



THE EAGLE LAKE HEADLIGHT

(USPS 163-760)
P.O. Box 67 — 220 East Main
(409) 234-5521
CITY OF EAGLE LAKE,
TEXAS 77434-0067
Published Weekly
Every Thursday

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ADVERTISING AND NEWS DEADLINE: 5 P.M. MONDAY

Subscription Rates

Colorado County (including Lissie and Egypt)\$12.00
Fayette, Lavaca, Wharton, Austin counties\$13.50
Other Texas Residents\$15.00
Outside of Texas\$16.50

Single Copy Price: 35-Cents
Second class postage paid
at Eagle Lake, Texas

Address Corrections
should be sent to P.O. Box 67,
Eagle Lake, Texas 77434-0067

To THE EDITOR & You

'Thank you for the privilege'

Dear Editor:

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Eagle Lake City Council for granting me the privilege to serve as mayor of Eagle Lake for the next seven months. I appreciate their confidence, and I am glad to be able to help.

I also want to pledge to the citizens of Eagle Lake that the City Council and I will do everything within our power to see that you get the positive, efficient, optimistic, and effective city government that you pay for and deserve.

In closing, I want to say publicly what I know that many of you have said privately. We were fortunate

indeed to call Rev. David Mann one of our own. We will miss his counsel and his leadership. Most of all, though, we will miss him. People like him make

Eagle Lake a good place to live and raise families.

Yours truly,
Michael Cooper

Study Club sends thanks

Dear Editor and supporters,

First, we would like to thank the *Headlight* for its coverage before and after the Study Club Auction. Your helper, Carol Cardenas, worked hard by taking pictures.

With your support and willingness to give, we raised \$14,000 to give to the Eula and David Wintermann Li-

brary. The money generated will keep the library a high quality facility.

The value of your giving is returned to you in the many library services that benefit the whole community. Thanks again for helping us in the past and we hope in the future.

Cordially,
Ways and Means Committee

Bullock named honorary chairman

Lt. Gov. Bob Bullock last week was named honorary chairman of Putting Children First, a group seeking private school vouchers for students in low-performing Texas schools.

Bullock's acceptance of the honorary chairmanship signals his willingness to investigate state funding for such a project. But his willingness is not new. The Senate, over which Bullock presides, passed a pilot voucher program for lower-income students in 1995, but the measure was killed in the House.

"If I was that child and wanted to improve myself, I would like the best education that I could possibly get. This would be a means for them to do it," Bullock said. The focus, he said should be on what's best for Texas



State Capitol Highlights

By Lyndell Williams
and Ed Sterling
Texas Press Association

school children, especially at a time when the state has not provided enough funding for a massive school building program.

Jimmy Mansour, chairman of Putting Children First, said the group will advocate school choice in the 1999 Legislature. The goal, he said, will be to make it possible "for parents of the 800,000 children trapped in failing schools to use their education tax dollars for the schools of their

choice - public or private."

Opponents of a voucher system say a voucher program would take funding away from public schools and hurt the majority of Texas school children who will remain enrolled in them.

Bomer Questions SUV Risk

New reports about insurers seeking higher automobile liability rates for sport vehicles (SUVs) and pickup trucks have prompted calls to the Texas Department of Insurance from motorists wondering when their rates are going up.

Insurance Commissioner Elton Bomer's answer is it's not going to happen anytime soon for most drivers. Some insurers say that because heavier SUVs and pickups inflict more damage and injuries in accidents, resulting in much higher claims, the heavier vehicles' drivers should pay higher liability premiums.

But the Department of Insurance says reports show that occupants of heavier vehicles suffer fewer injuries in motor vehicle accidents, and this suggests that there could be offsetting credits in coverages.

"Safety is a big reason why Texans spend as much money as they do on SUVs and pickup trucks," Bomer said. "There won't be an increase in liability rates until I see hard proof that the increased risk can be demonstrated."

Under Texas law, rate-regulated auto insurance companies must follow the Department of Insurance's liability rating system, which allows only the driver's age, sex and automobile usage - not the type of vehicle - to apply.

To change the rating system, insurance companies would have to petition Bomer to allow the make and model of a vehicle in a driver's liability rate. Then, a public hearing would have to be held in which Bomer determined that higher premiums would be fair and adequate and not excessive or discriminatory. To date, no company has petitioned for such a change.

Other Capital Highlights

The State Board of Education approved the \$177 million purchase of textbooks to be placed in Texas school classrooms in the fall of 1998. The books were approved on a 9-5 vote, with some members criticizing a \$56 book, "Focus on Algebra," because, they said, it was focused more on environmental and political topics than on algebra.

Former President George Bush and his wife, Barbara, presided over the Nov. 7 opening of the George Bush Presidential Library Center at Texas A&M University in College Station. The Bushes toured the \$83 million complex which includes the library and museum, the Bush School of Government and Public Service and the Presidential Conference Center.

Land Commissioner Garry Mauro, a Democrat, is said to have picked Nov. 17 as the date he will announce for governor. Incumbent Republican Gov. George W. Bush is to announce for re-election Dec. 3. Secretary of State Tony Garza, a Republican, last week announced his candidacy for land commissioner.

Hundreds of sex offenders, previously exempted from registration, are signing up with police and sheriff's departments under a new law making registration requirements retroactive to 1970. State officials estimate the volume of registrants may have tripled since the law went into effect Sept. 1.

Gov. Bush appointed Grace Shore, 56, of Longview, to the State Board of Education, to replace Donna Ballard of The Woodlands, who resigned. Shore, a former public school teacher and a small business owner, has three children and is a grandmother.

Let's Look Back...

24 & 48 YEARS AGO

Jan. 11, 1973

The Board of Education of Rice Consolidated Independent School District approved Monday night a one-year extension of the contract of Supt. E.A. Krivacka...

Mr. & Mrs. Daniel Norris Mascheck are the proud parents of a baby boy born Dec. 27, 1972, at 3:39 a.m. in a Bryan Hospital. Grandparents are Mr. & Mrs. Louis J. Mascheck of Eagle Lake and Mr. & Mrs. August H. Jones Sr. of Bernardo...

The Rev. L.J. Johnson, former resident of Eagle Lake and pastor of the St. James Baptist Church of Georgetown, passed away Friday, Dec. 8, at eight o'clock...

A guest in the home of Mr. & Mrs. Raymond Perry and family is Gail Curtis, a resident of Sale, Australia...

Mrs. Jimmy D. Holden, formerly Miss Sue Ellen Rolf and a recent bride, was honored with a lovely Tea Shower at the home of Mrs. Carl Austin on Dec. 16, 1972...

The marriage of Miss Linda Nell Dye, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Loretta H. Dye, and Robert Harlow Brient II was solemnized Friday, Dec. 22, at eight o'clock in the evening in the First Baptist Church of Eagle Lake...

Mr. & Mrs. Frank Broesche of Eagle Lake announced the engagement and approaching marriage of their daughter, Betty Ann, to Jerome

J. Zahradnick, son of Mr. & Mrs. Emil J. Zahradnick of Hungerford. The couple will exchange vows on Feb. 17 at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church in Eagle Lake...

Oria Mason repeated as the Cager of the Week for the Rice High School Raiders basketball team, reported Coach Jack Grammer this week...

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church in Eagle Lake was the setting of the Nuptial Mass uniting in marriage Miss Agnes Reel and Patrick Lynn Duke at 3:00 in the afternoon of Dec. 30, 1972. The bride is the daughter of Mr. & Mrs. James R. Reel of Eagle Lake and the groom is the son of Mr. & Mrs. Patrick Duke of Rosenberg...

Friends in the community regretted to learn of the death of Mrs. Ruth Murriam Starks of Conroe, the mother of Mrs. Lester Herman of Eagle Lake...

Mr. & Mrs. Howard Lobpries of Garwood announced the engagement and approaching marriage of their daughter, Beverly Ann, to Johnnie Kotrla, son of Mr. & Mrs. R.J. Kotrla of Weimar. The wedding is set for Feb. 17 at 2 p.m. at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Nada...

Mrs. Grace Towell will no longer conduct the "well child clinic" to give immunizations to the pre-school age (See 24 & 48, Page 4)

Secrets and good government don't mix

By Dan Morales, Texas Attorney General

When does a government employee or a public official have a right to keep secrets from the people who pay his or her salary? My answer is: "Almost never."

Most citizens understand there are times when government secrecy is required, such as in cases involving national security or investigations to determine criminal wrongdoing. In fact, there are other reasonable "exceptions" to the requirement of open government, such as the protection of personal records of children who attend public schools.

Nonetheless, most Texans also understand that the principle of open government is more than a good idea. It is a bedrock principle of our democracy. Those of us who serve as public officials and government employees should never forget that we work for

the public, to benefit the public, and we should expect our work to be subject to public scrutiny.

Last spring, the Texas Legislature passed a bill making public information about traffic accidents harder to get. The problem they were trying to fix was a legitimate one. Many people felt that certain professionals were engaged in "ambulance chasing" by scrutinizing public accident reports and then calling people who had suffered severe injuries in these accidents in order to solicit their business. These victims were being harassed.

The effort to protect privacy was well intended, but it created a real obstacle to the public's right to know. In one case, the mayor of a Texas city and his wife were involved in a car crash that involved a fatality. The Texas Department of Public Safety, in its efforts to follow the new law, refused to release information regarding that accident.

Several Texas news organizations challenged the law, and for good reason (See Secrets, Page 8)

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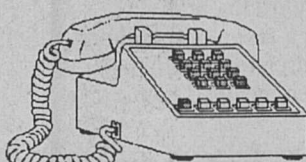
Acacia Natural Gas Corporation has a pipeline damage prevention and public awareness program in this area to avoid pipeline incidents from occurring and to keep the general public informed as how to identify and report natural gas leaks.

Acacia Natural Gas Corporation installs and maintains pipeline warning signs over, or near, their natural gas pipelines at roads, highways, railroad crossings and along the pipeline right-of-way. These warning signs have the company's name, the type of gas being transported, and 24 hour telephone numbers where Acacia Natural Gas Corporation may be reached. Anyone planning any type of excavation work near these signs, or where pipelines are located, should notify Acacia Natural Gas Corporation before starting the excavation activities to prevent an incident from occurring. Acacia Natural Gas Corporation will locate, mark

their pipelines, and coordinate the excavation activities to prevent an incident from occurring. Natural gas pipelines occasionally develop leaks. These leaks often show up as blowing dirt in the air, bubbles surfacing in water, dead vegetation in an area where the surrounding vegetation is normal, and sometimes has an odor like hydrocarbons or oil.

When any, or all, of these conditions are observed near Acacia Natural Gas Corporation pipeline, the conditions and location should be reported immediately, by telephone, to the numbers on the pipeline warning signs. An Acacia Natural Gas Corporation representative will be dispatched to the location as soon as possible to investigate the situation and take the appropriate action.

By following these simple steps, you could prevent an accident from occurring and may save lives.



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