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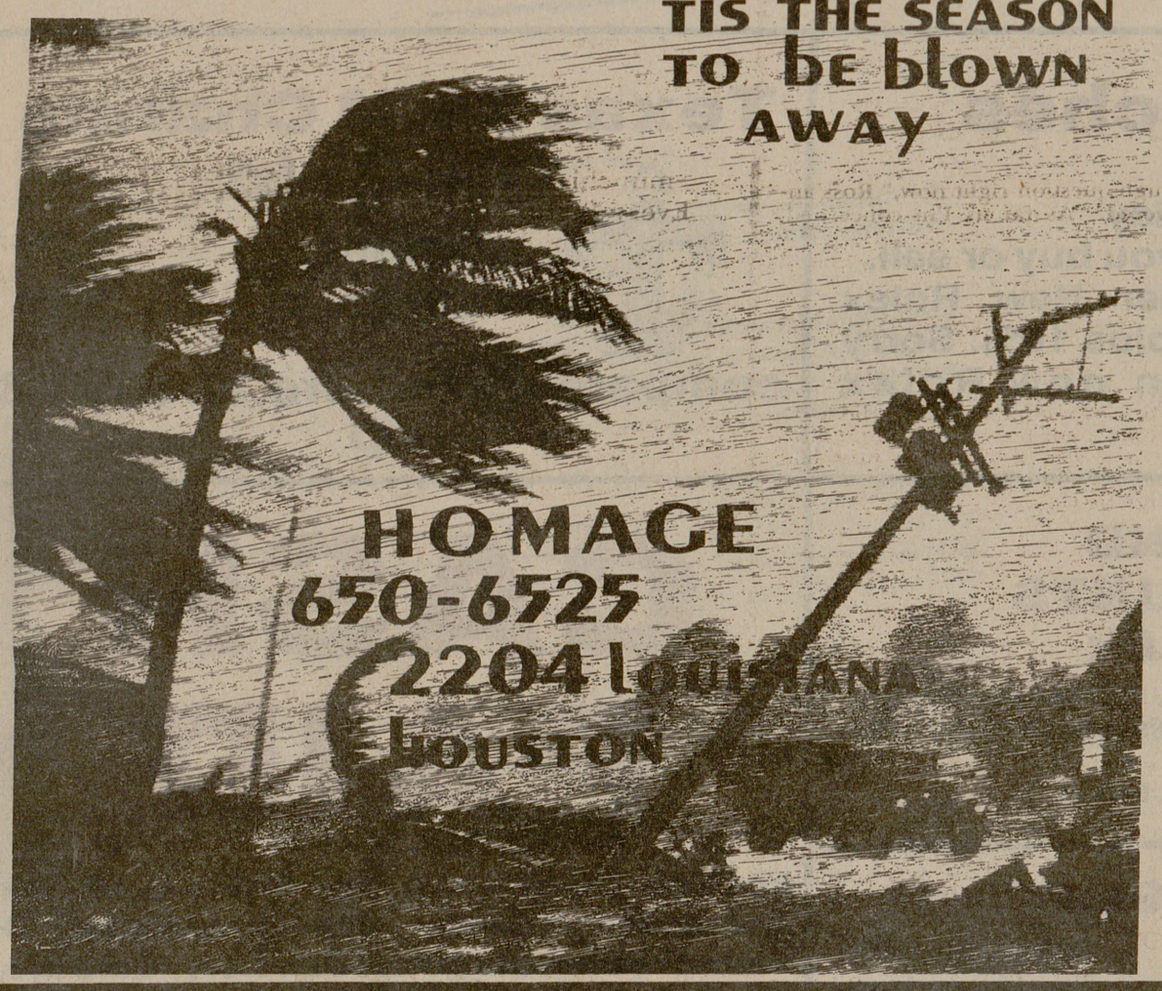

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Pennwalt

(Continued from page 1)

talked to a local Pennwalt representative but received little assistance.

"It's infuriating, and talking about it makes me mad all over again," she said. "I just felt very powerless."

"Mostly I just wanted information. I talked to just the local Pennwalt, the PR (public relations) guy. I remember he was just not very cooperative, and I was surprised because I was just information-gathering at the time."

Walker said Pennwalt officials care more about profits than the well-being of local residents.

"As far as I can tell, they're not concerned," she said. "They're interested in keeping their losses financially to a minimum. They don't want to be fined if the fines are too heavy. They're not concerned with the community; they're not concerned with people. They're concerned with the bottom dollar."

"They do what the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) forces them to do, and then they skate along as long as they can, because it would require major reorganization for them not to be as careless in their handling as they are."

Julie Jeter-Edwards, who lived near the plant for a year, said the contamination caused by Pennwalt is dangerous and that the company should clean it up.

"I think Pennwalt ought to fix what they've done," she said. "Corporations like that need to clean up their damn messes, because it's not only killing wildlife, it's going to get us one of these days."

Some people who live near the plant, however, don't think the contamination is serious.

Frank Trujillo, who lives near Finfeather Lake, said the water contamination never has caused any problems.

"The neighbor's kids, they played in it, waded in it, caught fish out of it," he said. "People came from all over catching minnows out of this thing. I've never heard of anybody ever getting sick off it."

Activities such as these rarely occur today, however, because signs have been posted at the lakes warning people of the arsenic contamination.

Moore said that the contamination caused by the plant has not affected public health. She said Pennwalt is concerned about the environment and has acted responsibly in dealing with the contamination. She also said that part of the contamination was caused by Cotton Poisons Inc., a firm that produced chemicals in the area before Pennwalt bought it in 1944.

"Pennwalt has been dealing with extremely complex environmental issues at the Bryan lakes for many years," she said. "The very complexity of those issues, which result in part from conduct by Pennwalt's predecessor, has lengthened the remediation process. Pennwalt is a responsible corporate citizen and is concerned about protecting the environment at all its locations, including Bryan, Texas."

However, according to water commission inspection reports, conditions at the Bryan plant over the past several years have posed a potential threat to the environment. A June 1987 inspection report states that "general housekeeping does not appear adequate. Steel tanks containing raw materials are not all bermed to prevent run-off if a spill occurs."

According to a June 1988 inspection report, "General housekeeping could be improved . . . . Potential for run-off into adjacent waterway still exists . . . . Some areas in and around holding tanks are still not bermed up to prevent spillage onto plant grounds in case of an accidental rupture of the raw materials tank."

A Jan. 31, 1989, inspection uncovered several violations at the plant. A letter from the water commission to Arthur Chernosky, manufacturing manager at the Pennwalt plant, outlined the violations.

"The company is responsible for the groundwater contamination immediately underneath the plant," the letter stated. "This is the result of arsenic leaching through the soil into the upper and middle aquifers. The contaminated groundwater appears to be surfacing into Finfeather and No Name Lakes."

No Name Lake is a small lake between the plant and Finfeather Lake.

Other violations included inadequate aisle space in the container storage areas and storage of containers for longer than 90 days, the maximum allowed storage time.

The letter stated that penalties of $10,000 per day could be assessed against the company if it failed to explain the violations or remedy them. In a March 17 letter to the water commission, Chernosky said that the violations had been remedied or were being addressed at that time.

Local Pennwalt officials would not comment on the issue of arsenic contamination or any related topics. John Adams, manager of the Bryan plant, said that for the past several years, local company officials have been required to defer all questions to the company's main office in Pennsylvania.

According to water commission documents, groundwater in some areas near the plant contains about 4,000 milligrams of arsenic per liter. The legal limit for drinking water is 0.05 milligrams of arsenic per liter. Although the contaminated ground water is not used as a source of drinking water, it is possible — but not likely — that it could contaminate other sources of groundwater.

According to a water commission report, "Unless the contaminant plume should reach a well in which it could migrate down the well outside any casing, usable groundwater is probably not at risk. This is not intended to de-emphasize the seriousness of surface water, lake sed soil and air contamination whi taken place."

Dr. Eric Comstock, a memb the American Academy of C Toxicology and a clinical as professor of medicine at the b College of Medicine, said such of arsenic-contaminated wate dangerous.

"Groundwater contaminat 4,000 milligrams per liter is substantial degree of con nation," he said. "This degree were used as potable water, fo ample, could lead to a vare problems."

Comstock said that such hig els of arsenic could lead to sk cer, lung cancer and other dis in addition to causing short-ter fects.

"Acute arsenic effects look tially like cholera, leading to a tery, bloody diarrhea and very problems," he said.

The Bryan plant also has duced air-borne contaminants have found their way from the site into nearby residential areas a result, the Texas Air Co Board has taken action against company.

Because of the air contamina the company also has become target of several lawsuits.

Jack and Stella Brown, who near the plant, filed an $8.5 mil lawsuit against the company in According to the petition that filed, the Browns believe that charges from the plant may damaged their health and property.

"The plaintiffs greatly fear their health has been damaged that they will suffer or die in the ture due to the toxic chemicals have contaminated the premises the atmosphere above the prem which plaintiffs have breathed tinuously for a long period of the petition stated.

A $2.3 milion lawsuit also filed against Pennwalt in Septem by the First Federal Savings Loan Association of Bryan. Acc ing to the petition, First Fede which owns property near the p is unable to sell the property bec of damage caused to it by the p emissions.

Pennwalt owns plants in sev other Texas cities, including H ton, McAllen, Crosby and Be mont.

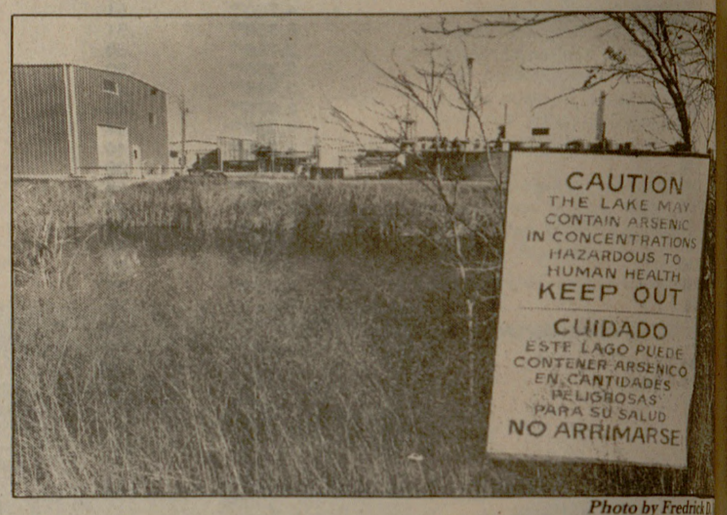

Photo by Fredrick D

This sign is one of many around Finfeather and nearby No Name Lake. In the background is the Pennwalt Corp. of Bryan.

Senate

(Continued from page 1)

mittee to express concerns and ask questions.

Senate Speaker Herman Saatkamp apologized and offered his sympathies to Jones and others who were upset with the scheduling, but said nothing could be done to change it.

In other business, the Senate:

- Passed a resolution asking the A&M administration to push for legislation to raise the upper limit of responsibility to the A&M System from a total of $5 million to $500,000 per person in the event of a lawsuit involving an A&M employee.
- Approved a resolution by the Ad Hoc Committee on Selection and Evaluation of Administrators concerning the selection, evaluation, and retention of deans.
- Passed a resolution deploring the destruction of the shanty erected by the Students Against Apartheid and all other acts of racism at the University.
- Approved the elimination of seven sophomore-level courses from the Speech and Writing Skills category in the core curriculum. The courses, which are Shakespeare, World Literature I and II, American Literature I and II and English Literature I and II, will be offered only under the Cultural Heritage heading in the curriculum.

> "I know I won't be here, and I would hope that others would join me in this protest."
>
> — Dr. Woodrow Jones, professor

- Passed requests for new g uate-level courses in chemical engineering, civil engineering, mec cal engineering, elec engineering, and counseling chology and a new undergrad course in mathematics. The S also approved two changes in requisites for two undergrad level physics courses.
- Approved a recommend from the Graduate Council to let dergraduates enroll in classes b those already with bachelor's grees, but voted down a recom dation that post-baccalaureate, degree-seeking graduate stu must attain and maintain a 3.0 in order to remain eligible to re ter.
- Discussed revising a bylaw cerning the composition of the C mittee on Emeritus Status to in consultation with the college d library director, and the college cuses and a maximum three-term on the committee.

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