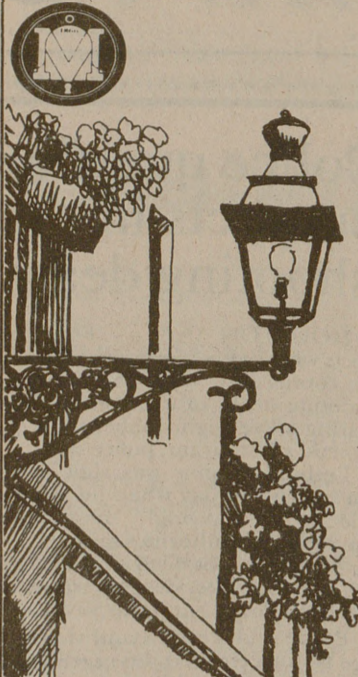


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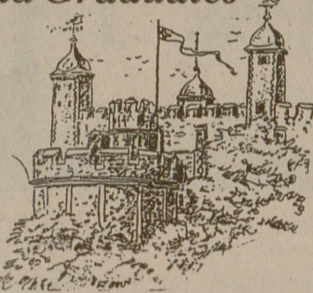
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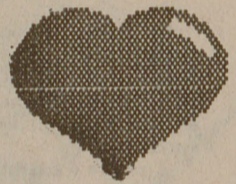
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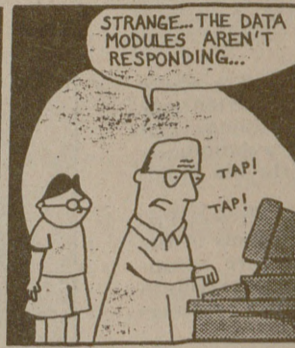
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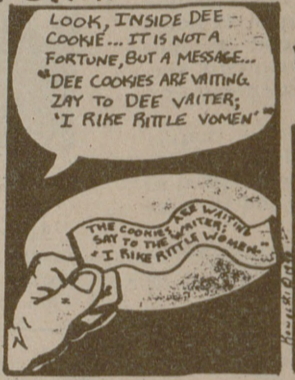
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Texas researcher studies family trees

NACOGDOCHES (AP) — "You've got to be part bloodhound and part detective," said Carolyn Ericson, author and researcher of family trees. "If you like reading mystery books, you'd like doing genealogical research," she said, calling it "the most fascinating work I've ever done." Author of 35 books and the 21-year-old "Kissin' Kuzzins" newspaper column, Ericson has put her

Texas. Her husband must've put it up," said Ericson, "and he moved to central Texas and doesn't have a headstone at his grave at all.

"So here's Mama with all this information and poor old Papa with none at all."

The foursome's dogged persistence leads them to "burn up" in the summer and "freeze" in the winter "until our pens freeze," said Ericson.

"We've been covered with fire ants and seed ticks and been down more pig tracks and logging trails than I ever thought existed," she said.

But the personality of the headstones and the value of their silent history draws them back.

"Some are so sad," said Ericson. "When you come to a grave with a mother and baby buried together you think about that heartbroken husband."

Ericson has a 30-drawer file of 3x5 cards with headstone information she is putting on computer. At 6,800 entries, she is "up to Haltom, so it's a long way to Z."

Preserving information before it dies with grandparents or lost records is a central goal of Ericson's work.

She recommends people simply take a tape recorder to older relatives and ask them to tell about their families, then save the tape until time and interest allow for dealing with the history.

She says people would benefit from making their own family records to pass on to their children.

"One of the main ways family tradition and heritage were passed down was through children sitting on Mama's knee," Ericson said. "Now Mama's out working and a lot of family history is going to be lost."

"One of the main ways family tradition and heritage were passed down was through children sitting on Mama's knee."

— Carolyn Ericson, researcher

magnifying glass to gravestones and county records for 30 years searching for clues to Nacogdoches County's past.

Encouraged by her parents' involvement in growing the family tree, and determined to complete a decade's work of a friend who died, Ericson began research when her son went to kindergarten and left her mornings open for the library.

Often accompanied by her husband and parents, Ericson also began the tedious toil of cataloging cemeteries, "which means you walk up and down the row and take down the entire inscription off each tombstone," she said.

"One in Garrison is as high as your head and just covered with information — when and who she married, when her parents came to

Code violations may be cause of dorm fire

MARSHALL (AP) — Numerous violations of the city's fire code were found during an inspection of a Wiley College women's dormitory that was destroyed by a recent fire, authorities said.

Fire Marshal Bill Elliott said he found inoperable fire extinguishers, alarms and smoke detectors.

Fire doors that should have been closed to seal out oxygen also were found propped open following the Feb. 5 fire that was found to have started after someone left a hot iron on a bed.

Help has been pouring in for the 121 students who lived in the residence hall, many of whom lost all their possessions.

But officials at the college have not yet decided whether to make extensive repairs to Dogan Hall or build a new dormitory. Insurance may not cover the estimated \$1 million cost for a new building, they said.

"If we have to build a new structure, we think there may be a gap or window there of \$300,000 or so," said Dr. A.J. Stovall, a Wiley faculty member.

Those who lost possessions in the fire have been grateful for assistance from outsiders.

"Most of us are from Chicago, and we brought everything we owned down here. TV, clothes everything," said Carolyn Burnett, who lived on the first floor.

Wiley president David Beckley said the college gave each woman \$200 for immediate needs from the school's operating fund. An emergency fund has been started to replenish the expenditure, he said.

Jury verdict clears chemical company in Houston toxic waste dumping case

HOUSTON (AP) — A chemical company accused of dumping dangerous chemicals near a subdivision was cleared of any liability Monday after a four-month trial and a week of jury deliberations.

The unanimous verdict for Monsanto Co. by jurors in State District Judge Alice O. Trevathan's court granted nothing to 222 homeowners who were asking for \$355 million in damages from Monsanto Co., the chief user of the Brio Waste Site in southeast Houston near Friendswood.

The plaintiffs wanted \$1.6 million in damages each, which they said was equivalent to Monsanto's daily profit margin.

Michael Waldeck, the lead attorney for the plaintiffs, said he was extremely disappointed in the jury's decision and would appeal.

"I just don't believe this — I'm in shock," said Judy Romeo, a plaintiff in the case who abandoned her home of four years in the Southbend subdivision about five months ago. "I'm going to go home and have a good cry."

The jury's verdict came after nearly a week of deliberations. The decision closes the longest civil court trial — four months — in Harris County. There were more than 20,000 pages of transcripts, 8,011 exhibits, 250,000 documents, 339 witnesses and 65 attorneys.

Jury foreman Alfred Morales said the plaintiffs didn't prove their case.

"It was a very, very difficult decision," Morales said. "I would have to say that there was lack of evidence, in my opinion, that we were looking at. The big thing is

the evidence and the evidence was not there." Juror Jim Stecker said the decision reached was an emotional one, but added, "I believe that it is safe to live out there."

Homeowner Herb Bateman disagreed. He said he moved his family from the Southbend subdivision in August because "we felt our lives and our children's lives were in danger."

The plaintiffs claimed the Brio Waste Site has been the cause of medical problems ranging from upset stomachs to headaches. Some residents testified they fear they will contract cancer in the future because they live so close to the waste site.

In addition, plaintiffs claim their property values have dropped significantly.

"I don't know how the jury could overlook the overwhelming evidence of dumping," said Bateman, who abandoned his home of 15 years and moved to nearby Friendswood.

"It's not the end of the fight," Bateman said. Monsanto denied responsibility for any injuries, saying it is one of many companies that has used the Brio site through the years.

During closing arguments, Monsanto attorneys charged the suit is a "conspiracy" against the company on the part of builders and developers of the subdivision who settled a lawsuit filed by the homeowners then joined forces with them against Monsanto.

Past and present residents of the Southbend subdivision sued Monsanto after learning much of the toxic waste in the Brio site came from the chemical company.