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Produced By:
John & Jeannine Fearing
Marilyn Mueller
Shirley Lueddecke
Kay Clipson

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Cloud over courthouse growing

By John Fearing, Headlight Editor

Our hat is off to county commissioner L.J. "Sonny" Spanhel. He stood up for fairness last week as his fellow commissioners and county judge Lester Cranek considered what they needed to do to replace resigned sheriff Jim Broussard.

However, from report I've heard, commissioners are giving appearances of practicing "good ol' boy" politics and continuing to hide from the public. If you will remember, past discussion in commissioner meetings brought charges from the public that our top county officials were trying to hide information and protect Broussard; at one point it looked like they were trying to block the investigation and prosecution.

The public ears became a little warmer last week we they learned county leaders did not want restitution for \$16,000 prosecutors think is missing from sheriff department funds. Their excuse is that prosecutors can't pin down exactly what was missing. I frankly don't believe that, and I doubt many other people do either.

So, with the cloud of suspicion rising over the courthouse, commissioners would do well to pay attention to public sentiment.

They should choose their sheriff appointment next Monday carefully. Spanhel suggested they appoint someone who will not be a candidate for the job in the Democratic primary. That makes it a fair race. To appoint someone who will be a candidate for the job, is to give that person an unfair advantage. Out front page story lists those interviewed Tuesday for the appointment. At least one would make a good temporary sheriff to fill the year remaining in Broussard's failed term; that person won't be a candidate.

The public wants the decision to judge the leadership we've elected.

Local, regional water notes from the LCRA

18,200 acres of second crop rice watered here

According to information sent last week to members of the Colorado County Water Council, the LCRA Lakeside Water Division in Eagle Lake provided water to 18,200 acres of second crop rice.

That is 1,000 more acres than was watered by LCRA's Gulf Coast Division in Bay City.

Gulf Coast watered 21,100 acres for first crop rice this summer, approximately 600 acres more than watered by the Eagle Lake division.

In other news about water: The Rice Consolidated school district has been provided materials for a pilot program conducted by LCRA on a generic water education program called, "The Story of Drinking Water." LCRA said the excellent

response to the pilot program indicates the need for water education materials in all schools.

Thomas Hudec of Colorado County is one of several volunteers from the LCRA 10-county region that is volunteering time to further develop an elementary school education unit on water education. The project will be distributed throughout the region in the Fall of 1988.

The Water Council/LCRA Water Demand Task Force met for the first time on Nov. 9. The participants learned about modeling approaches and local data needed to produce a good, long-term forecast of water requirements. Virgil Addler and Dr. David Maidment of the University of Texas described their research on

municipal domestic water use. Their work is part of a computerized modeling system being developed by LCRA and Camp Dresser McKee.

The task force is assisting LCRA in its local area forecasting and highlighting important water use issues facing local communities.

Hydrilla Alert — For several years LCRA has attempted to control hydrilla, an exotic aquatic weed, in Cedar Creek Reservoir. Last summer, hydrilla was identified in Lake Bastrop for the first time. This aggressive weed rapidly replaces native vegetation. Hydrilla impacts flood control, water storage and distribution, and power production by limiting storage volume and restricting flow. Recreational activities such as fishing and swimming are limited by the density of the weed.

Hydrilla often is transported on boats and trailers from an infested lake to an uninfested lake. Fishermen may plant hydrilla in an uninfested attempt to improve fish habitat. Willful transportation of hydrilla is a crime under the federal Noxious Vegetation Control Act of 1976 and is a violation of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Code.

Also, LCRA is working with a team of engineering and biological consultants to plan and design an innovative wastewater treatment demonstration plant in Johnson City. This research and development project will find out how advanced (tertiary) levels of waste treatment can be achieved at low cost and maintenance.

An aquacultural system, utilizing marsh plants, will be designed and constructed to "polish" wastewater as it leaves the city's existing wastewater plant.

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Bob Stallman elected to Texas Farm Bureau board

Bob Stallman, of Columbus, has been elected to the board of directors of Texas Farm Bureau, the largest state farm organization in the nation. Stallman was nominated by delegates of his district, TFB District 11, and elected by the voting delegates to Texas Farm Bureau's 54th annual convention in Lubbock recently. He succeeds David Foechner of Boling who had served the six years permitted by TFB bylaws.

A third generation rice farmer, the new TFB board member started rice farming in 1975 and formed a family partnership with his father and brother in 1981.

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The PUCT began requiring utilities in 1984 to use fixed fuel factors, which specify the amount to be charged for fuel per a customer's kilowatt-hour use. Since future fuel costs are not known, the fuel factors ultimately can be more or less than CPL's actual fuel costs.

Over the last four years, CPL has requested a total of \$198.1 million in fuel refunds, including this one, which had reduced its customers' bills more than 20 percent.

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