

Wednesday, April 12, 1989

## Texas cities experiment with waste recycling

By Sherri Roberts

STAFF WRITER

Although Texas and other southern states have been slower to adopt recycling programs than many northeastern states that have less abundant aluminum and land resources, more Texas cities are experimenting with the programs.

Independent companies in Bryan-College Station recycle and sell aluminum, paper and glass products to companies such as Alcoa and Reynolds Metal Co. However, both cities practice "cold-mingling" — depositing recyclable and non-

recyclable public waste materials together in a landfill.

"All that stuff we're packing in there (landfills for waste) is a natural resource," James Minor, solid waste division manager for Bryan, said.

Minor said the expense of implementing a recycling project is a significant factor discouraging Bryan officials from adopting such a program.

A curbside recycling program would require the city to buy trucks specifically for the recyclable material and also to supply containers to deposit the material, Minor said. In addition, many people would not want the inconvenience of

having to separate paper, aluminum and glass materials from the rest of their garbage, he said.

Alan Watts, manager of waste reduction programs for Austin, said that city's curbside recycling program, begun as a pilot program in 1982, eventually will close the gap between its 1987-88 budget of \$1 million and revenues of \$300,000. The program, which is financed by the city's solid waste services fee, will benefit the city indirectly by increasing employment, decreasing pollution and saving energy, he said.

Because the raw materials in paper, aluminum cans and glass have been refined, it requires 95 percent

less energy to make a can from a recycled aluminum can and 50 percent less energy to make paper from recycled paper, Watts said.

Shirley Johnson, the Austin program's public education coordinator, said the program, which collects more than 550 tons of recyclable materials a month and is provided to 90,000 homes, will expand to include the entire city in June.

More than 800 block leaders stimulate publicity and community involvement in the program, she said.

Other Texas cities soon may have to follow in Austin's footsteps because of newly revised Environmen-

tal Protection Agency rules, which will require cities to recycle a certain percentage of waste material.

Minor said Bryan officials, who are working with College Station officials to possibly acquire a joint landfill site, do not want to implement a recycling program until EPA releases its revised regulations later this year.

Ron Schmidt, general manager for Texas Commercial Waste, said cities should increase efforts to develop a market for recycled materials rather than simply pouring funds into a recycling program. By finding new uses for recycled material, demand for it would increase, eliminating decreased revenues because of a flooded market, he said.

throughout the Brazos Valley, including the Skaggs and Manor East Mall parking lots.

Schmidt said the success of the program has exceeded the expectations of the project's organizers. It has generated an average revenue of \$600 per month for its sales of recyclable material to companies, he said.

Other local community groups are starting recycling projects as well.

The Texas Environmental Action Coalition recently rescued 10 to 15 tons of outdated fact sheets and various other papers at the Agricultural Extension Service warehouse — papers which administrators were planning to burn — and sold them to a Houston paper company for recycling.

Mike Worsham, vice president of the coalition, said paper companies offer about \$110 per ton for recyclable computer paper and \$15 for a ton of newspapers.

Whatever the method, Bryan officials say recycling efforts in the community most likely will increase.

## Lawyer for Wright accused of 'collusion'

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Speaker Jim Wright's chief critic Tuesday accused the speaker's lawyer of colluding with Democrats to violate the secrecy of the ethics committee as it considers charges against Wright.

"My reaction is sort of beyond rage, into amazement," said Rep. Newt Gingrich, R-Ga., who filed the complaint last year that led to the ethics case against Wright.

Wright's attorney, William Old-

aker, was permitted to be present during the three weeks of closed-door meetings beginning in late February at which the committee's outside counsel, Richard Phelan, presented his case in detail to panel members.

Last week Oldaker began briefing selected House Democrats and a few key Democratic lobbyists on the speaker's defenses against the issues that have become the key focus of the ethics probe: evasion of outside

income limits and business dealings with a Fort Worth developer, George Mallick.

The committee took the unusual step of allowing Oldaker to sit in on its private deliberations because it was useful for members to hear "the initial line of reasoning" from the speaker's attorney, Gingrich said he was told at the time.

But the process is clearly confidential under House rules, he said, and for Oldaker to later brief Demo-

crats, including outside lobbyists, on the case is "an act so stupid, so fundamentally undermining the ethics process that . . . I find it hard to believe he is doing that," Gingrich said.

"These are people who are out of touch with the way modern society operates," he said, adding that two GOP members of the ethics committee were "stunned" to hear of Oldaker's activities and promised to look into the matter.

Committee chairman Rep. Julian Dixon, D-Calif., declined to criticize Oldaker, saying only that "he has to represent his client in the way he sees fit" and that he did not know the content of the briefings.

But the panel's senior Republican, Rep. John T. Myers of Indiana, said he had some concerns.

"We extended the courtesy of our committee, which is not required by the rules," to Oldaker, Myers said. "When he discusses what took place there, he's in violation of House rules. . . . I guess I'm just giving a warning."

The committee continued its deliberations on Tuesday and Dixon said he expected the meetings to continue through the week. But it appeared increasingly likely that there would be no public announcement of a final decision until next week.

## Official: Workers comp system doesn't work

AUSTIN (AP) — The chief administrator of the Texas workers' compensation system said Tuesday the system often rewards fraudulent claim disputes and shortchanges legitimate claims.

"Right now there is absolutely no accountability in the system," Joseph Gagen, chairman of the Industrial Accident Board said.

Before a Senate subcommittee considering sweeping changes to the state's workers' comp system, Gagen read a letter he received from an attorney, whose client was considering suicide because of a disputed injury claim.

After an appeal of the Accident Board's ruling, the woman's workers' comp payments had stopped and she was running out of money, the letter said.

"Senators, there is not a damn thing I can do for that lady," Gagen said. "I guess the biggest frustration I

have day-to-day is that inability to resolve problems."

Gagen, of Houston, said under the Texas workers' comp law, disputes are encouraged and there are no incentives to keep costs down.

When an injured worker or an insurance company disputes the decision by the Accident Board "at this point, you can throw the workers' compensation law away," he said. Once an appeal is filed, the workers' comp payments stop.

This produces an economic hardship on the worker with a legitimate claim and may cause him to settle for less than to what he is entitled, Gagen said.

But those with phony claims know they can settle out of court because the insurance company will pay anything lower than the cost of going to court.

Gagen said 10 percent of the claims before the Accident Board are awarded nothing.

## Civil penalties may result from hospital chopper crash

HOUSTON (AP) — Hermann Hospital could face civil penalties stemming from the operation of its Life Flight program, which suffered a setback this week when three people were seriously injured in a helicopter crash.

The possible fines would be in connection with findings of non-compliance with Federal Aviation Regulations and FAA guidelines and policies cited in a March 1988 National Aviation Safety Inspection Program Report, said Gerrie Cook, a spokesman for the FAA regional office in Fort Worth.

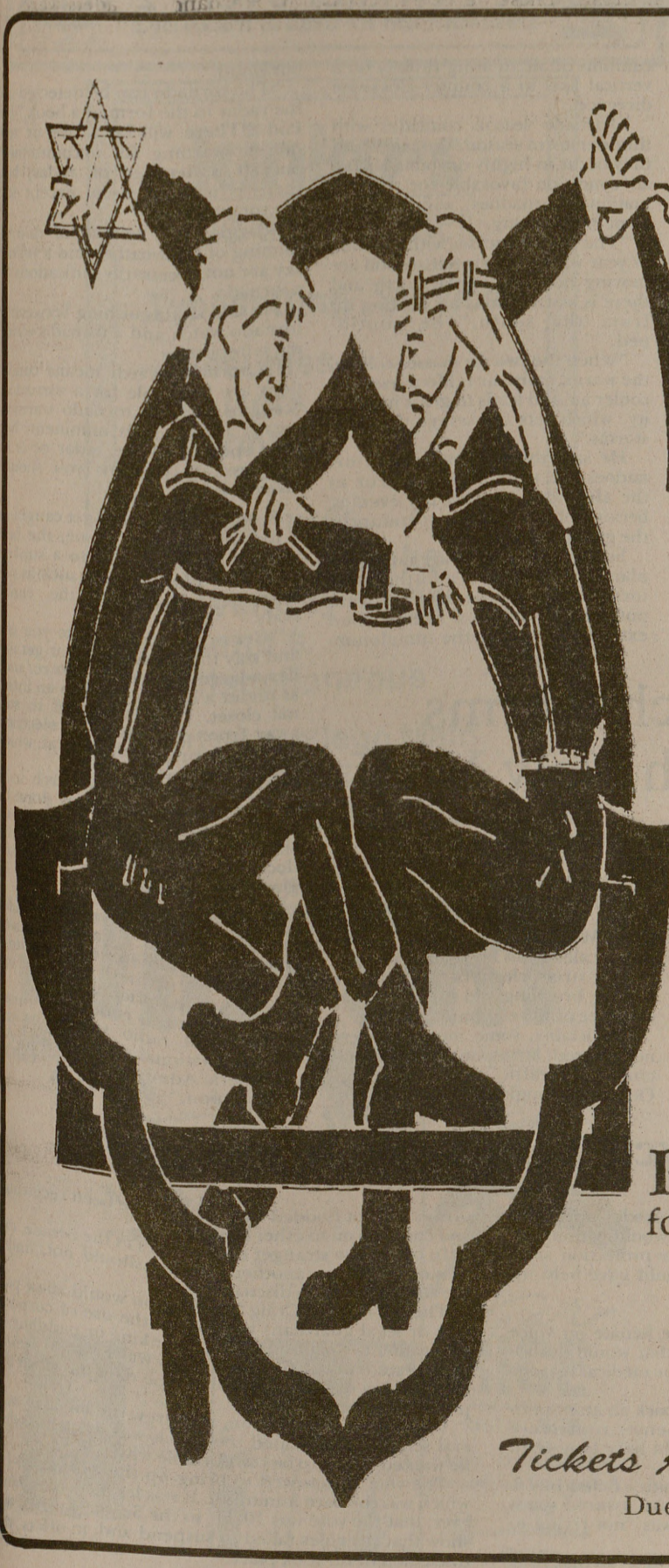
On Sunday, a Hermann Hospital Life Flight helicopter plunged 100 feet shortly after takeoff from the hospital parking lot. Investigators on Tuesday continued efforts to try and determine if the helicopter struck

the side of a parking garage before plummeting to the ground.

The pilot, a nurse and an emergency medical technician were injured and remained hospitalized Tuesday.

### Correction

The cutline accompanying a photo on the front page of Tuesday's *Battalion* incorrectly identified Phil Gooch as a member of the Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity. Gooch is a member of Sigma Alpha Epsilon. The fight also was identified incorrectly as the final match of the heavyweight division. It was a semifinal fight. *The Battalion* regrets the errors.



# TONIGHT

Wednesday, April 12

## THE MIDDLE EAST: PEACE OR POWDER KEG

### 8 p.m. Rudder Auditorium

*The Honorable*  
**Dr. James Jonah**  
Assistant U.N. Secretary-General

*The Honorable*  
**Robert McFarlane**  
former National Security Advisor

*Admiral*  
**Stansfield Turner**  
former C.I.A. Director

*Moderated By*  
**Ed Bradley**  
Co-Editor 60 Minutes

*Tickets Available at the Rudder Box Office and Dillard's*  
Due to current world affairs, Javier Pérez de Cuéllar will not appear.

