

# A&M faculty member invited to U.S.-U.S.S.R. symposium

By Holly Beeson

REPORTER

One mark of a world-class university is the presence of faculty members worthy of notice in the international arena. A Texas A&M University associate professor has achieved that status. Dr. Ozden Ochoa, an associate professor in the mechanical engineering department, has been invited to attend the first Symposium on Mechanics of Composite Materials between the Soviet Union and the United States. Ochoa is one of 32 delegates chosen to represent the United States at the conference in Riga, Latvia, May 23-26. She was the only delegate invited from the southwestern United States. The purpose of the symposium is to increase

the sharing of information between the two countries, Ochoa said. She was selected to attend the conference on the basis of a paper she submitted to the American Society for Composites, a sponsor for the symposium. "The paper is the outcome of a research project," she said. "It addresses the structural response of a composite component panel when it is subjected to different environmental conditions."

A panel, basically graphite fibers and polymers, is tremendously important because of its light weight. Her paper explores environmental contributions, such as moisture and temperature, to the load-carrying capability of a panel. Composite materials are used on space shuttles, airplanes, helicopters and automobiles such

as the Corvette and Fiero. Ochoa said the study of composites is an active field with much to be uncovered.

The symposium will last two weeks. Participants will present papers and talk with peers, as well as visit Soviet technical institutions, and learn about Soviet culture. "My personal interpretation of the conference is that this is another step in exchanging ideas with the Soviet bloc," Ochoa said. Ochoa said the symposium will give A&M the opportunity to be internationally recognized as a major school that does outstanding research in composites. "I want to understand the state of the art in terms of composites in the Eastern bloc," she said. "I would like for them to see what we're doing and see how good we are at it."

## Speaker Lewis makes apology to reporters

AUSTIN (AP) — House Speaker Gib Lewis apologized Wednesday to news reporters after telling one to "shut up" when he asked the speaker a question about bass stocked on his ranch. "I was a little rude . . . and I apologize if I've offended anybody," Lewis said in a gathering with reporters during the House session. But, he added, "When you see stories in the newspaper that are misleading, when you see misleading headlines, to mislead the general public, you feel like your integrity has been questioned. I think that's why I get upset."

Lewis — who also has received deer, elk and turkeys through the state Parks and Wildlife Department — said all the stocking was proper and "above board." "I don't think my integrity should be in question on these matters," said the Fort Worth Democrat. "Every contact with those people has been at arm's length, been in the same type of transaction as any general citizen."

He said Parks and Wildlife officials "have not shown me any preferential treatment, and to my knowledge, they have not shown anyone any preferential treatment." Lewis on Tuesday criticized a report in the *Dallas Morning News* that said Parks and Wildlife employees caught and transported more than 100 black bass from an East Texas lake to Lewis' ranch in Williamson County. Although the director of fisheries defended the action, other agency employees said ordinary Texans probably would not have received the same service.

After apologizing, Lewis maintained that the news story "was completely, totally out of proportion."

"Unfortunately, somebody raised the question that maybe the speaker . . . was given preferential treatment. I don't believe that. No one in Parks and Wildlife believes that."

"My relationship with the Parks and Wildlife . . . is a very close relationship over 18 years. I'm a sportsman and I've been very supportive of their programs and I know what their responsibilities are."

"My association with them on stocking on any property I own has been under those conditions. . . I have made requests and in some cases I have not made any requests."

# Proposal to burn natural gas could clean air, create jobs

AUSTIN (AP) — Bills promoting natural gas use would help clean up Texas air and stimulate the economy, Land Commissioner Garry Mauro told state lawmakers Wednesday.

"Too often, we Texans have assumed that a growing economy and a clean environment are at odds," Mauro said in testimony to the Senate State Affairs Committee. "Our reserves of natural gas have given us a dramatic opportunity to prove that assumption wrong. Texas is blessed with vast reserves of natural gas, the cleanest-burning fossil fuel on earth," he said. "If we can link that demand for Texas natural gas to the national imperative to clean up our air, it's a no-lose situation for everybody."

Also testifying for the measures were representatives of such groups as the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club, Texas Independent Producers and Royalty Owners Association and American Lung Association. The Senate panel did not vote on the legislation.

It has been estimated the legislation would create more than 8,000 jobs and increase the state gross product by almost \$500 million by 1998.

One bill would require the use of compressed natural gas or other alternative fuels in state-owned or -operated fleets with more than 15 vehicles, school districts with more than 50 buses, and local transit authorities. A 10-year schedule for conversion of existing fleets from gasoline or diesel is set out.

Converting only 100 state vehicles to compressed natural gas would save taxpayers \$50,000 a year,

according to Mauro, who cited preliminary results of a pilot project.

The other bill would affect the 21 counties that fail to attain federal air quality standards. Those counties are in the areas of Houston, Dallas-Fort Worth, El Paso and

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Beaumont-Port Arthur, Mauro said.

The measure would empower the Texas Air Control Board to require fleet vehicles in such areas to burn compressed natural gas or alternative fuels to reduce pollutant emissions.

It would allow the board to levy a surcharge to discourage the burning of fuel oil in utility and industry boilers capable of using natural gas between April 15 and Oct. 15 each year. That is the period most prone to ozone formation, Mauro said.

Private financing would be used under both bills for vehicle conversions, and exemptions would be provided if such financing is unavailable, Mauro said.

Executive Director Johnny Veselka of the Texas Association of School Administrators expressed concern about the availability of suitable technology and the cost of implementation. He suggested that lawmakers consider a voluntary incentive program instead of a mandatory one for school districts.

There are no commercially available compressed natural gas engines for installation in buses, said John Bartosiewicz of the Texas Transit Association.

## Deaf student participates in regular classroom

BEAUMONT (AP) — Joel Thoreson looks like any other active 8-year-old as he puzzles over math problems or builds a paper pinwheel with classmates.

With energy and assurance, the bright-eyed second grader eagerly chats with a friend or shyly flirts with a little blonde-haired girl.

One can almost overlook the two gray cables looping up from a black receiver clipped to his belt to the pair of hearing aids in his ears.

Although he is profoundly deaf, Joel studies math and language arts in the morning with students with normal hearing at Pietzsch Elementary School.

No other deaf children in the Beaumont Independent School District are "mainstreamed" at that early age in those subjects.

Joel still studies science and social studies in the afternoon with youngsters at the nearby Deaf Co-op, an educational cooperative for deaf students that serves Southeast Texas school districts.

Joel's mother, Diana Thoreson, said she hopes to her son can attend a regular classroom for the entire day in third grade.

In Beaumont, deaf elementary school students generally run and jump in physical education classes with other hearing children. But when it comes to reading and writing, they often do not attend class with children of normal hearing until middle school.

Thoreson said she hopes her son's example might encourage parents to mix deaf children with regular students at a younger age.

"If you have a child with a disability and put them in a normal surrounding, it would help them to act more normally," Thoreson said. "They can live a normal life and not have to feel gloomy that they are deaf."

But Pietzsch principal Joe Judith warned parents of deaf children must take care not to push their children too far too fast.

If the district mainstreams too early and the youngster fails, the child could become deeply discouraged with school and eventually might drop out when they get older, he said.

"Each child is an individual," he said. "A parent has to be aggressive, but has to be realistic about it. It is better to know that when you kick them out of the nest, they will fly."

Thoreson said several teachers at the Deaf Co-op said her son did so well in the deaf education classes last year that he might make it in a regular classroom. Joel attended class with other students in fine arts and reading for the last few weeks of that school year.

Inspired by school districts in Houston and Humble that mainstream deaf children in elementary school, Thoreson pressed to have

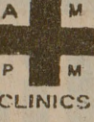
her child go to regular classes part of the day. She cited federal law requiring school districts to teach handicapped children with their non-handicapped peers to the greatest extent possible.

Thoreson met with a committee of the principal, teachers from the Deaf Co-op and regular classroom teacher Patty Calhoun. Judith said the committee decided to mainstream Joel because of his good speech and language skills and his good academic record. The committee then worked out an individual educational plan for him.

For much of the first semester, an interpreter sat in on the class and translated the teacher's lectures into sign language. But signing proved distracting for other students in the class and ultimately unnecessary for Joel.

Calhoun still speaks into a small microphone that hooks into a small black transmitter strapped to her waist. Joel's receiver picks up the signals from the transmitter, allowing him to follow the teacher's discussion. When other students read aloud, Calhoun lets them talk into the microphone.


"He's just like any other 8-year-old, except he has a hearing loss," Calhoun said. "He's never had a grade average below a C." To help Joel, Calhoun learned some basic sign language and taught some signing to the other children.



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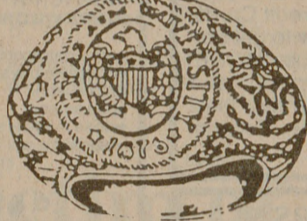
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