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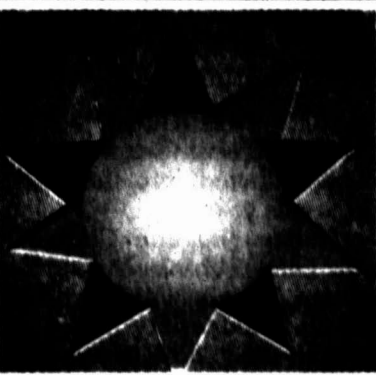
Pampa

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For weather details see
Page 2

HOUSTON (AP)

Hundreds of firefighters from across the nation are expected to attend a Houston memorial service today honoring two fallen comrades.

The 10 a.m. event at Rice Stadium is open to the public.

Veteran firefighters Lewis Mayo III, 44, and Kimberly Smith, 30, died when the roof collapsed shortly after they entered a burning Houston McDonald's early Monday. Smith was Houston's first female firefighter to die on duty.

During today's memorial, firefighters in full dress uniforms will march their way into the stadium from the city's Mecom Fountain, more than a mile away from the event site. Several streets surrounding the proceedings will be closed for part of the morning.

Speakers at the memorial will include Houston-Galveston Bishop Joseph A. Fiorenza, Mayor Lee Brown, Fire Chief Lester Tyra, state Sen. Mario Gallegos, U.S. Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee and colleagues of the two victims.

The grieving families are set to receive medals of honor from the city's fire department and the International Association of Fire Fighters.

On Thursday, the teen-ager involved in the McDonald's fire that killed Mayo and Smith was charged with two counts of felony murder, according to officials.

The 15-year-old, who remains detained, will have his first court appearance at 9 a.m. Tuesday before state District Judge Mary Craft. The boy worked at the southwest Houston restaurant.

Prosecutors also said Thursday no decision had been made whether to certify the juvenile to stand trial as an adult.

• Anna Belle Brooks, 72, homemaker.

Classified 9
Comics 6
Religion 5
Sports 7

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Ranch land fire trial nears end

By KEITH ANDERSON
Staff Writer

MIAMI — A civil suit in which ranchers are suing an electric power company for damages in connection with a blaze that burned over 5,000 acres of ranch land could wind up today or Monday.

The ranchers are suing Southwestern Public Service Company for \$615,000 in the case being heard before a six-man, six-woman jury in the Roberts County Courthouse.

It involves a 5,353-acre fire Feb. 22-23, in 1996, north of Miami and south of the Canadian river. The case is being heard before 31st District Judge Steven R. Emmert.

Officials determined that fallen power lines caused the fire. The ranchers contend that SPS was negligent in the bracketing of the power lines to the utility pole, that SPS failed to follow its own specifications for bracketing the power lines.

The original civil suit was filed with the Roberts County clerk March 24, 1997, by Steve Hale, Bill Tolbert, and Blake O'Brien. SPS attorney Marty Jones of Amarillo said the power company settled with Hale and Tolbert, for \$100 per affected acre. But at the time, O'Brien was involved in a land dispute with Eddie, Salem, and Jason Abraham of Abraham Investment Company over the affected land in the Payne Ranch.

An appellate court determined the Abrahams owned the land, and the Abraham brothers filed a plea of intervention in the civil suit with Roberts County Aug. 8, 1998.

The Abrahams, who had the most land damaged by the fire, were offered \$12.50 per acre from SPS, but declined the offer, Salem Abraham said. The Abrahams claim 8,200 acres of their Payne Ranch were affected by the fire. They are seeking \$75 per acre in damages.

In ranch land cases, affected acreage is different than burned acreage. A portion of a pasture may burn, but the burned portion of the pasture affects the unburned land around it.

Attorneys Joe Lovell and David Mullin, both of Amarillo, represent the Abrahams.

Center manager says new theater in works

If all goes according to plan, Pampa will have a movie theater again in about 30 days though no contracts have yet been signed.

That's the word from Martin Riphahn who manages Coronado Center in which the old Cinema 4 was housed. It closed in early January as the result of a tenant-landlord dispute.

"We will have another theater," Riphahn told *The Pampa News* Thursday. "We are working on the interior now. We are cleaning it up and fixing it up." That work includes updating the bathrooms and replacing ceiling tiles.

The theater will continue to house four screens but Riphahn said it may open with two or three of the screening rooms while work continues in the others.

After the new tenants take over, Riphahn said they have told him they plan to brighten the screens, put in a new sound system and install new seating.

GOP Open House tonight

The public is invited to an Open House from 5-8 p.m. tonight to mark the opening of the Gray County Republican Party headquarters.

Refreshments will be served and Republican candidates in the March primary will be on hand to meet with the public.

Headquarters is located in Suite 202 of the Combs Worley Building at 120 W. Kingsmill.

Starting next week, headquarters will be open on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. or by appointment.

The phone number is 669-1276 or 665-5563 to schedule an appointment.

Environmentalists: Texas third in toxic waste in waterways

HOUSTON (AP) — An environmental group's latest report ranks Texas waterways the nation's third most polluted water bodies fouled by toxic discharges from businesses and other groups.

Released Thursday, the U.S. Public Interest Research Group analysis also called for stricter government enforcement to fix what the group called "a continuing water pollution crisis in this country."

The organization used data from a key part of the federal Toxics Release Inventory, also known as the "right to know" program, to support its assertions.

Statistics from the 1997 inventory, the latest available, indicated that industries, municipal waste treatment plants and

federal facilities in Texas released 27.8 million pounds of toxic substances to rivers, reservoirs and bays.

That figure was the third-largest total among the states, eclipsed by Louisiana's total of almost 47 million pounds and Pennsylvania's 40.7 million pounds, according to the Houston Chronicle.

Jeremiah Baumann, an author of the U.S. PIRG report, said it shows that federal and state-enforcement efforts to protect water bodies against pollution are not effective enough.

Recycling and reducing the amount of toxic materials being discharged "is best for human health, best for the environment and usually best for the bottom line," he said.

Officials at the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission had no comment on the report. A spokeswoman for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in Washington told the Chronicle her department was reviewing the report and might issue a response today.

Accounting for more than half of the Texas total release was BASF Corp. at Freeport. It reported discharges to the Brazos River, near the Gulf of Mexico, of slightly more than 14 million pounds — virtually all of it listed as "nitrate compounds." It was the third-largest number listed among all facilities nationally.

But Steve Baxter, environmental manager at the BASF plant, said his company's discharge was mainly treated waste-

water bearing about 600 to 800 parts per million of nitric acid, which does not impair the river's environmental quality. A voluntary, \$8 million upgrade at the plant will recycle more than half of the nitric acid into usable products, starting next year, he said.

Nitrate compounds represented more than half of the national total of toxic discharges to water bodies in 1997 — 156 million of almost 270 million pounds. Among the sources listed for nitrates were fertilizer products, sewage and runoff from animal feedlots.

The PIRG report also advocated giving citizens greater authority to file lawsuits to curb water pollution and expand the "right to know" program.



Brothers Eddie, Salem, and Jason Abraham visit during a break Thursday in their civil suit trial against SPS. Below, a map showing the affected area.



Want to be a DPS trooper?

Want to be a trooper with the Department of Public Safety?

Well, now's your chance as applications are being made available in advance of the next six-month recruit school that starts Sept. 18 in Austin.

Application packets may be picked up in Pampa at the DPS office at 2909 Perryton Parkway. The office is open from 8:30 a.m. until 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Information is also available on the DPS web site www.txdps.state.tx.us.

"Diversity is a priority at DPS and we're encouraging minorities and women to apply," said DPS Recruiting Coordinator Lt. Curly Colquitt. "This is a chance to make a difference in one of the country's elite law enforcement agencies."

Applicants must be U.S. citizens, at least 20 years old by the time they are accepted as trooper-trainees, be of good moral character, meet certain vision requirements, and have at least 60 hours of college (prior law enforcement or mili-

tary experience may be substituted).

A final conviction (including probation) for any DWI, DUI, family violence or felony automatically will disqualify applicants. The screening process will include verification of written and oral statements and overall scrutiny of the applicant. Physical, psychological and drug testing are also required.

Graduates initially are assigned to one of the Department's uniformed services — Highway Patrol, License and Weight or the Driver's License Division. After gaining experience, troopers may apply for promotions within those services or other areas of the DPS, such as the Texas Rangers, Special Crimes, Auto Theft or Narcotics.

Trooper-trainees are paid \$2,000 a month. After graduation, they will earn \$29,000 annually with a pay increase to \$35,000 after completing a one-year probationary period.

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Spelling bee



(Special photo) Seventh graders Emily Elliott, left, and Jonathan DeLong, right, won the Pampa Home Educators Association Spelling Bee recently. Elliott made first runner-up while DeLong took top honors as the overall champ. Both students will participate in the Gray County Spelling Bee in March.

Calendar of events

PAMPA AREA LITERACY COUNCIL

Pampa Area Literacy Council office is open from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Monday-Friday. For more information, call 665-2331.

THEE PLACE

Thee Place for Singles is open 7-10:30 p.m. Saturdays at 520 W. Kingsmill.

ADHD/ADD SUPPORT GROUP

If interested in the ADHD/ADD Support Group call Connie at 669-9364.

ST. MARK CME CHURCH

St. Mark will host a monthly breakfast the first Saturday of every month from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. Donations will be accepted.

MACEDONIA CHURCH

Macedonia Church will host a monthly breakfast the third Saturday of every month from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. at 441 Elm Street with the Rev. I.L. Patrick. Donations will be accepted and the public is invited.

THE FELLOWSHIP OF CHRISTIAN COWBOYS

The Fellowship of Christian Cowboys potluck will meet on the fourth Saturday of each month at 6 p.m. in the Clyde Carruth Pavillion. For more information, contact Keven Romines at 665-8547 or Jim Greene at 665-8067.

GREEN THUMB TRAINING

A Green Thumb training is slated from 1-3 p.m. Feb. 22 at Lovett Memorial Library, 111 N. Houston. Participants must be at least 55 years of age, be eligible to work in the United States and meet income guide-

lines. For more information, call the local Workforce Center at (806) 665-0938 or 665-2672, or the local field operations coordinator, Mary Ann Resch, at (806) 364-2743. Green Thumb, Inc., is a non-profit organization dedicated to strengthening families, communities and the nation by providing disadvantaged and older individuals with opportunities to learn, work and serve others.

DINOSAUR DAYS

Lake Meredith Aquatic and Wildlife Museum will sponsor "Dinosaur Days" throughout the month of February at Lake Meredith Museum, 103 N. Robey, Fritch. Activities are geared for pre-school through third grade children. To arrange a program, schedule a tour or for more information, call the museum at (806) 857-2458. The dinosaur program will be presented from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Monday-Friday.

AMERICAN YOUTH ABROAD

American Youth Abroad offers study abroad opportunities to high school students in the U.S. AYA is a not-for-profit program sponsored by American Institute of Foreign Study Foundation. To receive the AYA 2000 Brochure, call Andrea Baskinger at 1-800-322-4678, ext. 5164 or e-mail abaskinger@aifs.com. The deadline is April 15.

T.O.P.S. #149

Take Off Pounds Sensibly (T.O.P.S.) #149 meets at 6 p.m. Monday at 513 E. Francis. Call

669-2389 for more information.

T.O.P.S. #41

Take Off Pounds Sensibly (T.O.P.S.) #41 meets at noon Monday at 511 N. Hobart. For more information, call 665-3024.

AL-ANON

Al-Anon will hold weekly meetings on Mondays and Wednesdays at 8 p.m. at 910 W. Kentucky.

VFW CHARITY BINGO

The Pampa Veterans of Foreign Wars Post #1657, 105 S. Cuyler, will be having Charity Bingo every Sunday at 1:30 p.m. Doors open at 12 noon. The public is welcome. License No. 1-75-6037422-9.

CELEBRATION OF LIGHTS

The Celebration of Lights project will hold regular workshop meetings at 6:30 p.m. on Monday nights at Warren Chisum's Office, 100 N. Price Road. Anyone wishing to help with the project is invited to attend any work session.

PAMPA DUPLICATE BRIDGE CLUB

The Pampa Duplicate Bridge Club plays Monday at 1:00 p.m. and Thursdays at 10 a.m. at The Senior Citizens. For a partner, or more information, please call Marie Jamieson at 669-2945.

PANHANDLE ALLIANCE FOR THE MENTALLY ILL

A support group for the mentally ill and family members meet the second Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m. at 218 N. Russell. This week we are discussing the negative symptoms of paranoid schizophrenia. There is no charge. For more information or if you need a ride call Sharon King, 665-2818.

BPA proclamation



(Special photo) Pampa Mayor Bob Neslage recently signed a proclamation naming this week, Feb. 14-18, Business Professionals of America Week. Above: Neslage, (first row) Lisa Estrada, Milissa Session, Daniel Dreher, Jimmy Story, Ricky Morehart, Christi Lee, Caryn Lowry, Jamie Mears; (second row) Greg Hartman, Daisy Leal, Kelleen Ebel, Sean Stowers, Chris Hearron, Adam Fox, Doug Belleu and Jessica Corner.

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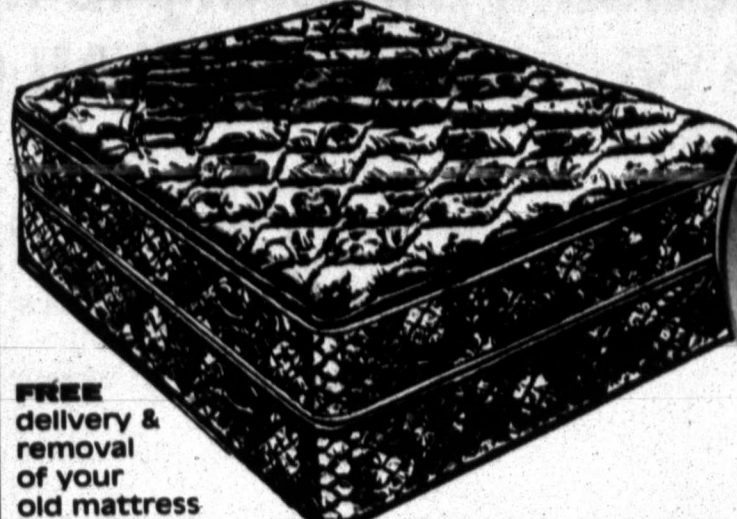
It sometimes happens that a job transfer or other circumstance unavoidably results in sellers having to vacate their homes while they are on the market. If so, sellers must keep up the appearance of their properties. And, as well intentioned as a friend or neighbor may be in pledging to watch the property for the absentee seller, the responsibility can be too demanding. As a result, the selling potential of the property becomes sabotaged. To avoid this problem, absentee sellers are encouraged to enlist the help of their estate agents.

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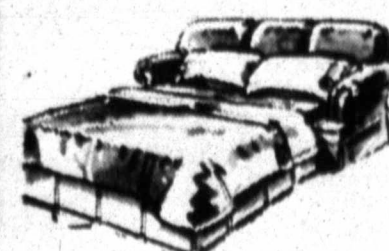
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Coloring Contest



(Pampa News photo by Denny Cowan)

The Greater Area Pampa Chamber of Commerce recently sponsored a coloring contest. The second place prize was a party at McDonald's, the third place prize, a Valentine's Day Goody Basket from M&H Leasing. Over 600 participated in the contest. Above: (back row, left-right) Dawn Hulsey, manager, McDonald's; Clay Rice, manager, Chamber; Mary Ann Richards and Maxine Watson, M&H Leasing; (front row, l-r) Cambree Moreno, second place winner; and Crystal Blanco, third place winner. Judging the contest were: Police Chief Charlie Morris, Fire Chief Kim Powell, Gray County Sheriff Don Copeland and Mayor Bob Neslage.

Hung out to dry

BALTIMORE (AP) — They almost got hung out to dry for good.

But customers of a bankrupt dry cleaner will have four hours on Saturday to retrieve belongings from the closed shop.

Sukhdarshan G. Singh, owner of Finesse Tailors & Cleaners in suburban Baltimore, agreed to open his shop Saturday to allow customers to claim trousers, dresses and shirts that have been there for six weeks.

The 35 affected customers filed complaints with the Maryland

Attorney General's office over their captive clothing after a Jan. 11 corporate bankruptcy filing effectively closed the shop.

Attorney General J. Joseph Curran said he was pleased with the resolution.

"Having clothes held hostage for six weeks is a major inconvenience," he said.

High-tech profits go to support poetry

SEATTLE (AP) — Some high-tech profits are being devoted to fund one of society's oldest forms of expression.

An Internet entrepreneur has given \$2 million to support the University of Washington's creative writing program.

The gift from Ravi Desai, president and chief executive officer of California-based Logical Information Machines, will fund a poet-in-residence program and provide fellowship support for promising graduate students.

"Supporting poetry has certainly attracted its share of attacks, but I still think there's a role for difficult poetry in our culture, and I want to contribute to its creation," said Desai, 30, a native of Ithaca, N.Y.

The money will be allocated evenly between the poet-in-residence program — which will bring visiting poets to work with undergraduate and graduate students — and a fellowship program that lessens the cost for graduate students.

Desai, who also is a columnist for *Worth* magazine and a weekly commentator on *America Online*, says his goal is to expose students to the brightest talents among living poets.

Teacher who left student in Spain could get fired

CHICAGO (AP) — A Chicago teacher could lose her job for allegedly leaving a high school student behind in Spain at the end of a student exchange trip.

"We would be mad if a student was left behind at the Field Museum after a field trip," said school chief Paul Vallas, referring to a common Windy City school outing. "The teacher should be terminated unless the investigation reveals that there were extenuating circumstances."

An attorney for veteran teacher Christine Matishak says his client was trying to help the student after he lost his passport in the city of Bilbao on Friday. Matishak put the student on a bus to Madrid so he could get a new passport there. The student said she arranged for lodging, an adult chaperone for the journey and even let him use her credit card.

"It seemed to be the best thing at the time," said the lawyer, Edward M. Maloney.

Wal-Mart meat workers unionize in Jacksonville

JACKSONVILLE, Texas (AP) — Meat workers at a Wal-Mart Supercenter in Jacksonville became one of the few unionized Wal-Mart stores in the nation Thursday, voting to join the United Food and Commercial Workers Union.

The 10 members of the meat department voted 7-3 in favor of unionizing, Dallas-Fort Worth station KXAS-TV reported.

Recently, the National Labor Relations Board ruled the meat department workers were eligible for union representation because of pay differences and separation from Wal-Mart's other departments.

Wal-Mart officials had challenged the unionization effort, saying the meat department was not separate and there was no need for outside arbitration.

"All of our associates belong to a team," spokeswoman Jessica Moser told *The Associated Press* in January. "The thing that makes the store work is our open-door policy. An associate can take a problem all the way to the CEO of the company."

Wal-Mart employs more than 850,000 nonunion workers and is among the largest private employers in the country. Company officials have said some Canadian employees are represented by unions. Jacksonville is about 115 miles southeast of Dallas.

Doctor who operated on wrong side of brain under scrutiny again

NEW YORK (AP) — A neurosurgeon once fired for operating on the wrong side of a woman's brain is under state scrutiny again following the death of one of his patients.

Staten Island University Hospital has been directed by officials to keep Dr. Ehud Arbit from practicing medicine there pending an inquiry, *The New York Times* reported today.

Arbit is the hospital's chief of neurosurgery, a job he has held since being fired five years ago from Memorial-Sloan Kettering Cancer Center for operating on the wrong side of a patient's brain, the newspaper said.

In a letter to the hospital dated Tuesday, Deputy state Health Commissioner Dennis P. Whalen said officials received information about a "potentially grave risk to patients," and warned of "an immediate and serious threat to the health of any person subjected to surgery" performed by Arbit.

State officials would not specify the nature and extent of their investigation. However, a patient died this year after having brain surgery performed by Arbit, said Kristine Smith, a state Health Department spokeswoman. She declined to identify the patient.

Arbit's lawyer, Barbara Ryan, said "no cause for concern" exists regarding Arbit's care for patients.

An official at the Staten Island hospital contacted by *The Associated Press* declined comment early today, and Arbit did not immediately return a message left at his office.

In 1995, a state health department investigation found Arbit had confused the X-rays of two patients with Indian names. He then operated on the wrong side of one patient's brain. The woman survived the surgery, but the operation left her with memory damage.

Cable to bind bonfire together never installed

COLLEGE STATION, Texas (AP) — A steel cable meant to bind logs together during the late stages of Texas A&M University's Bonfire construction was lying unused in a nearby storage area when the stack collapsed, sources close to the investigation say.

John Weese, A&M's facilitator to the special commission investigating the accident confirmed the cable had not been installed, according to the *Bryan-College Station Eagle*.

Twelve Aggies died and 27 more were injured when an estimated 1 million pounds of logs resembling a giant wooden wedding cake came crashing down on them Nov. 18.

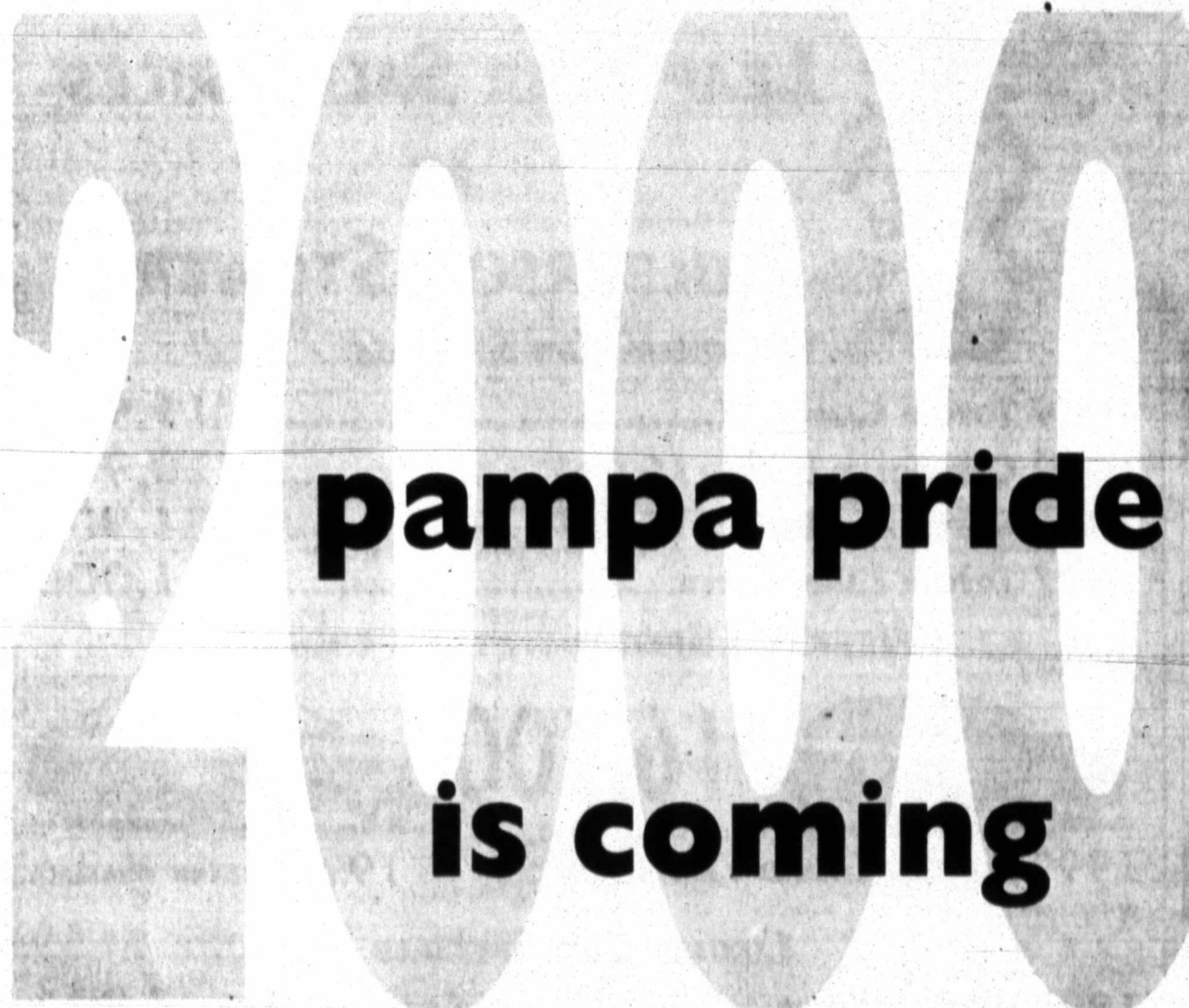
In some — but not all — previous years, the half-inch cable was wrapped around the lower two tiers of the stack, according to Larry Grosse, an unofficial adviser who aided the student-run project for 13 years until late 1995.

Shortly after the accident, Grosse told the *Eagle* that a missing cable would not necessarily have caused the collapse, but could have contributed to its severity. He cited a previous accident that occurred five years earlier.

"The 1994 Bonfire was completely rain-saturated during massive flooding, began to lean and was pulled to the ground with great effort," Grosse said. "The reason it fell intact is because it had those steel cables holding it together. The 1999 Bonfire just fell apart when it collapsed," Grosse said. "The logs went every which way. The cable would not have permitted the logs to separate so much."

The eight junior and eight senior leaders who oversee the construction of the Bonfire stack, either could not be reached or declined to comment pending the outcome of a special commission inquiry into the tragedy. Rusty Thompson, the official A&M staff adviser to Bonfire, also declined to comment until the special commission completes its report due out this spring.

Grosse, who is not part of the investigation, acknowledged that the Bonfire worked "perfectly fine" for decades without having the cable.



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