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Cowboy Country News

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Published each Wednesday in the county seat of Yoakum County, Plains, Texas

Volume V11, Issue 16, January 3, 2001



Court agrees to economic development investment, OK's new Baliff position

In the December 27 session of Commissioners court, Judge Dallas Brewer reviewed a letter from Yoakum County Connection Chair Linda Powell seeking financial cooperation from the county in the form of a matching \$2,000 grant. The Connection recently received a state grant in that amount to help fund a young leaders workshop tentatively scheduled this Spring. Ms. Powell's letter stated the total \$4,000 would be used to fund the workshop to train young people to assist in county organizations, clubs and volunteer efforts promoting the county. "We think the future of Yoakum County depends on leaders, and economic development can only be accomplished with foresight and forethought," Powell's letter stated.

In other business, the court approved the county's participation in establishing a Baliff position for the 121st Judicial District Court, Yoakum County Court and Terry County Court. Final details of the agreement will have to be reached with a contract between all parties. A bid was awarded to Mustang Country for the purchase of a 2001 Dodge Caravan minivan. After trade-in of a 1991 Ford Aerostar and rebate, the purchase price for the vehicle was \$21,385. The vehicle will be used by the Yoakum County Senior Citizens Center in Denver City.

The Treasurer's report indicating an ending general fund balance of \$8,585,482 at the end of November was approved.

Veteran county official steps down

In twenty four years of service as a county commissioner, Jim Barron has "been there and done that." First elected in the 1976 November Democrat Primary, he took office January 1, 1977, and his official retirement came at the stroke of Midnight December 31, 2000.

Asked what prompted him to seek the commissioner job twenty-four years ago, Barron told CCN, "I more or less grew up around the courthouse here. My Mother worked many years in both the county clerk and the auditor offices, and my interest in county government started early on. In high school, both Jack Palmer and I said we would one day like to be elected a commissioner. I was able to pursue that goal, but because of his relationship with the Fitzgerald family, Jack could not."

Barron said when he entered county politics he told people he would listen and pay attention to their thoughts and needs, and he would work for those needs not only locally but throughout the state. Future appointments to state government organizations allowed him to carry through with the promises.

Barron feels the most important aspect of his role as commissioner was to develop an awareness of the needs of this community, his precinct and the entire county. The greatest difficulty a member of commissioner court faces is arriving at the economic means of meeting all those

needs.

Asked what he considered some of the major accomplishments during his 24 years service, Barron said, "I am proud of Yoakum County's medical facilities. I know they have been hard to maintain financially, but they are a very important asset for the county's citizens. I think we have done a good job with our parks and county golf course. They are the most utilized facilities we have in the county, and I am proud of them."

Barron said probably the toughest decision court members faced during his term of office was justifying an increase in the tax rate when tax values fell sharply, and continuing to maintain a progressive and efficient county government.

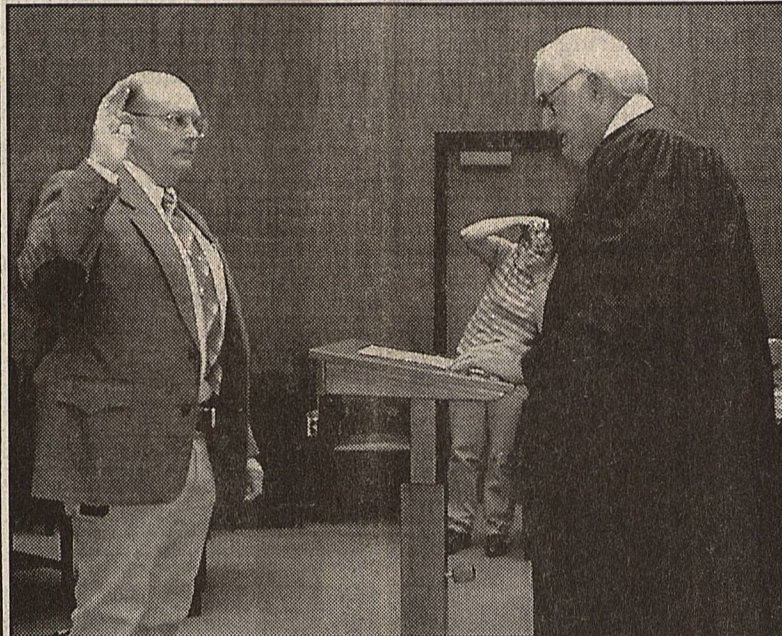
"I took a great deal of satisfaction from my direct involvement in obtaining grant funds to improve the water and sewer systems of both Plains and Denver City several years back. They received almost \$2 million for badly needed improvements," Barron said. He feels his appointment and election to several state governmental organizations helped obtain those grant monies.

Barron was appointed to the Regional Council of the Department of Community Affairs by then Governor Anne Richards. Other governmental positions include Board Member of the West Texas Association of County Judges and Commissioners, then serving

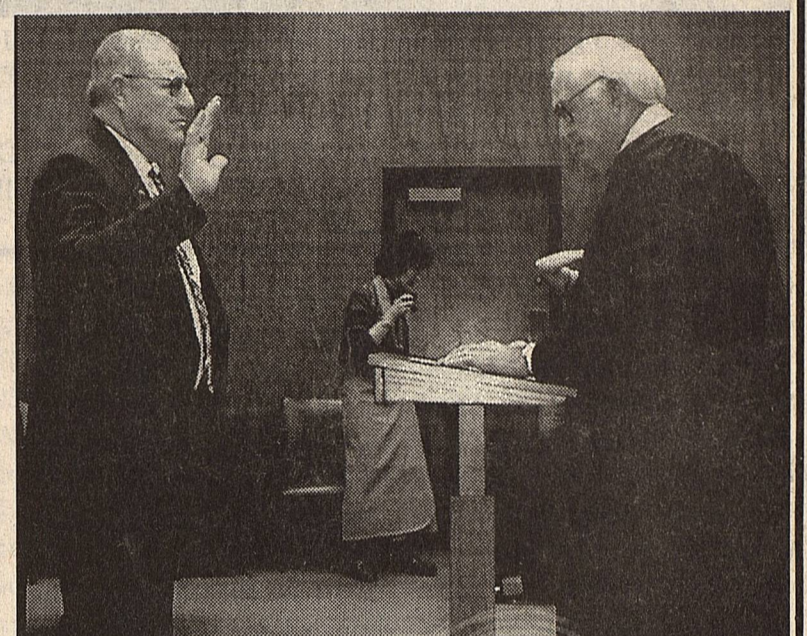
Turn To Page Two,
 'BARRON'

County officials sworn in December 28

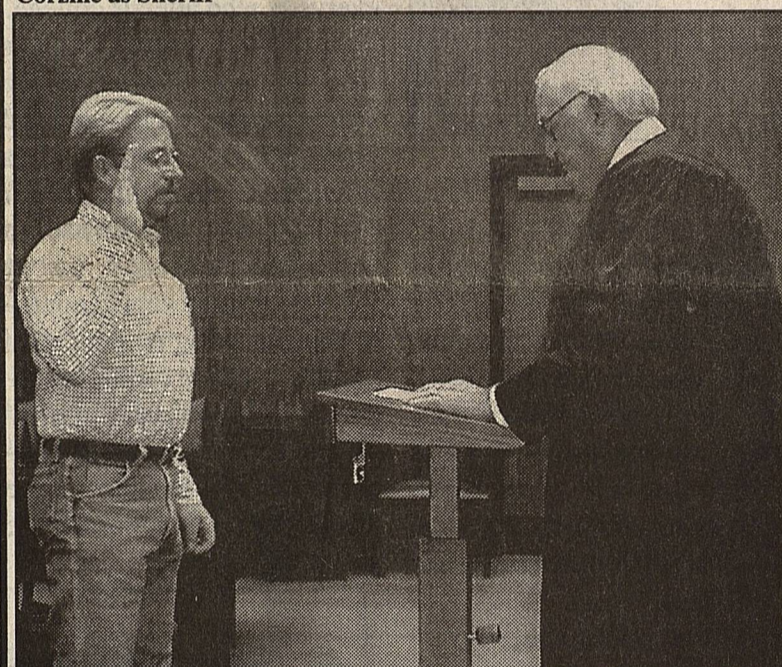
Official duties won't start until January 1, 2001



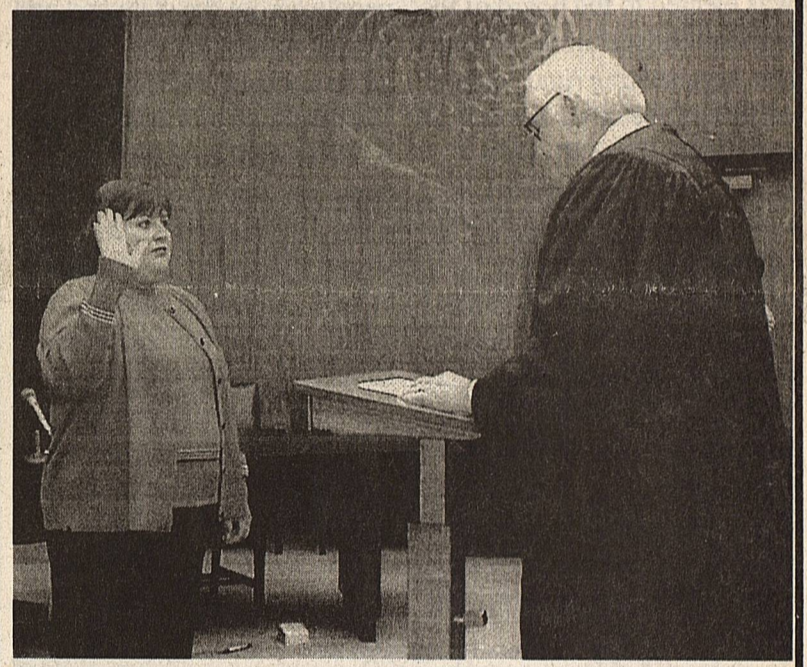
Judge Brewer was busy last Thursday - Here he swears in Don Corzine as Sheriff



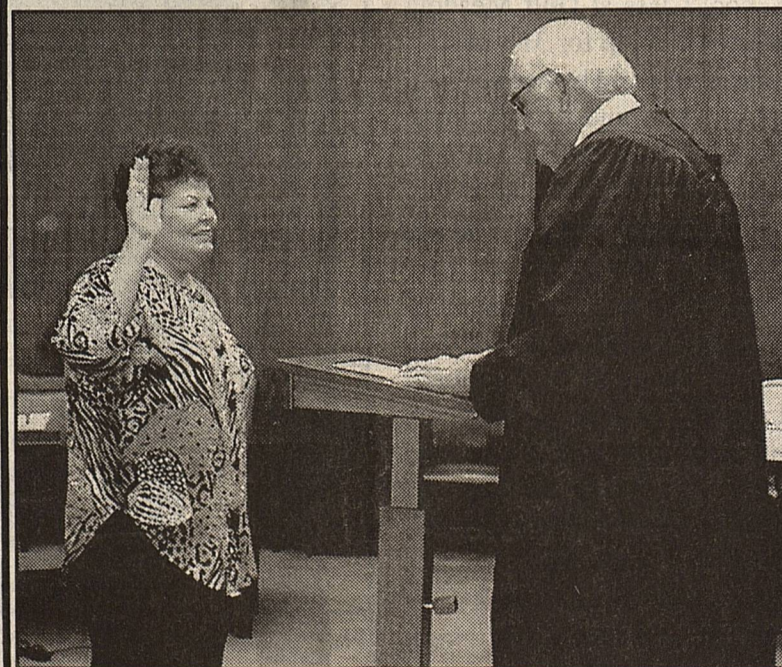
Ty Earl Powell sworn in as Commissioner, Precinct 3



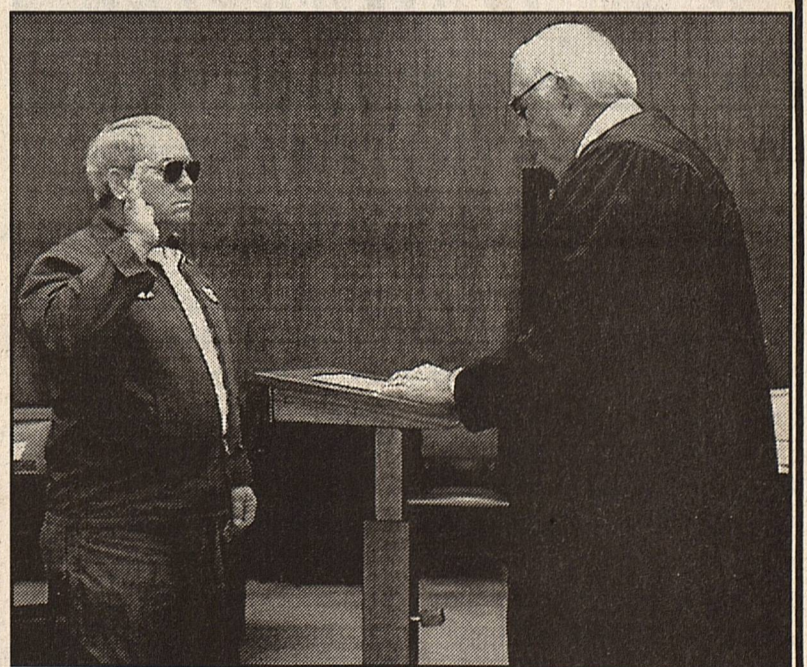
Woody Lindsey returns as Commissioner of Precinct 1



Betty N. Rivas is new Tax Assessor/Collector for county



Dene Rafferty returns as Pct. 1 Constable



Gordon Sefcik will serve as Pct. 2 Constable.

2001 ushered in with armed robbery here

At approximately 2:15 AM on New Year's Day, an older model Lincoln Town car containing two men pulled up to the gas pumps at the local Allsup's Convenience Store. The driver got out, filled the vehicle and entered the store, and prepared to pay the clerk. When she opened the cash drawer, he pulled a pistol from his jacket, and pointed it at her face. He then emptied the drawer, putting the money in an Allsup's shopping bag, and escorted the clerk to the back store room, telling her not to move or use the phone for ten minutes.

She actually waited about five minutes, and called the sheriff office. Deputy Larry Murphree responded to the call about 2:25. He reported the clerk, Cindy Watts, described the robber as an anglo male probably in his mid thirties, five feet eight to six feet tall, with shoulder length hair and a mustache. Murphree said Ms. Watts didn't get a close look at the other man in the car, and did not see a license plate, or the direction the car took when it left. He said the clerk described the weapon as a semi-

automatic handgun. Approximately \$200 was taken in the robbery.

"The store didn't have a video surveillance system, which would have greatly helped in our investigation," Murphree told CCN. He said tele-type reports of the armed robbery were sent to all law enforcement offices in Region 4 and 5 of Texas and New Mexico. As of Tuesday morning, no additional leads on the robbery had been developed.

Because of the New Year Holiday, our print schedule was delayed one day. We apologize for the inconvenience

Adios, adieu, au revoir, & good luck!



No more 8 to 5 grind for these three. Shown left to right are Jim Barron, retiring Precinct 3 Commissioner, who started his county service January 1, 1977; Wanda Smith, retiring Tax Assessor/Collector. She started work in the tax office August 1, 1973; Jim Rice, who served as Sheriff of Yoakum County from February 1, 1980 until December 31, 2000. The three were honored by a large crowd of well wishers at a farewell party last Friday Afternoon. Best wishes to all three from CCN.

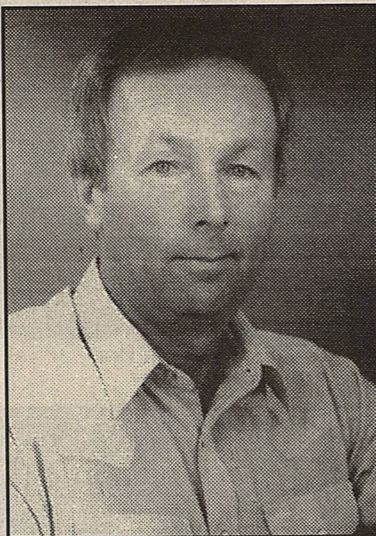
From Page One, 'Barron'

as President of the association; In 1986 he served on the Association of County Judges and Commissioners of Texas, and was elected President of that organization in 1989-90 and 1995-96; He has been a board member of the Texas Association of Counties, and in 1994 was elected to the board of the National Association of Counties, representing rural counties of Texas. He also served as Chairman of the Property Casualty Insurance Board, and helped develop current coverage for Texas counties.

Asked if he had any regrets about his years of service, Barron said, "Not really. I may have done a few things differently, but I feel I have been where the Lord wanted me. Now I feel I know he wants me to pursue other things. I've had a fear sometimes of expressing

my true feelings to people, afraid I would be considered to be 'politicking', but I do feel a real love for the people of this community and the county, and when I leave office, I want to continue to serve them anyway I can. I'm very grateful for the many opportunities the job has provided me. I've developed close relations with good people across the state and nation, I've shaken the hand of governors and the president."

At the close of the interview, Barron recalled, "I just remembered the very first job I took on as a newly elected commissioner. I received a call from an elderly lady who lived in the country. She complained about having fleas in the grass around her house. I loaded up a hand sprayer and some chemical, and went out and sprayed her grass. It seemed a bit ludicrous; Here I was, responsible for all sorts of big, expensive equip-



Jim Barron, Circa 1976

ment and machinery, and I'm hand spraying fleas. It got rid of them, and she was really appreciative. If that's politics, I don't consider it bad politics."

Barron plans to do some traveling, continue a small farming operation, and work with Crosswind Enterprises to expand their internet services for rural West Texas.

Out-of-State Dollars, Educated Workforce Fuel Texas Economic Growth

Higher education doesn't just fuel Texas' economic engine, it builds tracks and plots the course for more sophisticated and information-based state economies. As the state economy becomes more sophisticated, the more it needs the intellectual sparks and innovation that come from an educated workforce.

High-tech businesses aren't going to grow in states that don't have an abundant supply of highly trained employees, says Charles Miller, chairman of Houston investment firm Meridian Advisors and commissioner of the Comptroller's e-Texas education task force.

"Highly successful economic communities and the areas of strong economic activity today in America must have two essential elements, growing populations and excellent institutions of higher education," Miller says. "This combination is crucial to superior economic growth. Texas is fortunate to have both."

The Comptroller's office estimates higher education pumps nearly \$5 billion each year into the state's economy. That includes student, college, university and research spending. It also includes the increased earnings and productivity of everyone who attends college.

Texas colleges and universities receive about \$4.6 billion in state general revenue and local property taxes each year, that's a return of more than \$5 for every \$1 the state invests in higher education.

"It is the human capital contributions from higher education that draw venture capital to support entrepreneurial activity," Miller says. "And it is entrepreneurial activity that creates the opportunity for economic growth."

\$3.9 billion to the Texas economy that year, and out of state and international spending at the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center generated another \$605 million. In total, spending and responding from these sources by Texas businesses and consumers each year tops \$6.8 billion in economic output.

The state could improve that figure if the Legislature would allow public universities to keep all of the money they are reimbursed by the federal government for spending on overhead and administration of federal programs.

Public universities only get to keep half of their \$66 million reimbursement; the rest is cut from their state appropriations and kept in the general revenue fund. The state may be missing a good bet. If the \$33 million in federal reimbursements were returned to public universities for research, the overall state economy would gain an estimated \$110 million annually.

The first, more immediate, economic impact of out of state spending on higher education in Texas is to provide jobs at colleges and universities, and in communities across the state. A more important factor is that those institutions improve the skills of the state's work force, and that increases productivity as smarter workers work smarter. The skills students learn in turn increases the overall capacity of the economy to produce more with the same number of employees-creating a larger economic pie for everyone to share.

To measure this increased capacity, the Comptroller's study calculated the potential lifetime earnings of those who attend college, but did not graduate,

office estimates that each year of knowledge added by the higher education system adds nearly \$24.7 billion to the Texas economy each year.

This enormous impact does not tell the whole story. There is no way to estimate accurately the other by-products of higher education, including inventions, patents and the general advancement of knowledge.

Although higher education's role in expanding research and development and attracting business and workers from other states is generally accepted, the study could not quantify the size of its economic impact.

"Higher education is like the ABC's of the Texas economy. It's a basic necessity for success. You have to know the ABC's to read. You have to learn the skills required for a 21st Century work force to keep the economy on solid ground," says Bill Hammond, president of the Texas Association of Business & Chambers of Commerce and commissioner of the Comptroller's e-Texas competitive government task force.

The fuel higher education adds to the Texas economy is potent, but it could do more, according to Texas' Commissioner of Higher Education Don Brown. "Higher education drives our economy in many ways, so Texas must close the gaps in participation and success at all levels of education for all of its people," Brown says. "The alternative is the bleak future projected by demographers-Texas will have a growing, unskilled and under educated population that cannot meet the demands of a technology based work-place."

The Legislature budgeted \$13.4 billion for higher education in 2000 and 2001, nearly 14 percent of the state's budget and an increase of \$1.2 billion, or nearly 10%, from 1998 and 1999. State funding for higher



Obituaries

Services Held For Erma Dean Walker

Services for Erma Dean Phillips Walker were held at 2:00 pm. Saturday, December 30th at the Brownfield Memorial Chapel, with Brother Bill Wright of First Baptist Church, Plains, officiating. Interment was at Terry County Cemetery, Brownfield, under the direction of Brownfield Funeral Home.

She passed away December 27th at Southeast Memorial Hospital after a lengthy illness.

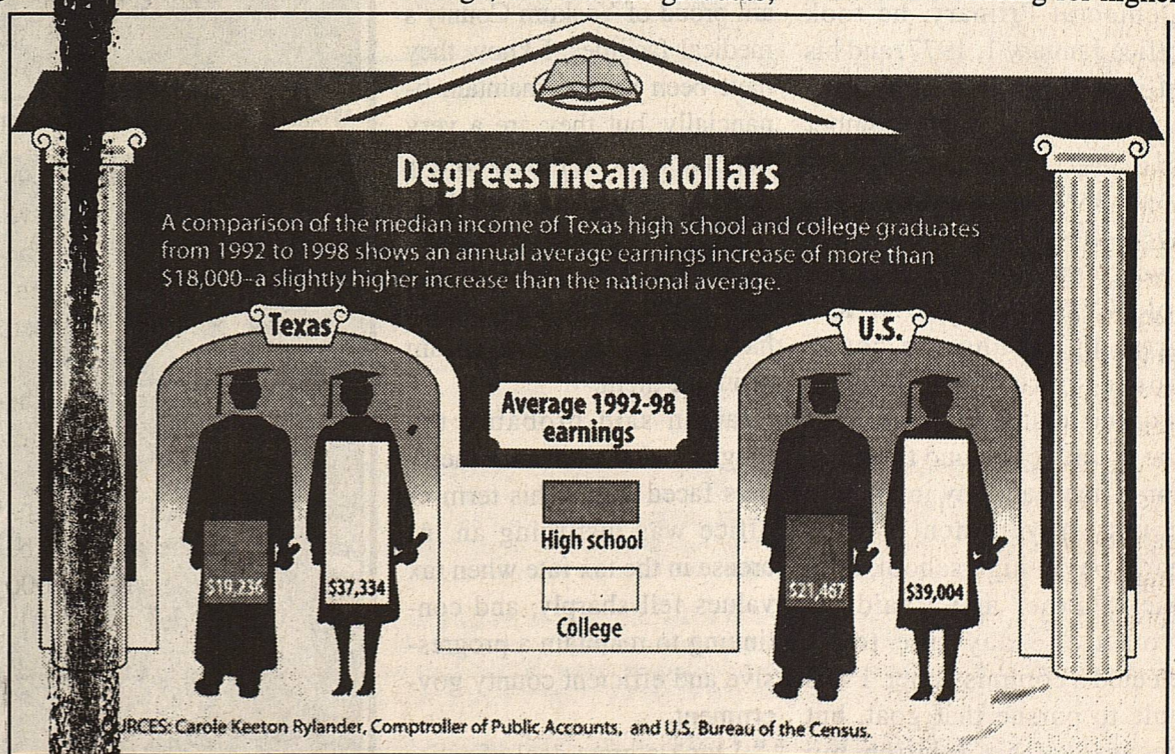
She was born on October 20, 1917, in Gatesville to Roy M. "Dixie" Phillips and Maggie Laura Paul. She graduated from Tarleton University. She moved to Terry County in 1938 and taught school at Gomez from 1938-1939. She married Ed F. Walker of Gomez on February 25, 1939. The couple lived in the Dallas area and later spent the last 51 years in Houston.

She taught a Ladies Sunday

School Class at Gulf Meadow Baptist Church for 31 years.

She is survived by her husband of 62 years and two children: Sylvia J. Jackson and husband Raymond of Tenaha, and Gary L. Walker and wife Frankie Slone Walker of Plains; four grandchildren: Ray Jackson of Tenaha, Randy and Shannon Lloyd Jackson of Paducah, Lorri and Donnie Cunningham of Leander, and Dare and Donetta Young Walker of Plains; seven great-grandchildren; a sister, Mrs. Lucille Hawkins of Kentucky; a brother, Bob Phillips of North Carolina; numerous nieces and nephews, and many friends. She will be greatly missed by all.

The family requests in lieu of flowers, memorials can be made to the First Baptist Church of Plains, Texas in the name of "Dean Walker".



The Comptroller's analysis shows that in 1998, spending by out of state and international students at community and technical colleges, public universities and health related institutions supports \$2.3 billion in economic activity across the state.

Federal and privately supported research added another

and the earnings of those who graduated with bachelor's and advanced degrees.

The study also measured the improved productivity that resulted from a better educated work force. The Comptroller's

education, however, still lags behind spending for other public services.

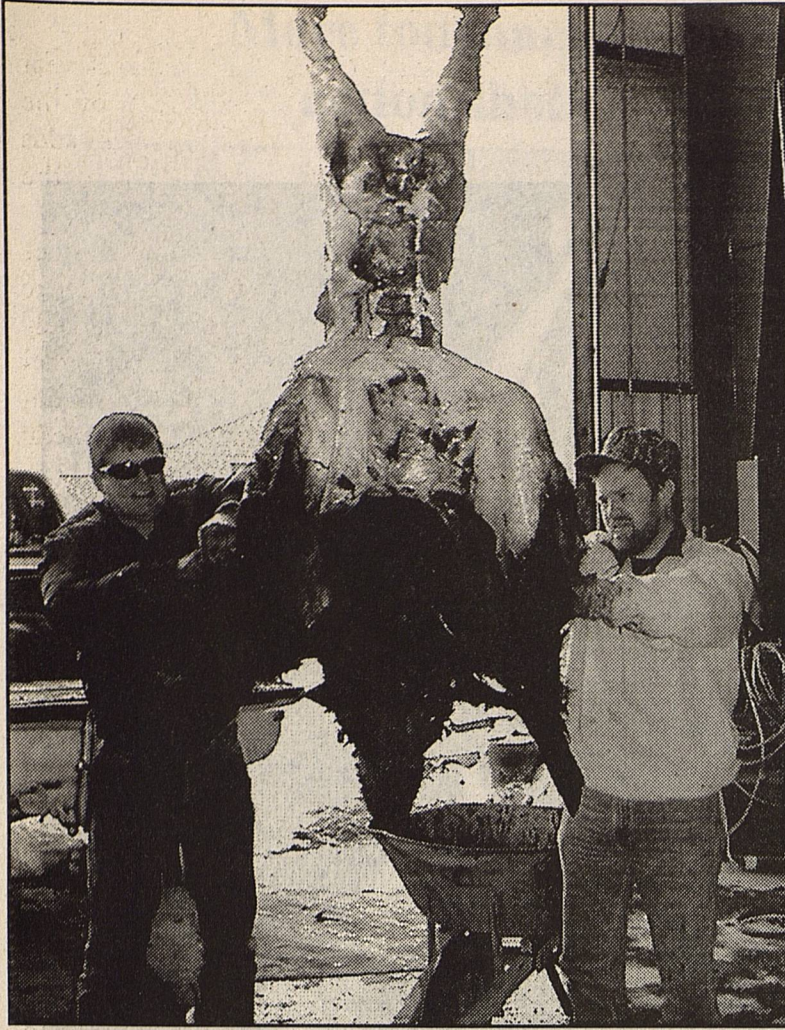
Jan. 25, 1839: Lone Star flag adopted by the 3rd Congress of the Republic of Texas.

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Neal Bearden and Jered Sellers are shown last week butchering a large Feral Hog. Sellers killed the hog in Cochran County, and Bearden killed a smaller hog. They estimated this animal weighed well over 300 pounds. Sellers said a Texas Parks and Wildlife officer recently told him his department estimates there are over 4,000 of the Feral Hogs in Cochran County, and their numbers are growing rapidly.

Lyntegar Battles Outages

Lyntegar Electric Cooperative has been experiencing electrical outages since early Monday morning due to an accumulation of ice on the wires and poles. In some areas, damage is extensive with numerous poles down in single stretches of line. Heavy snow beginning early Tuesday morning over most of the Cooperative's service area added to the already existing problems.

Progress is being made in restoring service where poles and wires are not down. In the areas of extensive damage, the restoring of service may be very slow until some of the snow and ice is gone.

More than 100 employees are working on the storm damage. The Cooperative operates more than 6,600 miles of line containing almost 100,000 poles. An exact count on the number of poles broken has been established at this time, but current estimates exceed 400 poles. A contractor is expected to arrive Wednesday to help with the work, but travel is slow getting their equipment here.

In the event your power is off, we suggest you make whatever preparations you can to cope with an extended outage period. If you plan to or if you have already connected a generator to your house, please notify the Cooperative so we can insure

that it has been properly connected for the safety of both you and Cooperative personnel.

As the sun comes out and the temperature begins to rise, numerous outages are anticipated due to lines bouncing and coming into contact with each other. So even if you have power now, expect outages as the ice begins to drop from the lines. Hopefully, most of these outages will not be of long duration. However, we anticipate the Cooperative's telephone lines to be busy.

Should you come upon an electric line lying on the ground, please do not try to move it yourself. Call the Cooperative to report the location of the downed electrical line. As always, think electric safety when around power lines. Lyntegar Electric Cooperative would like to apologize for any inconvenience this ice storm has caused and assure you that we are working to restore power as quickly and safely as possible. The Cooperative appreciates your patience and cooperation during this time of inconvenience.

January in Texas - Jan. 17, 1821: Colonization Contract awarded by Mexico to Moses Austin for Anglo-American settlement. Jan. 29, 1854: Permanent School Fund set up by Fifth Legislature

JP Court

December 28, 2000-In Justice of the Peace court Precinct 1, with Judge Melba Crutcher presiding there were 49 traffic cases, 1 felony, 1 public intoxication, 1 driving under the influence of alcohol by a minor, 1 issuance of bad check. Bonds set: Public intoxication - \$500.00 bond. Displayed/fictitious driver license - \$500.00 bond. Fugitive from justice - no bond. Fugitive from justice - \$50,000.00 bond. No liability insurance - \$500.00 bond. Unlawful consumption of alcoholic beverage by minor - \$500.00 bond. No drivers license - \$200.00 bond. Driving while intoxicated - \$1,000.00 bond. Terroristic threat - \$500.00 bond. Burglary of a building - \$5,000.00 bond. Driving while intoxicated - 2nd - \$1,500.00 bond + interlock ordered. Possession of controlled substance - \$1,500.00 bond. Possession of drug paraphernalia - \$500.00 bond. No valid inspection certificate - \$200.00 bond. Possession of controlled substance - \$500.00 bond. Driving under the influence of liquor - \$500.00 bond.

County employment approved by court

In the January 2 session of Commissioner's Court, new employment in the Sheriff's Department and the Tax Assessor/Collector office was approved. Kenley Powell was hired as a Sheriff Deputy effective January 1, 2001. Sue Holder and Jeanette Mancha will serve as deputy clerks in the Tax Assessor Clerk's office. Holder's date of approval was January 1, and Mancha's effective date is January 8.

A contract for inmate housing space in the Terry County Jail was approved. Terms of the contract will remain the same, and Terry County will be guaranteed \$30 per day for five jailed inmates, whether the space is used or not. The annual cost of the additional jail space is \$54,750.

Rick Dickson, representing the Yoakum-Terry County Joint Drug Task Force, reported on a grant proposal for funding the task force. A state grant in the amount of more than \$279,000 was approved for the 2001-

We Get Interesting Letters!



*Editors Note: Last spring, CCN featured an article and photo of J.P. McMullan, a bicycle rider passing through here on a coast to coast ride. We sent him a copy of the issue, and last week we received the following thank you and report of his successful ride, and this photo. He also sent a map of his entire trip but it would not scan for re-printing. J.P. is now back at work in Antarctica as a heavy equipment operator.

A THANK YOU...to all; you helped make my dream of riding a bicycle across the United States a very memorable journey!

On March 18, 2000, I began a bicycle ride from Venice Beach in Los Angeles, California with no idea of the route I would eventually travel or the wonderful people I would meet. The cross-country portion of my ride ended in Lubec, Maine on June 6, 2000 after riding 4,583 miles! Next, I rode west to Bangor, Maine where I visited my sister and her family before riding home to Devon, Pennsylvania, completing my ride on July 18, 2000 with 5,747 miles of memories! I could not have dreamed a better ride! The words may be simple, but are most sincere. THANK YOU!

I decided to write a 'standardized' thank you, in effect bringing us all together on my ride, because although you did not meet each other, you all did something special for me. The 'black line' on the map not only shows my route, it represents places across our country where we met. Just think, as you read this thank you, many of you may be reading these words at the same time!

To make my thank you a little extra special, I waited until I could send it from the United States' Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station on Antarctica. I included one of my photos of the Geographic South Pole, which also shows the polar plateau landscape, research observatories and a line of old Geographic South Pole markers, indicating the polar ice cap movement. I have my photos and journals of the ride with me and have enjoyed wonderful memories while writing my thank you notes. I hope you are happy and well, and I extend to you my best wishes for a wonderful holiday season!

Thank you for making my ride even better,
John Paul "JP" McMullan

Thank You For The Prayers, Cards, Food And Flowers Following The Loss Of Our Father. We Love And Appreciate You. Amber & Dusty Bryan

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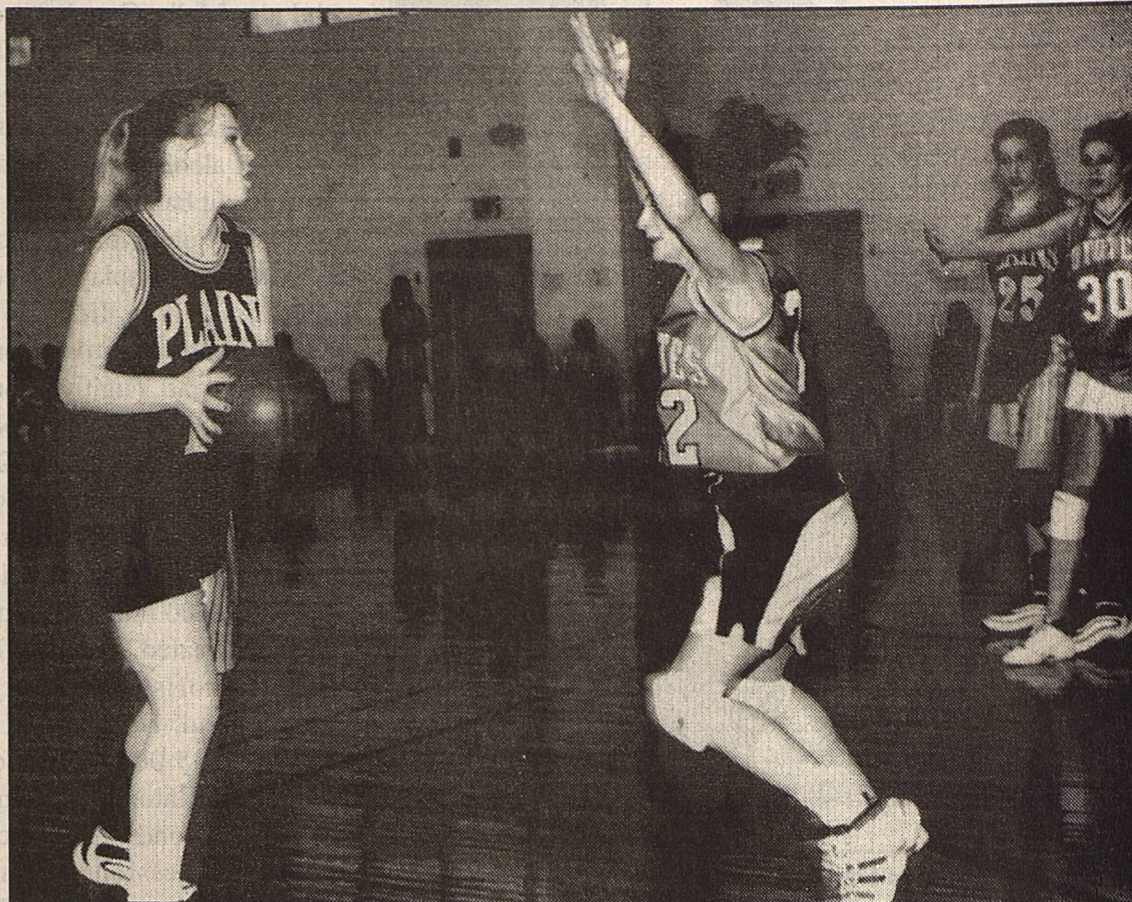
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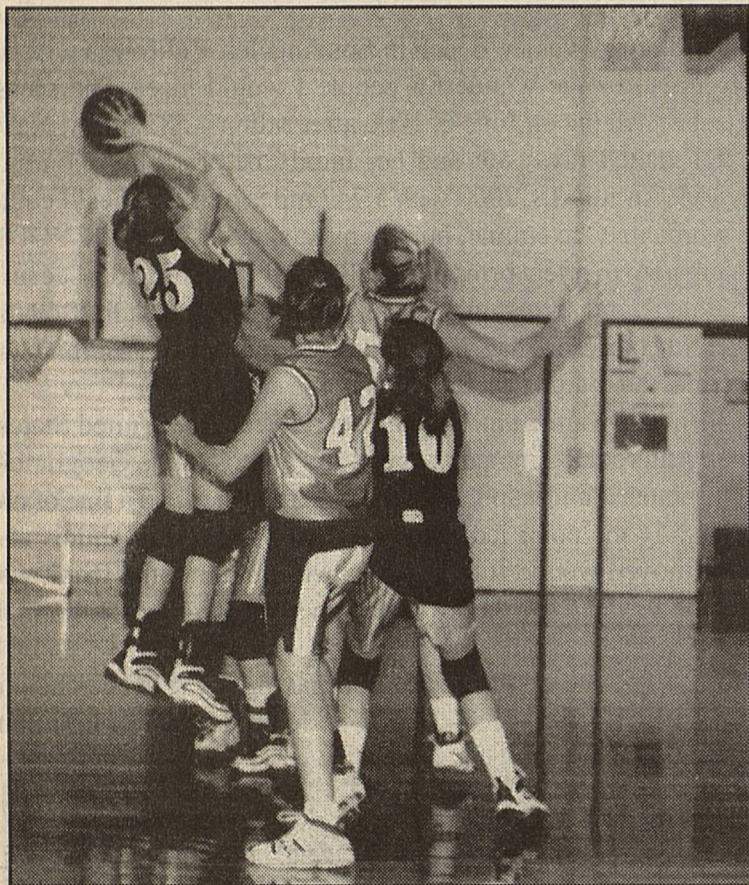
Sundown Tournament Action Scenes



Battle for the ball - Adam Garcia goes to the back door



Lexi Warren ponders getting around a Lady Coyote



Annaliesa goes high for two points

Tournament Recap

PHS COWGIRLS:

The girls had a rough tournament. They fell to their first opponent, Sundown, 47-27, managing only 23.4% of their field goals. Chelsi Wagnon and Annaliesa O'Quinn managed 9 points each, Lexi Warren and Kim Willis had 3 each, Tanya Vasquez 2, Chelsea Blount 1. Annaliesa pulled down 8 rebounds, and Chelsea Blount had 4 steals.

In their second outing, they were downed 68-32 by the Borden County Lady Coyotes. Their shooting improved to 28.2%. Annaliesa led the scoring with 12 points, Chelsi Wagnon had 7, Chelsea Blount 6, Tanya 5, Frances Cordova and Lexi Warren 1 each. Annaliesa had 9 rebounds, Lexi was credited with 3 steals.

PHS COWBOYS:

The Cowboys fared much better at Sundown, winning the championship. They first destroyed Morton 63-34. Jarod Newland was lead scorer with 15 points, Adam Garcia had 14, Jared Bell 12, Dustin Six 11, Brett Squyres 4, Aaron Cain 3, Moises Gonzales and Tanner Hamm 2 each. Jared Bell grabbed 20 rebounds, Brett had 10, Adam had 3 assists, and Bell had 5 steals.

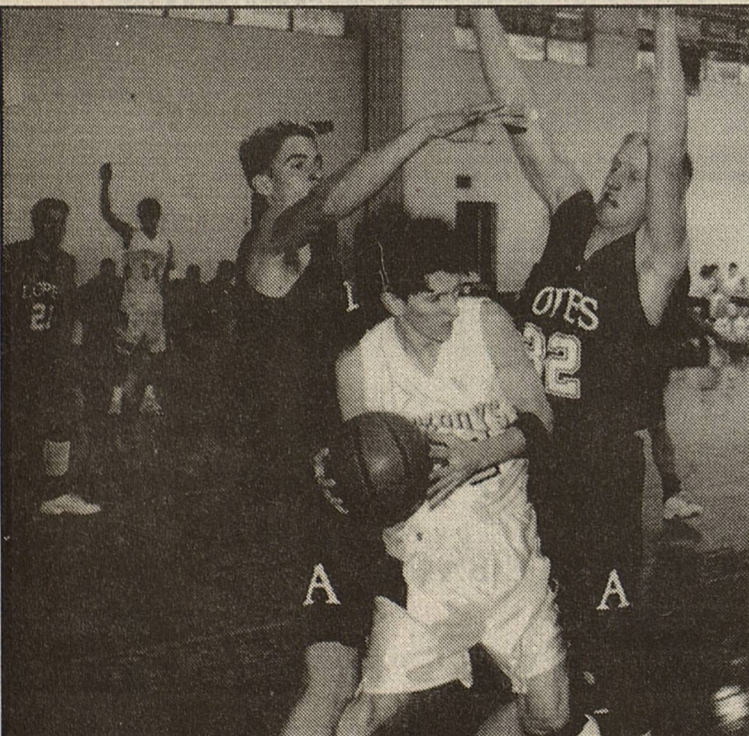
They next beat a very tall Abernathy team 68-46. Adam got hot and scored 23 points, Jared Bell managed 14, Dustin 12, Jarod Newland 11, Brett 4, Moises and Stan Caballero 2 each. Bell again led rebounding with 10, Adam had 5 assists, Bell managed 5 steals.

In the championship match, the Cowboys shot 53.8% from the floor and dominated Sudan 72-50. Adam again led the scoring with 16 points, Newland had 14 including 4 three pointers, Dustin and Bell had 12 each, Brett 8, Aaron 4, Moises and Tanner Hamm 3 each.

The Cowboys and Cowgirls start district action January 8.



Lots of hands and arms in the air



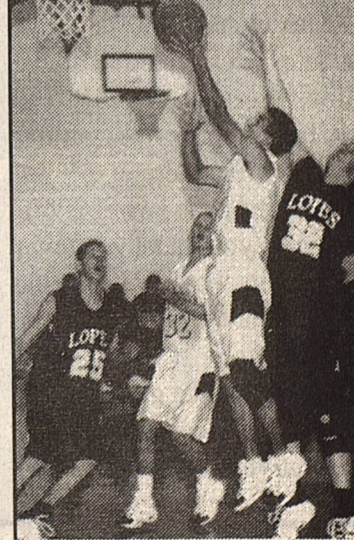
Dustin Six between two mad Abernathy Antelopes



Chelsi Wagnon set for free throw



Jared Bell scores two



Adam lays one in

Go, Cowboys, Cowgirls!

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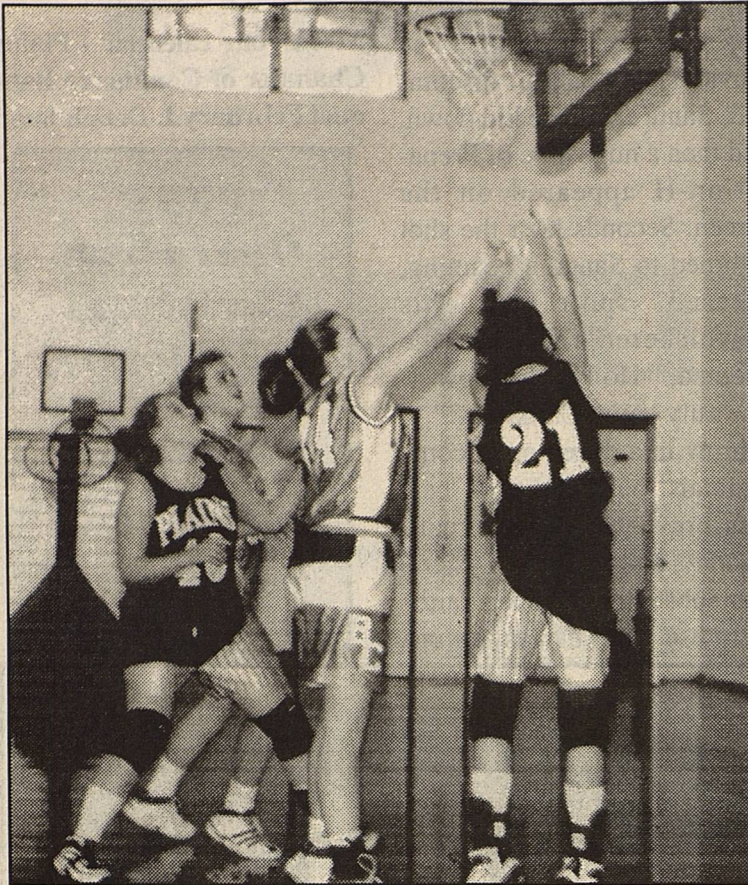
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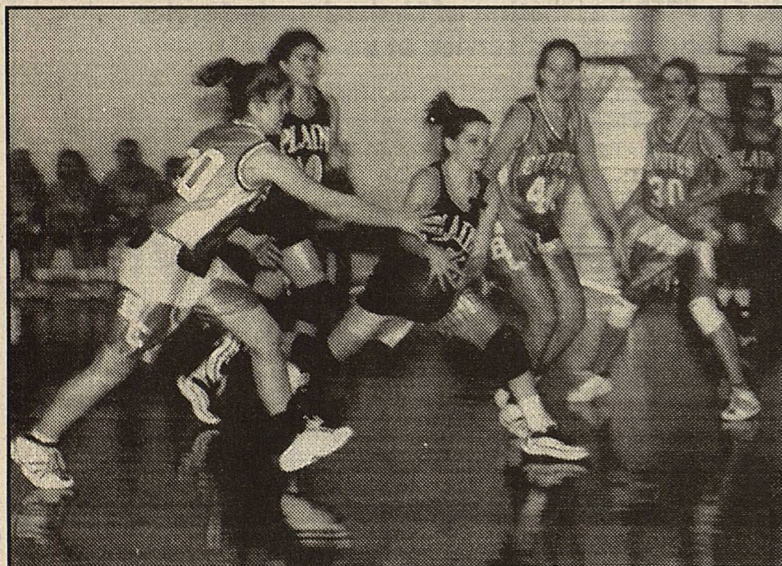
More tournament action shots



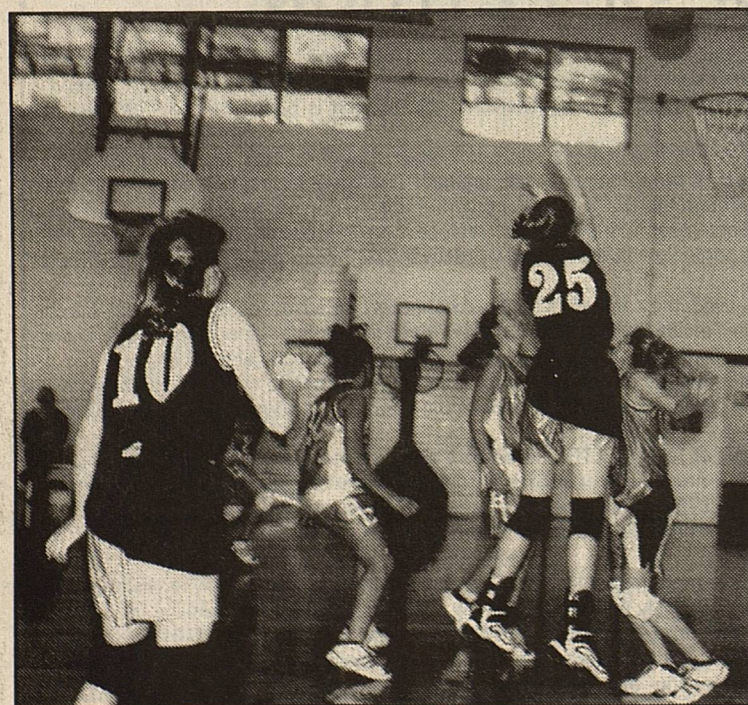
Chelsea Wagnon, 21, shoots short jumper



Chelsea Blount made this free throw



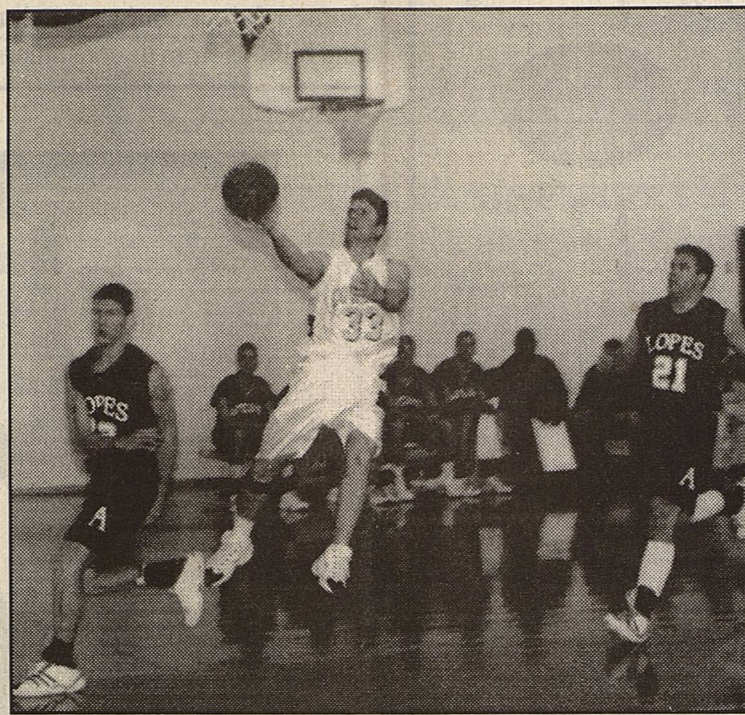
Mackenzie Winn tries to get inside defense



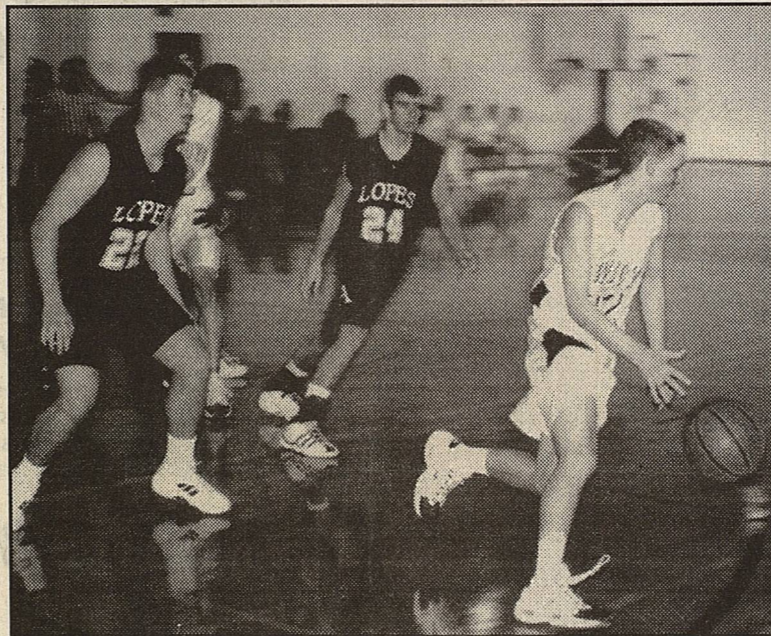
Annaliesa takes jump shot



Jared Bell plays some 'D'



Brett Squyres soars for layup shot



Jarod Newland has to circle the wagons against Abernathy

Farm leaders meet with Bush

Lubbock, Texas - National Grain Sorghum Producers (NGSP) President Leo Bindel, a sorghum farmer from Sabetha, Kansas, was among a group of farm leaders in Austin recently to meet with President Elect George W. Bush, Agriculture Secretary-designee Ann Veneman and Governor Christine Todd Whitman who Bush chose to head the Environmental Protection Agency.

Two days after nominating Veneman as U.S. Ag Secretary, Bush and others met with farm leaders to discuss Bush's agricultural agenda as it relates to the challenges with which producers are faced. Also in attendance were state secretaries of agriculture from Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Florida, Tennessee, Michigan, Texas and Ohio. Clayton Yeutter, who served as ag secretary for the first two years of Bush's father's administration, participated in the discussion.

"We are grateful President-Elect Bush and Secretary-designee Veneman and other leaders took the time to visit with us about the issues facing farmers today, including regulations, trade, farm policy and the financial situation in agriculture," said Bindel. "President-Elect Bush and others let us know help is on the way for U.S. farmers, and I was impressed with the level of concern and the familiarity he demonstrated in discussing these challenges."

Bindel said his group welcomes the opportunity to work with Veneman. "She has a long and distinguished record of service to farmers, and her experience and knowledge of agriculture will be essential to solving important dilemmas producers face," Bindel concluded

200,000 Texas kids now enrolled in CHIP

Seven year old Zachary Lopez and his 16 year old sister Talia of Austin both suffered severe headaches last summer. For the first time in their lives their mother, Ida Lopez, didn't hesitate to call a doctor. Now that she and her husband enrolled their children in Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) in Texas, she can afford the expense.

"The CHIP program has given me great peace of mind," said Ida, a receptionist at an Austin based cable manufacturer. "Both my husband and I work, but our employers can't afford to offer health insurance, but for just \$18 per month, their headaches are gone, they can see clearly, and are studying hard in school."

Ida and her family represent one of the thousands of Texas families who have gained "peace of mind" since they enrolled in CHIP. 200,000 children have enrolled since the program began last May. The numbers mean Texas has outpaced other comparable states in the initial months. CHIP program leaders are announcing new initiatives to reach even more Texas families who may not be aware they qualify for the program. These include a new multi-million dollar statewide advertising campaign, community based marketing initiatives and outreach by business and community leaders. CHIP started nine months ago with federal funds and money from the tobacco lawsuit settlement. It offers low cost insurance to low to moderate income families. Premiums are \$18 per month or less, depending on a family's size and income. For example, a family of four could make up to \$34,000 or possible more.

To learn more about CHIP or other TexCare insurance options you may call 1-800-647-6558 toll free

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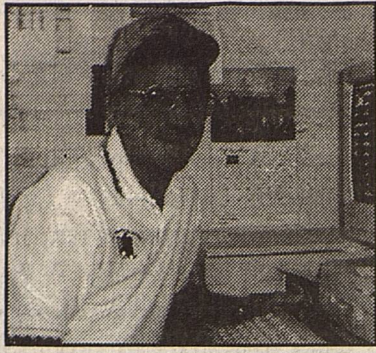
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From The Hack



I watched the PHS Cowboys and Cowgirls play a couple of games in last weekend's Sundown basketball tournament. The girls faced Borden County's Lady Coyotes, a team name which aroused some questions. I really wonder how a bunch of high school girls really and truly enjoy being called female coyotes. You know, coyotes are notoriously sly, cunning, sometimes even down right mean and ravenous. That brought to mind a few other odd sports names I've seen around the state. The town of Taylor, down near Austin, calls their high school boys athletic teams the Ducks. Are the girls Hens? Lady Ducks? Neither is very appealing. Even worse, just down the road from Taylor is the small farming town of Hutto. Their male athletes are proudly called the Hutto Hippos. Now, don't even try to convince me those high school girls enjoy being called Lady Hippos, or Hippoettes. I also recall a Texas town whose high school student athletes are called Jackals. Can't you just imagine one of their girls basketball teams screaming ecstatically, "We're the Lady Jackals... or Jackalettes."

At the courthouse farewell party for Barron, Rice and Smith, Melba Fitzgerald asked me if Santa Claus had been nice to me. I semi-truthfully told her, no, all he brought me was one potato. "A raw one?" she asked. I said yes, and she said, "My, that's not too much of a gift. My Johnnie did much better than you," then she walked away. A little later, I ran into Johnnie and asked about his visit from Santa. He told me he got a commode seat. "My, I bet you were thrilled," I offered. "Oh, it was OK. We really needed it. The old one was cracked and pinched so bad it had left my bottom pretty badly

scarred. What I didn't like was having to install it. I was having a few problems getting it on, and dropped my upper plate in the bowl." I can appreciate how that would dampen your Christmas spirit.

How many New Year's promises have you broken already? As an attempted peace offering, I told the Bride I would never again refer to her in this column as the Old Bride, if she would never again refer to me as dolt, clod head, or mush brain. She failed miserably the day after New Year day when she discovered I had accidentally tossed one of her gifts in the dumpster. Man, do you have any idea at all how foul those things smell when you're inside one pawing around?

The recent snow storm which dumped about six inches of the white stuff on beautiful down town Plains created at least one mini-crisis. Bob Blundell (come on, you know Bob, he who never laughs, tells lies or jokes dealing with the feminine gender) is a Crossword Puzzle Fiend. His day begins early, and when Uncle's Convenience Store opens, he is their first customer. He steals a a Lubbock paper and rips it open to the puzzle page and furiously goes to work. In his pickup he carries not only a Webster's and a Funk & Wagnall's dictionary, but the latest copy of Roget's Thesaurus. If a word in the puzzle stumps him, and the above reference works, he is verging on mental collapse until someone helps him out. Well, the snow deprived us of the Lubbock paper for three consecutive days. The third day I truly felt he was a candidate for a straight jacket. He was actually suffering withdrawal pangs, which were not eased at all by the local golf course also being shut down. Talk about true misery.

I suppose it's necessary in Mother Nature's scheme of things, but I despise winter, and I despise it more every birthday I manage. If I desired snow, ice covered streets and biting cold I would move to Minnesota. Our weather here lately has put a severe crimp in my golf outings. Going into the courthouse this week, I mentioned all of the above to Judge Brewer. I watched him grimace, and a

nervous tic set in around his mouth. "It's been so long since I've played I've been feeling very strange, very poorly. I went to the Doc, and he said I was suffering withdrawal pangs from lack of golf. He suggested I take a week or two off in Palm Springs. I may just take his advice, if I can convince my wife it's necessary for my health and well being." Good luck, Judge.

The weather has also resulted in my incarceration before the TV much more than I am accustomed to or enjoy. I continue to be mildly astonished at some of the commercials luring billions from us consumers.

Last night I watched Santa Claus, squirming uncomfortable in a chair, waiting to hoist some little urchin onto his lap to get it's Christmas wish list. Obviously in painful discomfort, Santa eased the kid down, and then a huge tube of Preparation-H appeared on the screen. Seconds later the shot returned to Santa, a beaming, pleased smile on his bewhiskered face, and he shouted, "Ho Ho Ho, now I can truly enjoy Christmas!"

Throw in a dozen or so commercials touting Viagra, hair loss preventives, bad breath fighters, and all those mysterious substances women faithfully use, and it's easy to un-

derstand why that guy referred to television years ago as a vast wasteland. It still is.

Mark your calendar - Plains Chamber of Commerce Banquet February 1. Details later.

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NOTICE OF PETITION

Texas ALLETEL, Inc. (Texas ALLETEL) has filed a petition with the Public Utility Commission of Texas (Commission) to establish a surcharge to recover lost revenues and increased costs associated with Expanded Local Calling Service (ELCS) petitions for several Texas ALLETEL exchanges. The submission of this petition is based on the Commission's Substantive Rule 26.221.

ELCS permits an exchange to expand its local calling scope to include one or more exchanges if customers approve by ballot the payment of an ELCS fee in lieu of long distance charges. The costs and lost revenues associated with this petition are those not recoverable through the ELCS fee. A portion of this surcharge is to recover ELCS costs associated with routes implemented prior to September 1, 1996, and will replace the surcharge approved in January 1999 that expires in February 2001. The remaining portion of this surcharge will recover ELCS costs associated with new routes implemented in the year 2000.

If the Texas ALLETEL petition is approved, the company's local exchange will be assessed an additional monthly surcharge of \$2.84 per business line, \$1.42 per residential line and \$0.50 per each Tel-Assistance customer per access line. The resulting total ELCS surcharge will be \$4.44 per business line, \$2.22 per residential line and \$0.78 per Tel-Assistance line. If approved by the Commission, the additional monthly surcharge will begin, on an interim basis, with the February 21, 2001, billing cycle, subject to refund all or part of the charge if the Commission does not finally approve the proposed surcharge.

The net annual effect on the revenues of Texas ALLETEL will be zero since the requested surcharge replaces lost revenues and reimburses Texas ALLETEL for the direct costs of service associated with all ELCS petitions. The estimated total lost revenues and increased costs Texas ALLETEL seeks to recover through this proceeding is \$51,634 monthly.

If you have questions about this charge or would like further information, please call Texas ALLETEL at 1-800-452-5354.

The Public Utility Commission has assigned Project No. 23301 to this proceeding. Persons who wish to intervene or comment in these proceedings should notify the Commission by January 21, 2001, the deadline for intervention. All requests to intervene should be mailed to the Public Utility Commission of Texas, 1701 N. Congress Avenue, P.O. Box 13326, Austin, TX 78711-3326. Further information may also be obtained by calling the Commission's Office of Consumer Affairs at (512) 936-7120. Hearing- and speech-impaired individuals with text telephones (TTY) may contact the Commission at (512) 936-7136.

AVISO DE PETICIÓN

Texas ALLETEL, Inc. (Texas ALLETEL) ha presentado una petición oficial ante la Comisión de Servicios Públicos de Tejas (Public Utility Commission) (Comisión) para establecer un recargo para recuperar los ingresos perdidos y los costos incrementados asociados con las peticiones de Ampliación del Servicio de Llamadas Locales (ELCS) para varias de las áreas de Texas ALLETEL. Esta petición se presenta en base a la Regla Substantiva número 26.221.

La ELCS permite que un área amplíe su alcance de llamadas locales para que incluyan una o más áreas, sólo si los clientes aprueban el pago de una tasa ELCS mediante una boleta en lugar de cargos por llamadas de larga distancia. Los costos y los ingresos perdidos relacionados a esta petición son aquellos que no son recuperables mediante la tasa ELCS. Una porción de este sobrecargo es para recuperar los costos del ELCS asociados con los trayectos interrumpidos antes del 1 de septiembre de 1996 y reemplazarán al sobrecargo aprobado en enero de 1999 el cual caduca en febrero de 2001. La porción restante de este sobrecargo es para recuperar los costos de ELCS asociados con los trayectos interrumpidos en el año 2000.

Si la solicitud de Texas ALLETEL es aprobada, el área local básica de la compañía recibirá un recargo mensual adicional de \$2.84 para clientes comerciales, \$1.42 para clientes residenciales y \$0.50 para clientes de Tel-Assist, por línea de acceso. Esto hará que el recargo total de ELCS sea \$4.44 para clientes comerciales, \$2.22 para clientes residenciales y \$0.78 para Tel-Assist. Si la Comisión lo aprueba, el recargo mensual adicional comenzará, mientras tanto, con el ciclo de facturación del 21 de febrero de 2001, con un acuerdo de reembolso de la totalidad o parte del cargo si la Comisión no aprueba la tarifa.

El efecto anual neto sobre los ingresos de Texas ALLETEL será de cero ya que el sobrecargo solicitado reemplaza los ingresos perdidos y reembolsa a Texas ALLETEL por el aumento del costo directo del servicio asociado con todas las solicitudes de ELCS. La cantidad total prevista de ingresos perdidos y aumento de costos que Texas ALLETEL desea recuperar a través de este proceso es de \$51,634 por mes.

Si tiene alguna pregunta con respecto a este cargo o si quisiera obtener información adicional, sírvase llamar a Texas ALLETEL al 1-800-452-5354.

La Comisión de Servicios Públicos ha asignado el Número de Proyecto 23301 a este proceso. Las personas interesadas en participar o expresar algún comentario con respecto a este proceso deben notificar a la Comisión antes del 21 de enero del año 2001. Cualquier solicitud de participación debe ser enviada por correo a la Public Utility Commission of Texas, 1701 N. Congress Avenue, P.O. Box 13326, Austin, TX 78711-3326. Para obtener información sobre cómo participar, llame a la Comisión al (512) 936-7120. Aquellos individuos con problemas de oído o de habla que tengan teléfonos teletipo pueden contactar a la Comisión al (512) 936-7136.

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