

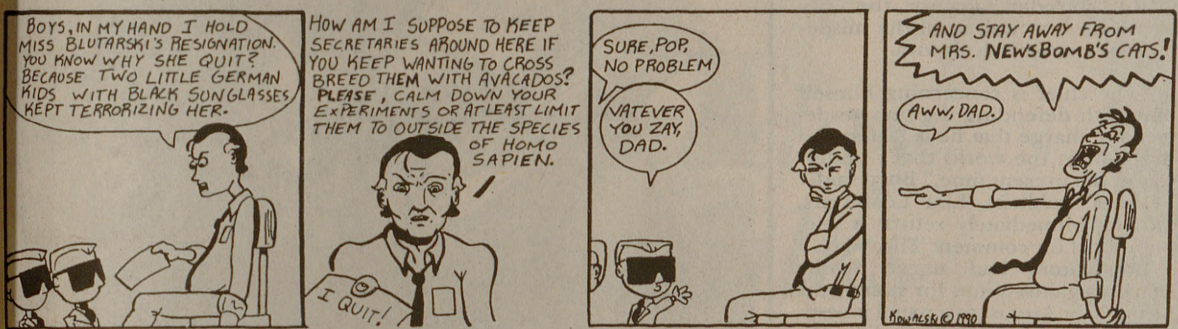
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by Scott McCullar © 1990



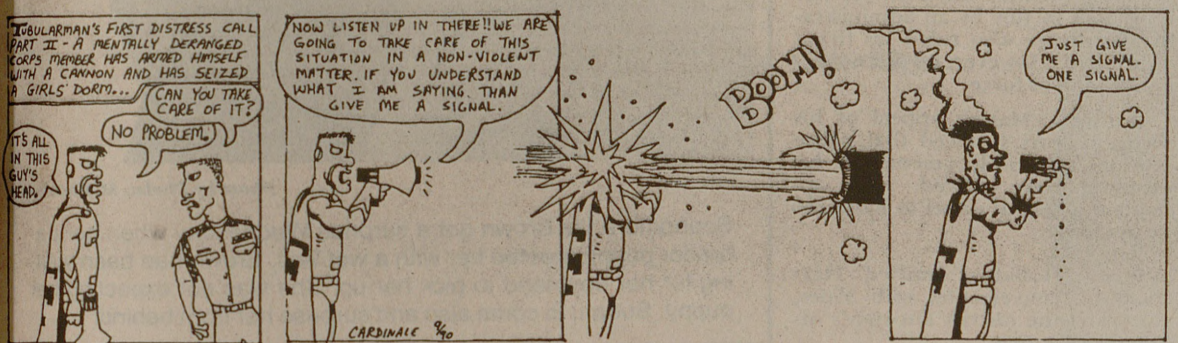
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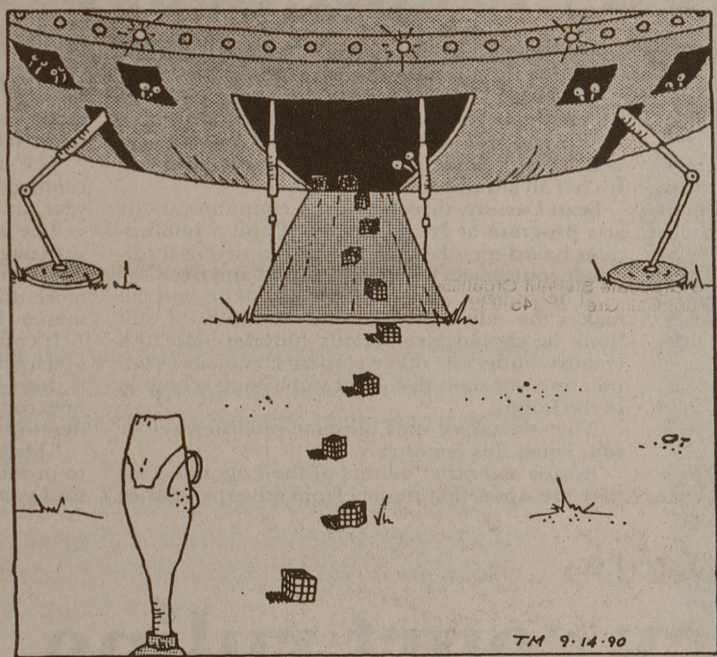
Tubularman

by Boomer Cardinale



Billion dollar budget needed for health care

Nerd House by Tom A. Madison



AUSTIN (AP) — If Texas is to move forward in mental health spending to meet the national average, the Legislature must approve the mental health department's \$1.1 billion budget request, the Texas mental health commissioner says. Earlier this week, two national advocacy groups labeled Texas as "the biggest skintflint" in mental health spending. The National Alliance for the Mentally Ill and the Public Citizen Health Research Group ranked Texas 45th in the quality of mental health programs. The most recent national survey of mental health spending shows

**Texas has increased per capita mental health spending by 37 percent.**

— Denny Jones, commissioner, Texas Dept. of Mental Health and Mental Retardation

that Texas' \$20.53 per capita ranks 49th among states and the District of Columbia.

The next biennium request, if fully funded, would take us to \$41.02 per capita statewide — about the national average," Denny Jones, commissioner of the Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation said Wednesday.

The department is asking for a total budget of \$2.9 billion for the next biennium. Of that, \$1.1 billion would be for mental health services.

The survey released this week was based on 1987 data. Since then, Jones said, Texas has increased per capita mental health spending by 37 percent — up to a current level of \$28.12.

That, however, is not enough, Jones and other mental health advocates said at a press conference called to respond to the new rankings.

Man claims innocence, jokes about Treaty Oak

AUSTIN (AP) — The man convicted of poisoning Texas' historic Treaty Oak with the herbicide Velpar says he is innocent and jokes that he may open a nightclub called "The Velpar Spot" when he gets out of prison.

Paul Stedman Cullen, 46, is serving a nine-year prison term for pouring Velpar on the centuries-old Treaty Oak, where legend holds that Texas colonist Stephen F. Austin signed treaties with the Indians.

The tree's plight and the efforts to save it were the subjects of worldwide media attention.

Cullen told the Austin American-Statesman in a story published Thursday that he is innocent.

"I didn't poison it," he said. "We're appealing (the case). I think with the pressure brought to bear by

the media, they were trying very hard to fit somebody into the role of suspect and defendant."

Since the poisoning in the spring of 1989, the city of Austin has received thousands of letters from people who followed the tree's struggle to survive massive doses of the liquid herbicide.

Visitors still place gifts, poems, and other items in front of the tree. Only a fourth of the oak, which stands at the western edge of downtown, is alive.

"I'm glad to see that society can have sympathy for a tree," Cullen said. "I think it may be somewhat misguided, but if a tree can serve as a focus to bring sympathy out of people, then I'm glad to see that they have the capacity for that."

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