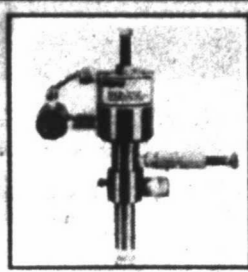


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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 31, 2004

NEWS

DEATHS

Ruth Estes Herlacher, 97, homemaker.
 Lorene Stephens, 92, drapery store owner.

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Landfill filling up; Cell 3 on the way

By DAVID BOWSER
 STAFF WRITER

Richard Morris, Pampa's director of public works, plans on finishing the review of contracts today for the construction of the third cell at the city landfill.

"Cell 3 will be similar in size to Cell 2," Morris said. "It will look like the previous cells once it's in operation."

He began looking at the project schedule in October.

"Some time in the month of April," Morris said, "we'll be going out for bids."

Compared to the original schedule that was set back in September, he said, the project is in a two to three week crunch, but time was built in for delays.

"The construction time was set up for six months," Morris said.

Cells in the past, he said, have been completed in 120 days, or within four months.

"I think we have a little bit

of time to play there," Morris said. "We need to be in that cell by late November or early December. We're filling up pretty fast."

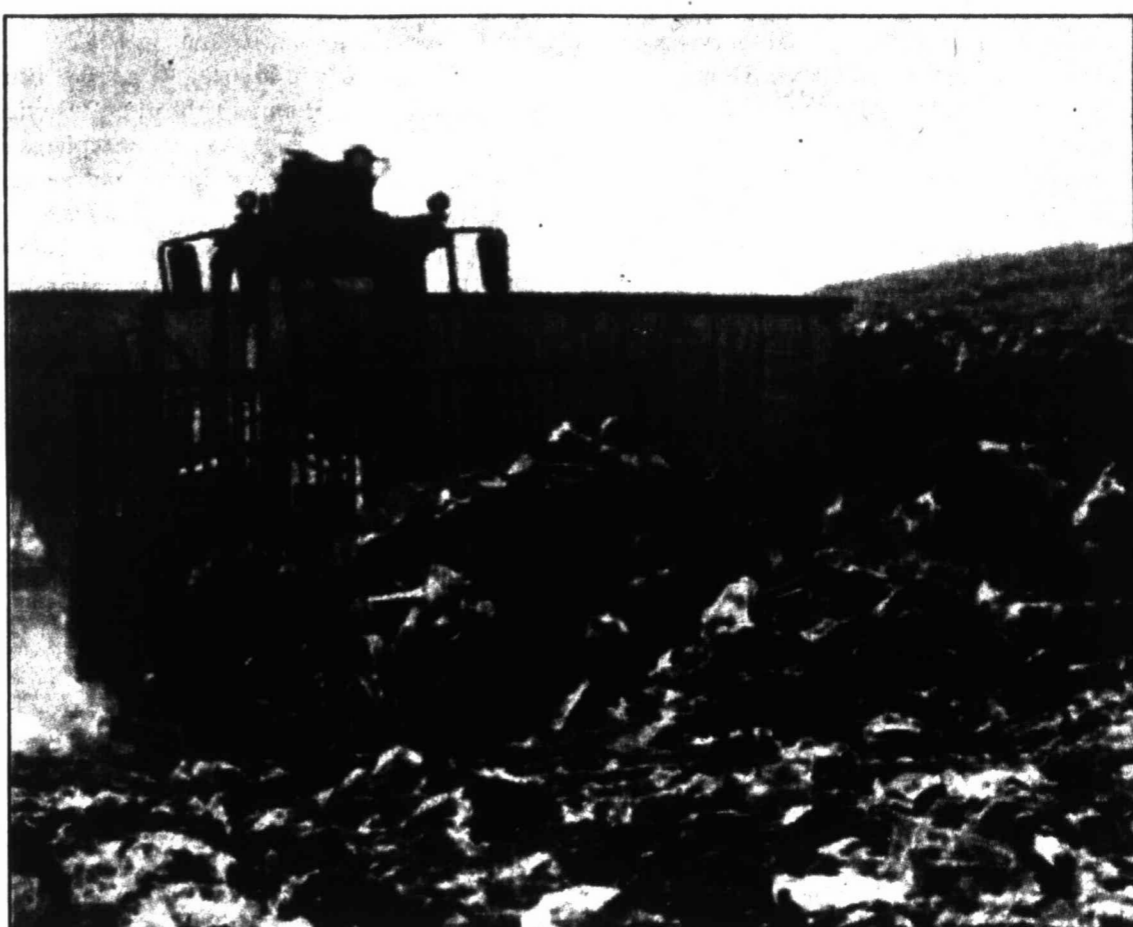
He said he's been monitoring Cell 2 closely the last several months. Morris said he hopes to get an extra couple of months out of it. That would stretch his budget a little further.

One of the things the city plans on doing with the new cell is finding someplace else to stockpile the dirt dug out for the site.

"When we developed the first cell, we stock piled a lot of the material, the excess material, over to the west," Morris said. "Then when we did the second cell, we realized that wasn't the thing to do because at some point in time, we'll be using that area for new cells."

When they started the second cell operation, he said, they hauled a lot of the excess

(See LANDFILL, Page 3)



(Pampa News photo by David Bowser)

Alex Price driving a compactor spreads and presses Pampa's trash into the ground at Cell 2 of the city's landfill. Cell 2 is expected to be full by the end of the year. The city plans to open Cell 3 in the late fall.

**County Commission
 to meet on Thursday**

Gray County commissioners will hear a quarterly report from County Attorney Josh Seabourn at their April 1 regular meeting, beginning at 9 a.m. in the second-floor courtroom of Gray County Courthouse, 205 N. Russell.

Other items on the agenda are:

- Road crossing on County Road 1.
- Contract with Official Payments Corporation.
- Resolution concerning Texas Governor Rick Perry's new tax plan.

He just wanted to go home

By MARILYN POWERS
 STAFF WRITER

A Pampa man remains in Gray County Jail today after reportedly fighting with local peace officers and running over one county sheriff's deputy's foot with his vehicle.

Mark Douglas Hinkle, 45, Route 1, Box 959, was stopped by two deputies for vehicle

and traffic violations at the intersection of county roads E and 4 soon after midnight last night. He gave them permission to search the vehicle, and they found what was believed to be a controlled substance, according to Sheriff Don Copeland.

After the substance was found, Hinkle "got belligerent," Copeland said, and "got

into a scuffle" with the deputies. He managed to get into his vehicle and drive off, running over one deputy's foot in the process, the sheriff said.

"It was near his home, and he drove to his place," Copeland said. There, Hinkle was finally arrested after the two deputies followed him

(See ARREST, Page 3)

Natural gas demand spurs new drilling, jobs

By BETSY BLANEY
 ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

LUBBOCK (AP) — The surge in natural gas prices has been a boon for the Permian Basin in West Texas, leading to an increase in rigs and jobs, industry officials say.

Two years ago, the Permian Basin had 131 active drilling rigs. Today, it boasts 214 rigs — nearly half the statewide total of 497.

The increase in rigs allowed operators to complete 680 new wells in February, the highest number in more

than 30 years, according to the Texas Railroad Commission.

Each new rig creates about 100 jobs, said Morris Burns, executive vice president of the Permian Basin Petroleum Association.

"That means that there's another 10,000 jobs in the Oil Patch than there were two years ago," Burns said Tuesday. "We've got a lot of people developing new prospects and drilling new wells."

The new workers owe their jobs to the rising price of natural gas, in the view of Gary Flaharty, director of

investor relations for Houston-based Baker Hughes Inc., which has tracked the rig count since 1944.

"The price has been in excess of \$4 for a thousand cubic feet for a long enough time that it's worth drilling," Flaharty said.

Natural gas prices began rising quickly in November and have remained high for several months. Analysts have expressed surprise, noting that inventories have seemed adequate, but demand has been rising.

Texas is the country's largest producer of natural gas, averaging 5.7 tril-

lion cubic feet per year, nearly 30 percent of the U.S. total. In addition to those in the Lubbock, Amarillo and El Paso areas.

It is also the largest consumer of natural gas in the nation, at 3.9 trillion cubic feet annually. Demand has been rising with the population but mostly because of a jump in the number of gas-fired power plants.

Since 1995, 56 such plants have been built in the state — an unprece-

(See GAS, Page 3)

Business, taxpayers groups oppose 'split roll' tax

By APRIL CASTRO
 ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

AUSTIN (AP) — The state's most influential business group would be opposed to a new split-roll tax, the only school finance taxing alternative that Gov. Rick Perry has publicly advocated.

Texas Association of Business, Texas Taxpayers and Research Association and a handful of other business and trade groups signed a letter opposing the idea, which would mean charging different

tax rates for residential and business property owners.

"While we differ on some of the other elements of your report, we agree that there is one option that should be rejected. That option is the split roll tax, however it may be proposed," the groups said in a letter to the Joint Select Committee on Public School Finance.

The split-roll tax is one of several options the committee presented as a viable alternative in its report to the Legislature.

Last week Perry called the tax a "great idea" that could lead to the replacement of the share-the-wealth school finance system known to many as Robin Hood.

"Governor Perry has not proposed a split-roll tax," said Perry spokesman Robert Black. "In fact Texans will find that Governor Perry's plan will cut taxes for and constitutionally protect both homeowners and business."

Perry has made no proposal on how to replace revenue from property taxes that

schools now depend on.

The idea of a split-roll tax hasn't been popular among business-friendly Republican lawmakers. Republican Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst has predicted its failure in the Legislature.

"I think it's pretty unpopular," said Bill Allaway, president of the Texas Taxpayers Research Association. "So far, the only real advocates for it have been the governor's people."

Under one proposal, the business property tax, which is

now levied by local governments, would become a statewide property tax. Any statewide tax requires a constitutional amendment and a public vote. It would also require passage by two-thirds of both the House and Senate — a seemingly unlikely proposition under the recent partisan climate of the Legislature.

Perry has been sensitive to the state's corporate population as lawmakers look to find an alternative to Robin Hood.

(See TAX, Page 3)

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Shriners barbecue



(Courtesy photo)

Shriners Ben Watson, left, and Keith Woods get set for Pampa Shrine Club's all-you-can-eat Spring Bar-B-Que slated from 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Sunday, April 4, at Top O' Texas Sportsman Club on South Barnes Street. Adults eat for \$8; children 6 through 12 years of age for \$5; and children under 6 for free. Carry-out will be available as will bulk meat sales. Proceeds will benefit Khiva Temple Pampa Shrine Club activities.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

LANDFILL

material over to the old landfill.

"We capped off the old site," Morris said, "which we were going to have to do anyway."

This time, the city plans to build more berms around the cell and the landfill site and fill in a lot of areas.

They don't plan to haul any of the excess material over to the stockpile west of Cells 1 and 2.

"At some point in time, looking at Cell 3, we will probably want to go back to the west of Cells 1, 2 and 3, and develop a cell there," Morris said. "If not the next cell after three, the one after that."

Morris said today the city is making the stockpile of dirt

west of the cells now in use available to contractors and the state highway department.

"We do need to try to get rid of that existing stockpile there," Morris said.

Wal-Mart is hauling a tremendous amount of that material off, he said, and is putting it on their building site.

Morris said he hopes the city will have some other construction like that.

The stockpiled dirt is an asset to the community, he said.

"It's pretty good material," Morris said today.

Contractors can afford to haul it a little further since they don't have to pay for it.

Morris said the project to date is well within the budget, a view that John Horst, Pampa's director of finance,

seconded.

Horst said that every year, the city reserves between \$160,000 and \$250,000 for the landfill.

"By September of this year," Horst said, "we'll have a total of a million dollars available. Of course, we'll be spending some of that earlier, but as long as the cost doesn't exceed a million dollars, we'll be okay."

Morris said the estimated cost will be \$1.2 million, but part of that comes from other funds.

"One of the things we did last time, when we went to Cell 2," Morris said, "we actually went over what we had, but we took some of that money and used it to begin closing the old cell. That's probably something that we'll do again."

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

ARREST

home with reinforcements from Pampa Police Department, other deputies, and Texas Department of Public Safety troopers.

Deputies Scott LaRue and Dennis Elliot, the arresting officers, sustained minor injuries such as scrapes and bruises from the scuffle, as did other peace officers entering into the fray. The deputy's run-over foot was treated and found to be bruised but not broken or otherwise seriously injured, Copeland said.

Hinkle was charged with aggravated assault on a peace officer, possession of less than one gram of a controlled substance, and evading arrest with a motor vehicle. He remained in jail today awaiting a bond hearing. Hinkle was taken to

Pampa Regional Medical Center's emergency room this morning as a precaution to check for any injuries that needed medical treatment, Copeland said.

"It was a pretty good scuffle," Copeland said.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

TAX

But, according to the letter, the split-tax roll would not foster the positive business climate that Perry has been adamant about maintaining.

"The split roll will

inevitably lead to higher property tax burdens on businesses, discouraging new investment and stifling job creation," the letter said. "Texas cannot attract new capital investment with inordinately high property taxes on businesses."

Inhalant abuse: A silent epidemic

Huffing, "bagging, spooking, and sniffing are terms for inhalant use — a cheap, legal and accessible way that young people in Pampa and other communities are getting high.

The National Inhalant Prevention Coalition (NIPC) recently kicked off a campaign to raise awareness of the dangers and popularity of this deadly practice.

Inhalants are an equal opportunity form of substance abuse. They are used by young people of all economic levels and all ethnic backgrounds. Nationally, almost one in six 8th graders has intentionally inhaled household chemicals to get high at the risk of brain damage and even death. Local numbers are higher. Last spring, 25 percent of Pampa Middle School 8th graders reported having used inhalants at least once during their lifetimes according to the Texas A & M Texas School Drug Survey. Almost a quarter of a million young

people use inhalants in any month.

"Most parents know how to talk to their kids about tobacco, marijuana and drinking because they have enough knowledge about these things, but inhalants are an informational blind spot for them," said Harvey Weiss, NIPC executive director.

Inhalants are as close as the kitchen sink or a child's classroom. More than 1,000 abusable products exist including butane, propane, gasoline, Freon, degreasers, correction fluid, nitrous oxide, whipping cream, shoe polish, spray paint, toluene, paint thinner, chloroform, air freshener, cooking spray, "poppers", "rush" and "locker room." Young people in the 12 to 17 age group most commonly use glue and toluene, followed by gasoline and lighter fluid.

Using inhalants is like playing Russian Roulette: Users can die the first, 10th or even 100th time they use.

Sudden Sniffing Death can result from heart or lung failure, asphyxiation, or paralysis of breathing mechanism. Long-term effects of inhalant use include brain damage, respiratory problems, liver damage, kidney damage and bone marrow damage; short-term memory loss; and hearing impairment.

The key to preventing inhalant use is education. Parents and educators should be aware of the signs of use — paint or stains on the body or clothing, loss of appetite or nausea, a chemical breath odor, spots or sores around the mouth and nose, red or runny eyes or nose, anxiety or a drunk and dazed appearance.

For more information on inhalants, contact Lesley Gershmel with the Pampa I.S.D. Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities program, the National Inhalant Prevention Coalition at 1-800-269-4237, or go to www.inhalants.org.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

GAS

dented binge — said Charles Matthews, a member of the Texas Railroad Commission.

The same trend has taken place nationwide. As a result, the amount of natural gas burned nationwide to generate power rose 56 percent from 1993 to 2002, outstripping the growth of coal and oil in power production, according to the Energy Department.

The volatility has led to turmoil in the natural gas industry, said Cloyce Talbott, chief executive of Snyder-based drilling company Patterson-UTI Energy Inc., which owns the nation's second-largest fleet of land-based rigs.

Talbott said the country long assumed that natural gas was plentiful and cheap, leading to the building of so many gas-fired power plants that demand now outstrips supply.

"We're finding smaller pockets of natural gas, producing them at a higher rate quickly, and the decline rates are going up," Talbott said. The decline rate is a measurement of how quickly a gas reservoir is being drained.

"It's really a hell of a mess," Talbott said. "It's good for people like us, but it's not good for the people of this country."

Alex Mills, president of the Texas Alliance of Energy Producers, disagreed. He said natural gas used to be a byproduct of oil drilling but is now a separate industry.

"The exploration effort for natural gas has really just begun," Mills said. "And that's the exciting part of the natural gas business. As long as you've got a good steady demand for natural gas, people are going to look for it."

Nationwide, 1,150 rigs were working last week, up from 962 a year ago, according to Baker Hughes, far below the 1981 peak but an improvement from the low of 488 rigs in 1999.

Of the active rigs last week, 982 were exploring for gas, 165 were looking for oil and three were listed as miscellaneous.

On the Net: Baker Hughes: www.baker-hughes.com

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The Pampa News Comics

DEAR ABBY

written by Pauline Phillips and daughter Jeanne Phillips

Trucker's Midlife Crisis May Be Causing Couple's Rocky Road

DEAR ABBY: My husband, "Chuck," and I have been married going on five years. He's a long-haul truck driver.

Three weeks ago, he asked me for a divorce because he's been cheating on me with a long-haul lady driver I'll call Annabelle. The next weekend, he came home and we were together like nothing happened.

The weekend after that, Chuck said he's decided to hold off on the divorce until he can straighten out his head. He says he's depressed and unhappy, that he still loves me, but he doesn't know what he wants. Before he left on his new job - driving with Annabelle -- he put his wedding ring back on. Then Chuck made a comment I still don't understand. He said that she was happy he did it.

Chuck says I have to lose my stomach and firm up my breasts, but that is easier said than done at 40. Before we got married, I was a size 24. Now I'm a size 16, so where does he get off saying I'm too fat?

Some of my friends say Chuck is going through a midlife crisis because he'll be 45 in a couple of months. I don't know what to do anymore. My head says to file for divorce and get on with my life. My heart says to wait a couple of months. I love him deeply even though he ripped my heart to pieces and destroyed what little self-esteem I had left. Please help. -- HURT AND CONFUSED IN CONNECTICUT

DEAR HURT AND CONFUSED: Hold off on that divorce. It appears your husband's spirits are sagging more than your stomach and breasts. His problem could be a midlife crisis or depression -- but whatever it is, he needs to speak to his doctor and stop projecting his problems onto you.

P.S. He should also change driving partners. If I were you, I'd demand it.

DEAR ABBY: My daughter, "Nancy," is 14 going on 21. She wants to start dating, but I don't think she's ready. So she goes out anyway and doesn't ask my permission. After she's out, she doesn't bother to call to say where she is or if

she's OK.

Nancy also refuses to do her chores. Not long ago, she failed to come home after school; she takes the bus. I looked for her for two hours, then I called the police and filed a report. She didn't show up until after 11 p.m. Her excuse was that she was working on an English project with a friend. I wanted to believe her. I told her she should have at least called. The next night, she did the same thing.

This time, I called her friends and found out she was with a boy named "Steve" and she wasn't doing homework.

What can I do, Abby? My daughter will not listen to me. She plans to continue seeing Steve, even though I forbid it -- and plans to spend the night with him. I think she's too young to be dating this seriously. What's the best way to tell when your teenager is ready to date? -- WORRIED IN NEW YORK

DEAR WORRIED: Girls who are "ready to date" are young women who have proven they are responsible, make intelligent decisions and can be trusted.

Your daughter has not done this, and she is on the verge of getting herself into serious trouble.

As her parent, you must quickly learn to assert yourself -- something it appears you have not done. There is a support group for parents of hard-to-handle children. It is called BILY (Because I Love You). For information and locations, log on to the Web site at www.BILY.org.

P.S. You did not mention how old Steve is. If he is 18, he is presumed to be an adult. At 14, your daughter is legally too young to consent to sex, which would make Steve a sex offender and vulnerable to prosecution.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

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For Better Or Worse



Zits



Garfield



Beetle Bailey



Marvin



Crossword Puzzle

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS DOWN

1 Door

fastener

5 Pinochle

score

9 Door sign

11 "Vive --!"

12 Greene of

"Bonanza"

13 Laugh-

able

14 Debate

side

15 Inclination

17 Born

loser

19 High

trains

20 New

Hampshire

city

21 Use a

towel

22 Mix up

24 Convened

26 Unspoken

29 Follow

30 Means

32 Brainiac

34 Computer

key abbr.

35 Saucer-

occupant

36 Rolling

38 Dustin

Hoffman

film

39 Stellar

hunter

40 Actor

Montand

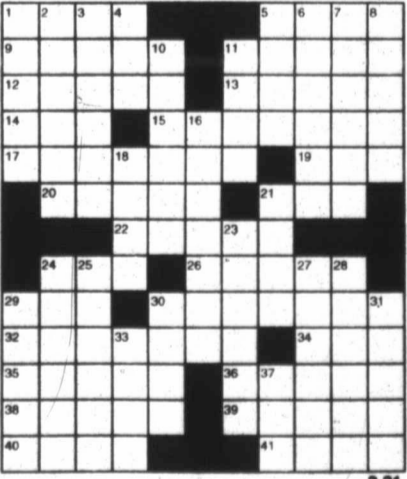
41 Rational



Yesterday's answer

- 1 Lends a hand
- 2 Pullover jacket
- 3 Walked purposefully
- 4 Desk set item
- 5 Fix
- 6 Classroom item
- 7 Desolate
- 8 Losing plans
- 9 Send back
- 10 Chain part
- 11 Summer cooler
- 12 Diesel creation
- 13 Do usher's work
- 14 Retro style
- 15 Crow's-nest cry
- 16 Fast train type
- 17 Roma's nation
- 18 Rat out
- 19 Dry and crumbly
- 20 Turn down
- 21 Songwriter
- 22 Cluckers
- 23 Treasury Dept. div.

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Marmaduke



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The Family Circus



"Am I up past my bedtime yet?"

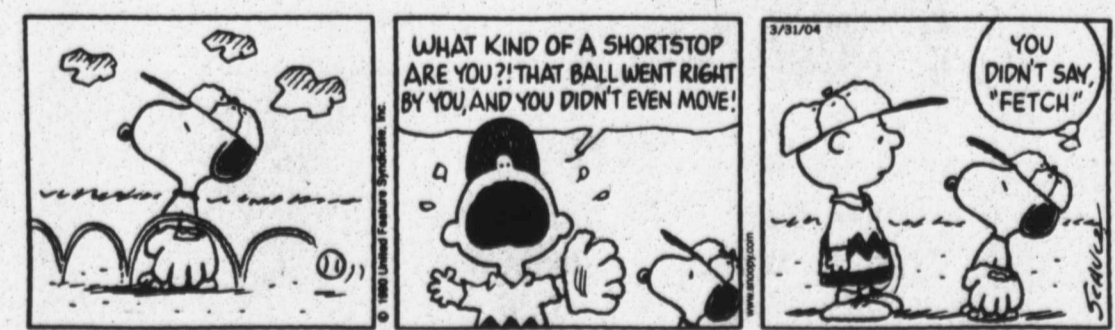
B.C.



Haggar The Horrible



Peanuts



Blondie



Flo & Friends



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overall.
The win
Nicole Cla
only three
The Lac
at Randall

SPORTS

Pampa run-rules Hereford, 11-1

PAMPA — It didn't take long for Pampa to pick up its first District 3-4A win of the season.

Senior outfielder Jed Martin went 4 for 4 at the plate and junior right hander Tyler Doughty tossed a two-hitter as the Harvesters run-ruled Hereford 11-1 Tuesday in five innings.

Martin batted in four runs and had a two-run homer in the first inning that gave Pampa a 3-1 lead. Derek Lewis added a leadoff home run in the second that sparked a five-run outburst.

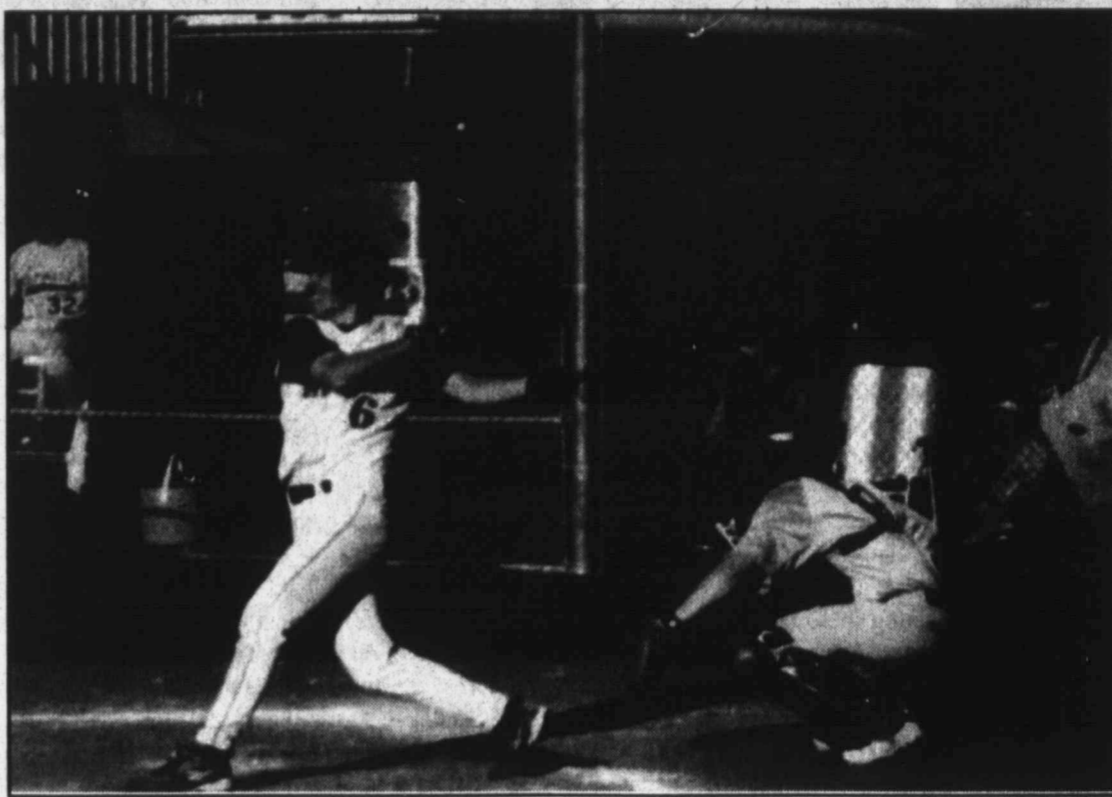
Doughty gave up a first-inning home run to Jayden Slentz, but settled down to

allow only an infield single in the third. Doughty finished with 8 strikeouts and 1 walk to boost his record to 4-2 for the season.

Both Pampa and Hereford are 1-2 in district play.

Tyson Hickman had two hits and two RBI while Seth Foster also had a pair of hits and an RBI. Nick Story had a run-scoring double and Dusty Lenderman added an RBI single. Hunter Craig, Shea Brown and Doughty each rapped a base hit.

Pampa visits Palo Duro for more district action Friday. For the season, the Harvesters have an 8-8 record.



Senior outfielder Jed Martin raps a fourth-inning double for the Harvesters. Pampa visits Palo Duro for a district clash Friday afternoon and then hosts Dumas at 1 p.m. Saturday.

NOTEBOOK

BASEBALL

PAMPA — Baseball fans are invited to a "Family Day" at Harvester Field on Saturday.

Pampa welcomes Dumas in District 3-4A action. The varsity plays at 1, followed by the junior varsity at 3:30.

The first 100 fans will receive free seat cushions.

There will be brisket wraps, hot dogs and homemade ice cream for sale at the concession stand.

Baseball Booster Club members urge the fans to come and join the Harvesters for a fun day.

CORRECTION

Lucas Almanza's name was misspelled in a March 30 article on the Pampa Middle School swim team.

SOFTBALL

AMARILLO — Pampa beat Caprock 8-2 Tuesday to take sole possession of second place in the District 3-4A softball race.

Amy Youree slapped a three-run inside the park home run to key a five-run outburst by the Lady Harvesters in the fifth.

Pampa improved to 5-1 in 3-4A and 12-5-1 overall. Caprock, which dropped out of a tie for second place, is 4-2 in district and 9-7 overall.

The winning pitcher was Nicole Clark, who gave up only three hits.

The Lady Harvesters play at Randall on Saturday.

Yankees rip Devil Rays; Matsui comes through for his fans

TOKYO (AP) — Hideki Matsui and the New York Yankees came through for their fans.

Matsui rocked the Tokyo Dome with a two-run homer, Jorge Posada hit three-run shots from both sides of the plate and the Yankees calmed their jittery supporters back home by routing the Tampa Bay Devil Rays 12-1 Wednesday night.

"It was truly a happy moment for myself," Matsui said, allowing himself a rare moment of public emotion.

A day after Tampa Bay turned baseball upside down by winning the season opener 8-3, the Yankees restored the old order — appropriate for a country tied to tradition — in another game that started just after 5 a.m. in New York.

Kevin Brown recorded his 198th career victory in his first start for the Yankees, allowing six hits over seven innings, and Tom Gordon and Mariano Rivera finished with hitless relief.

Tony Clark, playing first base because of Jason

Giambi's ailing knee, hit a tiebreaking two-run homer for the Yankees, who made sure they didn't return from Japan in last place.

Owner George Steinbrenner took the first loss calmly, saying, "It's not where you start, it's where you finish," but an 0-2 trip might have led to a different tune.

"It wouldn't be fun. In fact, I made a comment when we were down 1-0 in the first," Yankees manager Joe Torre said. "I felt a little tenseness in there. I said, 'Guys, what's the worst thing that can happen? We lose 162 games, big deal. We can still eat, and you're still going to get paid.'"

Alex Rodriguez came a few feet short of a grand slam but had another quiet night, going 0-for-5 and dropping to 1-for-9 with no RBIs. Derek Jeter finally got his first hit, an RBI single, after going hitless in his first seven at-bats.

"I was in there saying, 'I'm the last one without a hit,'" Jeter remembered.

Tampa Bay, coming off six straight last-place finishes, was pretty much overlooked during its five days in Japan. Devil Rays manager Lou Piniella understood that.

"We came to play a team that was very popular here," he said. "If we can play .500 against New York all year, I'll be very, very pleased."

The night — if not the whole week — belonged to Matsui, Japan's biggest sports star.

After starring for 10 years with the Yomiuri Giants, he signed with the Yankees before the 2003 season. In his first game back, he homered against his old team in Sunday's exhibition game.

That didn't count. This one did.

He repeatedly was greeted by flashbulb-popping fans thrilled to see him in the flesh, and he rewarded them with two big hits. After Aubrey Huff's RBI single in the first put the Devil Rays ahead, Matsui tied it in the fourth with a run-scoring sin-

gle off loser Jeremi Gonzalez.

Clark's homer in the fourth put New York ahead 3-1. In the fifth, Matsui teed off on a belt-high pitch, sending it deep into the seats in right-center. Fans gave him a standing ovation, a rarity in Japan. Some of the spectators repeatedly bowed to him.

The ovation was prolonged, as if fans were trying to get him to come out for a curtain call. But Matsui, always modest, didn't leave the dugout.

He had another chance to come up big in the seventh when he batted with the bases loaded, but Matsui struck out against Trevor Miller.

After he was presented with the series MVP award, a red-and-gold armored samurai helmet called a Kabuto, he addressed the crowd from a podium near home plate. The videoboard showed his father.

"Hopefully, we can have many more games like this," he said. "Everybody really enjoyed this, and the fans were great."

The crowd in the Big Egg was much quieter than the previous night. And while some Yankees' fans might have been furious over the opener, players were calm.

Brown, the 39-year-old right-hander acquired from Los Angeles in December, struck out five and walked none. His turning point came in the fourth, when he gave up a leadoff single to Jose Cruz Jr. and went to a 3-0 count on Tino Martinez.

Brown came back to strike out Martinez as Cruz was caught trying to steal second. Posada homered right-handed off Damian Moss in the fifth and left-handed against Jorge Sosa in the seventh.

It was the fifth time he homered from both sides in the same game, the first since June 28, 2002, against the New York Mets.

His drives were an afterthought as players dressed for the 7,250-mile flight back to spring training in Florida.

"Now," Posada said, "we can talk on the plane."

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Happy Haven Child Care recently held a Trike A Thon to raise donations for Saint Jude Children's Research Hospital. Through pledges the children raised over \$300 with the top fund raiser being Gage Kennedy.

