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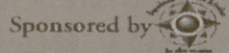
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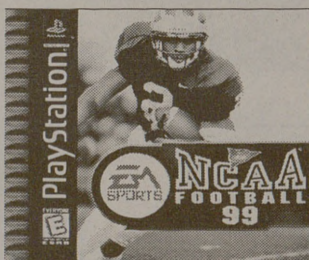
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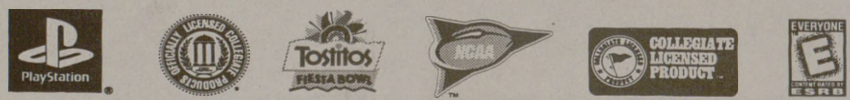
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STATE

Page 6A • Thursday, January 28, 1999

'The End' may not be near

State officials dispute predictions of Y2K-bug disaster

AUSTIN (AP) — Survivalists' predictions of financial collapse and long-term power outages because of the so-called Y2K computer bug are far-fetched, state officials say.

Banks and utilities as well as state government agencies are performing well in making sure their date-specific technology can handle the turn of the century, officials told a Tuesday briefing for state lawmakers.

"We expect no disruption in the banking system," said Banking Commissioner Catherine Ghiglieri. "I'm hoping that by the time we get close to the date change, the public will be confident the banks will be prepared."

State officials are monitoring every banking institution in Texas to make sure they are upgrading computer systems to handle the date change from 1999 to 2000. Computer scientists say computers

might read only the last two digits of 2000, causing some systems to freeze up and in some cases, shut down at midnight on Jan. 1.

No bank has been rated unsatisfactory, said Ms. Ghiglieri, who added she does not plan to withdraw her money amid worries of a New Year's meltdown.

Texas residents should remember their money will remain protected by federal deposit insurance, she added.

The federal government will print extra cash to make sure banks have enough on hand in case of a rush for withdrawals, she said.

"We are advising against people pulling out large sums of money," Ms. Ghiglieri said. "The date change is not a holiday for criminals and we don't want people creating security problems for themselves. I feel very confident in the banking system. We may experi-

ence a few glitches, but overall we don't expect a disaster."

Utilities in Texas also are prepared, said Jim Calloway, Y2K coordinator for the Public Utility Commission, the agency which regulates local telephone and electric companies.

Utilities report that the expected risk of Y2K power outages is less than that associated with a typical Texas thunderstorm.

"Utility companies deal with power interruption on a daily basis. We don't expect the catastrophic scenario that some have predicted," Calloway said.

As for air travel during the holiday, American Airlines representative Susan Garcia said most of the components on aircraft operate in "real time and don't care what the date is."

"Our No. 1 concern is safety. We do not fly aircraft unless we're cer-

tain it is safe," Ms. Garcia said.

Other officials predicted a relatively smooth transition into the new century for hospitals and public safety institutions.

"If we have power, traffic signals will be fine," said Tom Newborn, director of the Department of Transportation.

People should avoid hospitals or hospitals about over particular procedures, Matt Wall of the Texas Hospital Association said.

Hospitals have sources of emergency power in case of outages, he said.

The state plans to spend \$340 million on Y2K compliance by the year 2001, said Sherry Field, director of the Year 2000 Project Office.

One of the biggest fears is public fear of what people read in the media, she said.

Court rejects appeal of Kerr County man

AUSTIN (AP) — The Texas Court of Criminal Appeals on Wednesday upheld the death penalty in eight murder cases, including one in which a man killed a gas station clerk in Kerr County.

The court voted 9-0 to reject the appeal of Daniel Earl Reneau, 23, who was convicted of shooting to death Kriss Keeran, 31, during the Jan. 2, 1996 robbery at a Texaco station.

In his appeal, Reneau said the circumstances of the crime did not constitute sufficient evidence that he posed a threat to society, as he only "killed one person with a single shot in the course of a robbery that was not well planned," according to court records.

The state, however, argued that Reneau had participated in several burglaries in the weeks prior to the incident, including one in which he said he "would kill anyone that comes up."

In addition, guards from Reneau's jail testified they overheard his plans for escape, in which he commented that he "wasn't afraid to

take out a jailer, to take out a law enforcement official, but he was going to get out one way or another," the court opinion noted.

The court also rejected appeals from:

— Douglas Alan Roberts, 36, who was convicted of the May 18, 1996 slaying of Jerry Velez. Roberts abducted Velez in the parking lot of a San Antonio apartment complex and forced him to drive them out of the city limits where Velez was stabbed several times and run over with his own car, according to court records.

Roberts then drove to Austin where he called police from a pay phone to turn himself in.

— Stanley Allison Baker, 32, who was convicted of murdering Wayne Walters, an employee at the Adult Video Store in College Station, for his truck and all of the money in the store's cash register on Sept. 28, 1994.

Police seized Baker's notebook, which noted his goals for the year included "30 victims dead, 30 armed robberies, and steal a lot of cars," court documents showed.

— Henry Watkins Skinner, 36, who was convicted in 1995 of killing his girlfriend, 40, by, 40, with an ax handle and stabbing her two sons, Elwin Caler, 22, and Elwin Caler, 20, in their Pampa home on Nov. 19, 1993.

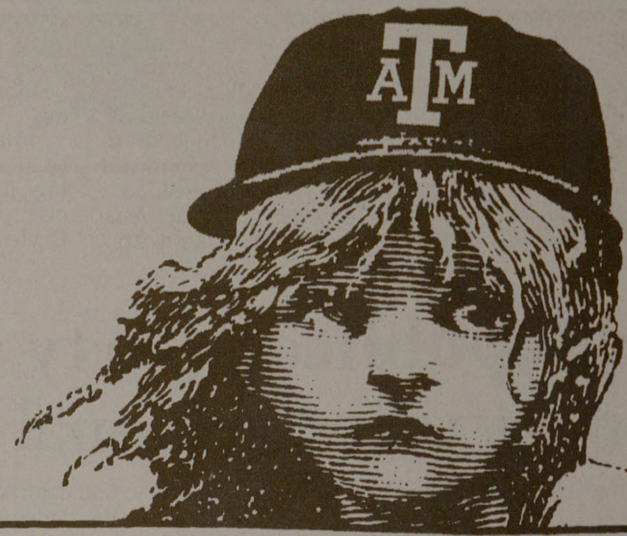
— William Kendrick Burns, 40, who was convicted for the March 28, 1981 slaying of Johnny Lynn Hamlett in Bexar County.

— Joe Lee Guy, 27, who was convicted of killing 62-year-old Larry Howell during a robbery of Howell's grocery store in Bexar County on March 25, 1993.

— Willie Earl Pondexter, 24, who was convicted of killing Martha Lennox, 70s, during the Oct. 29, 1993 burglary of her home in Red River County.

— Frank Moore, 37, who was convicted of shooting 23-year-old Samuel Boyd in the parking lot of Wheels of Joy Club on Jan. 19, 1993 in Bexar County.

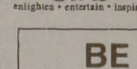
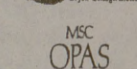
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