

### Project Recovery helps rehabilitate problem students

The Associated Press

HOUSTON — Hambrick Middle School student David Acevedo made the mistake earlier this year of proudly showing his .25-caliber semiautomatic weapon to another student. He was expelled. Now, Acevedo and 12 fellow teens — all kicked out of the Aldine Independent School District on weapons, drug or assault allegations — are getting one more chance to make up for their mistakes and get back into school.

Project Recovery, a first-time program started this semester at Aldine ISD's Lane Center in far north Harris County, uses a structured, highly disciplined approach to trying to build self-esteem in problem students like Acevedo.

Some of the program's rules border on boot camp-style discipline: strict hair-length code, and boys must wear dress shirts and ties. No jewelry is allowed.

All teachers and staff members must be addressed as either 'ma'am or sir.'

Students will stand at their desks at the beginning of class until told to sit by their instructors, and they will move to the side in hallways as they pass adults.

All students perform community service, such as picking up trash along highway medians and at parks, repairing vandalism, working at a food bank and mowing yards and performing simple maintenance for the elderly, and local churches.

Students going to the school are picked up by a special bus at their doorstep, and taken home the same way.

But most of all, says the director of the program and several instructors, Project Recovery tries to treat the students — whom some teachers might find intimidating — with respect.

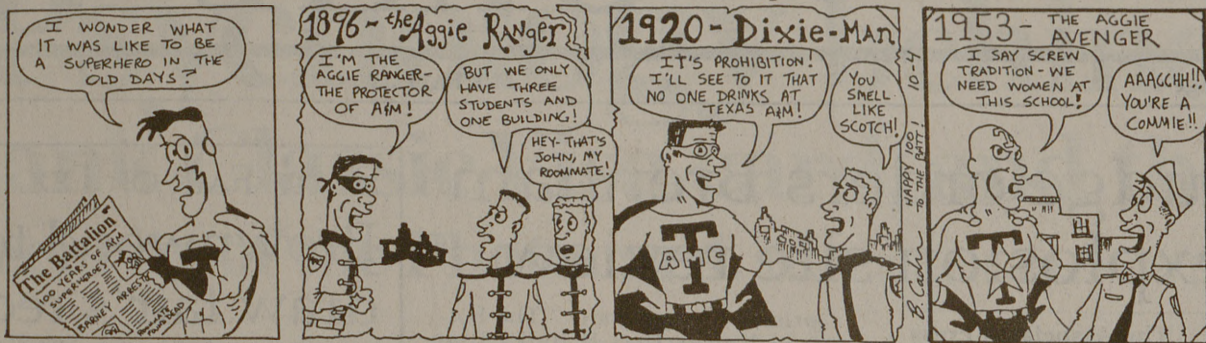
So far, students and instructors say, the program appears to be working.

Acevedo, 14, who says "bunches" of fellow students take guns to school daily, says he's staying out of trouble thanks to Project Recovery.

"If I was back in the other school I'd be skipping class, get-

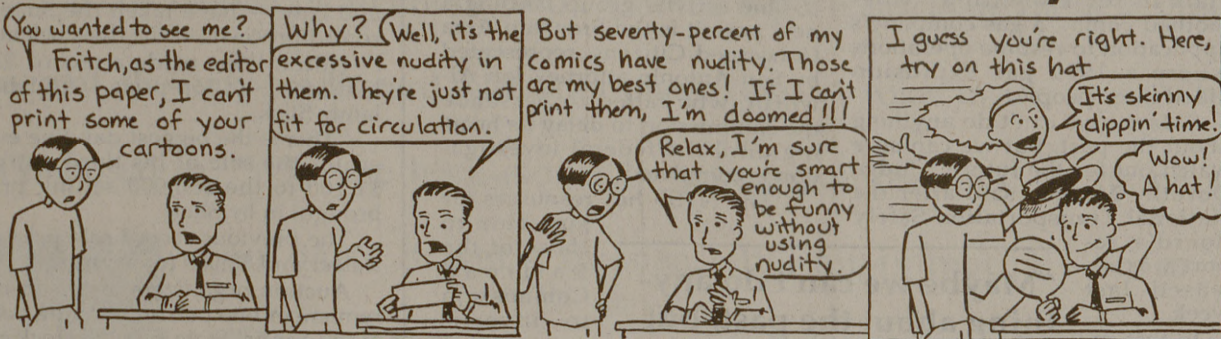
### Tubularman

By Boomer Cardinale



### Fritch

By Critch



ting high. ... Here, there's nothing to do but learn," Acevedo said as he pored over a textbook on Texas geography.

As for his classmates who still deal in troublemaking exploits: "I don't care no more about them, really. I don't do the things I used to do," Acevedo said.

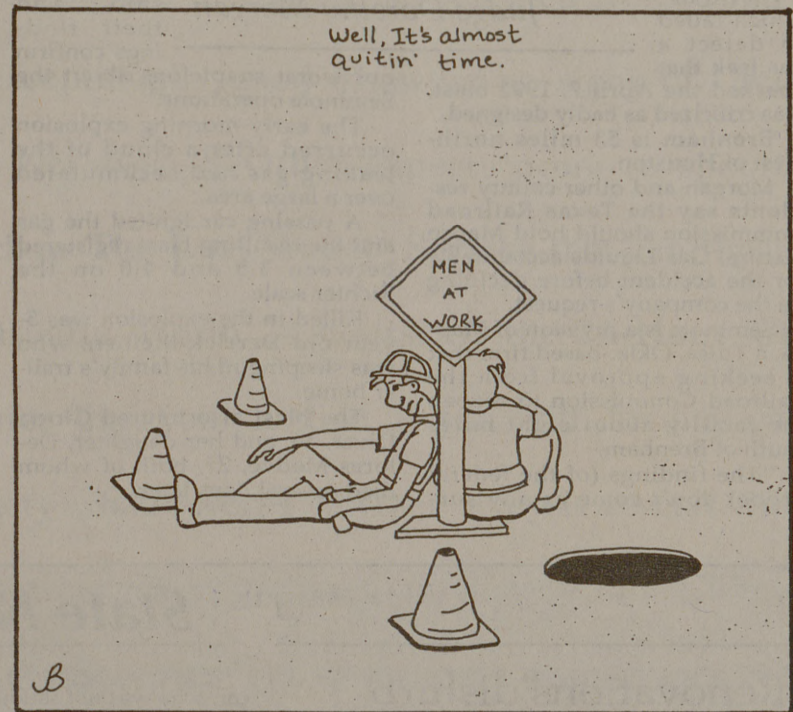
Another student, a 12-year-old boy who was expelled for fighting, says he appreciates the individual help the program's staff gives.

Richard Ruhman, project coordinator, said the program grew out of a commitment by Aldine administrators to work with problem students instead of "just putting them out on the street," or in an already established alternative education program that deals with students with less severe discipline problems.

Students encouraged to enter the voluntary program are those expelled for using or selling drugs, assaulting another student or teacher, or for being caught with a weapon on campus.

When the student is expelled, parents are given a brochure explaining the program and encouraged to enroll the student. So far, the parents of 13 of the 15 students expelled so far this school semester have taken up the offer.

### JUST THE BEGINNING



By Jason Brown

### 'Dittoheads' can dine with Rush Limbaugh

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Lunch is served two ways at Blackie's House of Beef — with Rush Limbaugh or without.

The meat-and-potatoes restaurant about a mile from the White House is one of a growing number nationwide to feature a "Rush Room," where the faithful can dine without missing the blustery conservative talk show host's midday radio show.

They're listening to Rush over ribs at Barbecue Shack in Florence, Ky., and over bratwurst at Bernkastel Festhaus in Daytona Beach, Fla.

At Taste of Texas, a Houston steak joint, he's piped in to diners on individual speakers

at each table.

At Blackie's, as Limbaugh rails loudly over the sound system, customers sit in a room decorated with red-white-and-blue bunting and listen quietly, munching on burgers and steak.

There are fax machines set up for them to send their views to the show, although on this day the machines sat dormant.

Limbaugh isn't for everyone. Many find his remarks about "environmentalist wackos," "feminazis" and "commie libs" more than a little offensive. That's why Blackie's only seats people in the Rush Room if they request it.

Those who do are diehard fans — or, in Limbaugh lingo, dittoheads. Most find it a

heady experience to be around others who talk the Rush talk.

Bill Bates of Olney, Md., loves the guy. So when his friends threw him a 60th birthday party recently, they knew just where to hold it.

"I think it's wonderful, because I am a great Rush admirer," said Bates. "It's so comforting to think that somebody in the public eye like Rush believes in what we do."

Rush Rooms started springing up spontaneously in 1990. Since then, Rush has plugged some on the radio and on his TV show.

"The Rush Room in Washington, we're very proud of it," said Kit Carson, Limbaugh's chief of staff. "We get faxes and letters from it all the time."

### Virgin Mary found on South Texas bumper

The Associated Press

ELSA — The latest sighting of the Virgin Mary in South Texas, this time on the rear fender of a 1981 Camaro, is no less than a miracle for believers in a humble neighborhood of gravel streets.

"We are very proud that the Virgin visited us," said Aurora Quintero. Miracle seekers came to her home for weeks after her brother told neighbors that the image, less than a foot tall, appeared on a piece of galvanized

steel he was riveting to his rusty fender.

"Everyone who comes is friendly. All of them believe in the Virgin," said Quintero, 50. "We are not charging or selling anything. We are letting people see the Virgin."

The maroon Camaro has become an attraction for the devout and the curious, as had a Brownsville boarding house where believers saw the Virgin Mary in a cottonwood tree this summer. A few years ago, a simi-

lar sighting drew attention to the floor of an auto-parts store in the border town of Progreso.

Many people in the Rio Grande Valley believe such images are signals from God. Many others say they are natural events, made spiritual only through the fervor of the believers.

Although the crowds at the Virgin Mary sightings in this low-income, predominantly Roman Catholic area usually taper off after a few weeks — as they already have at Quintero's small but well-

kept place — experts say the devotion of believers is very real.

"This is called faith and belief, and it is serious stuff," said anthropology professor Tony Zavaleta, dean of liberal arts at the University of Texas-Brownsville.

Apparitions of the Virgin play an important role in the Mexican culture, including the well-known story of peasant Juan Diego. His vision of the Virgin of Guadalupe in 1531 convinced the Catholic Church to build a shrine in her honor on an old Aztec holy site.

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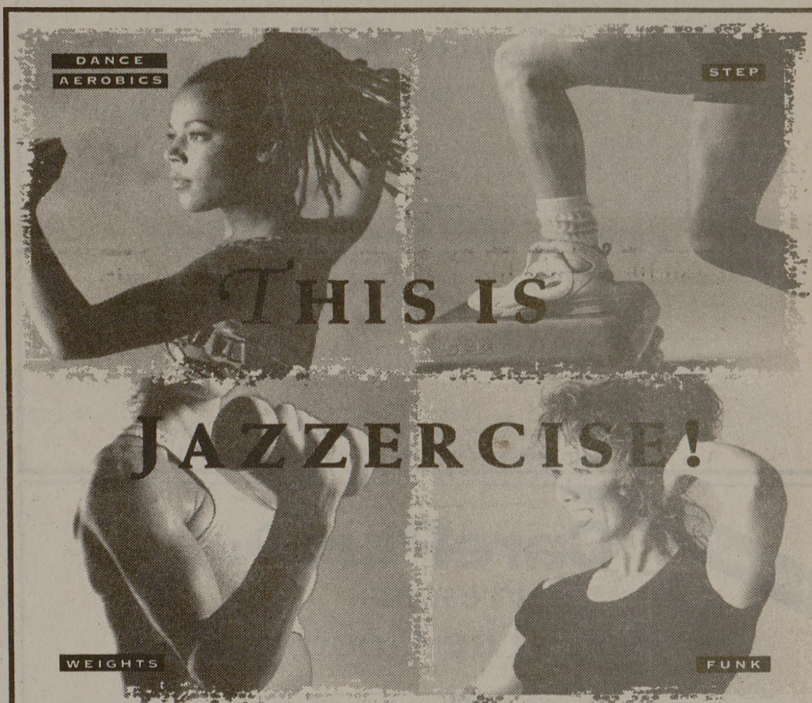


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