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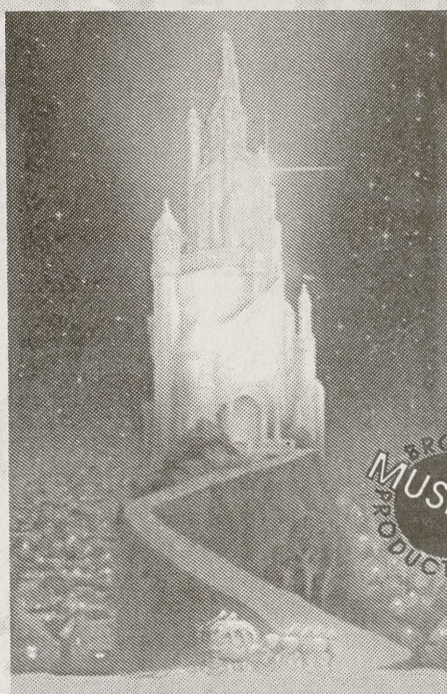


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**Death chamber renovations complete
in time for new execution witnesses**

□ The new procedures could take effect as early as Dec. 1.

HUNTSVILLE (AP) — The Texas death chamber has a new look which makes it ready for relatives of a murder victim to watch their loved one's killer be put to death.

Continuing a tradition that started more than 77 years ago when inmates first built the death house at the Walls Unit in downtown Huntsville, Texas prisoners have erected a wall down the center of the death chamber, cutting the viewing area into two separate rooms each less than 6 feet wide.

"We sat down and decided about all we could do is divide the room in half," Neill Hodges, the assistant warden at the prison, said Thursday.

One room will hold witnesses selected by the convicted murderer. The room on the other side of the wall will house relatives of the murder victim.

Under procedures to be approved Friday by the Texas Board of Criminal Justice at a meeting in Dallas, up to five relatives of a murder victim will be able to witness the execution of their loved one's killer.

The Texas Board of Criminal Justice ordered the rules drafted after hearing testimony from victims' family members who urged that relatives be given such an option.

The new procedures could take effect as early as Dec. 1, depending on what the board does Friday.

The renovation required some air conditioning changes, addition of a second speaker so people in both rooms can hear the inmate's final comments, and new carpeting.

Also, a blind was placed over the window through which the executioner watches the inmate. Officials determined the shade was needed because the mirror surface of the one-way glass window allowed people standing on either side of the chamber wall to see each other in the reflection.

Hodges estimated the work, which took about a week to complete, cost about \$2,000.

Under the new policy, as

many as five "close relatives of the deceased" could witness execution. Those relatives are defined as a spouse, parent, stepparent, or adult brother, sister, child or stepchild.

At the prison director's discretion, another individual with close relationship to the victim could be a witness. And if more than five relatives of the victim wish to attend, relatives of another victim for whose killing the inmate was convicted could attend.

They'll join in the death chamber up to five relatives, friends designated by the inmate as personal witnesses. Also, the chamber are up to five media witnesses, a chaplain, criminal justice board member and prison staff.

Just what the doctor ordered: Dr Pepper fan writes book about the bubbly beverage

□ Author Jeffrey L. Rodengen spent two years researching his favorite soft drink.

WACO (AP) — There is no prune juice in Dr Pepper.

Exploding that long-lived myth was the most interesting thing author Jeffrey L. Rodengen says he learned while writing his book about the legendary soft drink.

On Saturday, Rodengen will visit Waco, where Dr Pepper was first formulated in 1885 by pharmacist Charles Alderton, to sign copies of his book, "The Legend of Dr Pepper/Seven-Up."

A devoted Dr Pepper drinker, Rodengen has spent the last two years traveling the country researching and collecting photographs about Dr Pepper and Seven-Up for his book.

"It is absolutely my favorite soft drink," Rodengen said Wednesday, sipping a homemade Dr Pepper at the Dr Pepper Museum. During his research, he spent countless hours with museum officials collecting facts about the origin of the drink and about the history of Waco.

"I was drinking Dr Pepper long before it

was cool," he said.

Rodengen, of Fort Lauderdale, Fla., is a nationally syndicated columnist, producer, director and industrial historian who has written hundreds of articles chronicling American technology and industry. "The Legend of Dr Pepper/Seven-Up" is his 14th book.

"I was drinking Dr Pepper long before it was cool."

— Jeffrey L. Rodengen
author, "The Legend of Dr Pepper/Seven-Up"

The book covers the time from when the two soft drinks were formulated until their recent purchase by Cadbury Beverages.

But Rodengen said it focuses on Dr Pepper because it has a more interesting and longer history.

"I had no idea Dr Pepper was invented in Waco when I first started," Rodengen said. "The book includes how Dr Pepper grew from a regional to a national favorite."

The book contains reproductions of many original photographs of Waco from the 1800s and more recent photos of the museum.

"This is a lovely book that brings the his-

tory of Dr Pepper up to date," said Mildred G. "Milly" Walker, curator of collections at the Dr Pepper Museum. "This is a very readable book. It does not read like a calendar."

Walker said Rodengen's book is the second that has been written about Dr Pepper. In the 1970s, author Harry Ellis wrote "Dr Pepper: King of Beverages," which was dated in 1985 for the 100th anniversary celebration of the drink's invention.

Rodengen said although he is only promoting the book in Texas, he expects it will also be a best seller out of state.

Rodengen will have two more books out before Christmas about the history of Briggs & Stratton, a company that makes small engines, and Ingersoll-Rand, a construction/mining company.

But neither of them will be as fun as writing "The History of Dr Pepper/Seven-Up," Rodengen said.

Pointing to his drink, he said, "All this is a little flavoring and carbonated water. It's not like writing about engines or nuclear submarines."

Editor's note: The author of this story, Michèle Brinkmann, was a 1994 graduate of Texas A&M and a former Battalion city editor.

Texas leaders consider all their workers 'essential'

□ Many senators and congressmen are keeping their staff while fighting budget battles.

WASHINGTON (AP) — The government shutdown that has sent some 800,000 federal workers home on forced leave appears to be doing little to trim the staffs of Texans in Congress.

Few in Texas' 32-member congressional delegation have felt the need to furlough their own Washington and district workers as the budgetary battle between the White House and GOP-led Congress drags on.

Rep. Steve Stockman, a freshman Republican from Friendswood, is going further than most of his colleagues on Capitol Hill.

While furloughed employees are expected to be paid at some point for their enforced holiday, 10 of Stockman's staffers have been placed on leave without pay. And, Stockman himself has pledged to donate an as-yet unspecified portion of his \$133,600 congressional salary to a Houston homeless shelter.

"It was important for our staff and for Congressman Stockman to convey to the federal employees that we understand what's happening and that this affects us too," press secretary Jennifer Murray said Thursday.

"We had a meeting here and decided it was important for us to show that we are serious about balancing the budget and that this is more than just a war of words," she added.

The two Texans in the House Republican leadership are taking a

different tack, arguing that during the shutdown their staffs are important to furlough.

"In light of the fact we are in a leadership office and we are trying to reopen the government, we felt as though we needed every hand here to make sure we could effectively do that," said Tony Ruck, spokesman for House Majority Whip Tom DeLay of Sugar Land.

A spokesman for House Majority Leader Dick Armye, R-Irving, said his boss is of a similar mindset. "The entire Armye team is at work," said spokesman Jim Wilkinson.

"To have a constituent of ours go one single day without a vote while our federal government is not a thing we can accept," he added.

Rep. Chet Edwards, who is in the Democratic leadership, shuttered his two district offices and placed nine full-time workers on furlough, arguing that anything less would be hypocritical.

"I believe this budget deadline is completely unnecessary," Waco lawmaker said. "However, until it is resolved, I think it would be hypocritical for members of Congress to be fully staffed while others, Social Security and other federal employees are furloughed."

Republican Sens. Phil Gramm and Kay Bailey Hutchison have furloughed any of their employees, their press secretaries said.

Neither has Rep. Henry Bonilla, R-San Antonio.

"I think that Henry's view is that in this time we are getting a lot of calls, a lot of questions from our constituents wondering how this is going to affect them," said Bonilla spokeswoman Allison Griffin. "We want to have people here to help them with their requests."

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