



**WEATHER**

TOMORROW'S FORECAST:  
Partly sunny, chance of t-storm

HIGH: 85      LOW: 60



Here I come!

Photo by Mike C. Mulvey

Sheila McDaniel, a sophomore animal science major from Corsicana, practices her turning exercises on skis Thursday on Mt. Aggie. Mt. Aggie, located near G. Rollie White Coliseum and Rudder Tower, is used for skiing instructional classes throughout the semester.

# Alton school bus collides with semi; 19 students die

ALTON (AP) — A school bus crowded with teen-agers collided with a truck and plunged more than 40 feet into a water-filled pit Thursday, killing 19 students and injuring 64, five critically.

It is the worst school bus accident in Texas history, state officials said. Survivors said the driver of the

**Firefighter saves 10/Page 3**

soft drink delivery truck ran a stop sign and struck the bus, sending it off course and into the pit.

Truck driver Ruben Perez, 25, of Mission, said his brakes failed, according to Texas Department of Public Safety Sgt. Israel Pacheco.

The truck passed a Texas state inspection last month, Coca-Cola officials said.

Pacheco said investigators had not determined how fast the truck was going, but a witness said the bus was going about 25 mph.

"I thought I was going to die," Alex De Leon, 18, said as he stood in front of Mission General Hospital in muddy pants and hospital slippers, with cuts on his face and bruised hands. "It just filled up with water real quick."

"I opened up a window, took out my sister, took out a couple of friends and it was already full of water, and you could smell the diesel," said De Leon, a 10th grader.

Pacheco said 81 people were on the bus, including driver Gilberto Pena. Pena was in critical condition in intensive care at Mission General.

The bus was designed to carry 83 people, said Herman Light, quality assurance director for the manufacturer, Blue Bird Body Co. of Fort Valley, Ga.

Pena had picked up his last student en route to nearby Mission when the Dr Pepper semitrailer truck struck the left side of the bus about 7:40 a.m. at an intersection just east of Alton, which is located just north of the U.S.-Mexico border, authorities said.

The bus tumbled into the pit, which is about 20 feet from the road,

said DPS Sgt. David Baker. The truck remained at the side of the road.

Rescuers dove in 12 feet of water to pull both the living and dead from the submerged and overturned bus.

Some students scrambled out and stood on the bus, screaming for help. Notebooks, school papers and backpacks floated away.

Frantic parents rushed to the scene. One woman was carried away in an ambulance, hysterical after seeing the bodies of her two daughters pulled from the water, the *Monitor*

in McAllen reported.

Another wept as she was told about the death of her child, the *Monitor* said. "How can she be dead? She had just gotten on the bus five minutes before," the woman said.

"They were just trapped. We had to break the glass of the windows to get in," said Al Nye, a diver who pulled seven bodies from the bus.

All the dead were between 12 and 18, said Mike Cox, DPS spokesman in Austin. The bus accident is the worst in Texas history, he said.

## Caliche pits left by contractors plague South Texas roadways

ALTON (AP) — Thousands of caliche pits like the one involved in Thursday's tragic school bus accident line roads throughout South Texas, a little regulated legacy of contractors and others who dig up the gravel-like material for road base and then move on.

Nineteen students were killed when the bus plunged into the pit following a collision with a soft-drink truck, becoming submerged in about 12 feet of water at the bottom of the 40-foot-deep chasm.

No guard rail separated the pit from the roadway 20 feet away, nor were there any road signs warning of its presence. Texas Department of Public Safety Sgt. Israel Pacheco said there was no fence around the pit, though there may have been one prior to some recent road construction nearby.

There are no state regulations governing the pits, according to officials at the Railroad Commission of Texas, which governs surface mining, and the General

Land Office, which oversees the state's geology.

While being mined, operation of the pits is governed by federal mining regulations, according to Bill Driscoll, executive director of a state contractors' association. Those regulations do not apply to inactive pits, he said.

Officials were unsure who had excavated the pit involved in Thursday's accident just outside Alton or who owned the land on which it is located.

Caliche, a Spanish word, is defined as gravel, sand and desert debris cemented by a porous calcium carbonate, state geologist Bill Farr said.

The material occurs naturally through the Southwest and Mexico, and "is used quite a lot in making road base material," Farr said.

"You'll see caliche pits lining the highways all throughout the Southwest," he said.

Such a pit is "not unusual in the (Rio Grande) Valley," Torres said. "We see that a lot down here. . . . I used to go swimming in them as a kid."

## Committee says speed up appeals from Death Row

Proposal raises uproar from civil rights lawyers

WASHINGTON (AP) — A committee appointed by Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist called Thursday for streamlining death penalty appeals to assure swifter executions, but only after condemned murderers get more legal help.

The proposal promptly was denounced by civil liberties lawyers who accused Rehnquist of stacking the committee.

"They want to be able to kill more people faster," said Mary Broderick of the National Legal Aid and Defender Association.

Retired Supreme Court Justice Lewis F. Powell, who heads the committee, said, "The hard fact is that the (capital punishment) laws of 37 states are not being enforced by the courts."

"I respect those who argue for outright abolition of death punish-

ment but it seems irrational to retain the penalty and frustrate its fair implementation," Powell said.

Ironically, Powell said he would vote to abolish capital punishment if he were a state legislator, contending, "It has not deterred murder."

The United States has the highest murder rate of any nation and is the only democracy that has the death penalty, he noted.

Powell said the aim of his committee's report is to reform a system that encourages endless legal maneuvering, years of delay and frenzied, last-minute moves to stave off execution.

The committee report was submitted to the U.S. Judicial Conference, the policy-making arm of the federal courts. The conference postponed any action on the report — and any recommendation to Con-

gress — until its 28 judges reconvene in March.

The committee recommended that states enact laws to limit death row inmates to two rounds of appeals in state and federal courts. One round would challenge a verdict directly; a second would be based on alleged violations of the condemned individual's rights.

The current system permits successive rounds of appeals in the federal courts.

States that choose to adopt the new system — which also would require congressional approval — would be required to assure legal help to death row inmates at taxpayer expense throughout the appeals process. That is not the case now.

## UT fraternity receives probation for alleged theft during hazing

AUSTIN (AP) — A University of Texas fraternity has been put on probation because pledges allegedly were required to steal lumber from a construction site in a hazing incident, a UT official said.

The fraternity, Sigma Nu, will keep its campus privileges during the one-year probation, said Glenn Maloney, assistant UT dean

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ney, assistant dean of students. But he said a subsequent violation of UT policy could bring an increased penalty.

"It's not unusual to get complaints about the theft of lumber that someone feels is being used by fraternities for their party sets," Maloney said Wednesday.

He said this is apparently the first time UT has gathered enough evidence to discipline a group for such a theft under hazing policies.

The Texas Legislature in 1987 redefined the offense of hazing and created harsher penalties. Hazing is defined in part as "any activity that induces, causes or re-

quires the student to perform a duty or task which involves a violation of the penal code."

Maloney said officers of the fraternity have cooperated with the UT investigation and have told him they do not plan to appeal his decision.

A man who answered the telephone at the Sigma Nu fraternity house Thursday said, "Sorry, no one here has any comment," and hung up.

The terms of probation for Sigma Nu include performing a community service project, submitting a written pledge program and having fraternity officers and pledges attend a conference at UT this weekend for fraternities and sororities, Maloney said.

The officers also must take part in a Greek leadership conference next spring, and fraternity members must give UT permission to discuss their grades with the officers, Maloney said.

Four pledges were caught by Travis County sheriff's officers in November while loading lumber onto a trailer at a South Austin construction site, Maloney said. He did not know the outcome of the case.

The incident was not identified as being related to hazing until January, when a Dallas resident gave university officials a tip, he said.

Gathering information on the incident took several months, he said. A decision about discipline was delayed because Sigma Nu officers were not in Austin during the summer, Maloney said.

## A&M scientists plan physics research center

By Selina Gonzalez  
Of The Battalion Staff

Texas A&M scientists will join forces with a Nobel Prize winner and other scientists from universities across the nation and from Latin America to plan a Western Hemisphere physics research center Friday.

Dr. Abdus Salam, 1979 Nobel recipient in physics and director of the internationally known International Center for Theoretical Physics (ICTP) in Trieste, Italy, will be at the meeting in the Clayton Williams Alumni Center.

"We want to try to bring to Texas A&M what is called the International Institute for Theoretical Physics," A&M physicist Dr. David Ernst said.

Friday's meeting is the first step toward forming the IITP, which will be patterned after the

ICTP. Ernst said A&M plans for the three-year old idea to get started September 1990.

Public relations and fund raising will head Friday's agenda, Ernst said. He said federal, state and private donations all will be used to finance the project.

Those attending the conference include Latin American scientists Dr. Fernando del Rio of the Universidad Autonoma Metropolitana-Iztapalapa, president of Mexico's National Academy of Science, and Dr. Gil da Costa Marques of the Universidad del Sao Paulo, president of the Association of Latin American Physical Societies.

Dr. Alex Dalgarno of Harvard University, Dr. David J. Gross of Princeton University and Professor Joseph Macek of the University of Tennessee will all participate in the conference.

## Hugo collides with South Carolina coast

CHARLESTON, S.C. (AP) — Hurricane Hugo struck the coast of South Carolina with renewed fury Thursday after thousands of coastal residents in southeastern states grabbed what they could carry and fled inland on jammed highways.

"I'm sure the shoreline is getting hurricane-force winds," Bob Sheets, director of the National Hurricane Center in Coral Gables, Fla., said at 9:15 p.m. EDT.

"We don't have observation set up on every point of the coast," he said, but Myrtle Beach had reported the highest sustained winds so far of 65 mph.

Hugo's muscle reached winds of 135 mph, up from 125 mph earlier in the day and 105 mph the day before. North and South Carolina can expect tornadoes linked to Hugo for the next two days, according to the hurricane center.

The resort city of Myrtle Beach was a ghost town as the powerful winds of Hugo approached and tens of thousands of people sought higher ground.

Earlier, the center reported that hurricane force winds were expected to hit the coast between Savannah, Ga., and Charleston near mid-

night, and the eye of the storm was to pass over 3 hours later.

At 8:15 p.m. EDT, sustained winds were measured at 70 mph in Georgetown and 50 mph in Myrtle Beach. Winds are termed hurricane force when they reach 74 mph, forecasters said.

The coastal area could expect hurricane-force winds for 10 to 12 hours once the eye comes ashore, officials said.

The leading edge of Hugo was most likely to hit between Savannah, Ga., and Charleston any time after 8 p.m. EDT. A hurricane warning was in effect between Fernandina Beach, Fla., and Oregon Inlet, N.C.

At 6 p.m., Hugo was 180 miles south of Myrtle Beach, S.C., near latitude 31.2 degrees north and longitude 78.2 degrees west and moving north-west at 20 mph. It was expected to turn gradually to the north, the National Weather Service said.

The timing of the landfall was critical because of the storm's tidal surge, a dome of water 10 to 15 feet high that would feed a normal 5-foot high tide that peaks after 2 a.m.

"On top of that will be waves, and so (on) . . . barrier islands (in) many places the buildings will be swept clean off of those islands," Bob Sheets,

director of the National Hurricane Center, said from Coral Gables, Fla.

Evacuees queued up at gas stations and stripped store shelves of bottled water, bread and batteries. Officials warned coastal dwellers not to linger because gale force winds and flash floods could block escape routes. Five to 10 inches of rain is expected to fall.

The Navy moved ships out of coastal harbors to ride out the storm at sea. Army bases in coastal states moved helicopters inland or into shelters. Officials at Pope Air Force Base in Fayetteville, N.C., ordered 12 to 14 C-130 transport planes to Arkansas to wait out the storm.

South Carolina Gov. Carroll Campbell declared a state of emergency and dispatched 400 National Guardsmen to assist a mandatory evacuation of coastal barrier islands and shorefront. About one-fifth of the state's 3.1 million residents live in eight coastal counties.

The Georgia Emergency Management Agency opened shelters and advised about 142,000 people — more than 95,000 of them in Chatham County — to leave their homes. Gov. Joe Frank Harris declared a state of emergency in six counties.