

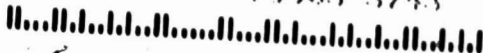
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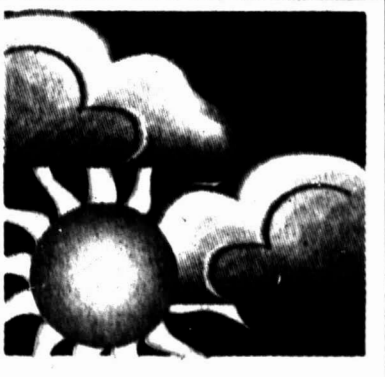
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For weather details see Page 2.

One ticket correctly matched all six numbers drawn Saturday night for the twice-weekly Lotto Texas game, state lottery officials said. The location was not available. The ticket was worth an estimated \$4 million. The numbers drawn Saturday night from a field of 50 were: 9-14-21-34-40-42.

PAMPA— Gray County Republican Party and the Top of Texas Republican Women will co-sponsor a forum March 2 for the Republican candidates who are seeking election in the March 14th Republican Primary. The Forum will be held at 7 p.m. at the Knights of Columbus Hall, 318 N. Cuyler. The public is urged to attend and learn more about the candidates who want to represent them, said Doug Ware, GCRP chairman, and Laurey Gilbert, TOTRW president.

HOUSTON (AP) — Capt. Anthony F. Lucas could have made it much easier for the people planning for a party next year honoring the birth of the Texas oil boom. Now the location question may have finally been settled. The Spindletop 2001 Commission, which is planning the celebration to mark the 100-year anniversary and Beaumont-area surveyors Joe Breaux and Darrell Shine say they now know definitively where Lucas drilled his historic well.

- Elizabeth Ann Calvin, 17, Memphis High School student.
- James Monroe Lancaster, 70, farmer.
- Thomas William 'Tom' Johnson, 79, retired Skelly Oil Company employee, auctioneer.

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Medical4
Sports5

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ROTH

Second dairy to open by mid-summer

Will be built by intersection of Highways 60 and 152

By KATE B. DICKSON
Associate Publisher

The second dairy to receive funding from the Pampa Economic Development Commission should be up and running by mid-summer if everything goes according to plan.

On Friday, the principals of Roden Dairy, Godley, Texas, and Buddy Cockrell, local landowner, inked sale papers on 320 acres of land. The spot for the new dairy is on the south side of the intersection of Highways 60 and 152 about seven miles east of Pampa.

Also Friday, the PEDC made its funding official, said Susan Tripplehorn, PEDC executive director.

The PEDC, which is funded by a half-cent sales tax, is providing \$500,000 to the dairy - a sum that does not have to be repaid, Tripplehorn said. In addition, there is a \$250,000 "forgivable loan" earmarked for a manure bagging and sale operation.

Under terms of the forgivable

loan, Roden Dairy must employ 15 full-time workers each year for five years in order to escape any repayment, she said. If in any year of the five years the workforce is below 15, the dairy would have to repay \$50,000 for each below par year. Workforce figures will be based upon Texas Workforce Commission reports.

While the manure plant will go on line in conjunction with dairy operations, a possible bottling plant is several years away, Tripplehorn said. The PEDC has agreed to another \$250,000 forgivable loan for the bottling plant.

Roden Dairy will support 2,400 cows, Tripplehorn said, with 2,000 of them to be milkers.

Pampa's first dairy, Moody Dairy, which formerly operated as Carrell Dairy, also in Godley, opened in August and is now milking 950 cows, Tripplehorn said. Moody Dairy is on Highway 152 about 15 miles east of Pampa.

While the Carrells continue to operate a dairy in Godley, the Rodens are moving their entire operation to Gray County.



Pampa, meet the Rodens. From left, grandmother Mery Roden, son Gary Roden, granddaughter Reagan Roden, grandfather Larry Roden, daughter-in-law Tara Roden, grandson Rhet Roden, son Ricky Roden. The Rodens are building a dairy operation near Pampa. (Gary and Ricky are brothers, and they are the sons of Larry and Mary Roden.)

PISD board will review contract

Pampa Independent School District board of trustees will evaluate the contract of Superintendent Dr. Dawson Orr when they meet at 6 p.m. Tuesday at the Carver Center Boardroom.

The renewal of the superintendent's contract is considered annually by the board of trustees.

Items to be considered in the meeting will be insurance and athletics bids, discussion of planning and budgeting process for 2000-2001, and setting the school trustee election for May 6. A time and place of meeting to canvass the May election results will also be determined.

Other items to be considered for the 2000-2001 school year are high school band uniforms, approve the textbook selection committee recommendations, and the school calendar.

Trustees will consider a resolution to adopt Texas Public School Week. Trustees will consider the sale of tax delinquent property. The board will also consider the study of block schedule on educational performance.

Financial reports will also be considered.

Administrative reports include Worth the Wait Abstinence report, class ranking policy, board member credit training hours, Region 16 board of directors election and notifying the board the PAASB Grassroots meeting has been rescheduled for Feb. 29.

Public comments will be held at 7 p.m.

White Deer board to meet

The White Deer ISD school board is not considering shutting down the Skellytown campus, board member Joe Freedman said.

"It's been discussed ... totally shutting it down, though, No," Freedman said. "Definitely not."

The school board will meet tonight to set a school board election date, and appoint elec-

tion judges. The board will also consider the 2000-2001 school calendar, the local teacher salary schedule, breakfast and lunch price increases, substitute teacher pay increases, reduction in force for the nursing services program, principal's contracts, and a district contribution toward service learning grants.

The board will meet tonight at 6:30 in the White Deer Cafeteria.

PEDC continues active recruitment of dairy farms

With two dairies recruited, the Pampa Economic Development Commission plans to continue its effort to bring even more of them to Gray County.

PEDC Executive Director Susan Tripplehorn said efforts are under way daily to recruit more dairies. As a matter of fact, she said the PEDC is responding today to inquiries from a dairy in the Stephenville area.

Also, the PEDC is working up information from inquiries received earlier this month when PEDC President Richard Stowers and Tripplehorn attended the world's largest agriculture show, the Tulare Farm & Equipment Show in Tulare, Calif.

Their attendance was in conjunction with membership in the High Ground of Texas, Tripplehorn said. The organization represents 48 communities and groups in the Texas Panhandle to south of Lubbock.

"By pooling our money we can do more work and recruiting than any of us can do alone," Tripplehorn said of the High Ground membership. "Everyone in High Ground shares the leads received at the show."

During the show, contact was made with some California dairies that have interest in relocating - especially dairies from the Chino Valley area where some 200 of them have been annexed to make way for urban growth, Tripplehorn said.

But even before the show, she said dairies as far away as California have expressed interest in Gray County and the surrounding area.

Already, dairies have located in Heretford, Plainview and several other High Ground locations, she said.

"The more dairies we can get in the entire area the better off everyone is," Tripplehorn said.

(See PEDC, Page 2)

CCPC dedication set March 5 Guided tours will be available

Clarendon College Pampa Center will have its official opening and dedication on Sunday, March 5 from 2:30 - 4:30 p.m.

The public is encouraged to attend the event that will include a ribbon cutting, building dedication and raising of flags beginning at 2:45 p.m. Guided tours of the facility will be available during the open house.

The CC Pampa Center made the move into the

new facility at 1601 W. Kentucky from the former Sam Houston Elementary School at 900 N. Frost.

Following a successful fund-raising drive, construction on the center began on Dec. 11, 1998 and was completed in December 1999. Spring 2000 classes began in the new center in January.

College officials say the new facility, which provides a more college-like atmosphere, has been well received by the student population.

Sixth-grader Megan Jouett (left) won first overall in the the Pampa Middle School Science Fair for her project "What color is Black?". Sixth-grader Lauren Denney (middle) placed third overall for her project "Which cup will keep your beverage hottest?", and Eighth-grader Sara Albracht (right) placed second overall for her project "Are dogs really colorblind?".

(Special photo by Margaret Williams)



City plans to oppose Energas rate increase

Pampa is joining over 60 cities across West Texas who are opposing a rate increase request from Energas Company.

Bob Eskridge, city manager, said the committee and staff's recommendation will be to deny the rate increase.

The matter will be discussed during at 6 p.m. public hearing Tuesday in the city commission chambers at Pampa City Hall.

Energas filed its intentions in August to increase residential and commercial gas rates by \$9.8

million a year.

Amarillo city commissioners approved a \$2.05 million Energas rate hike in December after reaching a compromise.

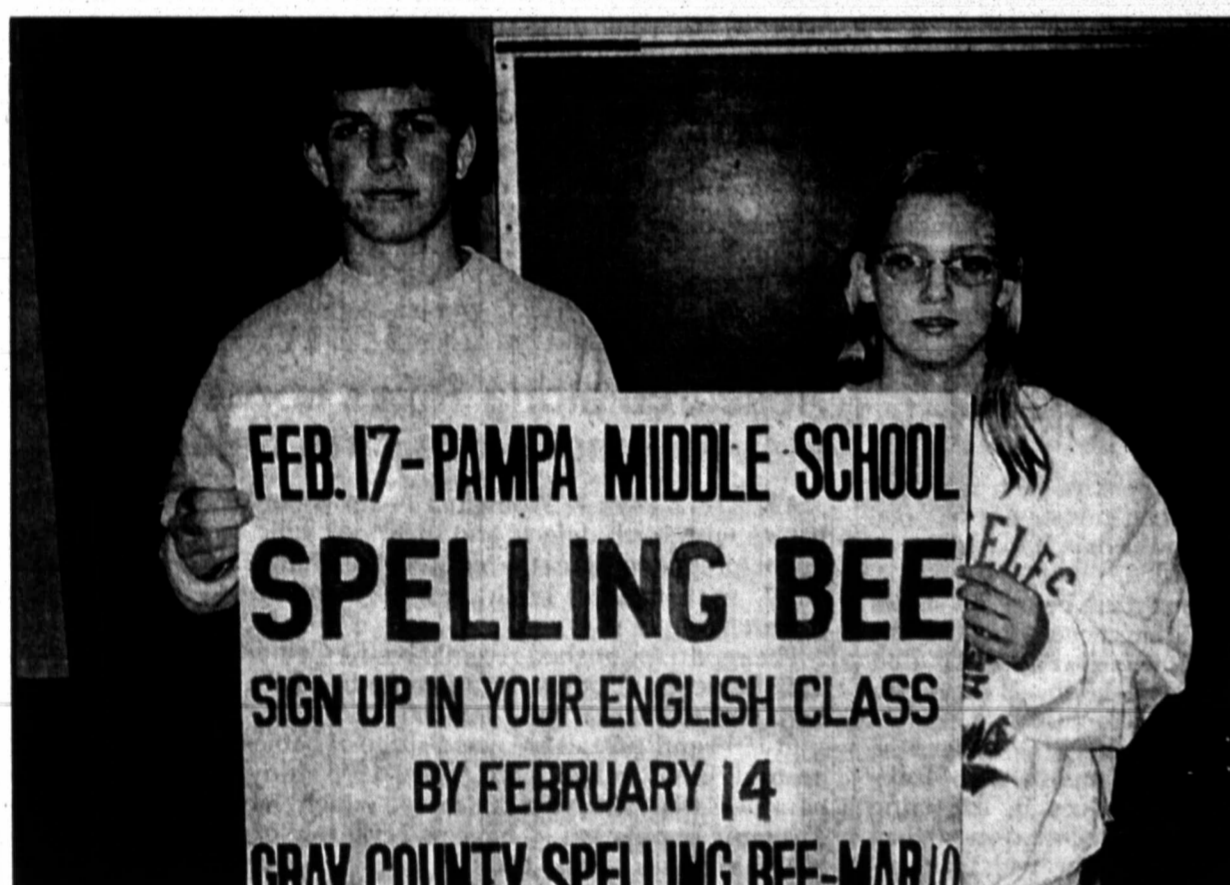
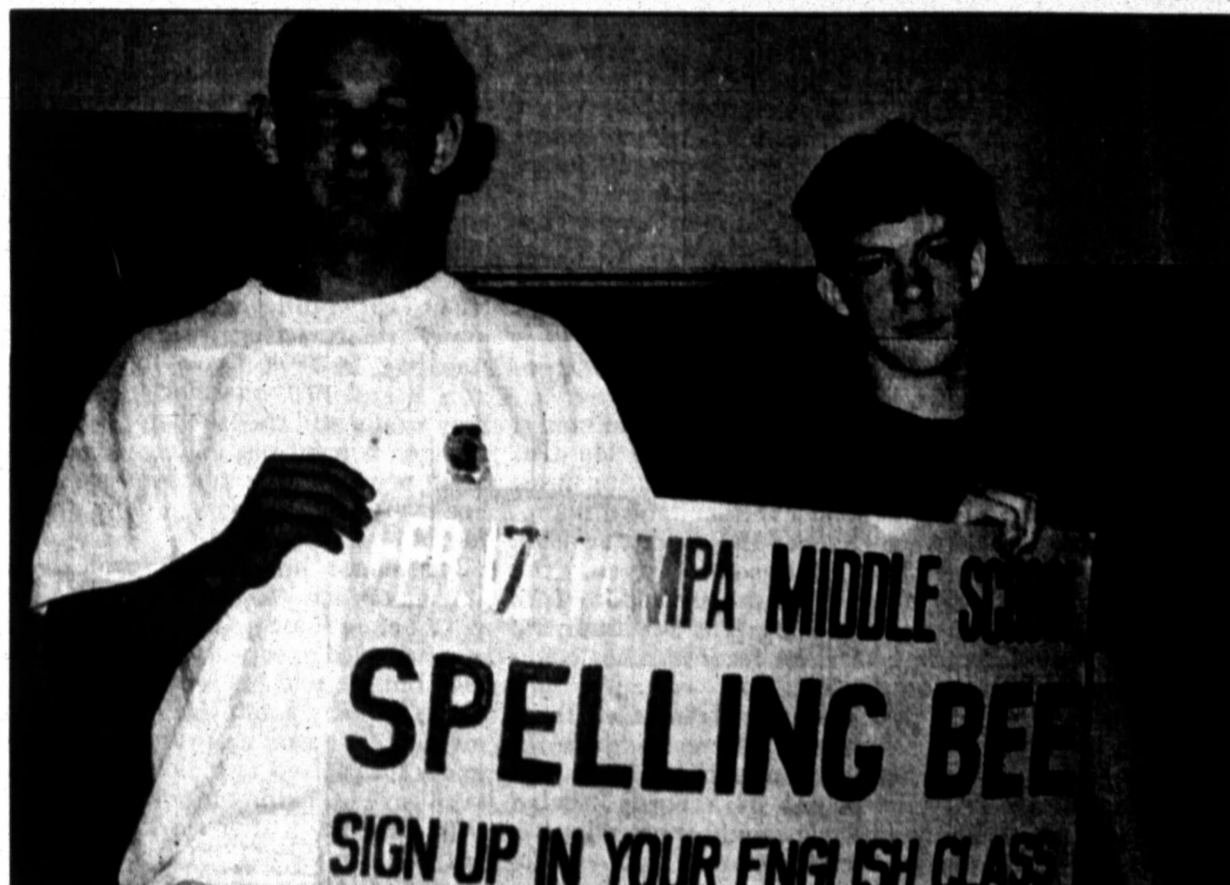
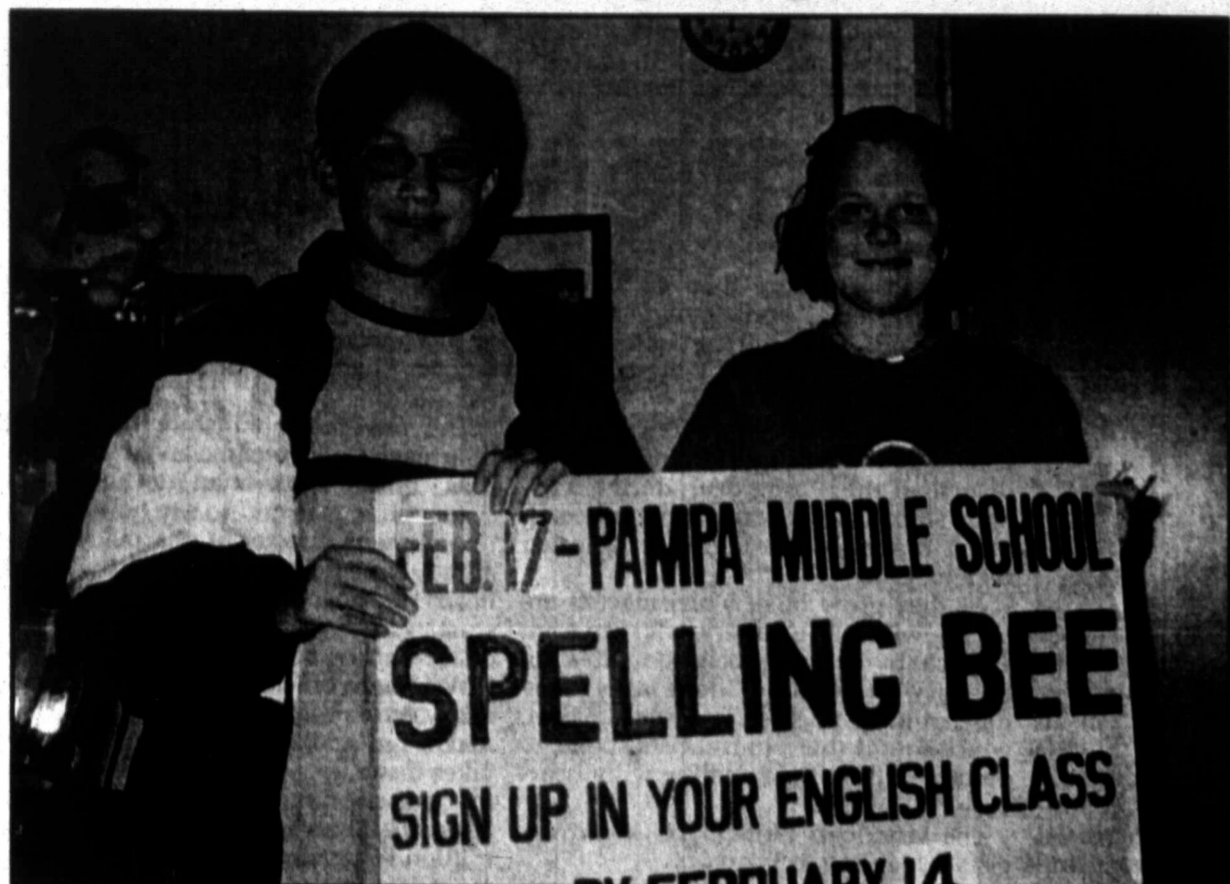
Energas requested a \$4.5 million increase in Amarillo.

Canyon City commission is scheduled to vote tonight on the issue. Assistant City Manager Courtney Sharp said the council will deny the request.

The proposed increase would raise an average monthly rate of \$27 to \$31, or 14 percent.

Pampa Chamber of Commerce Tourism Committee meeting
in the Nona Payne Room, Tuesday, February 22nd at 2:00 p.m.

Pampa Middle School Spelling Bee



(Community Camera photo)

Pampa Middle School recently held a spelling bee. Winners will represent the school at the Gray County Spelling Bee slated March 10 at Lovett Memorial Library. The county spelling bee champions will advance to the regional spelling bee to be held April 15 in Canyon. After the regionals is the National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C. Above: (top) PMS sixth grade champion Aaron Anguiano and runner-up Marissa Hudson; (middle) seventh grade champion Seth Foster and runner-up Dustin Elliott; (bottom) eighth grade champion Kit Koop and runner-up Ashley Francis.

January chills Texas 100 Stock Index, all sectors show declines

AUSTIN — The Texas 100 Stock Index fell 5.6 percent, to 128.7, in January, a month that also brought declines in the Standard and Poor's 500 (down 5.1 percent) and the Dow Jones Industrial Average (down 4.8 percent).

All sectors of the Texas 100 showed declines, but the hardest hit was the entertainment and travel sector, which dipped 11.6 percent. Entertainment and travel were bitten by the Y2K bug, as many people curtailed holiday travel and rang in the New Year at home. Rising fuel prices also hurt airlines. Continental Airlines, Inc., saw its share price drop 28.7 percent, and American Airlines, Inc., stock value dropped 19.7 percent. Restaurant stocks had a mixed month, with Tricon Restaurants International (Taco Bell, Pizza Hut, KFC) dropping 25.9 percent, while Bunker International, Inc. (Chili's) and Phoenix Restaurant Group (Blackeyed Pea, Denny's) gained value.

The strongest performer in the Texas 100 Stock Index in January was Comp USA, whose share price nearly doubled as the Mexican firm Grupo Sanborns bought the 85 percent of Comp USA that it did not already own. Seven-Eleven, Inc., stock rose 50.9 percent in January, as 7-Eleven and American Express announced plans to test new ATM kiosks offering cash and other electronic banking services in Dallas-Fort Worth stores. Overall, retail stock prices dropped 4.4 percent.

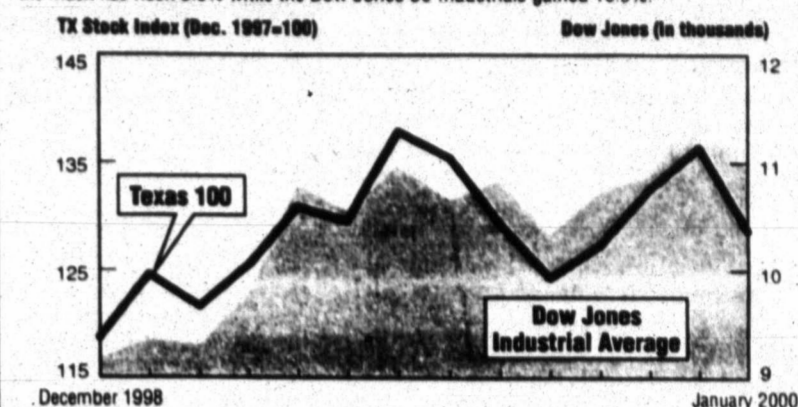
Share prices in the normally booming high-tech sector dropped 6.7 percent. Dell Computer Corp., which is often the sector's strongest performer, warned of slowing growth, and its stock price dropped 24.8 percent. The market also reacted negatively to reports by some high-tech companies of lower-than-expected earnings and problems with product delivery. Stock prices for aircraft and defense companies in the high-tech sector were generally down. Companies whose stock did well in January include Advanced Micro Devices, Inc., whose Athlon chip has matched Intel's in speed, helping the company earn a contract with Gateway for personal computers. AMD stock rose 24.4 percent. Texas Instruments Inc., stock rose 11.5

TEXAS STOCK INDEX

The Largest Publicly Traded Employers in Texas

Texas 100 Stock Index

The Texas 100 Stock Index fell 5.6% in January to a level of 128.7. Over the last 12 months, the index has risen 3.3% while the Dow Jones 30 Industrials gained 16.9%.



Ups & downs by sector

Largest percentage changes in company stock prices

Sector	Change	Company	Change
Energy	5.6%	Baker Hughes	+17.2%
		Schlumberger	+8.8%
		Exxon	+3.6%
		Phillips	-13.0%
		Dow Chemical	-12.8%
Other Manufacturing	7.2%	General Motors	+10.8%
		American Standard	-18.3%
		Trinity Industries	-17.8%
		Goodyear	-15.4%
		Continental	-10.5%
Entertainment & Travel	11.6%	Phoenix	+10.0%
		Brinker	+4.7%
		Continental Airlines	-28.7%
		Tricon Restaurants	-25.9%
		American Airlines	-19.7%
Retail	4.4%	Comp USA	+91.4%
		7-Eleven	+50.9%
		Safeway	+7.0%
		Stage	-48.6%
		Lowe's	-25.3%
High Tech	6.7%	Advanced Micro Devices	+24.4%
		Telelobe	+15.2%
		Texas Instruments	+11.5%
		Lucent	-26.0%
		Dell	-24.8%
Service & Financial	2.0%	Sitel	+17.9%
		Chase Manhattan	+3.9%
		West TeleServices	+3.8%
		AFS	-27.1%
		Borg Warner	-17.0%

NOTE: The index reflects how much an investment of one dollar in each company made in December 1997 would be worth today (\$128.69).

SOURCE: Carol Katten Rylander, Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts.

percent. The Boeing Co., which gained a strong position in aerospace by buying the satellite business of Hughes Electronics from General Motors Corp., saw a 7.4 percent increase in its stock price. Stock prices in the other (non-technology) manufacturing sector dropped 7.2 percent in January. Energy stock prices declined 5.8 percent. Stocks in the service and financial sector

AWF seeking nominations for awards banquet

AMARILLO — Amarillo Women's Forum is seeking nominations for its annual Distinguished Service Awards. The purpose of the Distinguished Service Award is to honor outstanding women who have helped shape the development of the Texas Panhandle through their contributions of talent and skill. The award recognizes and publicizes the visible examples set by these women who pave the way for others to follow.

Since 1976, 200 awardees from 26 communities within the panhandle have been selected from the arts, business, finance, education, health care, law, science, volunteerism and other fields.

Nominees must be Texas women who are legal residents of the top 26 counties of the Texas Panhandle and have not previously received this award. The forum encourages people to nominate women who were nominated in previous years.

Winners of the Distinguished Service Award will be chosen on the basis of significant individual impact on the Panhandle of Texas through their communities. An anonymous panel of judges representing the area will select recipients on the basis of their lasting contribu-

tions and achievements. The deadline for nominations is March 15. Presentation of the awards will be made during a luncheon on May 6 at the Ambassador Hotel. For nomination forms or additional information, contact Jane Juett at (806) 355-0603.

STAR funds available in the panhandle

AMARILLO — Texas Panhandle Mental Health Authority offers a broad range of services to area youth and families. Through a contract with the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services, TPMHA is part of statewide initiative known as the Services to At-Risk Youth program. STAR funds allow youth-serving agencies to provide counseling and support to runaway and truant youth as well as youth in family conflict. This program targets youth age 7-17 and their families in the upper 21 counties in the Texas Panhandle. The Pampa-based office provides services for Gray and Wheeler Counties.

The STAR program collaborates with other local agencies to provide services. Schools, parents, police, juvenile probation, juvenile courts and other non-profit groups can refer youth in conflict to the program with a simple phone call.

"The STAR program can benefit any family. It's designed to help youth and their families resolve

their current conflicts by building skills to help avoid more serious problems down the road," Heidi Rindlisbacher, program director, said.

Services provided by the STAR program include:

- Individual and family counseling in the home or at a designated location;

- Advocacy training for parents to help develop skills to support their children;

- Training to develop skills in problem-solving, communication, anger management, decision-making and conflict resolution for youth and families; residential placement in emergency situations; and a 24-hour crisis hotline.

There is no fee for STAR services. Susan Timmons, STAR coordinator for Pampa, works closely with youth and their families in identifying positive strengths and developing skills to enhance relationships and resolve conflict.

For more information or to refer a youth to STAR, call Timmons at (806) 662-9666; or Amarillo at (806) 359-2005 or 1-800-692-4039.

THE Pampa NEWS

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PAMPA NURSING CENTER
FEATURE EMPLOYEE
 is
DENNIE HAYNES

Dennie Haynes has worked at Pampa Nursing Center as a Certified Nurse Aid since June 1999. Her association with PNC began when she visited her mother, Lola Roach, who lived in the Secure Care Unit at the nursing home during the late stages of her Alzheimer's disease. Mrs. Haynes came to know many of the residents after Dennie's mother passed away, she continued to visit and volunteer on a regular basis. Mrs. Haynes then decided she would like to work full time with the Alzheimer's patients and has been a valuable asset to PNC ever since.

In fact, Dennie received Employee of the Month for January 2000. When Dennie was interviewed for this newspaper article she said "I really love these people, and you can quote me". We know that Dennie, it shows.

Dennie is married to Ronnie Haynes and has two children. Aaron is 17 and Lauren is 15 and both attend Pampa High School.

PAMPA NURSING CENTER
 1321 W. Kentucky Ave.
 669-2551

MEDICAL

Pharmacist's workload is a patient's worry

By JOHN HENDREN
AP National Writer

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. (AP) — Pharmacist Randy Kautz asked Walgreens for help at least four times.

He warned that the drug counter's busy pace might lead to errors. On June 15, 1994, he no longer had to make the point. That day one of his regular customers, Nathan Johnson, sank into a coma from which he never emerged.

"Oh my God," Ruth Johnson remembers Kautz saying as he reexamined the prescription bottle that she brought back to the store. "I've given the wrong medication."

A pharmacist's task is now filled with more speed and more stress than ever before — and, studies suggest, less satisfaction. Pharmacists blame their workload, growing along with their worries. When that workload affects accuracy, the pharmacist's worries become the patient's.

The National Pharmacists Association, a trade group based in Darien, Ill., recommends that, for safety's sake, a pharmacist fill no more than 15 prescriptions an hour. Elizabeth Allan Flynn, a researcher at Auburn University School of Pharmacy in Alabama, says studies by her and others suggest that the rate of pharmacists' errors increases after they fill more than 24 prescriptions an hour.

Whatever the number, pharmacists complain they routinely have to exceed it.

Druggist J.F. Burnham warned Walgreens managers in 1991 that the frantic pace at his store in Arlington Heights, Ill., "enhances the chances for error." Two pharmacists working separate shifts were filling up to 400 prescriptions a day — or nearly 29 an hour.

"It's not unusual for me to talk to pharmacists who are filling 300 prescriptions a day," says Thomas J. Moore, a health policy analyst at the George Washington University Medical Center in Washington, D.C. "The job of the pharmacist is becoming nearly untenable. Management is putting on pressure to increase output and reduce waiting time. And it's going to get worse."

That stress has driven druggists like John Magaudda from their jobs.

"I'd see a bottle of thyroid medication on the counter and I'd say, 'Why is this out here? I didn't fill a thyroid prescription today,'" said Magaudda, who quit his job at a Rite Aid in Santee, Calif., in 1997 after 36 years. "If things went on, it was going to get worse, and I was going

Druggist J.F. Burnham warned Walgreens managers in 1991 that the frantic pace at his store in Arlington Heights, Ill., "enhances the chances for error." Two pharmacists working separate shifts were filling up to 400 prescriptions a day — or nearly 29 an hour.

to make a mistake. A bad mistake."

In a letter of warning to the California State Board of Pharmacy, Magaudda wrote that more pressure on pharmacists would inevitably lead to more errors.

Several of the 50 state boards of pharmacy that oversee the industry have begun to take complaints like Magaudda's seriously. Some have linked understaffing to patterns of mistakes by the high-volume chains that now dominate the industry.

In Oklahoma, Eckerd reached a settlement with regulators in 1998 after the state board of pharmacy found 23 prescription errors over one year at the chain's Oklahoma stores.

In one of those instances, pharmacist Shirley Frame worked 67 hours over seven days before making a mistake that she attributed to "understaffed, overworked employees." The state board said Eckerd didn't employ enough pharmacists "to safely fill prescriptions," and concluded, "The harm to the public is tremendous."

Eckerd admitted no fault. "No inappropriate staffing was found," the company said in a recent statement, and the settlement with regulators "did not include any changes in staffing."

In Washington state, the state pharmacy board reached an agreement with Rite Aid last year after regulators fielded 134 complaints of dispensing errors over three years at various locations. The chain agreed to pay \$50,000 in fines. It also agreed to review its staffing policies, but made no promises to change them.

Rite Aid made a similar deal with Oregon regulators in March, agreeing to pay \$60,000 to resolve a pharmacy board investigation. The state alleged that the chain had shown poor supervision and violated state laws requiring pharmacists to counsel patients on how to take their drugs.

Rite Aid spokeswoman Jody Cook said the company has since taken action. In Washington state, Rite Aid put every company pharmacist through a

revamped training program, installed automated dispensing machines at its busiest stores, and reduced the number of complaints last year from 95 in February to six in December.

In Oregon, the company appointed a new regional vice president to coordinate with regulators. It also increased staffing, automated some dispensing and reduced complaints from 22 in January to one in December.

Pharmacy owners say there are no easy answers.

An expanding array of innovative drugs and insurance plans that cover them has driven aging Baby Boomers to the drugstore in record numbers. Consumers now buy an estimated 3 billion prescriptions each year — two pills for every one they bought in 1989.

Yet pharmacy schools turn out about the same number of druggists as they did in 1989, creating what drugstore owners call a national pharmacist shortage.

President Clinton signed legislation in December to study the extent of the shortage. The National Association of Chain Drug Stores, a retail trade group, estimated that 4,000 of the 120,000 jobs at the nation's major chains were open as of December.

The American Society of Health-System Pharmacists estimates a moderate to severe shortage of druggists at 90 percent of its hospital pharmacies, based on a survey of 350 of its directors earlier this year. Nearly half of the directors reported openings, with an average vacancy rate of 17 percent.

The group's chief executive officer, Henri Manassi Jr., wrote to hospital pharmacy managers on Jan. 26 that the shortage is leading to overworked pharmacists and "error hazards" that threaten patient safety.

Many safety-related professions set limits on the hours worked. Air traffic controllers take breaks every two hours. Pharmacists have no limit. Many complain that they rarely take lunch breaks, or even bathroom breaks.

Walgreens generally schedules phar-

macists for no more than 42 hours of work a week, spokesman Michael Polzin said. The shortage often translates to extra hours at Walgreens and other chains.

Following a 1997 incident in which an Eckerd pharmacist in Wilmington, N.C., dispensed the wrong drug during a 16-hour shift, Eckerd started guaranteeing lunch breaks for druggists in selected regions.

As they grow busier, pharmacists are coping with more paperwork than ever. The chain drug association cites an industry-funded study done last year by the Arthur Andersen accounting firm, which found that pharmacists spend 20 percent of their time dealing with insurance.

The workload crunch has left druggists struggling to keep up.

At the Daytona Beach Walgreens where Susan Johnson picked up her husband's fateful dose, the pace was picking up. In June 1991, the pharmacy averaged 162 prescriptions a day. When she picked up her husband's prescription in June 1994, it was open 24 hours and averaging 247 prescriptions.

Kautz was scrambling to supply customers with their drugs within 15 minutes. He meant to give her Coumadin, a blood thinner to prevent blood from clotting. Instead he gave her Cyrcin, a female hormone that can have the opposite effect.

Two weeks later, Johnson suffered a stroke that left him comatose. He died last year, never regaining consciousness. His widow won a verdict of \$6 million.

Between October 1991 and June 1994, when Mrs. Johnson arrived, the Daytona Beach pharmacy reported 27 other errors to Walgreens headquarters, according to store records revealed in Ruth Johnson's lawsuit.

In a deposition, Kautz recalled three or four occasions before the June 15 error when the same mistake happened — Cyrcin placed in a bottle labeled "Coumadin." He caught those mistakes before they left the store.

Along with reports of errors came store reports of chronic understaffing. In February 1994, store managers warned of "current staff being stretched to the limit." Kautz had asked for more help at least four times, according to testimony from Kathryn Correia, the pharmacy's manager.

Kautz said he asked for another pharmacist to work with him but was told one "wasn't in the budget." He said he never took lunch or other breaks because the store was too busy and he

had no one to relieve him. And, between 1993 and 1994, the store added six hours of pharmacist time per week, but not a second pharmacist, according to court records.

The now-relocated store has added pharmacist and technician hours since then, but a spokesman declined "for competitive reasons" to say how many. Walgreens director of pharmacy operations, Phil Burgess, testified that he'd heard pharmacists at various Walgreens stores complain "forever" about inadequate staffing and excessive workload.

Walgreens officials would not say how many errors the company's pharmacists make, but spokesman Polzin said mistakes make up a "minute percentage" of the prescriptions the chain's pharmacists fill. The chain recently paid \$150 million to revamp its computer system, replacing computers handling 250 prescriptions a day with those that can manage more than 400.

"There is more business coming into the pharmacy, no doubt about that," Polzin said in a recent interview. "But we've made a very concentrated effort to deal with that workload efficiently and allow our pharmacy staff to handle that business without it becoming overwhelming."

The expanding workload has left many pharmacists frazzled — and unhappy. In 1998, Drug Topics magazine asked 870 pharmacists whether they would still choose their profession. Only 45 percent responded yes, a drop of 10 percentage points over six years. For many, high stress is a daily part of the job.

Pharmacist Jim Ellison manned the Daytona Beach Walgreens counter a few years before Randy Kautz took over. He also had tried to cope. He asked for more help but, he told his brother David, "It doesn't do any good." He rejected a promotion that meant more work and eventually transferred to a slower store. He even gave up bathroom breaks.

To calm down after work, his brother said, Ellison jogged, lifted weights and started drinking four or five beers a night.

Anxiety was Ellison's unshakable companion, even in his final moments. In March 1995, he had chewed the nail on his middle finger to the nub. Bite marks cut into the plastic tube that he hooked to the tailpipe of his Honda Civic inside his garage.

No one will ever know for certain why Ellison killed himself. But his brother and his widow think they know. It was "his job."

Study: High blood pressure in middle age raises stroke risk

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — High blood pressure in middle age sharply raises the risk of strokes later in life, even in people who have brought their pressure under control, a study found.

Doctors have long known that high blood pressure is the single most important cause of strokes, which hit more than 600,000 Americans annually. However, doctors traditionally consider only a person's current blood pressure — not past readings — when judging whether their risk is higher than usual.

A new study found that a history of high blood pressure is a powerful predictor of stroke risk, no matter where a person's blood pressure now stands.

The findings are from the 50-year-long Framingham Heart Study in the Boston suburbs. They were presented by Dr. Sudha Seshadri of Boston University Medical School

at a meeting in New Orleans of the American Stroke Association.

"It's not just the blood pressure you have now," she said. "It's the blood pressure you had in the past."

Her study was based on a review of 5,197 study participants, including 367 who had suffered strokes. The researchers looked at current blood pressure, as well as blood pressure decades earlier.

A standard blood pressure reading is given as systolic pressure over diastolic pressure. Systolic, the larger of the two numbers, should ideally be below 120, while the diastolic number should be under 80.

The Framingham researchers found that a 20-point elevation in systolic pressure when people are in their 60s raises their stroke risk by 50 percent after they reach age 70. A 20-point elevation during the 50s raises the risk 40 percent later on.

An increased risk persists even if people bring down their blood pressure in old age, though the risk is lower than if hypertension is left untreated.

"This study is important, because it shows that a risk factor is in effect over a lifetime. The longer you have it, the greater its effect," said Dr. Ralph Sacco of Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center in New York City.

Another study by Dr. George W. Petty of the Mayo Clinic shows the importance of leaky and deformed heart valves in triggering strokes. The researchers followed more than 700 people who had problems with their aortic or mitral valves, the two main valves that control blood flow on the left side of the heart.

They found that severe mitral valve narrowing was an especially important risk. People with this condition were nearly four times more likely than usual to suffer full-blown strokes or ominous mini-strokes.

Research along Texas border bolsters idea folic acid cuts birth defects

ATLANTA (AP) — Women in 14 Texas border counties who had babies with birth defects and then took folic acid during a subsequent pregnancy greatly reduced the chance of having a second baby with spinal birth defects, according to government researchers.

The report, published recently by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, bolsters earlier findings that the B vitamin can help prevent neural tube defects (NTD).

In 1990 and 1991, there was a surge of babies born without brains around Brownsville, Texas. A 1993-1998 study found that the Texas counties that border Mexico — which have a predominantly Hispanic population — have an NTD rate of 1 per 750 births. The national rate is 1 per 1,000.

Researchers tracked 124 women who had babies with birth defects. All took folic acid during a subsequent pregnancy, and only one woman had a second baby with a birth defect. And in that case, researchers could not locate the woman during her pregnancy to provide the folic acid and track her progress, said the project director, Dr. Russ Larsen.

Folic acid is found naturally in leafy green vegetables, beans, tuna, eggs and other foods. The Food and Drug Administration ordered manufacturers to begin fortifying foods with folic acid in January 1998.

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Mother Needs a Little Talk About Stepfather's Big Mouth

DEAR ABBY: My mother remarried two years ago. "Bart" is good to her; however, he drives me and my husband absolutely up the wall. He's a compulsive talker, and he belittles my brother whenever he can. He also makes inappropriate comments about sex. They are not directed at me, but he gives me information about my mother and him, which makes me very uncomfortable.

Now he is bad-mouthing my mother to my husband and telling my husband not to tell me, because he knows I will tell my mother.

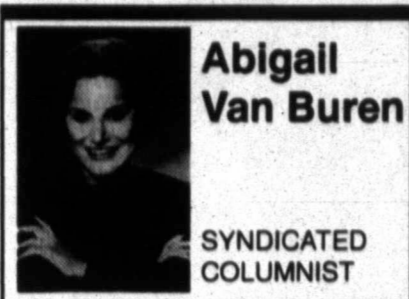
They have started pressuring us to go on vacation with them for a solid week. I can't bear the thought of it. My husband doesn't want to go either, and he says I should not tell my mother how I feel — just avoid her husband as much as possible.

Abby, I think I should level with her, but how do I go about it without breaking her heart?

HURTING IN OTTUMWA, IOWA

DEAR HURTING: Dodging your stepfather is not a solution. You are overdue for a frank talk with your mother. Tell her everything you have told me. Her husband's comments are clearly inappropriate, and the situation won't change unless she's made fully aware of how and why he's driving people away.

DEAR ABBY: The letter in your



Abigail Van Buren

SYNDICATED COLUMNIST

eyes for you!

DEAR ABBY: Your letters about husbands doing things for their wives sparked my interest. Not only does mine open doors, he does the laundry, goes shopping — and does a very good job of it.

He takes me out to dinner each and every payday, sweeps, mops the floors and shampoos the carpets, and keeps the yard beautiful. He does not mess in my flowerbeds, however. That's my baby.

He can't cook, but that's OK because I love to cook.

We are in our 50s and we leave love notes all over the house. He always kisses me goodbye on his way out the door to work — whether I'm asleep or awake.

I hear of so much family violence, I'm very happy and consider myself a lucky woman. In this imperfect world, I got the almost perfect man.

A HAPPY COUPLE IN MISSOURI

DEAR HAPPY COUPLE: My congratulations to you both. My column is usually a trouble-dump. But with the exception of the series of letters I have printed about acts of kindness, I don't know when I've enjoyed printing letters more than those I've received from couples who take the time to express their love for each other. Perhaps they will provide inspiration to couples who need it.

column about complimenting employees when they do a good job brought back many memories for me. I am a senior citizen now, retired — but it brought a smile to my face.

Twenty-six years ago, I went to work for an optometrist. I was working there for about a month, when I received a note from him telling me about the excellent job I was doing and thanking me. That note meant so much to me; it also motivated me to try to do even better.

People are always quick to criticize. How wonderful it would be if all people would give praise when it is due.

LENORE SHANKMAN, STRATFORD, CONN.

P.S. Two years after I started the job, the optometrist and I were married!

DEAR LENORE: That's high praise, indeed, for a job well done. It's a smart employee who makes herself indispensable. I'm glad that your boss only had

Horoscope

TUESDAY, FEB. 22, 2000

BY JACQUELINE BIGAR

The Stars Show the Kind of Day You'll Have: 5-Dynamic; 4-Positive; 3-Average; 2-So-so; 1-Difficult

ARIES (March 21-April 19)

Tempers flare — especially yours — as you deal with a lot of confusion and moodiness. Take an overview; you'll feel better and regain needed control. Unexpected developments put a new slant on what has gone down. Tonight: Relax, for your own sake!

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

Dig into work and put your best foot forward. Frustration eases as you focus on clearing your desk. Concentration helps you forget a problem. Resolution might not come overnight. Be creative when handling responsibilities. As a result, you gain. Tonight: Easy does it.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

Your creativity meets a challenge head-on. A friendship is tested, as you deal with different points of view. Another sees the whole situation, but differently. His input helps you work past a problem. Partners work with you — finally! Tonight: Ever frisky.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)

Build bridges with a boss who can be demanding, but who gives you a strong sense of direction. Be open to a change of pace and plans. You demonstrate flexibility, as does another.

Solutions come easily. Listen to your instincts about a partner. Tonight: Home is where it's at.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

Communication sizzles, and not always in a manner that pleases you. Evaluate what you are hearing, and choose not to react. Explore the possibility of revamping your thinking. Perhaps you made a faulty assumption! Tonight: Accept a surprise invitation.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

Financial responsibility remains a question. Another clearly doesn't agree with you. Try to find a middle point, but don't hurt yourself making a compromise. Work requires innovative thinking and actions. Learning new technologies helps. Tonight: Don't go overboard.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

Watch what is going on with others before jumping to a conclusion. Another's reaction could simply be a good defense. Read between the lines. Make inquiries and calls. Be willing to see the other side. Attend to a child or loved one. Tonight: You are master of your own ship.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

Take a break if you are having a difficult time dealing with others, especially co-workers. Be realistic about just how much anger you can absorb. Pull back and regroup. Take a hard look at your health and dietary patterns. Tonight: Make a resolution toward your well-being.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

Focus on what is important. Remember what you want and expect from a key situation. Though you might not be able to realize it today, you could

in the near future. Work with the unpredictable and let go of any rigidity, and you'll succeed. Tonight: Where the gang is.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

All eyes turn to you. Go within for answers; an external approach doesn't work. Finances remain key to an important decision. Don't let anyone or anything pressure you. A family member is out of sorts; count on his lack of support. Tonight: Work late.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

Make calls; do your own sleuthing. The answers you find could surprise you, but they will bring insights nevertheless. Don't get caught up in an argument or disagreement. Take the high road. Friends reverse course. Tonight: Browse through a favorite store.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

Withdraw into yourself. Make decisions involving a partnership and finances. Do not take another for granted — listen carefully to his opinions. You could reverse an important decision as a result. Show your willingness to break patterns. Tonight: Be with a favorite friend.

BORN TODAY

Actress Drew Barrymore (1975), actor Kyle MacLachlan (1959), U.S. Senator Ted Kennedy (1932)

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Crossword Puzzle

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 45 Garden starters

6 Gorillas, e.g.

DOWN 1 Scatter music

2 Tara family name

11 Sounds of surprise

13 Increased

14 Misbehavior

15 Direction suffix

16 Illuminated

18 French friend

19 Las Vegas star

22 — My Party

23 Actress Russo

24 Kitchen appliance

27 Drop in on

28 Writer — Stanley Gardner

29 Brooch

30 "M*A*S*H" actor

35 USN bigwig

36 Cath. or Prot.

37 Contend

38 Printer's output

40 Picture

42 Used a towel

43 Low point

44 Umpire's call

DRAG	HEAT
SEATO	EPCOT
TAROT	MITRE
ANEMONE	IRA
UNS	BONSOIR
BATHES	ENDS
EDWIN	
ODIE	ENTRAP
FIGLEAF	ELI
TAN	STOPSIN
ELIAS	REACT
NOTRE	ISLES
GEMS	TOES

Saturday's answer

20 David of "Separate Tables"	29 Opposite of post-down
21 Twist (out)	31 Wear down
24 Alaska purchaser	32 Dodge Unwaver-ing
25 Fur men's dessert	34 Phreptic ones
26 Washing-ton's capital	39 Ump's kin
27 Some of the strings	41 West of films

Marmaduke



"Got too close to his tail during the happy hour."

The Family Circus



2-21

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"In honor of Presidents' Day, I'm gonna veto vegetables."

For Better or For Worse



Zits



Garfield



Beetle Bailey



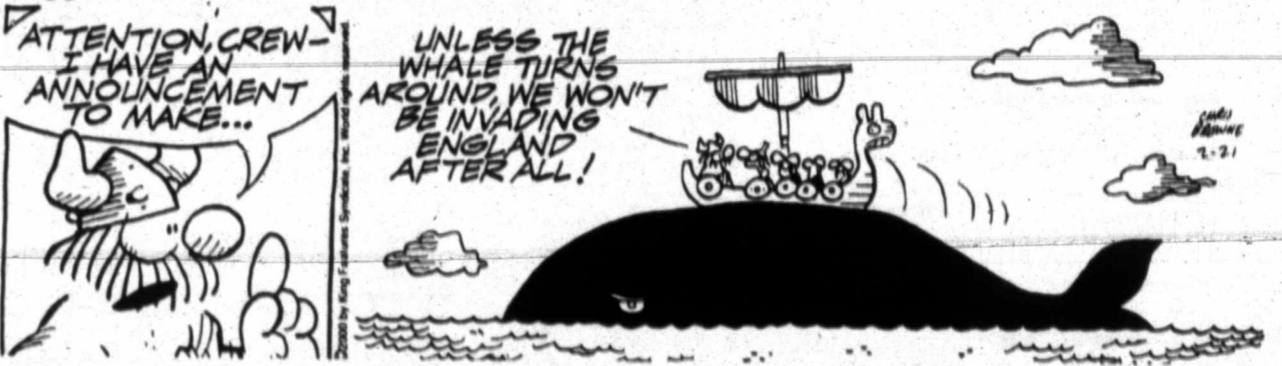
Marvin



B.C.



Haggar The Horrible



Peanuts



Blondie



Mallard Filmore



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