

WEST TEXAS Country Trader



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Abernathy
Weekly Review
The Canyon News

The Castro County News
The Clarendon News

The Lorenzo
EXAMINER
HEREFORD BRAND

Plainview Daily Herald
Ralls Reporter-News

Thursday, March 24, 1994

The Slatonite
The Tulia Herald

Seminar to explore uses of playas

LUBBOCK — The playa lake has been called the High Plains' most underutilized natural resource.

A meeting in May will seek to do something to stimulate the creativity of landowners in developing the many positive land, industrial and agricultural uses of the playa lake basins on their properties.

A symposium devoted to disseminating the latest knowledge about the current state of and future creative uses of playa basins on the Texas High Plains will be held May 18-19-20 on the campus of Texas Tech University.

The meeting will convene at 9 a.m. May 18 in the University Center at Tech and the first day keynote speaker will be Texas Senator John T. Montford of Lubbock.

Topics will range from studies on recharge of the Ogallala Aquifer to a tour of area playas to study wildlife habitat, urban

AgReview

runoff storage, confined animal waste storage and ag crop production applications around playas.

Speakers and topics will include:

■ Dr. Warren Wood, Current Estimates of Recharge to Ogallala Through Playas.

■ Dr. Don Reddell, Multi-Purpose Modification of Playa Sinks in the Late 1960s.

■ Dr. Lloyd Urban, Recent Artificial Recharge Experiments from Playas.

■ Dr. Thomas C. Gustavson, Bureau of Economic Geology Study on Pantex Playas.

Day two of the seminar will continue with more sessions from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Speakers and topics include:

■ Dr. John Sweeten,

Results of Studies of Playa Basins Used for Storage of Confined Animal Waste.

■ Dr. T. R. Mollhagen, Pesticides and Playas — Collectors for Agriculture Land Runoff.

■ Drs. Lloyd Urban, Loren Smith and Mr. James Mitchell, Ideas for Enhancement of Playas.

■ Darrell Peckham, Current Status and Projection of Ground Water Reserves in the Texas High Plains Ogallala Aquifer.

The final day of the seminar will be devoted to a bus tour of area playas from 9 a.m. to noon.

Information on registration for the seminar is available by calling one of the two co-chairmen for the event, Dr. Lloyd Urban, 742-3597.



Hard to miss cowpoke

Woody Williams/Canyon News

A cowpoke riding a Texas-sized steer catches plenty of looks from motorists on Canyon Drive in Amarillo. The ranch boss depicted is Royal Yarbrough, who rides a real steer 52 times a year for TV ads promoting his Dickie Stout Motor Ranch.

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'Big Birds' are focus of national raisers group

■ Ostrich Association puts down roots in Texas, where ostrich outnumber cattle on some family farms

Special to AgReview

FORT WORTH — The American Ostrich Association provides leadership for the American ostrich industry and is laying a foundation for its future.

The association supports the ostrich industry through work with government agencies and the media, promotion of ostrich and ostrich products, and information and referral services for breeders and related operations. The AOA also supports research into ostrich breeding and raising, the benefits of ostrich products and potential markets for ostrich through the American Ostrich Foundation.

From a membership of 400 in 1988, The American Ostrich Association has grown to nearly 3,000 members. AOA members are located from coast to coast and range from owners and managers of traditional livestock ranches to lawyers, doctors and other professionals seeking entry into this exciting new industry.

The association's professional staff is led by Executive Director Chuck Ball, who came to the AOA in October 1993. Ball brings a background in the beef cattle and other traditional livestock industries to the task of developing the U.S. ostrich industry.

AOA policy and budgets are guided by 16 voting members of the board of directors.

The American Ostrich Association was founded in 1987. The association holds two major meetings per year. OstrichFest, the AOA's annual convention, is held in February. The AOA Mid-Year Meeting is held in June.

THE ASSOCIATION:

The American Ostrich Association offices are at 3840 Hulen St., Suite 210, Fort Worth, Texas 76107. The association can be reached at (817) 731-8597 or via FAX at 731-8446.

The American ostrich industry is relatively new compared to that of South Africa, where ostrich have been raised and slaughtered commercially for a century. The ostrich is the center of a multimillion-dollar industry in South Africa.

Ostrich breeding was estab-

lished in the U.S. in the 1980s. Currently, the U.S. is home to a breeder market, in which ostrich raisers sell their birds to others seeking breeding stock. A goal of the AOA is to prepare the domestic ostrich industry for transition to a slaughter market, in which birds would be processed at the age of 12 to 14 months for their meat, hide and feathers. The transition from breeder to slaughter market will take place over time as the U.S. ostrich population grows and markets for ostrich products expand.

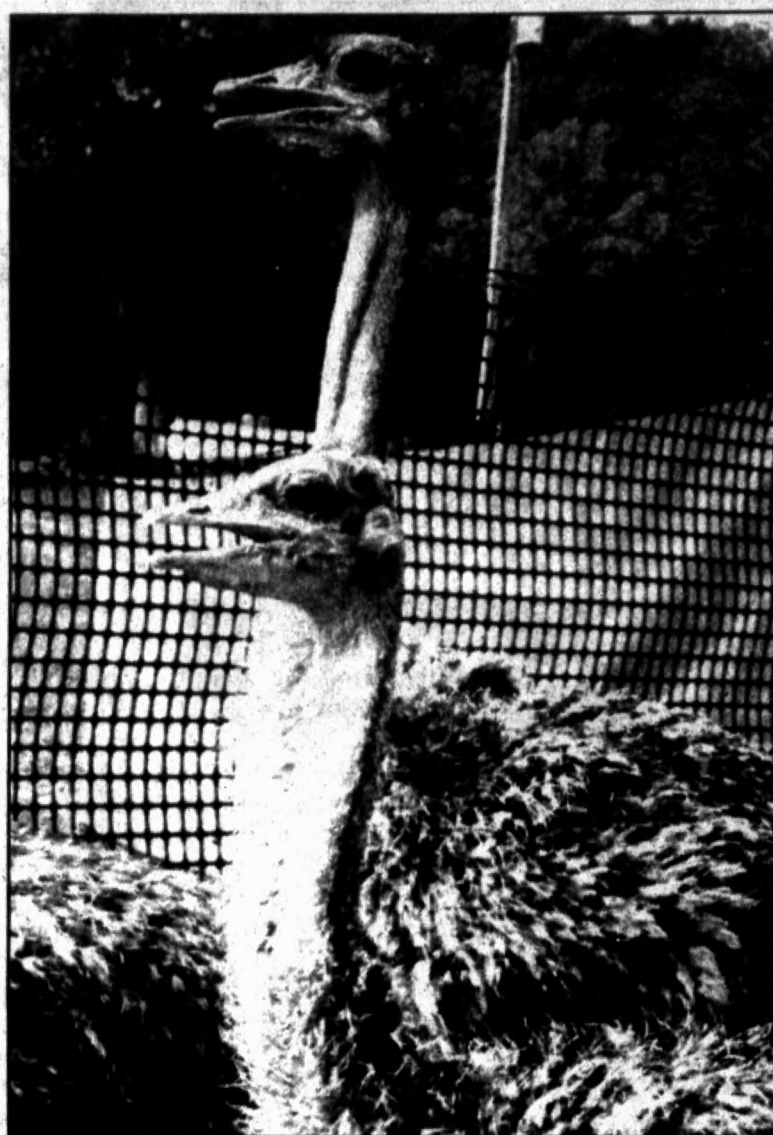
HISTORY OF INDUSTRY:

The ostrich has been raised commercially for more than a century, first for its feathers, now also for its hide and low-fat red meat.

Ostrich are considered ready for slaughter at the age of 12 to 14 months and generally will produce 75 pounds of meat, 14 square feet of hide and two pounds of feathers.

MEAT VALUE:

The newest and most promising ostrich commodity is its meat. This low-fat red meat already is in demand in Europe and the



Pacific Rim and finds a home on the tables of some of the nation's finest restaurants. High in protein, ostrich meat is lower in fat than beef, chicken or turkey, yet is satisfying for red-meat lovers.

A promising alternative to beef for health-conscious Americans, ostrich meat has a flavor and texture similar to beef, about the same protein content of beef, but less than half the calories. Like beef, its red color is provided by iron content.

HIDE:

The distinctive quill pattern and suppleness of ostrich hide make it a leather much in demand by western bootmakers, shoe manufacturers, and makers of wallets, belts, briefcases and other accessories.

FEATHERS:

Ostrich were first raised for their feathers used either in fashion or for feather dusters, since ostrich feathers attract dust without generating static electricity. This unique quality now makes the feathers useful in a variety of contemporary applications, ranging from auto manufacturing to the computer industry.

A GREAT AG ALTERNATIVE:

The ostrich, *Struthio camelus*, is a member of the ratite family of flightless birds. It is indigenous to Africa, where the ostrich has been raised commercially for more than 100 years.

The ostrich grows to a height of seven to eight feet and can weigh more than 400 pounds. It is highly adaptable, requiring less acreage than other livestock and relatively modest amounts of food and water. Its natural habitat is, after all, the African desert.

There are several subspecies and varieties of ostrich, North African and East African or Masal Ostrich, also known as "rednecks," are rare in the United States outside of zoos. The bird is named for the reddish tint of the skin of its neck and legs. The red-neck ostrich also is distinguished by its bald or partially bald head.

The Somali and South African subspecies are known as "blue-neck" ostrich, due to the blue cast of skin on the neck and legs. These ostrich also are rarely found in the U.S.

The domestic ostrich, known in the U.S. as the "African

Black," is a hybrid of the redneck and blunneck ostrich. Originally bred in South Africa, the African Black ostrich is known for its feather quality. It is the smaller of the three subspecies.

Which type of ostrich is best? That depends on the type of products that the breeder wants to produce. Experts recommend selecting birds that can deliver a high-quality product, regardless of their type.

WHY RAISE THEM?

Ostrich were first raised for their feathers, and contemporary markets have developed for its hide and low-fat red meat.

DOMESTICATION:

The ostrich was first domesticated in South Africa in the mid-19th century. Its first commercial product was its feathers, used in fashion and costuming, as well as for feather dusters. After World War II, ostrich leather and meat became viable commodities. A cooperative marketing system for South African producers formed in 1959, and that nation controlled the market for ostrich products until recently. Ostrich breeding nested in the United States in the early 1980s. The American Ostrich Association, formed in 1987 to support this new U.S. industry, has grown to a professional association with nearly 3,000 members.

OSTRICH INDUSTRY:

Members of the American Ostrich Association are located from coast to coast, breeding their birds on farms and ranches from California to Florida. South Africa currently produces most of the world's ostrich.

Approximately 150,000 birds per year are processed in South Africa as part of a multimillion-dollar industry. Ostrich also are raised commercially in Israel, Zimbabwe and East Africa.

GETTING STARTED:

Ostrich may be purchased as proven breeding pairs, chicks or as eggs. Incubators are necessary for hatching ostrich eggs, as are pens for growing birds and adult ostrich.

Ostrich begin breeding at the age of two-and-one-half to three years, and pairs may breed for as long as 40 years. Breeding pairs will produce 30 to 100 eggs per year. Chicks hatch 42 days after incubation. About 10 inches in height when hatched, they grow approximately one foot per month.



IN THE WILD — More than a dozen birds wander unfettered on a South African ostrich ranch. While American ostriches are grown largely in pens, the South African ranches utilize the open range.

PHIL HAMILTON Plainview Daily Herald

Game birds on farm get special treatment

By JOHN H. CUSHMAN
NY Times News Service

UPPER BRANDON, Va. — Tell most farmers to flood low-lying farm land for the benefit of wild ducks and geese and they will reckon that they are coming out behind on the deal.

But at Upper Brandon Plantation, a colonial-era plantation on the south bank of the James River, about 30 miles southeast of Richmond, game birds outrank corn, soybeans, wheat and other cash crops, and anything that encourages waterfowl is considered a sound investment.

The 8,000 Canada geese that stopped here for the last few months foraged freely on tender shoots of winter wheat. But the geese, not the grain, are the farm's

prized assets, so they were granted their own preserve in the middle of the farm.

Deep in a marsh on the edge of the peninsular plantation, a thriving population of ducks are valued tenants, unseen behind a thick, swampy cypress forest.

Easily eroded slopes have been taken out of commercial production and planted in fescue and sunflower, the better to feed doves. Small game hide from predators among tall thickets of panic grass, planted to filter runoff from the farm.

The James River Corp., which set up a training and conference center on the property after buying the farm in 1985, takes important customers there for a few days of easy hunt-

ing and a secluded soft sell. That, to some extent, explains the company's love of wildlife. But the farm has also turned a profit since the company took it over.

Winter wheat production, for example, has been increasing every year. Last year the farm yielded 65 bushels an acre, up from fewer than 40 bushels under the previous owner, who tilled heavily and left the imposing manor house vacant.

"I have a responsibility to make money," said Peter Trexler, an environmental scientist who manages the property. "I also have a responsibility to my company, and to myself, to have a good habitat here. We're trying to do it all: wildlife, the environment and

profit."

The fields here have been farmed since at least 1616, making this perhaps the oldest farm in the country under continuous cultivation. But not since William Byrd Harrison, a pioneer of American scientific agriculture, inherited the farm in 1821 has it seen such experimentation. In the latest test, crayfish were seeded in the farm's restored wetlands, where they may eventually yield \$1,000 an acre.

Upper Brandon Plantation has become a model of small-scale, conservation-minded farming, and James River intends for it to stay that way: it has donated the development rights under an easement to two conservation groups, the American Farmland

Trust and the Nature Conservancy.

The company gets an \$8 million tax deduction by giving away its right to develop the property. All future farming practices will have to conform to a conservation plan approved by the U.S. Soil Conservation Service. The restrictions will remain binding even if the farm is sold.

James River, a \$4.7 billion manufacturer of paper and other products, will also benefit intangibly by polishing the kind of conservationist image that any paper producer would envy.

But the company insists that at Upper Brandon the profit motive comes first, and last year the farm cleared about \$60,000. In especially good years the company can earn three times that amount

on the 1,800-acre farm, which includes about 750 acres under cultivation, 580 acres in marsh and the rest in forest.

Trexler is no organic farmer: he turns to pesticides to fight off invasive grasses and insects. But he has bought modern equipment to use chemicals as frugally as possible.

Moreover, neighboring farms are imitating his waterfowl programs, which he said is not surprising since renting out hunting rights can bring in thousands of dollars.

"There wasn't a managed waterfowl impoundment on this river basin until we arrived, and there are probably at least three dozen now that I know of, on various farms up and down the river," he said. "We have re-created a lot of wetlands."

Gardners' picks for 1994

By The Associated Press

Some picks among introductions in the catalogs:

— Colorful clematis varieties are new in the Wayside catalog. Clematis "Multi-Blue" is a dramatic double, blue-purple flower with a central boss of spiky petals; blooms reach 3 or 4 inches and are suitable for

containers or small patio gardens. The "Royal Velvet" is a purple flower highlighted with reddish anthers, grows to about 4 to 5 inches and tolerates shade better than other varieties. "Anna Louise" features large 5- or 6-inch blooms in rich purple with a red-purple bar on each petal

and an "eyelash" center; these also are good for containers or patios.

— A showy hybrid from Park, the "Portulaca Sundial Peppermint," is a full double, 2 inches wide, with bright pink petals splashed and freckled with crimson around gold centers.

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Lubbock's oldest surviving building gets renovation

By JEAN PAGEL

Associated Press Writer

LUBBOCK (AP) — Memories cling like mystic cobwebs inside the old St. Paul's on the Plains Episcopal Church.

It was here that Lubbock pioneers gathered in 1914 to share their faith, marry their sweethearts, baptize their children, mourn their dead.

The gothic windows are gone, along with the altar, electric organ and shiny brass kneelers.

A visitor today finds a mess of peeling paint, protruding nails and tattered wallpaper. Dust dances in a sunbeam that lets itself in through splintered shingles.

"You have to use your imagination," conceded Tom Whiteside, brushing his foot over a whiskey bottle.

Whiteside and other history buffs know what

they're up against trying to salvage the oldest public building still standing in Lubbock.

But their \$109,000 restoration project got a big boost from the City Council earlier this year when council members agreed to grant St. Paul's a proper home.

Currently, the little clapboard building — sandwiched between Amigos Auto Service and a voice mail company — stands just a few yards off busy Avenue Q. Vandals and natural deterioration have taken a toll after 80 years.

So the city agreed to keep up the maintenance if the Lubbock Heritage Society renovates the church and moves it to a public park.

"I think it's wonderful," said Blanche Todd, who remembers Sunday school classes under the high rafters and Celtic cross. "It has

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Case names new president

HOUSTON (AP) — Tenneco Inc. announced that Jean-Pierre Rosso has been named president and chief executive officer of Case Corp., the company's farm and construction equipment division.

Rosso, currently president of the worldwide home and building control business at Honeywell Inc., succeeds Case President Edward J. Campbell, who is retiring March 31, Tenneco said Monday.

The French native also succeeds Dana G. Mead as Case's chief executive officer. Mead, Tenneco's president and chief executive officer, will remain Case's chairman.

Mead, who joined Tenneco in 1992 as president and chief operating officer, added the title of chief executive at Tenneco last month when Mike Walsh resigned the post because of his ongoing cancer treatment.

Campbell, 66, also has been an official of Tenneco operation companies for 26 years. He guided the Racine, Wis.-based Case through a complex, ongoing restructuring.

The once-troubled Case, Tenneco's largest operation division, was profitable in each of the last three quarters of 1993.

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hurt me all these years to see it deteriorating."

The building hasn't been used as a church since 1941, when its expanding congregation moved. Its new owner stripped most of the identifiable church symbols and created three apartments.

When the owner died in 1987, his family gave the building to the heritage society.

Volunteers have worked since then to return St. Paul's to the way it looked in 1914.

"It embodies the straight and simple lifestyles of the time ... durable and rugged and hardfast," said architect

Mary Crites, who calls the church part of Lubbock's identity.

"If you took a town or city that had no evolution of its buildings — everything plopped down from, say, 1985 — you would have a community that's nameless, not unique," she said.

Researchers give credit for St. Paul's founding to Sally McKee Coleman, a devout Episcopalian who reportedly barred cowboys from her boarding house until they removed their guns and combed their hair.

The 20-by-30 church

was ornamented with buttresses on the outside corners and colored paper pasted to the windows for a stained-glass effect. Its members — mostly ranching families and students at Texas Technological College — extended the building at least twice.

"We can foresee that the future of this little church, whose cross points to the stars, which seem very near in this prairie country, will be marked with continued endeavor and ultimate achievement," the minister's wife wrote in 1923.

Now its future again holds weddings and other functions for people who make reserva-

tions at the park.


Whiteside, an attorney heading the project, optimistically estimates that restorers need six more months and \$42,000 to complete the job.

They plan to replace the roof, the arched windows and the original beige wallpaper, said Whiteside, whose father was married at St. Paul's. One day soon, he promises, the oak floor will be polished again and a few pews might line the back wall.

"It's honoring the people who went on before you," he said, "and seeing what life was like before we were here."



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AgReview



South Plains

Ag News

March 27

TEXAS & SOUTHWESTERN CATTLE RAISERS — Will hold 117th Annual Convention in the Tarrant County Convention Center in Fort Worth.

March 29

PECAN SHORTCOURSE — Set for the Goldthwaite Civic Center in Goldthwaite.

April 16-17

COTTON GIN FESTIVAL — The 4th Annual Cotton Gin Festival will be held in Burton in South Central Texas featuring cotton gin, antique farm equipment, folklife demonstrations, parade, contests, kids stuff, entertainment and arts and crafts.

May 6-8

PAWNEE, OKLA., OLD TRACTOR SHOW — Typical old tractor event. Information available at 405-282-7008.

May 28

FLOYD COUNTY OLD SETTLERS — Day of celebrating and fun, plus a parade including antique tractors.

June 11

ARMSTRONG FARM TRACTOR PLAYDAY — Paul and Jackie Armstrong of Amarillo will host their annual tractor show on their farm 3 1/2 miles west of Hart on FM 145, then three miles south. A slow race, parade and plowing contest will be held.

July 9

LEVELLAND CELEBRATION AND TRACTOR PARADE — Parade and celebration including old tractors. For information contact Preston Reeves.

July 16

CHILDRESS REUNION — Day of celebrating and downtown parade.

'Waxing eloquent' about lack o' lotto luck

The Texas Lottery has been in effect for a while now, and my luck remains the same. Bad!

I would really like to meet some of the folks who win a substantial amount, and inquire about their pasts. I'll be they have always been lucky. It kind of hangs over their heads. You know the type. There is small comfort in knowing that most folks are like myself and never win... wrong!

THIS BRINGS TO mind a story about a fellow, like myself, who was used to bad luck just hanging over him. The incident occurred during the '30s, before the Lottery, before Bingo, and before Las Vegas. It was a time when raffles were being conceived and were just beginning to take hold in the country. Raffles were the predecessors of our present form of gambling, and were many times sanctioned by the church.

Anyway, this fellow was a cotton farmer in West Texas who needed to trade in his old plow mule for a new one. He went to the bank, took out a loan, went to the local mule barn and purchased a better mule.

HE RODE THE MULE home, fed him, brushed him down, and turned him out into the lot for the night. Daybreak came and the farmer was very anxious to harness up the new mule for a good day of plowing. Upon entering the lot, he found the mule with all four legs sticking straight up in the air, dead as a door nail.

"Woe is me," he moaned. "What am I to do now. I've got fields to plow, kids to feed and money owed on a dead mule. It just can't get any worse."



Precious Memories

By Ernie Gandy

Suddenly, an idea struck him. When he was in town the day before, he remembered someone trying to sell him a raffle ticket for something. He spent the rest of the day making

out raffle tickets for a dollar apiece. He then went to town and promptly sold all of them.

A FEW WEEKS later, he was back in town and ran across a friend who knew what he had done. The friend asked, "Say, how did you come out on your raffle and the dead mule?"

"Very well," he answered with much pride. "I cleared enough to pay of my bank loan and also enough to purchase a new mule out right."

"Yeah, but I'll bet you I made a lot of folks mad when they found out the mule was dead," the friend said.

"Just one," replied the farmer, "but I gave him his dollar back."

(Guest columnist Ernie Gandy is Farm and Ranch director for TV station KLBK, Channel 13, in Lubbock)

Hale man to lead applicators' group

ABERNATHY — Clark Riley of Riley Ag Services in Abernathy has been elected President of the Texas Commercial Ground

Applicators Association at its first annual meeting Feb. 18-19 in Austin.

Glen Akin of Slaton was named vice presi-

dent.

Special guest was Texas Speaker of the House Pete Laney of Hale Center and staff member Mark Smith.

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Frye named Hereford's Ag man of '93

Kenneth Frye was named the Hereford Brand Man of the Year in Agriculture at the 29th annual banquet of the Texas Sugar Beet Growers Association, Saturday in Hereford.

The award was presented by Speedy Nieman, publisher of the Brand. He was the 17th recipient of the honor. Frye, who farms at Easter, was honored for his production and his service in the community.

Neiman said Frye, 51, was noted for having the fastest motorcycle around during his days at Dirnmitt High School. Frye rented his first farm at the age of 17, and continued to farm while attending West Texas A-University. Today, his operation includes 14,000 acres of land in Castro, Parmer and Pecos counties which he and his brother farm. The Frye brothers are among the largest beet farmers in the area, with about 1,100 acres.

Frye also serves on the Castro County ASCS Board, and was ordained as a deacon at the First Baptist Church in Dirnmitt in 1993.

Frye married the former Linda Hogue of Slaton in 1964. They have three children: Shelly, a graduate of Texas A&M University; Carla, who graduated from Baylor University School of Nursing; and Reagan, who will graduate from West Texas A&M University in May.

Frye was re-elected to the TSBGA board during Friday's business meeting. Also elected to the board were J.C. Palmer of Nazareth and Randy Wieck of Umbarger. Ed Ramaekers of Nazareth and Richard Friemel of the Umbarger-Dawn area retired from the board this year. They were given plaques by Bill Cleavinger of Wildorado, TSBGA president.

Roger Hill, president of Holly Sugar, and Steve Reynolds, vice president of Holly Hybrids, spoke at the event. The keynote speaker, "Doc" Blakely, was introduced by board member Coby Gilbreath of Dimmitt.

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WHAT TO DO IF YOU THINK YOUR CHILD IS ON DRUGS.

Take a deep breath.

You're not a failure as a parent. You're not helpless. And you're not alone.

If you think you're a failure, consider this: There are many kids with neglectful parents who never use drugs. There are also children with seemingly model parents who do use drugs.

So the first thing to accept is that drugs, while indeed dangerous, are one more problem for youngsters to handle. And they'll do it better and faster if you're aware, involved, and don't stick your head in the sand.

THE AWARE PARENT IS THE GOOD PARENT.

Part of awareness and a major deterrent to experimentation is to talk to your kids about drugs.

But even with a lot of parental involvement, there are no guarantees. So it's important to know the symptoms of drug use and to take action if you see your youngster displaying them.

THE WARNING SIGNALS.

There are no symptoms that are absolutely reliable. But there are clues (see box).

Most of these symptoms tend to be gradual which is why parental awareness is so important.

But don't jump to conclusions.

Many of the warning signs for drug use are the same as those for depression or for the ups and downs of being a teenager. There's also the possibility it's a physical or emotional problem.

But whatever the problem, we're talking about a child who needs help. Right now.

The Telltale Signs

- Chronic eye redness, sore throat or dry cough.
- Chronic lying, especially about whereabouts.
- Wholesale changes in friends.
- Stealing.
- Deteriorating relationships with family members.
- Wild mood swings, hostility, or abusive behavior.
- Chronic fatigue, withdrawal, carelessness about personal grooming.
- Major changes in eating or sleeping patterns.
- Loss of interest in favorite activities, hobbies, sports.
- School problems - slipping grades, absenteeism.

START WITHIN THE FAMILY.

Nothing beats the power of love and family support. That has to start with a frank discussion.

Don't make it an attack. And don't try to talk with your child if he or she seems under the influence.

Wait for a calm moment and then explain that you're worried about certain behavior (be specific) and give your child every opportunity to explain. That means really listening, not doing all the talking.

At the same time, it's important to speak frankly about the possibility of drugs. And it's particularly important to talk about your values and why you're dead set against drugs.

If your youngster seems evasive or if his or her explanations are not convincing, you may want to consult your doctor to rule out illness and to ask for advice.

You may also want to have your child visit a mental health professional to see if there are emotional problems.

FURTHER ACTION MAY BE NECESSARY.

If your child seems non-responsive or belligerent, and you suspect drugs are involved, immediate action is vital.

First, you'll need an evaluation from a health professional skilled in diagnosing adolescents with alcohol or drug problems.

You may want to get involved with an intervention program to learn techniques that will help convince a drug user to accept help.

For the user, there are self-help, outpatient, day care, residency, and 24-hour hospitalization programs.

The right program depends entirely on the circumstances and the degree of drug involvement. Here, you'll need professional help to make an informed choice.

Another point: If a program is to succeed, the family needs to be part of it. This can mean personal or family counseling. It may also involve participating in a support group where you learn about co-dependency and how not to play into the problems that might prompt further drug use.

If you don't know about drug programs in your area, call your family doctor, local hospital or county mental health society or school counselor for a referral. You can also call the national helpline - 800-662-HELP - for advice and a referral.

WHATEVER YOU DO, DON'T GIVE UP.

That child who upsets you so much is the same little boy or girl who, only yesterday, gave you such joy. They're in way over their heads, and they never needed you quite as much as they need you now. No matter what they say.

For more information on how to talk with your kids about drugs, ask for a free copy of "A Parent's Guide to Prevention." Call 1-800-624-0100.

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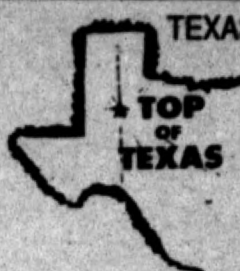
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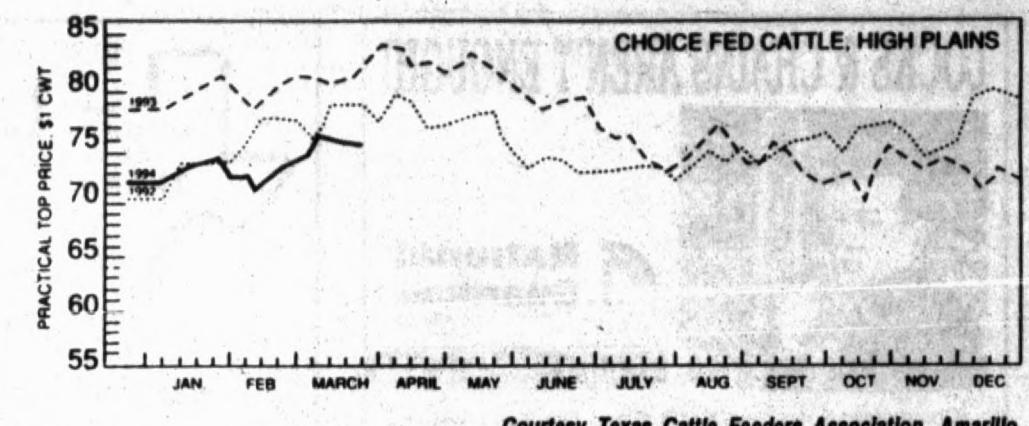
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1,400-year-old yew tree witness to British history

■ Its branches shaded Jane Austen, others

By **AUDREY WOODS**
Associated Press

SELBORNE, England (AP) — A terrible gale four years ago tore the Great Yew of Selborne from the spot where it had stood for 1,400 years and left it spread across St. Mary's churchyard, its exposed roots twined around human bones from medieval burials.

The tree was righted and replanted with expert advice, but after some early signs that it was rallying, the patient succumbed.

But the limbless trunk — nearly 26 feet (8 meters) around — will remain where it stands as a monument to hope.

"Because it is such a monumental size, and we thought it might take root again," says Rev. James Anderson, vicar of Selborne, a village of about 700 souls 40 miles (65 km) southwest of London.

Yews are thought to be just about immortal. The oldest known tree in Britain is a yew at Forthinghall, Scotland, which is estimated at 1,500 to 3,000 years old. Its girth is over 50 feet (15 meters).

The Selborne yew took root about the time St. Augustine arrived from Rome to persuade the locals to give up the worship of Woden and Thor. When it reached its millenium, the navy of the first Queen Elizabeth had just defeated the Spanish Armada.

The Rev. Gilbert White mentioned the tree in his "Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne," published in 1788 and still a bible for nature lovers. He said its "aspect bespeaks it to be of great age. ... The body is squat, short and thick, and measures 23 feet (7 meters) in the girth, supporting an head of suitable extent to its bulk."

A naturalist and Selborne's most famous son, White was the spiritual forebear of thousands of Britons who pursue flora and fauna through field and stream on the weekends armed with butterfly nets, binoculars and field guides.

The great yew was certainly known to Jane Austen, who lived four miles (6 km) north at Chawton from 1809 to 1817, the last years of her life. In this quiet corner of Hampshire she wrote "Mansfield Park," "Emma" and "Persuasion," and revised and finally published "Pride and Prejudice," and "Sense and Sensibility."

In a letter to her sister Cassandra, written May 31, 1811, she told of the upcoming "gaieties of Tuesday (Ye 4th), on Selbourne Common, where there are to be Volunteers (soldiers) and Felicities of all kinds."

She got to know Selborne in the

decades after White's death and knew other members of his family, says Jean Bowden, curator of Jane Austen's House in Chawton. She knew White's brother, Benjamin, an antiquarian bookseller.

Gilbert White, who died June 26, 1793, is remembered by a window in the church that shows the yew in the background.

It would be thriving still if not for the gale that swept southern England the afternoon of Jan. 25, 1990.

"I just looked out of the window and I could see the tower of the church, which was normally obscured. And the tree had gone," says the vicar.

Experts said part of the tree might be saved if it were righted.

While preparations were made, archaeologists made a quick study of the disturbed burials — the earliest was from the 13th century — and preserved the bones of about 30 people for reburial.

Students from the Merrist Wood Agricultural College sawed off the head of the tree. That reduced the burden on the remaining intact roots, not to mention lightening the load for the three-ton crane that would haul the yew upright.

A time capsule of 20th century odds and ends was stashed in the earth along with compost and fertilizer, and the split trunk was bound together and winched into place. The roots got a good soaking when the winching apparatus knocked a hole in a water main.

Much of the sawn-off wood was sold and made into carvings and souvenirs. Some was used to make a lute as a gift to the church, and planks from the largest bough were taken by the furniture department of the Buckinghamshire College of Higher Education.

"We hope to have a side altar made from it," the vicar says. "Whether it will come to anything I don't know because the wood is of poor quality."

Shoots that appeared in the first two years gave hope that the arboreal first aid had worked.

But Forestry Authority dendrologist (tree scientist) John White decided late in 1992 that it had died. "By Christmas it was gone," he says.

The link with the past is not lost. Cuttings were taken from the live tree when it fell and some are being coddled at the Forestry Authority's research center. A vigorous one has been planted in the churchyard across from the medieval oak door to St. Mary's, with plenty of room to spread its boughs.

"I would expect, in 15 to 20 years, you'd be able to sit in its shade," White says.