

# HOUSTON Breakthrough

OUR FIFTH YEAR

SEPTEMBER 1980

EMPLOYMENT  
UNLIMITED  
INC

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Film, theatre, art—a new calendar of upcoming cultural events. Page 26

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Detroit is sending its problems to the Sunbelt. In the next decade, Detroit will be a smaller, quieter, cleaner town with less unemployment. Houston won't. See story page 14.

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## KEEP JUDGE ROBERT BAUM

Judge Robert Baum has been a long-time supporter of the ERA. In 1978 his positions on issues of importance to women earned him the endorsement of the Harris County Women's Political Caucus. We, the undersigned supporters of the ERA, know that we need judges who are truly qualified and who share with us a belief in the basic principle of equal justice for all regardless of gender or party affiliation. Robert Baum's record as judge is one that women and men can be proud of. That is why we urge you to keep Robert Baum as judge of the 314th Family District Court.



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## LETTERS

I read Gabrielle Cosgriff's "Media Matters" column (*Breakthrough*, July/August) with great interest — and considerable chagrin. We're going over the research materials we used for checking the piece out, as well as the correspondence we've received since the Hochberg article appeared, to try to figure out what went wrong and how we could have caught the errors she points out.

In the second paragraph of her column she writes that "there are woeful inadequacies in local environmental reporting," while observing that we flubbed our opportunity to deal with this important subject. . .

We do very much want to get our Texas stories straight. . .

**JON SWAN**  
Senior Editor  
*Columbia Journalism Review*

Sometimes I think that if a popular statement in the extreme left faction of the feminist movement were: "the sky is green," *Breakthrough* would support it as unthinkingly as you expressed your opposition to the Hyde Amendment in the editorial "Cruel and Unusual Punishment for Poor Women" (*Breakthrough*, July/August 1980).

If a poor woman's life is in danger due to pregnancy, or would be if that pregnancy were allowed to come to term, then she should have access to subsidized abortion (for which the Hyde Amendment allows). If she just does not want a child, then let her use birth control. If she finds contraception too inconvenient (as in the case of the 16-year-old unwed mother who, when asked in an interview if she were not aware that a doctor could have prescribed any of her choice of contraceptive devices, replied that yes, she knew, but she would have had to take the bus all the way downtown to her doctor's office or as is the case of many women who object that the time taken to insert a diaphragm disrupts the flow of passionate lovemaking), then let her abstain from fucking. As opposed to the purely instinctive act that it is for rabbits, sex for human beings does and should include some cognitive responsibility. Conception is the possible natural outcome of intercourse roughly 33 1/3 per cent of the time. It should not be the responsibility of the government to protect citizens from the natural but unwanted consequences of a willingly undertaken act because the agent of this act has failed to regard, or was ignorant of, its result. . .

I support the ERA and the right of choice regarding abortion for American women. But to paraphrase a statement made by one of the justices after the ruling on the Hyde Amendment, the guarantee of the right to choose abortion is an entirely different matter from the economic guarantee that it be made available to all American women. Let us rather direct those tax funds to the immediate and required use of better sex education for both juveniles and adults, thereby returning to American individuals their rightful human responsibility for their own choices and actions and the self-respect and dignity which accompanies assumption of this responsibility. Avoiding pregnancy is a responsibility which absolutely precedes the question of what to do about an unwanted one. Let us finally put our attention there, where it belongs. . .

I would suggest that your editors take a little more time to examine those gray areas that lie between the black and white sides of every issue, feminist ones included. It would improve your credibility and expand your readership to those whom you could really hope to influence, beyond that pool of ye-saying readers who already agree and know in advance that they will agree with everything you say.

**QUEALY LEWIS**

I thought your series of articles on James Blue (*Breakthrough* July/August 1980) to be very

interesting and touching. I enjoyed reading accounts of his life and accomplishments through the eyes of people that had been associated with him in different ways.

Highlighting an artist who has contributed so much to our community and to the area of filmmaking is most appropriate for a newspaper offering alternative news.

**BETSY BALDWIN**

Janice Blue's piece in the July/August issue of *Breakthrough* ("Blue Period — a marriage, a divorce, a renewed friendship and death") comes very close to me and I thank and commend her on that. Her "sorting" is sensitive and helpful.

I count James Blue as one of the real "teachers" I've had in my lifetime. As a teacher and filmmaker myself, I wrangled with James and found myself clinging to my all-too-tenacious and provincial world views. James left no premise unexamined, no hypothesis untested, no conclusion unsupported. In describing him to others, I found myself telling them that he was someone who would never take the easy course. I don't believe he ever did an easy piece of work with cleanly packaged conclusions. The integrity of each and every inquiry, combined with James' unceasing curiosity made learning the sort of hard work that you feel good after.

In addition to all that I learned from James and his work, I learned a quality of approach that is much akin to the Greek concept of arete; I learned courage, rigor, and integrity. I owe a great debt to the future. . .

**BOB DEVINE**  
Antioch College  
Yellow Springs, OH

Thank you to Janice Blue for sharing her relationship with James Blue. The balanced tone of her article was a most appropriate tribute to one so humanistic. . .

**QUIDA DEAN**  
Nacogdoches

The current issue of *Breakthrough* is one of your finest! Of course, I enjoyed the cover story on Dick Murray ("The Wizard of Odds"), having had his prognostications during my campaign.

Janice Blue's story about her life with James Blue was inspiring and heartwarming. The other stories were also a tribute to him. ("A Farewell" by Gerald O'Grady and "Houston Legacy" an interview with Ed Hugetz by Missy Hauge.)

James had met with me and three others during the campaign and showed us a four or five hour program of film, including *Fourth Ward* and *The Invisible City*. It was a rare opportunity and gave me many insights. His loss not only affects our community but he will be missed by all who have come in contact with him and his work.

**ELEANOR TINSLEY**  
Council Member at Large

*Janice Blue responds:* Writing my story on James Blue took me through 12 years of our relationship and hundreds of pages before I woke up one morning and typed my final draft. The process was both painful and joyful and helped me reach an inner peace. I am grateful for *Breakthrough* and especially to my colleague and dear friend, Gabrielle Cosgriff, whose sensitive editing polished my words and thoughts. And thank you, too, to Morris Edelson for his encouragement to begin this task and to Jim Asker and Chandler Davidson for reading the final draft before its publication.

Sharing something so personal was a risky undertaking. But your letters — well over a hundred of them — touched me deeply. Thank you for your beautiful tributes to James. I shared many of them with his parents and mine.

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Photo: David Crossley

Who is this phantom of the spray can? What manner of mortal has taken on the name of one of Breakthrough's columns and paints it with abandon throughout the city, on dumpsters such as this one in the Alabama Theatre parking lot, and on freeway underpasses, and on blank walls? Now, "Local Color" announces on a wall on Alabama near Main, that "War is for fools. Local Color will have none of it." What will be next? Where will it all end? When will the stranger be unmasked?

## SEPTEMBER 1980

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Cover photograph by David Crossley

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### UNBEATEN WOMEN

A Discussion Group  
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# ZIPPY FOR PRESIDENT!



September 1980

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## FREE AT LAST!

"I never heard anyone call it a depression. People went around saying it was simply hard times."

— recollections of a man who grew up during the 30s from Studs Terkel's *Hard Times*

When we were growing up, people called it The Great Depression. Depression stories replaced fairy tales as folklore. Both had the same ending: we would all live happily ever after.

Those who lived through the 30s, survivors like our parents, gave a false sense of security to their children. We grew up thankful to be born during World War II and not a decade earlier. The war came just in the nick of time. It brought jobs and television. We could now see how well off we were as a nation. Just as modern medicine wiped out a virus or two, we thought we had this depression thing all but licked.

Of course, we're not in a depression, Ronald Reagan notwithstanding. But these tales from the 30s are hitting a little closer to home.

Enterprises like this newspaper have always been accustomed to hard times. Rubberneckers by trade, we've watched a lot of better-funded publications bite the dust over the last five years. If we were in it only for the money, we would have, too. A 32-page paper with an average of three pages of ads is a rare bird maybe, but hardly the goose that lays gilt-edged securities.

But it's an ill wind, et cetera, and one positive, delightful result of our economic setbacks has been that we are finally going to do something that we should have done a long time ago. Starting with this issue, *Breakthrough* will be free at newsstands and other distribution points. We've always advocated free speech, so here it is.

Instead of passing on our escalating costs to our subscribers, we decided to build our advertising revenue. The best way to do that is to make the paper as visible as possible. Advertisers always ask how the paper is distributed. In the past we've had to say, "Almost exclusively through the mail." This isn't New York City with a newsstand on every corner, you know.

Those outlets that would carry a monthly paper were spread around the city—both expensive and time-consuming to service. Those who refused to carry it did so mainly because they thought people would walk off with it. We hardly look like the *Green Sheet* or other ad rags sprouting like weeds around town, but we were competing for counter space, nevertheless.

For the first few months, we will circulate the paper in the areas of our greatest subscription strength—the Montrose-River Oaks, Heights and downtown areas. As our advertising allows, we will increase our print run and the areas of

distribution.

We will continue the mailing service for paid subscribers with no increase in rates. In fact, we will continue to send the paper to those of you who are currently paid subscribers for a year beyond your expiration date. Any renewals received before November 30 will also get the one-year bonus.

We have never had the resources to give our circulation the attention it deserves—we've always been too busy trying to put out a quality paper. We hope that now, with the potential for a vastly increased circulation, we will be able to bring you an even better newspaper.

Pass the word. *Breakthrough* is free, free at last.

We warmly welcome Morris Edelson as our newest editor. (Now we are four). You have been seeing his byline on many *Breakthrough* stories, including three recent cover stories: "Sharon Itaya: Tough on Toxics" (April), "Richard Murray: Wizard of Odds" (July/August) and this month's series of stories on the economy. He was on the faculty at the University of Wisconsin and a Fulbright Scholar and most recently retired from *The New York Times'* Houston bureau. This month, Dr. Edelson succumbs to his secret vice—gossip—in his new Local Color column. Dr. Edelson takes his inspiration from Addison and Steele, with a nod to Juvenal and Catullus, and he says, "Local color is the ticker tape of society, history written on a paper towel." His busy pencil running back and forth across the city will reveal an underlying pattern as intricate and appealing as a brass rubbing.

A welcome to Houston to Zippy who debuts in this month's comix section (see facing page). Zippy is a free spirit and "tends not to stay on the subject," says his creator, Bill Griffiths (*Mother Jones*, Sept/Oct 1980). "He has the technique of a TV commercial—he does one disconnecting thing after another."

At the moment, Zippy is running for President under the slogan, "Am I Elected Yet?"

Thanks to Jane Collings who introduced us to Zippy. Jane was our Antioch intern this summer and there was a good bit of Zip in her, too. We will miss her. She has to go back to school this fall, but look for her byline next month on film, her first love.

And, David Crossley—great photos and lay out! For a still photographer, he's always in motion. Jane calls him *Dashing David* because when he comes into the production room, copy takes wings. Things get done. And the staff perks up. "He appreciates genius," says Jane. "He laughs at my jokes.

That about zips it up . . .

— Janice Blue and Gabrielle Cosgriff

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# FACTS & RUMORS

Lyndon LaRouche rides again, Sissy's back in town and mushrooms are a fickle fungus

BY MORRIS EDELSON

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID CROSSLEY

## POLITICS

Behind *Fusion*, currently being distributed at the Houston International Airjam, there lies a long, bizarre tale. First of all, the "Fusion Energy Foundation" publishing the slick mag is using the kiosk space free, as can anyone on a first-come, first served basis, except the flowered shaved heads or leechy nuts. Secondly, the FEF is the latest incarnation of the Truth as seen by Lyndon LaRouche aka Lynn Marcus, aka Il Duce of the Brown Shirts of the Left, exposed long ago by *Counterspy* magazine as being in the pay of the US security agencies.

The LaRouche group, besides running this crazy old man for president, also was formed to attack every existing left of center organization in the US. LaRouche's group first appeared as a dissident Students for Democratic Society faction, supporting white-dominated teachers' unions in New York City. This group, the Labor Committee, was tossed out of the SDS, which didn't usually bother with such hassles. Then LaRouche's label became the National Council of Labor Committees. Nick Lick, as it was known, staged violent attacks on populist and leftist groups in the north and east, mopping up the last radicals trying to make a transition from anti-Vietnam War protests to general domestic movements. In Madison, Wisconsin, NCLC attempted to burn down the headquarters of the Wisconsin Alliance, an ACORN-like group, and tried to isolate and persecute its leaders by distributing red-baiting and merely insulting literature about them. "Neo-Nazi slime-suckers" was his epithet for some schoolteachers who tried to organize for better wages in Wisconsin.

As the left in America began to evaporate, LaRouche, who would run for president and get an inordinate sum of money and television attention every time, turned his attention to the anti-nuclear groups. Suddenly, fusion energy became the only hope of the West; no-growth, environmental and anti-nuke groups were agents of Communism on some days, reactionary hippies on others.

Now, titled Fusion Energy Foundation, LaRouche's group is adopting their insulting and holier-than-thou rhetoric to today's needs (as perceived by the right wing money that funds FEF): the production of bumper stickers and posters which read "Don't Let Jane Fonda Pull Down Your Plants", "Warning: I Don't Brake for Liberals", and "More People Have Died in Ted Kennedy's Car than in Nuclear Power Plants". *Fusion* magazine is only the latest, slickest, in a long line of LaRouche-toned publications, all of them combining snob appeal and sic-the-dogs-on-'em political views. There was *Executive Intelligence*, openly advertised for "top management", and even a little weekly called *Interview*, which used to have classical music-and-wine benefits for itself in the Midwest. The FEF people so far in Houston have restricted themselves to a little preliminary contact-making at the airport, a few semi-private political receptions at a modest suite of rooms in the Warwick,

and some intelligence-gathering on the Mockingbird Alliance and the PIRG groups here. LaRouche hopes to play a role in the acceptance of the South Texas Nuclear Project.

More innocuous is the series of films supposedly being sponsored by the downtown library. Actually, a group called Free Enterprise is using the facilities, free, to show Uncle Miltie Freedman do his Adam

Smith vaudeville routines. In addition to the eight-week series of films, a discussion leader will be on hand to lead any doubters to the prayer tent. Miltie's thesis is that the law of the jungle is actually most humane, since Darwinian social scientists have told us that poor people are a doomed, draggy bunch. No one would have even bothered with a Free Enterprise Foundation if more and more people

weren't beginning to doubt that 19th century industrial capitalism may not, after all, save the planet.

Frances T. ("Sissy") Farenthold is back on Main Street, practicing law. *Ms.* ran a September article on her tenure at Wells College, "The College President as Rebel." *Breakthrough's* Gabrielle Cosgriff was originally asked by *Ms.* to interview

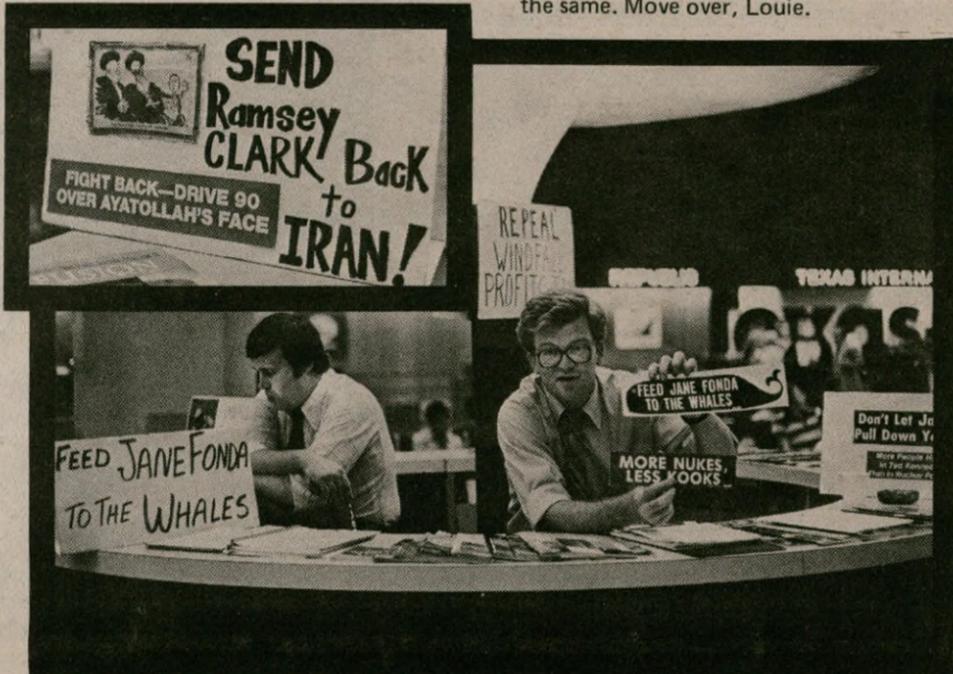


Like a Phoenix rising from the ashes, the horse at Stelzig's Western shop rears over the remains of the Hogg Building downtown.

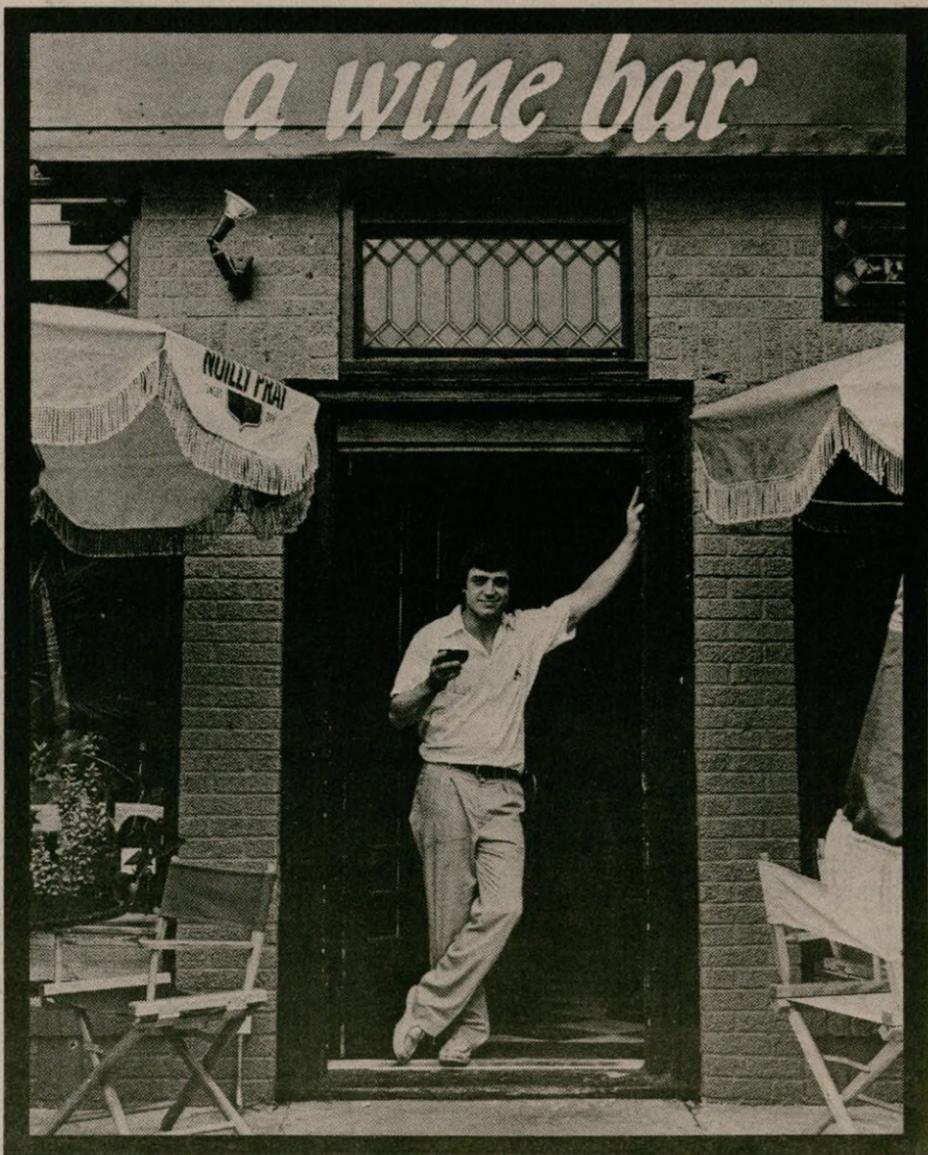
Farenthold in Houston, but Sissy didn't get back in town in time. Farenthold introduced politician-in-residence programs, an expanded internship and the Public Leadership Education Network programs to the upstate New York college. She says four years in women's higher education has made her an avowed feminist.

"You hear about the 'me generation,'"

said the former vice-presidential nominee, "but that isn't the case at Wells. Students may have seemed complacent when I came, but now they are petitioners." She says she returned to Houston after four years because she accomplished what she set out to do. Wells will never be the same and Houston has regained a valuable community leader. It, too, may never be the same. Move over, Louie.



Taking the curmudgeon's position on every issue from nuclear energy to Iran, these Fusion Energy Foundation followers work out of a booth at the airport. (See story)



Don Hill, manager of Zimm's on Montrose, raises a glass of Bordeaux. (See story)



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## LOCAL COLOR

According to UT Medical Center p r man **Stephen Stuyck**, there has been unjustified complaining going on about the half-million dollar home purchased for **Charles LeMaistre**, head of the UT Medical Center. The move was necessary because of the danger to LeMaistre's life—commuting daily from his house in the Tanglewood subdivision of Houston to the Medical Center. According to Stuyck, LeMaistre is forced to drive to work daily on the Southwest Freeway, and occasionally even on the dreaded South Loop West. The risk is too great, Stuyck feels, for a man who is totally indispensable to the medical world. Contemplated use of a Life Flite helicopter had been ruled out due to excessive patient use of that vehicle.

According to **Nicholas Chris** of the *Houston Chronicle*, LeMaistre's new residence has Bray's Bayou running through it. "We jumped at the chance to get the (LeMaistre) house," said Stuyck, "It is adjacent to the Texas Medical Center (but separated by a bayou)—and as the center expands, we can tear it down and use the space."

Footnote: Moving to Houston is a step down for LeMaistre whose previous house in Austin, when he was a short term Chancellor of the UT, was a million dollars in value.

Campaign manager **Bill Oliver** says that the **Ron Waters** campaign for State Senator was, in spite of Waters' loss to **Jack Ogg**, a "good thing." It is a difficult district, he pointed out, for a progressive to win. Ogg was able to use Waters' Montrose support against the challenger, but the outcome was close enough to be "agonizing." Waters will continue his work for the Houston Apartment Association and his interest in public life and urban legislation in Austin.

State Senator **Ogg** showed up at the benefit to raise money to cover debts for the losing candidate and presented a check even, along with a good sportsmanship speech. Although the Senator may have looked like a million dollars doing it, his check was substantially smaller than the rumoured two or five thousand.

Oliver's recent campaign organization of the Houston Fire Fighters Association bid for a pay raise was also turned back by Houston voters. "The firefighters are trapped," said Oliver, "in a situation where they were perceived as being related to the police. The general public's attitude toward the police did not help gain voter support for a raise." Oliver thought the police wage increase campaign might have been improved. For one thing, the police campaigned at large, using the mass media, rather than targeting on their known supporters. The style of the police campaign seemed to convey a threat of slow-downs or cutback in services if they did not get the raise. Thirdly, the pay raise ordinance was complicated and difficult for the public to understand.

"We were trying to get the nation's fourth largest city," said Oliver, "to agree to a tax increase, when the whole world wants a tax cut!"

Oliver said it was important in the future to see the difference between uniformed city employees: "The firefighters aren't arresting anybody. They are out there saving lives. They have a five minute response time, compared to the 30 minute response time of the police. But it is just not possible to make that distinction to the voters."

Oliver will be campaign manager for **Mickey Leland** and **Fred Daley's** fall campaigns. Campaign headquarters will open soon. Oliver is completing his 18th year as minister of Plymouth United Congregational Church of Christ in Beaumont, and

does election campaigns "avocationally", he says, adding "The church has been very tolerant of me." His most memorable moment, in a crowded career, was the Appreciation Dinner given him by political groups in Beaumont. Eight hundred people showed up in April at the new Beaumont Civic Center, including Andrew Young, Sarah Weddington, Jack Brooks and Mickey Leland.

"We had a lot of fun," recalls Oliver. "The biggest fun was that the civic center is Beaumont's newest white elephant, and they never had that black a crowd all over the place, paying the bill."

Council member **Eleanor Tinsley** finds, in her August 1980 study of women and advancement in government careers, that a majority of city employees remain uninformed about Houston Affirmative Ac-

tion and career development programs. The survey shows that a great majority of city employees hope to advance in their jobs, and feel restless when they don't, but think Big Jim McConn is Dada Nada as far as helping them get ahead. Tinsley's report, based on a study by graduate student, **Goldie Waghalter**, says that most of the career development programs mandated by federal law are unknown to lower echelon workers because the information just isn't being passed along.

Baby doctor **Benjamin Spock** will be the featured speaker at the ACLU fundraiser at Lt. Gov. **Bill Hobby's** little shack on South Boulevard in November. Local right to life groups see a chance for putting a little spice in the civil libertarians' usual menu of unsalted popcorn. They plan protests and a media campaign a-

gainst the "closet abortionist" Spock, a "running doc," according to one of his critics.

**Marie M. Oser**, who founded the Texas Institute for Families in Houston in 1975, will be executive director of the 1981 White House Conference on Children and Youth. The 1981 conference, date to be announced, will focus mainly on the impact of institutions, employment and culture on children and youth. Oser, who will work with Health and Human Services director Patricia Roberts Harris, will arrange presentations and invitations for the conference and be responsible for a comprehensive report to the President and to the public. Interestingly, these two reports will be very different—a brief summary is what the White House wants now, and the public will probably be inte-

rested in major presentations in full. If Reagan is elected, the White House report will probably be even shorter.

## AFFAIRS

The **Jim Love** opening at the Rice Museum was a stately riot involving 600 patrons and admirers of the life-form and machine tool sculptor. Love, who cowered in a corner at the opening, said he had named the show "Jim Love Up To Now" because "calling it a retrospective sounds too much like an obituary." Outside, his Trojan Bear, the lovable wooden animal which has been the only link between the Museum of Fine Arts and the Contemporary Arts Museum for the past few years, smiled happily as it settled into its home haunts.

Inside, **Dominique de Menil** was greeting people like **Liz Weingarten** at the

door, **David Crossley** was snapping pictures, and the wall to wall crowd was snacking on Jarlsburg and Vouvray. **Jane Collings** and **John Techman** arrived on a motorcycle.

Mrs. de Menil wore a simple black with silver jewelry, the artist a pair of baggy brown Levis, but many in the crowd were fancied out, including one couple dressed punk. The woman, **Judy Funderburk** displayed a pair of cut-off leopard skin cowboy boots, artfully made into clogs, full Rocky Horror makeup, and an enormous safety pin holding her silk-rag blouse together. The curator of the Museum, **Heidi Renteria**, who wore an orchid as large as a head of cabbage (a surprise gift from her husband, artist **Philip Renteria**), said "It was a nice reunion of friends of the artist and friends of the art. Love's work has a gen-

teness that makes everyone smile." The show continues until November 16.

## EATS

Out Basket: **Don's Oyster Bar** between Baba Yega and the Mining Company died, as did **Sorena's Restaurant** on Alabama. Don's had a thick, decent gumbo and the Cajun cooks are now headed back to Lafayette; Sorena's had a clean salad, unusual for the neighborhood.

There'll be no more beer busts at the **Kappa Alpha** fraternity house on Chelsea and Montrose, either. The ole animal house was not only wrecked by this "Confederate" fraternity, but the bills didn't get paid. The door's open, if you want to see a trashed-out wreck of a former mansion, just across the street from those absurd little pill box \$100,000 condos that replaced a drug store and medical offices.

On the wall of the ex-KA shell, note the motto, "Dieu et Les Dames."

In Basket: Down the street is the shadowy figure of "The King of Montrose," **Steve Zimmermann**, Zimmermann Enterprises, once a professor at St. Thomas University, with a weakness, among others, for modified guillotine steel sculpture. Zimm's backing John Anderson in the upcoming turkey trot, and seems to be raising his own profile among his Montrose constituents.

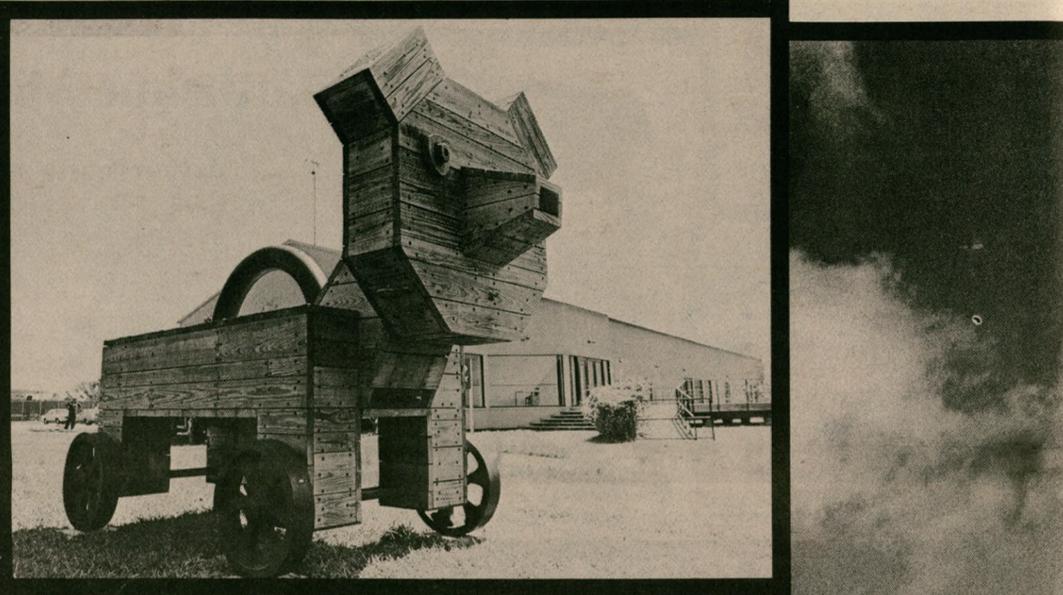
You will know **Zimm's Wine Bar**, by its valiant little umbrellas nudging the neighboring Steak 'N Eggs greasewood exterior on Montrose near Richmond. **Don Hill**, the manager, says, "Houston is getting increasingly sophisticated in its tastes for wine. The demand here means we can get some rare wines in bulk, such as 1974 California Cabernet Sauvignon."

Zimm's has a \$1500 bottle of 1988 Lafitte or 1924 La Tour for the hard-to-please, the best California from \$15-37 a bottle, and samples of the decent wines at \$2-3. Aside from the large wine, beer and water selection manager Hill touts a light, crisp menu of pates, meat and cheese platters, smoked salmon, and quiches for \$3.50 and under, and cheesecake imported from Arno's of New Orleans, all lunch specialties. The decor is elegant, intimate, and Hill reports rising popularity: "The Steak 'N Eggs customers passing by just add to the atmosphere. That's Montrose."

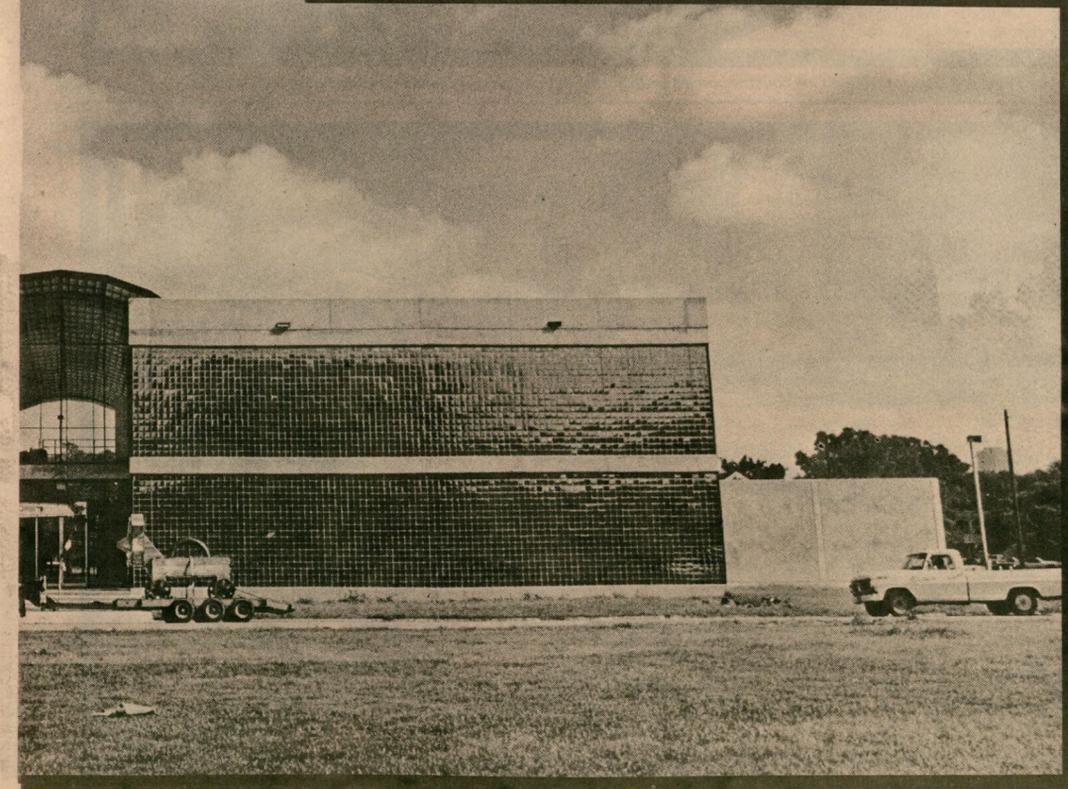
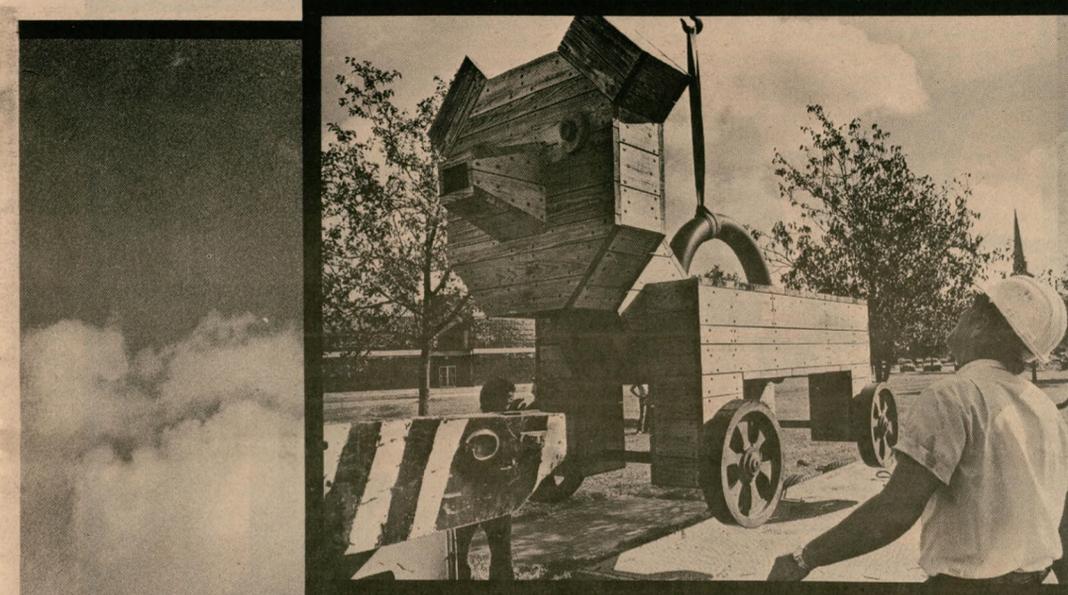
Another Zimm venture is **La Colombe d'Or** (the Golden Dove). The hotel is only four blocks down Montrose from Steak 'N Eggs, but it might as well be on another planet. **Emilee Lake**, director of hotel operations and sales, says the accommodations at this palatial pension are out of this world. So are the prices. For a terrestrial \$152-200 per evening, guests will enjoy the sight of about \$15,000 worth of antiques in their suites. The hotel, formerly the old Fondren mansion at 3400 Montrose, had been up for sale for 1.2 million, but now it's going to be the city's first luxury flophouse — room for 80, a French nouvelle menu, port and cognac served in the restored library.

The house, built in 1923, is already an important part of Houston's history. (Fondren was the founder of what became Exxon). The public can partake of the gourmet cooking, which will be a fixed menu changing seasonally. Costs will run \$20 per head at lunch and dinner, and there'll be a big Sunday brunch. "We're going to have a 'soft opening' in mid-October," said director Lake, "and then a victory party in November."

**Benny Boyle**, manager of **Luckyburger**, Mandell at Richmond, came back into business because his landlord asked him to. There was a lot of community heat about it as well, rumors of a picket-petition drive to reopen the place, after it was shut four months ago in a rent-raise dispute. "The first thing I did toward reopening," said Boyle, "was a no-no. I painted that big barrel on top of the place grey and green. It used to be orange, and everybody around here would tell their visitors, 'Oh just turn left at that big orange barrel.' When we painted it, people got all mixed up and they came to me and said 'Oh man you just got to paint it back.' So now the huge wooden ornament is orange than the University of Texas after a football game with Rice. Luckyburger's pinball machines and jukebox, however, have gone the way of the Susan B. Anthony coin and the Luckyburger shrimp basket. Boyle is now concentrating on his half-pound \$2 burger and his Hungry Farmer



The Trojan Bear, a work by local sculptor Jim Love, passed in front of the Glassell School as it left its location across from the Museum



of Fine Arts (left inset) recently to go to the Rice Museum (right inset) where Love is having a major retrospective. (See story)

## LOCAL COLOR

sandwich, a 2,000 calory snack of bacon, cheese and beef from which few walk away hungry or walk away at all, for that matter. Boye, 24, says he has no desire to become a franchise: "I just want to get the air conditioner in this place fixed—that's my ambition now," he said, mopping both brow and floor.

Up on Bissonnet, next to Hard Thymes Soup Kitchen (hours: almost never), it's worth wading over construction debris to get to **Munchie's**, which not only has 50 brands of beer at prices from .75, but also features on weekends a classical music quintet. The place has an ice-house layout, so you risk the big SLE at picnic tables outside, but as you sit and scratch that possible bite, you can't help thinking this is the way it s'posed to be, and dammit why can't we enjoy outdoors everywhere like at this homey little joint?

Neal, at **Neal's Ice Cream**, just in front of the River Oaks Tennis Club on Kirby, has just brought in Houston's first Italian Ices (fifty cents) in many flavors including watermelon. Neal has been open only a few weeks, and you will see him in the backroom, making the ice cream, wearing surgical greens. He was a medical student in Grenada for a few years, but decided ice cream did more for people's health and state of mind than medicine. Neal has a mid-west dairy state background and he says most of the other ice cream in Houston is an udder disaster. Mellorine? He wouldn't even bring himself to discuss it!

### ENTERPRISE

**Jim Alexander** serves desserts—right in the kisser. He and **Glen Sanders** operate **Pie Got-U** (going on 200 dissatisfied customers.) The standard hit costs \$30, with the hit simple, a Polaroid picture and a description of anything you may have missed about the incident. For deluxe services, up to \$75, Jim and Glen really go to town, collecting gossip, composing limericks, and cataloging the victim's sins, life right before the hit. Up to now, the meringue-mashing has gone to presidents of airlines, oil company executives, and television personalities with no hitches except the manager of Hugo's, who objected strenuously to the flavor of the occasion.

In case you never heard of Aron Kay, (the original Pie Man, imaginary ancestor of Pie-Got-U,) tossing pies, a silent screen laffgetter device, became nationally prominent in the Nixon years. Kay, a master of disguise, an anarchist, and loosely tied to the underground press, put pies in the face of Henry Kissinger, Howard Hunt, and the mayor of New York, Ed Koch, (the only one who sued him— unsuccessfully). Some of Kay's imitators did less well— the young man who pied the Guru Maharaj Ji (the teenage god) had his arm nearly broken by holy thugs, and the attempted pie-ing of former Wisconsin governor Patrick J Lucey (now John Anderson's running mate) resulted in arrest and alleged beating of a prankster. Kay himself retired from the business in 1978, produced one recipe book of tossed desserts, and is today half-underground, since he is wanted for misdemeanors around the banquet table in a dozen northern states.

"I'm a cockeyed optimist— or maybe a Pollyanna," said **Barbara Busby** as she opened her new contemporary gift shop, **Domicile** at 2423 Rice in the Rice Village. "I just got back from the Dallas market and no one was buying anything—I was buying everything in sight," she said. The results of the choices of Busby, the

former director of interior design at Foley's, will be evident during her grand opening week, September 15-20. Each day of the week visiting experts will demonstrate different items that are stocked in **Domicile**, including toys and games, crystal, kitchenware, and home furnishings. Busby plans to stay open on Thursday nights, an experiment she is conducting along with the Village Cheese Shop, in an attempt to bring people back to the University shopping area. Busby's husband, Don Huddle, is a professor of economics at Rice, but Busby says his role in the new store will be "strictly behind the shelves."

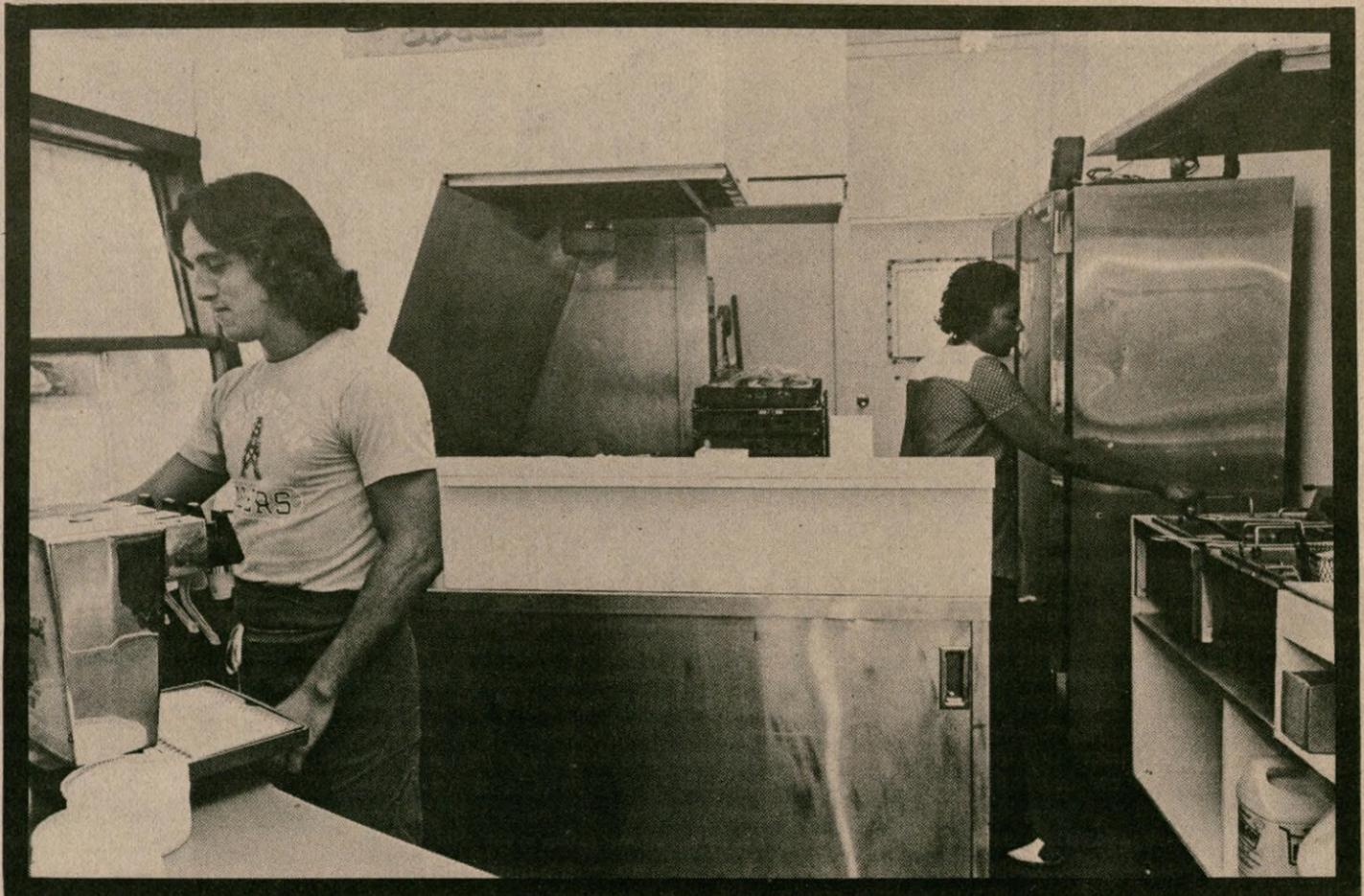
If you pass by **Iszadora's**, 1500 West Alabama, you may see the store staff out front shaking hands with passersby, clipping the hedges in a sunbonnet, picnic-

ing or standing on the stair of the period clothing shop. They can't complain, even though they are paid only in attention—their heads are filled with air alone. Like a lot of employees, you say? Not exactly, these are 1940's mannikins, decked out by manager **Stuart Axelson**, to demonstrate a little of his selection of fashions which date from Victorian to the 50s. Each room in the store represents an era of the past, and the shop is the largest carrier of vintage furs in the city. It also has period Western wear, lingerie, jewelry, and toys, with prices ranging from \$35 for a black crepe dress to \$350 for a black silk turn-of-the-century gown.

Axelson, **Mary Van Osdell**, and **Robbie Alba** own the shop and stage occasional dress-up parties to exhibit their range and newly acquired items. Said Axelson, "Most of my customers are collectors.

Some of them are a little weird— people who like to wear old clothes and live that kind of life style. There's an old clothing clique in Houston, and I myself run around with the owners of Hollywood Legends, Air, Flashbacks, and Peabody's, and we talk about the scene. I have been really happy with the response we get, from actors, female impersonators, collectors, and customers who are looking for something unusual or special to wear."

**Mary Ann Williamson**, owner of the Heights Book Store (motto: Read a Book, Help Stamp Out TV) announces her grand opening and a Whippersnapper Workshop for September. Every Sunday from 11-2, she will have the Sunday NY Times at prices cheaper than the Avalon Drug Store, and a runner who purveys



*Benny Boyle and Barbara Williams are cooking burgers again at that orange barrel at Mandell and Richmond. (See story)*



*One of Iszadora's mannequins seems to be enjoying a picnic on the shop's lawn at Alabama and Mulberry. (See story)*

bagels and cream cheese on order from the Ashland Deli a block away. She will offer tarot card readings and her own occasional renditions of torch songs from behind the bookstore piano. Mid-week Metaphysics programs on Wednesdays will feature Gail Sellers, author of the Astro Charts column for *Innerview*. Williamson's November ideas include an election night party, an ad for which says, "Oh my god, I just know one of these guys is going to win!" She wants to make her place a community center, where pleasantly unusual things occur. In her store she has copies of Mao's poems on top of *Joy of Sex* and *How to Get a Texas Divorce* filed in the Humor Section in the store. "I've been open a little over three months," said Williamson, "but I wasn't really open in my head—I had just gotten a divorce, so those first two

months don't count. If I make it until Christmas, this thing is going to be a success, I just know it."

The **Flewellen Center** on Alabama at Audobon has been positively perking lately. First the chic furnishing shop **TLC** opened with wine and roses, then Pasternak's grocery kicked Jack's Junque out of the building across Alabama, and now is cleaning up the place for a big antique shop there. Alas, the rumors of a deli are untrue, so we will continue watery egg breakfasts at Brasserie. However, signs announce a blessed event—the birth of the **Acadiana Bakery** due open now. It won't be jambalaya cakes, but croissants, rolls and Parisian sweets. A new set of awnings will go up on the building soon to match the new coat of paint, and who knows, they may even pull that

trash dumpster out of sight behind the building somewhere.

## MISCELLANY

Wholly communal, the **St. Thomas University** annual chili cook off at the tennis court-playground area was won by a cauldron full of "The Embezzler" recipe, concocted by freshpeople **John Donovan, Michael Fleming** and **John Martin**. Fleming said he wanted something that "will burn your throat to swallow" and the recipe's exact ingredients were so secret that two Houston police officers were called in the guard the cooks. However, an empty fifth of Jack Daniels was noticed not a mile away from the pot, so Fleming et al. may have used part of their \$125 prize for hangover remedies as well as Pepto Bismol.

St. Thomas, which teeters on the edge

of becoming a community institution occasionally (it sponsors Courses a la Carte, for example, and once had a media center) seems to be tottering back in the other direction. The tennis courts are padlocked, though if you look enough like A Faculty, you can get the keys at the counter in the Crocker Center. In case you wondered, all those grey and white buildings near it belong to the de Menil family, whose favorite colors are dull. If you think we're kidding just step into the Rothko Chapel. No use paying for an isolation tub after you've been to that ice house of the mind.

In a late-breaking development at St. Thomas, student **Toni Nunez** cleared up the mystery of the empty whiskey bottle. "It was the secret ingredient in what we call Whiteman's Chili," she said, "smuggled from the kitchen of the mother of my partner, **Kathy Godley**." The fifth helped her to take fifth place, and the cooking team, besides Captain Nunez, consisted of Godley, **Judy Clark**, and **Mary Harrison**.

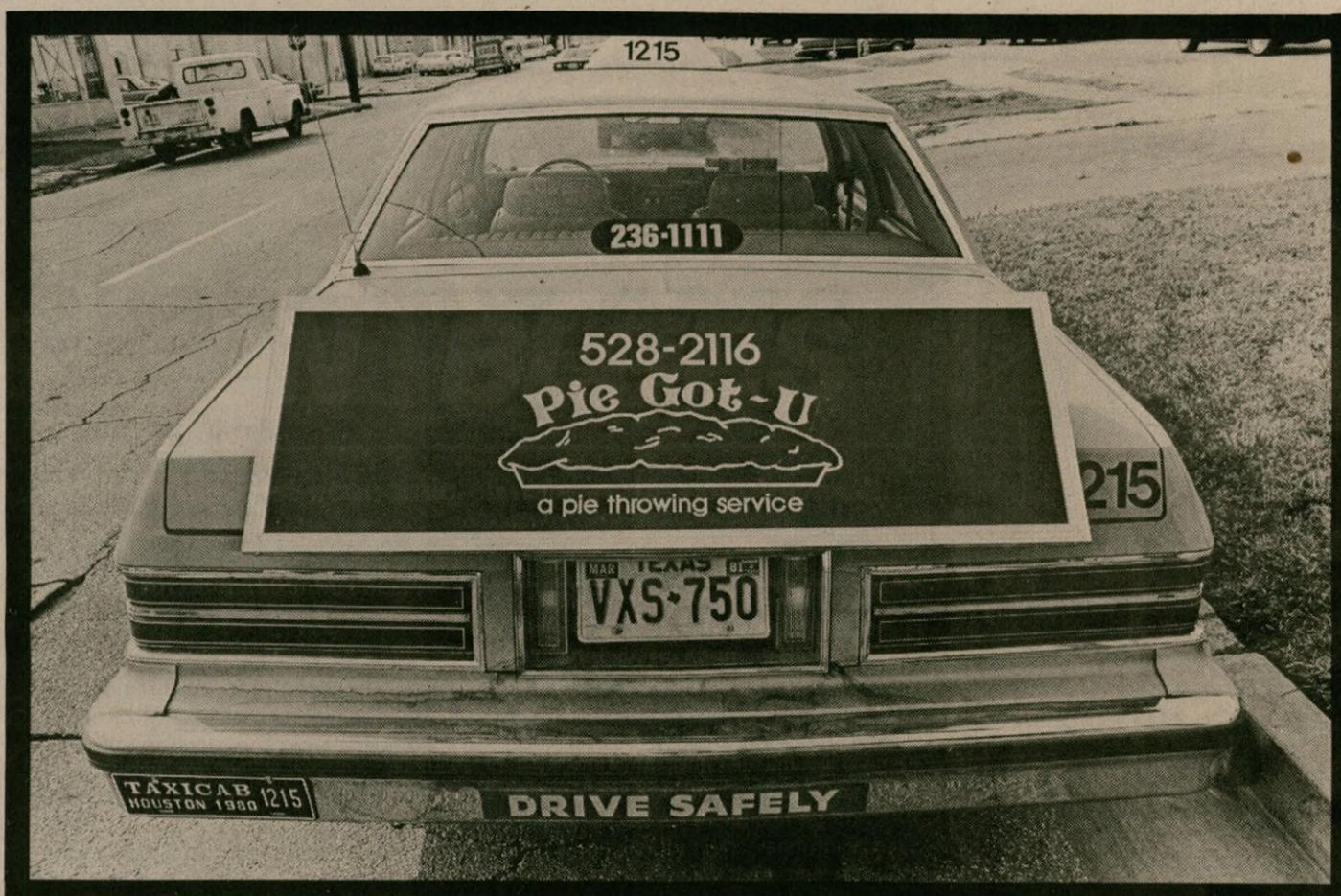
**Susan Spruce**, coordinator for the second year of Houston's **US-China People's Friendship Association**, says the national convention of the USCPFA will be in Houston in one of the next two years. The convention will bring a thousand visitors, special Chinese cultural displays and performances to the city, where the local chapter has 160 members and plans for expansion. Spruce is looking for a permanent office for the group, which currently uses her phone as a link to the public.

US-China and the **Asia Society**, 3400 Milam, are sponsoring a limited attendance hand puppetry show at Kincaid School, Sept. 15. The troupe performing, the **Fujian Hand Puppeteers**, is the most skilled in China making their first appearance in the US. Classical theatrical pieces, with music and English explanations, using foot-tall puppets that sword-fight, smoke, sing and dance, will be offered. September 17, a reception for the puppeteers and the puppets at Autry House will be open to the public free of charge.

Speaking of freebies, don't miss the **SUM** concerts jazz festival in Millèr Theatre, September 26-27, featuring nationally-known musicians. The **Texas Renaissance Festival** comes up at the end of the month, and the **Huntsville Prison Rodeo** in October.

Houston is not only a center of Asian American activity, it has more mushrooms than any other metropolitan area. To prove it, **Houston Baptist University** is sponsoring (Sept 11-14) its fourth annual mushroom foray, led by professors of botany from Kent and Alabama, which expects to bring back dead or alive some 400 species of the mysterious flesh of the gods (as mushrooms are called in Jalisco). **C.J. Forrest** of HBU says there are "many thousands" of species of mushrooms in Houston, but alas some are deadly. The idea of the foray is to give you a biting chance to survive if you pick 'n snack out in the woods— not only do all the hunters go out in the woods, but they spend the three days with films, books, and talks on the fickle fungus.

In case you miss it, try **The Big Thicket Museum** in Saratoga, Texas. The group of young naturalists over there have periodic trips up and down Village Creek and back into the Thicket, leaving no stone unturned in their quest for unique flora and fauna. A 9-hour canoe trip cost \$25, with a guide and swimming hole thrown in (bring your own lunch and repellent), and shorter walks, talks and picks can be arranged by telephone.



What next? If there aren't enough jobs to go around in Houston, it's not for lack of entrepreneurial creativity. (See story)



Mary Harrison, Kathy Godley, Toni Nunez, and Judy Clark used a little sour mesh whiskey at the St. Thomas chili cook-off. (See story)



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## MEDIA MATTERS



McConn: "I don't think nosy reporters need to know where I am..."

## STOP THE PRESS

Public servants want to serve public in private.

BY GABRIELLE COSGRIFF

**H**ouston mayor Jim McConn is miffed at the local media. He says he may just have to get his news in future from the out-of-town press. The reason for Hizzoner's miffdom is the press coverage of his son Terry McConn's arrest (Aug 3) for loitering at the scene of an accident.

Police Chief B.K. Johnson intervened a few hours after the arrest and sent the youth home from a southwest substation in a police car without charges being filed "Because it was the mayor's son."

The arresting officer, S.E. Carr, said he would file misdemeanor charges against Terry McConn. "We do not want any special treatment," the mayor told the press. Let me remind you," he said, "that the charge is a failure to move on, a class C misdemeanor, not a murder, rape, incest or robbery. You would think that all of them had been committed the way you all have played it up."

McConn has also cancelled, "for security reasons," the distribution of his weekly public schedule. When asked if that decision had anything to do with his anger at the press, McConn replied: "I don't think nosy reporters need to know where I am every working moment of my life. Does that answer your question?"

McConn is not alone among public servants in harbouring ill will towards the Houston contingent of the fourth estate. Last week, Houston school superintendent Billy Reagan refused to release recent test scores of high school students in the district. "Nobody else is releasing them. Why should we?" Reagan told *Houston Post* reporter Jorjanna Price, who had requested the scores. Price reported that Reagan said he was unfairly treated in widespread publicity given to the results of the Texas Assessment of Basic Skills (TABS), a statewide test given to all fifth and ninth graders.

So the mayor and the school superintendent are cutting back on information to the press, and thereby to the public,

their employers. Apparently, both these officials have been embarrassed by reports in the local press. Neither has challenged the veracity of what was reported, they just didn't like it. So the press will now be punished for their temerity.

Xenophon, the Greek historian, described how reporters of negative tidings were decapitated "as effortlessly as the scythe lops off the heads of the tallest poppies."

Well, we're an open, democratic, society and that kind of thing doesn't happen any more. Does it?

**T**he only permanent record, in print, of the recent UN World Conference on Women in Copenhagen (July 14-30) is *Forum 80*, a daily newspaper published by the Forum of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO.)

Many women attending the conference felt that *Forum 80* did not serve them well, either in its staffing or its execution. Nancy Landau, representing *Breakthrough* at the conference, (see story p. 24) told us: "Everybody was bewildered — more than that, we were angry and frustrated — at the sexist tone of the articles, the unflattering photographs and the hostile cartoons. It wasn't exactly positive imagery."

A letter to *Forum 80* (July 16) from Pat Zanger, Women's Organization for Equality, Belgium, read: "Now we know about the 'splendid African dress,' 'resplendent' matching outfits, and Queen Margrethe 'dressed in dark blue and a neatly tilted white pill box hat.'" (Page 1, July 15.)

"Where was *Forum 80* reporter John Rowley during the July 11-12 journalists' encounter when UN Conference Secretary General Lucille Mair referred to the 'obsession of the media with covering women as spectacles' and said she hoped journalists at this year's conference would cover women not as subjects, but rather co-

ver the subjects or issues women discussed?"

**Forum 80 Reply:** "He was working but we've told him about it. By the way, he is silver-haired, elegant and...shamefaced."

Fran Hosken, publisher and editor of *Win News (Women's International Network News)* wrote: The *Forum 80* newspaper amazingly turned out to be edited by two men. The astonishing fact emerged that at a women's conference where more than 1,000 women reporters as well as large numbers of editors and publishers were accredited, the representative of the NGOs who sponsored the *Forum 80* newspaper gave two men the responsibility of the publication of this newspaper, and at least half the articles were written by men.

Rosalynn Harris, the NGO representative, told WIN NEWS that "no experienced women editors, publishers, reporters were available."

Feminist publications from around the world thought otherwise. Several of them voiced their sentiments in a letter to *Forum 80* (July 28): "We, the undersigned, from the following feminist publications, would like to register our protest to the organizers of the NGO Forum about the way that feminist groups and publications have been dealt with.

1) It is a matter of great concern to us that many of the major feminist magazines and papers were not even informed about the conference. They were not even sent a handout to publicize that such a conference was taking place. We feel strongly that all these publications should have been officially invited to attend and cover the conference.

2) This attitude of bypassing is reflected throughout the conference. A good example: It seems that the NGO Forum found it necessary to invite a distinguished male journalist to be the editor of the NGO newspaper when it would have been a unique opportunity to bring together many of the women here involved in writing on women's issues. We feel that this task of covering a women's conference should legitimately have been the responsibility of feminist journalists."

- Noidonne - Italy
- Courage - Federal Republic of Germany
- Voice of Women - Sri Lanka
- Second Class Working Class - U. S. A.
- Fem - Mexico

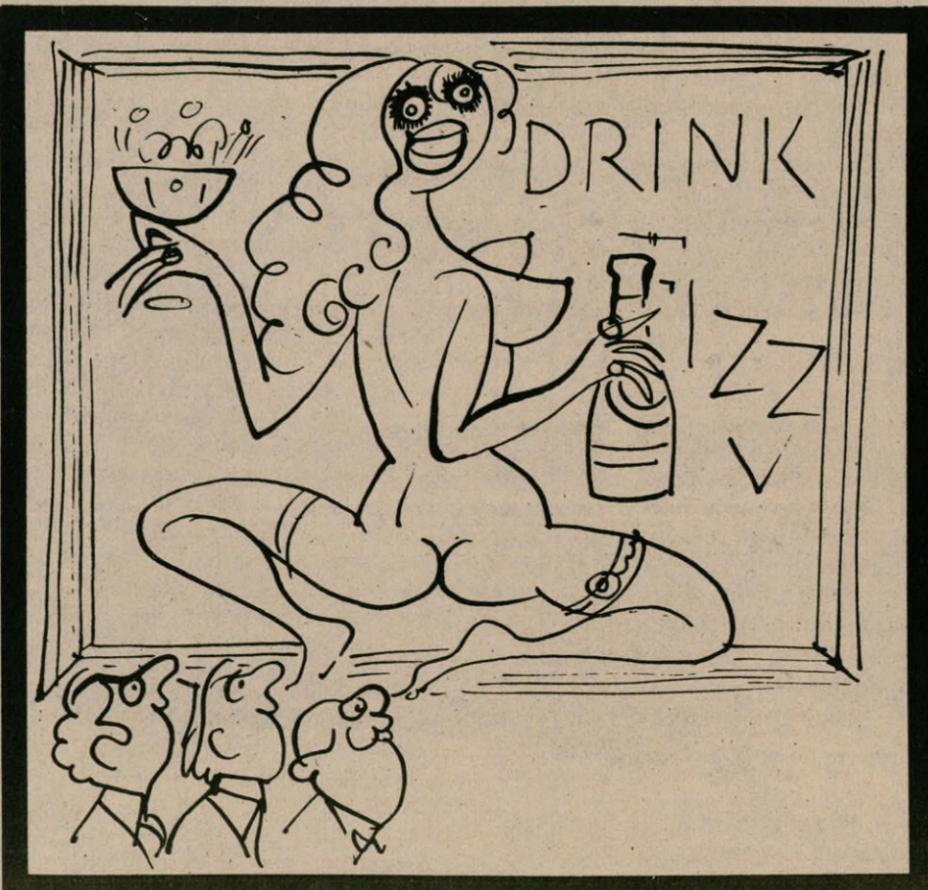


- ISIS - Geneva
- ISIS - Italy
- Sparerib - England
- Manushi - India
- Des Femmes en Mouvement - France
- A Woman's Place - England
- Boston Women's Health Book Collective - U. S. A.

A reading of several issues of *Forum 80* confirmed that the publication was indeed guilty as charged. The cartoons and photographs were particularly offensive, and the stories tended to patronize. Landau reports that women were not asked to edit the newspaper to avoid "controversy over First World/U.S. domination." It is ironic then that the male editor was British, and the bulk of the stories and cartoons carried such First-World bylines as John Rowley, Tony Hall and David Willson.

This find-the-right-man-for-the-job mentality reminds one of the 1976 presidential debates, the culmination of months of organizing by the League of Women Voters. After all the hard work was done, the starring role of moderator was awarded to Howard K. Smith.

(Thanks to Donna Allen, *Media Report to Women*, Washington DC for the material on Fran Hosken and the feminist publications letter to *Forum 80*.)



Illustrations from FORUM 80, published daily during the Copenhagen Women's Conference.

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## hou's'ov·kol'man

n. 1. A woman-owned business specializing in quality graphics and printing. 2. A large red brick house in the heart of Montrose.  
- adj. Having many and varied features.  
- v. Producing design, illustration, camera work, printing and bindery. - adv. 1. To increase the client's business manifold. 2. To satisfy the client.

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# HARD TIMES

Deflation in the job market and inflation in the supermarket

BY MORRIS EDELSON

Goat's milk is selling well again. So are, says the Wall Street Journal, comic books, freeze-dried survival foods, insect spray, cigarettes and Gospel sheet music. These products are on a list of economic "counter indicators," moving up when the standard of living moves down.

It's been six years since things looked so good for goat's milk, but, unfortunately, the counter-cyclical business sector makes up only three percent of the nation's production. Its silver lining outlines a rather dark cloud over the rest of us.

Even though the economic downturn hit the blue collar workers in autos, steel and residential housing worst, the rest of the country and other sectors of the economy are feeling affected. Jimmy Gannes, a vice-president of Curtis Steel Company, Detroit, suggested one result: "We're sending the Sunbelt our problems," he said. "Detroit is going to be a smaller, quieter, cleaner town and will have less unemployment in the next decade." Houston, he estimated, would experience a service and housing strain, a crash program to bring its services, roads and helping professions up to scratch, and then, as oil peters out, a surplus work force.

Those who might want to buy a house or car these days are suffering right along with Detroit and Pittsburgh, too. The idea of paying 20% interest on a loan for big-ticket items staggers them, so people are needing housing and transport. The anti-inflation high prime interest rate is being passed along, too, by big corporations to the average consumer.

Both candidates vow to keep the prime lending rate (for big corporations) down in the future. Both have promised tax reductions for business and maybe people, and both vow to achieve a balanced budget and an end to an 18% annual cost of living increase.

#### Reagan Carter Inflation explanation

Both Ronald Reagan and Jimmy Carter, says Bryn Mawr economist Richard DuBoff, accept the premises of classical economics. Our present predicament arose, so say the textbooks, because of

rising costs in industry, a drop in productivity and consequent less savings. Industry passed along costs, people could not afford to buy, and some people got laid off, worsening the situation. Instead of knuckling down, people just went on a buying binge, expecting costs to rise each year. People's spend-thrift mentality, their wild use of credit and their resistance to hard work have been major factors in pushing up the cost of living to its present annual 18% increase.

We have deflation in the job market and inflation in the supermarkets. What the textbooks think we should have is flatation, period.

Economists who hold to classic views believe that the federal government is another culprit in inflation, since it wallows in red ink, allowing too much credit to itself and others, creating money as it operates do-gooder projects such as welfare, environment and worker safety programs. The government distorts the efficiency of the marketplace and our society (an extension of the market) whenever it introduces an economic or social policy. Free Market forces organize all human activity most efficiently, be it work, leisure, marriage, crime or education—all should be seen as market transactions.

In the traditional view, whether liberal or conservative, real unemployment is actually near zero. People can get jobs and improve their economic condition if they really want to. Many supposedly out of work people are only slightly interested in a 9 to 5 routine. Unemployment is a form of leisure, a choice, so those enjoying it are not in real difficulty. Herbert Stein, chair of the Presidential Council of Economic Advisors, said in 1974, "Present employment has only a very slight misery component."

To increase productivity on an infinitely rising scale, says textbook economics using traditional Supply and Demand charts, it is necessary to keep taxes low on business and use what amounts to a regressive income tax on people, rewarding the most product-

ive, richest elements of society. Any hindering of these productive (rich) elements hinders production increase, so there should be few corporate taxes, no unions, and little government intervention in the economy.

DuBoff argues that this economic ideology, currently embraced by Republican and Democratic parties, is bunk. The basic premise here is that government gets in the way of Big Business, but, he says, "Economic decisions in our country begin and end with the private sector. The government comes in only as a rescue squad. The New Deal came after the Great Depression. The government does not interfere with large corporations now until they become dysfunctional, as in the case of Chrysler or Boeing."

The government has entered the world of business more apparently in the 1970s, says DuBoff, only because the problems of and challenges to business increase. Corporations have not been able to absorb the labor force in recent times, except during the Korean and Vietnam Wars, when unemployment fell to less than 4%. At the time of those wars, the big corporations spent like there was no tomorrow, just as did the workforce—and inflation rose rapidly.

Big corporations complain about government consumer safeguards, social security and health and safety programs—yet each program was introduced on behalf of business faced with a demoralized, suspicious, potentially angry and dangerous work force. Nonetheless, DuBoff points out, each government initiative has been met recently by an opposite and equal counterpush by the controllers of private capital—there is open business warfare against OSHA and the Federal Trade Commission. Corporations want to roll back the clock to when, asks DuBoff, to the 1920s, which led to economic collapse after a decade of untrammelled business initiative and consequent child labor, political corruption, and cultural decadence?

**You Can't Take It With You**  
Professor Barton Smith of the Univer-

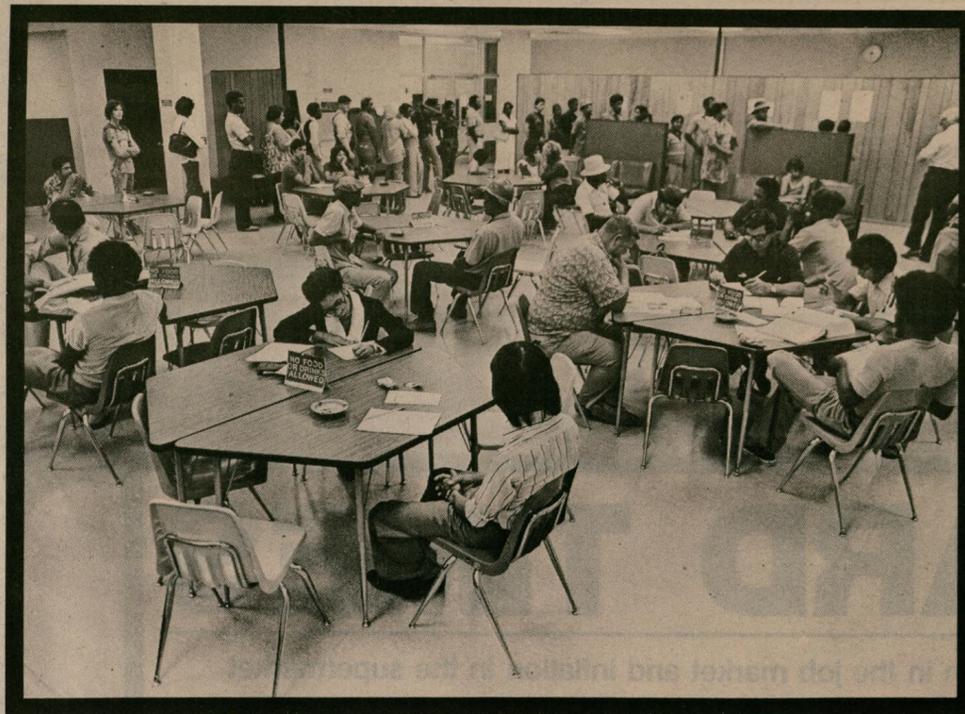


Photo: David Crossley

"You're useless the minute you walk through the door. You become a problem of the state, an applicant for a number."

# DEAD ENDS

Or: What's a nice high school valedictorian like me doing in the unemployment line?

BY MORRIS EDELSON

Breakthrough editor Morris Edelson spent some time at the Texas Employment Commission (TEC) this summer. He wasn't exactly on assignment although getting laid off from the New York Times had something to do with his sudden interest in the place. During his ordeal he compared the scene in the waiting room to an experience he had a few days earlier—his 25th high school reunion. "All of a sudden," he says, "I saw kids from my high school class, sitting around the hallowed halls of the TEC and I remembered my valedictory address to Beaumont High school's class of 1955. All of those clichés..."

## The Unemployment Office Seen as a High School Class Reunion

Outside the Texas Employment Commission, the sun shines, wind blows, and human beings travel back and forth to work, wanted and useful. Greasy glass doors separate the employed from the unemployed. Inside, there's a smoke-filled waiting room packed with muscle and flesh. Printed signs warning families to "keep children under control". Another prohibits food or drink, and one informs anyone who still keeps time *There Will Be A Four or Five Hour Wait*. An armed guard casually walks into the room from time to time. Just in case.

Whole families huddle around the room faded out by a bank of fluorescent lights. Everyone waits. Maybe one of the figures that appears briefly from behind the room dividers will call your name. You hope. You look around the room. You feel like a classmate of those in line with you. Finally, you talk.

There is Sid. He drove a truck in 1953 when he fought in the Legion ring as Un-

cle Sid, for a pocketful of change and cigarettes. He took blows to the head. He drank a lot of coffee and smoked two packs a day, he says. He tore his gauzy lungs apart, and one day collapsed on the warehouse floor and coughed himself to a V. He will never fight again, Sid.

After the clerk issues you the orange card, not an identity but a petition for identity as an unemployed person, you turn to the others in the room and prepare to repeat your valedictory address. The lights fade, the clock rolls back, you adjust the tassel on your mortar board: "Beyond those doors lies a vast petrochemical empire in which for us, much is given and much required. Our country, and our time, 1955, has given us the opportunity; our schools have given us the training; and our communities have served us the challenge to be useful, needed and productive."

The band prepares a reedy version of Pomp and Circumstance, the principal shifts his holster behind you, trying to spot the delinquents he will hand over to another social agency, some of them high, planning a spree in Galveston, others half asleep, digesting the pleasures of a diploma, memories of a state basketball championship, and adventures that lie ahead.

There's Jimmie, who says she was 14 when she first got hooked, snorting powder soft as the pollen in her family's flower store. She would shoot up, lay down and watch the thunderclouds. She had a fancy, older dude, and one day an albino cop kicked her head against the door and drove him off. They threw her in the joint, said she was a habitual, would breed like a rat, unload a generation of red-eyed junkies onto the welfare rolls. They snipped her

tubes in the county hospital after feeding her on lobotomies. She couldn't walk good after that, couldn't focus on the light so well, and took a job opening boxes and closing them again, for \$1.65 an hour. A lecher with a starched shirt and clip-on tie touched her white nigger skin he called it, and she cut the man and did time and here she is.

The speech continues as the class stirs. "No matter how we organize our personal existence, society is going to need our private and public contributions. We will be rewarded, by the world out there, and by the consciousness that we have done our duty. We read history by the light of lives of men and women who have achieved and maintained the inner peace and outward responsibilities, who were loyal to the best they knew, forever loyal to the royal duty they learned here—to be useful."

"You're useless from the minute you walk through that Texas Employment Commission door," says Dick Krooth, political economist and author of *Arms and Empire* and other studies of the free market economy. "You have become a problem of the state. You are an applicant for a number, want to become a statistic—a laid-off person, someone perhaps receiving unemployment assistance. But the Texas Employment Commission was not meant to serve that function, however. It exists for the sole purpose of denying that there is an unemployment problem."

"The state's programs are meant to affirm that whatever joblessness there might be is 'frictional'—a temporary mess that grew up because people seek work inefficiently and undeterminedly."

Krooth says that the state employment commission is meant to emphasize a

basic tenet of laissez-faire economics: anyone who really wants to work can have a job. "Employment is the gift of owners of business and capital," says Krooth. "They want to make more profit and continually seek ways of re-investing what they have already accumulated. So the job market, theoretically, is always growing and changing and can always use people who will grow and change with it, and who won't demand too high wages."

The TEC functions as a clearing house for employers, within limits. They need 10 laborers, say, and they rely on the bureaucratic maze of the TEC to screen out the unreliable or intractable.

Employment programs, however, arose from other considerations, from the struggle of workers after the Depression to have the government reduce some of the worst effects of the laissez-faire economic system. They hoped government would guarantee full employment or at least help laid-off workers find aid or new jobs. The struggle that resulted in the employment offices occurred after a decade of expansion in business which was relatively unchecked by either government regulation or resource shortage.

The contradiction is that the TEC was born to protect workers and must now be an adjunct of government policies which protect big business. The TEC tries to resolve this anomaly by a slow-down in its operation and an attempt to dehumanize, discourage and dismiss its clientele, the unemployed who enter the TEC door. "What else can they do," asks Krooth, "when there are funds for only 10% of unemployment compensation claims and useful or rewarding jobs for less than half of those who need them?"

The high school principal leans toward the microphone: "It's me today, and you tomorrow." Titters in the class. "Of all that I take pleasure in," he says, "the most pleasurable is the thought that someday some of you are going to be doing what I am doing now—sending people out into the world to make, and give, a living. You will be principals of a new generation, in important positions to shape and to serve the future."

Kitty served the salads at the George Webb's restaurant. She had fishnet stockings crawling up her legs and a foxy beehive above a straight, slim back. She slammed lettuces on the counter and plucked out their shuddering hearts, carved radish roses in six slices. She worked the night shift for six years and lived to tell. It was no joke. People gave birth in the telephone booth and dropped dead at the counter over porcelain mugs. Kids grabbed at the tip money in her blouse pockets, winos fumbled with her apron strings and slobbered invitations to her to share their rooms. She got fired the night she slammed a ham sandwich into someone's face. That same night the cook went whacky with whiskey and a meat cleaver and went after the manager near the noodle machine. They crashed into it, fighting, and it belched pasta shells all over the floor, until the Sicilians diverted the cook into the vegetable cooler and Kitty ran out, pursued by Mob curses and the sounds of Cooky barging around among the avocados.

Dr. Krooth continues: "The middle class is brought up on the idea that it will rise into management and ownership if it works hard and keeps hustling. If we remain faithful, we achieve the freedom of real wealth, something that can't be taken away when we miss a monthly payment. But the facts show otherwise: most people don't rise above their economic class. Many fall below it. Our loyalty and energy no longer can be thought of as investments in a paternal feudal scheme, where Massa will take care of the old and sick darkies and Mrs. Massa visit us with Christmas baskets. The modern

employer recognizes only the cash thread that ties him ever so delicately to us.

"Owners now pay a small fee or tax to other members of our class who teach us to read and write and be a skilled employee, to worry and pay for our own health and safety. The owner pays us as little as he can, pays those who train us as little as possible, and we can take it or leave it, that is, starve if we won't work for whatever the job pays and however they tell us to do it."

A bored TEC counselor is thinking of the freeways and explaining how workers are "disappeared. Unemployed means, officially, looking actively for a job. To us that is indicated by an applicant's continuous registration with our office and following up every lead and interview we arrange for the person." Any failure to show up, any break in response, any refusal to travel out anywhere to job interviews means being dropped from the files. The TEC turns the light of its countenance away from anyone who does not follow up an initial claim within 12 days, who works in, another stop-gap job, who accepts as little as 4 hours of contract or hourly wage labor. "Not unemployed" status, losing any chance of compensation, does not equal "employed" for the TEC, a state in which the worker is accumulating new benefits—many employers can avoid compensation programs altogether.

Travis Trevelund, a statistician with the TEC, admits that less than 5% of the unemployment compensation claimants among Houston's officially-unemployed army of 120,000 (as of July 1980) will draw more than three months of aid.

"But it's not so bad in Texas," says Trevelund. "Only a few people are feeling the pinch. Unemployment rates have risen, yes, but to a new stable plateau, in the 5s, state-wide. Seasonally adjusted—exclusive of all school-age job seekers who probably just want summer holiday work—unemployment in July was 5.5% for Houston, 4% in Austin, 8 or 9 in San Antonio, and 11% in The Valley. Texas, as usual, has entered the recession later and probably will pull out later than the rest of the country."

Here's Helen. She drove her coughing Chrysler 40 miles a day and packed a full lunch, three sandwiches and fruit. On her morning break she would eat one sandwich and save two for lunch, wash the white bread down her throat with coffee from her plastic cup, then pull up her chair and make her quota. She has quick hands, a muscle in her neck that quivers every time she stretches out her arm. She has a keen mind.

She would see men heading for the golf course when she went to work at dawn and would hit the southbound freeway for home when the buzzer tore through the oily machine shop air in the afternoon. She did 70 when she could, smoked a Kool when the traffic stopped, and says, "Mens—they ain't a good one in the lot." She travelled 200 miles a week to shovel bits of this and that along an automatic conveyor belt, while the 18 holes were played.

Helen has a handshake that hurts your fingers, and laughs a laugh that slides like honey off her broad tongue, sweetening the slumber of the TEC crowd. She even laughed on the freeway when fumes made everything go wavy and the commuters honked. She would feel sick and run her wrist across her eyes, then push the pedal to the floor and ride the oil washes home.

"No, the recession isn't bad," Krooth says, "if you only report unemployment figures for middle-class white males." He claims that that is what the Department of Labor statistics do—"Unemployment rates in the ghetto run over 20%, and the

migration out of the Midwest and Northeast unemployment pockets is as large as the flight from the Dust Bowl in the 30s."

The middle class also faces the problem of unemployment directly or indirectly, he explains, "because since business cannot continue to sell products on our saturated markets and lays off the blue collar workers who produce those products, the middle class managers' costs also rise. More social costs must be paid by fewer people. Either the unemployed have to be locked up, relocated, or restrained to get back to work—all this costs money. The poor steal not to starve—and even killing them will cost the middle class. Killing them indirectly, starting a war, which seems to be the way things



Photo: David Crossley

Waiting for a job.

are drifting now, is costly, too, and dangerous.

Someone has slashed the tires of a middle class white man whom they judged rather out of place at the TEC. Another student-looking youth rushes in crying aloud that someone has just stolen his \$500 bicycle locked just outside the greasy doors. The guard slaps leather and runs across the floor, people stir in their slumbering poses, the next name called is given an angry emphasis. People leave, and the heat seeps in. Some orange cards climb to the second floor where lists of minimum wage jobs are listed on scratchy microfiche, others are passed from box to box, across the building. The winds of economy scatter the papers like leaves.

Through the motes of the afternoon a tall, slender employment counselor, the manager of the office performs his daily adagio, The Collection of the Pencils. (Like the Czar's fatal error in Siberia, the possibly subversive literacy represented by these pencils seems to escape the authorities. They are used by all applicants, those who understand English, to fill out several forms which are thrown together at the end of the day.) He has the skill, collecting, of an experienced waiter. He never touches anyone slumped at the tables, and he smiles pleasantly but uninvitingly as he plucks each desk deftly clean. The box in his one hand, slowly filling with the neat and uniform wooden wands, could be a shallow vase, he and the reclining room all decorations on a Grecian urn, forever frozen in our condition.

He has passed among the class of '55, reunited for its 25th graduation anniversary. They sit over dinner; they have eaten too much; it was hard for them to stand to sing the old school song. The principal is handing out comic prizes as he once distributed commencement diplomas; people laugh with commonsensical complicity. "Now here's one for the baldest man—will Red' Davis please come up and get his hairbrush?" "And here's a prize for the woman who has been divorced the longest, a guide to Caribbean resorts for Dr. Carol Hopley!" There is a diploma for the person with the

most grandchildren, for the grocery executive from Connecticut who travelled farthest to get to the party, a chicken ("pullet surprise") for the class writer... laughter and satisfaction grow thick as the humid air in the night outside. Don't worry, we are all together, nothing will change—the Economic Being holds the whole world in those Invisible Hands of the marketplace. Miss Emma told us so, and we thought of those strong and beautiful praying hands in her afternoon economics classes.

"The wide range of lower to upper-middle-class people are really living on the brink," says Jane Ford, a lawyer specializing in bankruptcy and Chapter 13 slowed pace repayment cases. "A well-off person who might get sick, or lose a job for a while, can just get behind and never catch up again. If something increases their expenses just slightly it can have a disastrous effect—it can be a strike, a pregnancy, an illness in the family, maybe just no more overtime and they come to see us, or land in bankruptcy court."

"One of the bankruptcy court trustees was telling me," Ford continues, "that last year only a few hundred people in the whole Gulf Coast district had filed for Chapter 13 financial aid—and this year we already had more than 2,000 cases by August. It's not irresponsible people. It's people who are desperate to pay their bills, but they can't afford to pay. Some of them have \$700 a month house notes, others are addicted to credit cards—it's like a sophisticated company store set up where you get paid in scrip, people are absolutely hooked on those cards. They need a specialist for help. You see a lot of that, too."

"Well, at least no one looks like they need help," Marilyn Biggers, who organized the class reunion, is saying. "Beverly looks like she has been sick, and we almost lost Gene last year, but on the whole I think 1955 was a really good year, wasn't it? We have a history teacher at Baylor University, the manager of KLBK radio station, people on the Cultural Arts Council, a guy who owned Liberty Hall, the architect who built the city library, mostly professional people... though some of us aren't school girls any more!" And she laughs and gestures slightly to her ample frame.

And the laughter fades and changes, and the people grow quiet as the principal mentions a few people, former teachers, who are missing this part due to a prior engagement with mortality. The coach who took our team, the Cinderella Midgets, the papers called them, to the state championships in basketball. He and all of us had heart—that was our finest hour, the principal says. He recalls Miss Emma, and her thimble, thumping on the blackboard charts of supply and demand and occasionally on a student's head. He reminds us that the school itself has changed, and gone, the place we once knew, because of bussing—couples no longer stroll past the trophy case to marvel at the accomplishments of Babe Zaharias, nor do they seek out stolen moments backstage in the auditorium or at the drive-in.

But the old ideas remain true, he says. That kept us going, and winning, didn't it? Here's testimony—a letter from a missionary from our class who remembers us in Latin America, a telegram from Scotland, where a schoolteacher thanks the class for her remembered good times, a phone call from the shyest girl of 1955 now an executive in New York. The class of 1955 lurches to its feet in earnest this time and the principal leads us again into the war song: "Grand old team are we... and we'll fight, fight, fight, fight, fight, fight, and win victory." Out into the steaming night, past the greasy glass doors, our class is marching on, and on.

sity of Houston Economics Department, does not agree with DuBoff. Business principles, if not business itself, could save the economy. The basic principle to keep in mind, he says, is that there is no free lunch any more.

Smith says he was a hawk during the Vietnam War. He thought it might have ended faster with more decisive action by U.S. forces. But he admits now that he, like many other Americans, didn't understand clearly the guns-or-butter choice: LBJ's sleight of hand, deficit financing, made fools of us all. "If we had had to pay as we went for that war, right then," Smith says, "I think businessmen would have been right out there in the protest marches, too. We only imagined that the war didn't cost us anything—now we understand its cost."

Washington is, however, still trying to put wool over our eyes: "We have to get away from that free lunch myth. We should see what they won't say—that MX missile means a rise in our taxes. We must see that. You and I have to live within a budget constraint. So why doesn't Washington?"

Smith explained that Reagan is promising a balanced budget, just as Carter did once, but his campaign promises are mutually exclusive: the tax cut, a balanced budget, and a big increase in military spending. Smith would prefer to have the balanced budget and then a choice between the tax cut and increased spending for arms. But we need to see through the talk: "You have to ask yourself what would he really do in office; what are Reagan's unannounced priorities. Or you can tell yourself that you are voting not for him but for his advisors and just not listen to his three promises."

Smith is not one to lay the blame for the current economic mess on the average consumer, either. We can as well bite bubblegum as the famous bullet. During a local radio show, when a caller asked him what the average person should do during times of an 18% inflation rate, the audience settled back for another of those rousing sermons on how people should tighten their belts, etc. Guilt-trip, USA.

"I knocked them off their stools in the radio station," recalls Smith, "when I said that what the average person should do in the present times was get out there and spend. Spend! It, whatever 'it' is, will cost 20% more next year. Why save; why put your money in a savings account and get 6-7% interest? Are you saving for your retirement? If we continue as at present, most people's retirement funds will be wiped out anyway, within the decade. Lots of people face that situation already."

Even if it came from classical economics, the Federal Reserve Bank's answer to inflation isn't working, Smith feels. In the old monetarist texts of Milton Friedman what you do when prices rise and productivity and savings fall is simple: make money tight. Raise interest rates. By law you have made money scarce, more expensive to use. Then people work harder to get their share of it. They save it more, spend it less. Business cannot raise prices, because buyers' resistance to increases is high.

In this monetarist scheme, people become more serious when money is tight. Everyone watches costs more. Prices stabilize. The Astros win the pennant.

As money gets tighter, businesses, selling less, are bound to lay off a few workers, a few million of them. Good, says Friedman, because companies can cut wages, save more money, make people work harder still. There is more braking of the economy, and downward pressure on prices with less demand.

**High Primes and Misdemeanors**  
The monetarist brake on the economy is nearly as shoeless as some laid-off

# RECESSION BLUES

Down, and sometimes out, in the best economic climate in the country

BY MORRIS EDELSON AND JANE COLLINGS

**Tom Sanders, laborer:** "The economy in this town seems better than in a lot of places. In the whole country there are little pockets like Houston where there's still a lot of work. It won't last long, though. People will flood in and fill it up. Years ago, people from the South were moving to the industrial cities in the North to find work. Now, those places are burning out and a big migration to the sun belt has begun.

I've been looking for work out of the labor pools. These plants have work that needs doing, but they say they don't have skilled people to man them. Now why don't they teach the people a skill? The plants have all the money and they need people to work. You can't wait on the government all the time—it's too badly run to be of any help. These labor pools are just a big racket. They've got jobs paying eight, nine dollars an hour, and the guy that runs the place pockets five

of that. Anyway, you need a car to get out to the jobs and I don't have one.

My friend who works at the highway patrol once told me you got all these guys hiring wet-backs to work. When it comes time to pay them, they turn them over to the border police.

**Judy Gechman, director of the Houston Area Shelter for Battered Women:** We have noticed in the past few months we never have a vacancy in our women's shelters that lasts more than a few hours. They used to last weeks. All kinds of violence in the home is increasing with stress. It's not just poor people, it is a philosophy of family violence—78% of the men who batter wives or children grow up in homes that were violent. They are psychologically insecure. The couple is likely to have both partners psychologically insecure, both with low self esteem. Both

of them believe in the traditional 'the man-is-boss' sex role. The one thing you are hearing battered women say, again and again, is "My husband won't let me work, he won't let me..." These women are insecure because they are isolated—a lot of them come here with their families, for jobs, and they have no place to go outside the home, no roots here. There's not that much unemployment in Houston, but there is plenty of psychological insecurity, isolation and battering.

**Niami Hansen, community activist:** I use the car a lot less—I use it as little as possible and seldom ever take it out of the city. Food, I haven't gone without meals, but I eat a whole lot less meat and I try to eat a lot cheaper. Basically, I do things with other people, so my entertainment is mainly with my friends.

I think the recession is broadbased, and that we are being pushed into a war. I've been passing out leaflets against the draft. I think the government is trying to get our patriotism hopping so we will go to war for our oil. I think with unemployment so high, a lot of young people are feeling, "I have to join the Army to get a career."

**Jesse Alaniz, ACORN member and Allied Industries employee:** The recession has had a big impact on us, especially low-to-moderate income people. We are not even in the \$15-20,000 bracket per year. The utility increases are horrendous for us. We are taking the brunt of all of this. I live with my sister. She's got two kids. Her grocery bills are sky high, her gas and light bill are way up there, and we deny ourselves of a lot of odds and ends to see it through.

I don't want to over-react, but I will tell you like it is. They can give you a dollar raise where you work and they will take it all back from you—if not on groceries, it will be on medicine, or anyway you turn. Then your Public Utilities Commission (PUC), they look like they are working for the utilities and they are supposed to protect the consumers. I am going to Austin this month to the PUC hearings to speak against those big corporate giants. They are nothing but bloodsuckers, believe me.

What it really boils down to is the greedy taking from the needy! All those gas and oil companies—look at the millions they are taking in windfall profits. Do you see them plowing any of that back into hospitals, or roads, or upgrading the standards of living in the community? What they are doing is buying up chain stores and raising prices, buying land and kicking the farmers off the land. That's what it's all about.

**Mrs. Hutchins, retired:** "Everything's different now than what it used to be. I don't like it, I can't cope with it because I am too old I guess. Every time I go to the store things are a little higher. I draw a



Photo: Jane Collings

Mrs. Hutchins: "We didn't expect this. We always worked hard and had a good income."

social security check and before the week's out I'm out of money again. We didn't expect it to be this way. We always worked and had a good income."

**Beverly Hebert, a public relations specialist:** My husband is an engineer and we have two young children. I went back to work and that increased our family income. A few years ago, with the same combined earning we would have had a lot more things. Today, people in our income bracket are just not able to do the same things that people in our income bracket would be doing a few years back, like buying furniture, landscaping the yard, taking trips. That's what it has done to us, but when I think about what it has done to others, I think that's pretty lightweight. I don't buy many clothes. But like Ellen Goodman said, "There's a big difference between not having enough clothes and not having enough food for your children."

One of the secretaries who worked in my husband's office, was divorced and was on food stamps. I can identify with women like her when I think what it

would be like if I had to live on my salary without my husband's.

**Victoria Smith, 60s activist preparing for convent life in the 80s:** This particular recession has affected me, even though the economists say that it is not as bad as the one in 1974. This one is much worse for me because my income hasn't changed much since 74 despite the cost of living increase.

I am a writer, and I could be a publicist. You know how hard it is to break into that. I have rather unmarketable skills for right now for Houston. If I don't tend bar, or waitress, I am going to have to do office work to support myself. It's a hard realization—it really is, because it's what I have been trying to get away from.

I think working with non-profit voluntary agencies can spoil you. I started out working in voluntary organizations, like SDS, Liberation News Service, in the 60s and it spoiled me. You just develop a counterculture mentality and after that it is so hard to fit into regular society.

I somewhere stepped into a poverty cycle and never can get out. It infuriates me when I think about people who are well-to-do talking about those lazy people on welfare. Because you really do get down when you are not working. And you don't know if you're going to have work. And it is a cycle, you get worn down by not working and you don't want to go out and look for a job.

If people are out to make money, if they want upper middle class housewife success or career girl success, I can't get into it. I wish I could, because it is hard being poor. I have to say, I am poor, and it's almost a crime to be poor in Houston. My poverty is not what other people, really poor people live in—but it is! There's something kind of shameful about it. Especially to my parents, who think I am a complete failure.

This summer I told myself I had to make some money somehow, so I decided to do temporary work. For some reason they were just in a slump when I made my first application. And every day I wasn't working, I was just sunk. When I did go on some of these jobs, a lot of them that were supposed to be up-front office jobs turned out not to be. The agency told me to be sure to "Dress spiffy," and I had to laugh because I only had one "spiffy" outfit. And it isn't very spiffy.

It was really embarrassing, because there would be all these other people around, these other secretaries—young girls, usually, well-dressed, well made up—and I couldn't even afford make-up, I couldn't afford to have my hair trimmed.

I was bringing hard-boiled eggs and bread and butter for lunch, and people would wonder what I was about and why I didn't want to go out for lunch. And I was walking as much as I could. If it was within a mile, I would walk instead of taking the bus. And I did feel humiliated in a way. Even though these aren't my values, in Houston, especially, you do feel very out of it (a) if you don't have a car, no one can understand how you can possibly live, and (b) if you aren't well-dressed, well turned out.

It's been very distressing to me to see how weak my faith is. Here I am a struggling Catholic girl, and all of a sudden here I am worrying about and running after all these things that the "pagans" run after. It's hard to consider the lilies of the field in Houston.

**Mary Picketts, domestic worker:** I'm out here, trying to survive. I have five kids, and I can hardly keep them clothed and



Photo by Jane Collings

Mary Picketts: "I have five kids and I can hardly keep them clothed and fed."

fed let alone all the other stuff they need. I go to work on the bus. I might spend 30 minutes travelling one way, which isn't so bad. But I might spend another 30 minutes waiting on the thing to show up, and sometimes it might not even do that. Houston has the worst bus service I've ever seen, and that's the kind of thing that wears you out day after day."

**Cheryl Robideau, artist-secretary-teacher-tutor:** I think everyone should move into fantasy. It's the only thing I can afford.

**Frank Lopez, safety coordinator for the Houston Police Department:** My wife is an assistant in the Mayor's office and we have a young daughter. I can see myself pinching pennies more than a year and a half ago. More people are looking for bargains. We are.

This year we were thinking about going to visit relatives in Atlanta. After we checked into the cost of gasoline, we decided to stay around the Gulf Coast. We took our vacation in Galveston.

Basically, we are careful about all our expenses—gasoline, food, clothing. With clothes we are going more with things that would be lasting; we're more conservative in taste. We do more entertaining at home than going out.

Instead of doing things on impulse, we think about it. We used to say, "let's go here and let's go there"; now we say, "that's a good idea but..."

Even the little purchases I notice we do now by Yellow Pages. I found myself doing that this morning. There were some sales on, and ordinarily I would jump out there and buy what I just saw on the tube. But now I say to myself "I don't need that, I don't need this," or if I do, I compare prices by calling around the Yellow Pages. Often it saves me a trip. Then there's long distance. I'm more conscious of calling when the rates are cheaper. We're not at the hardship stage yet, just showing a little more concern, watching our expenses more closely.

**Sharon Itaya, medical doctor employed by Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers (OCAW) Union:** The strike in the refineries here earlier this year was recession-related. About 25,000 people were off work for several months. The recession made it harder on people when they were out on strike; it's the ultimate weapon against worker unrest.

The union has been hurt by the recession, because the employers have been laying off our members. Whole parts of factories have been closed down, like tetraethyl lead manufacturing at

ARCO where they let 300 people go. There've been layoffs in the rubber industry as well, because of the decrease in demand for tires from the car industry.

The unions have lost a good deal of political clout. I see our union locals downplaying health and safety issues because they're afraid of offending employers and of company layoffs.

The younger people don't expect hard times—they haven't had to worry so far where their next check is coming from. They're using this credit thing, where \$50 down gets you a condominium.

Some of the older folks in the union have stand-by money. They seem to know what to anticipate and they seem to have a little left over; and the people with big notes borrow from the older folks so they won't lose their house and their car. And the unions get together to help people pay for their houses and their car notes, but it is a little harder to go around and collect to pay people's boat notes. So people lose some of their luxury items like that.

On the average we're still living relatively comfortably; it's not as bad as Detroit, but it may be coming.

I was just talking to a woman, a grandmother, who is a real fighter out at one of the ARCO refineries. She went out to work there six or seven years ago, because she was single and needed money. That seemed the best kind of job, rather than working 100 hours a week to make an adequate salary when she could work 40 or 50. So she went out there—they gave her all the toughest jobs. What happened to her was she got lung problems from doing her job. The other people would kind of fake it; they wouldn't get in there and clean things. She would just get in it and do it, and now she has bad bronchitis and emphysema. Whenever she gets close to those chemicals she can hardly breathe. Now she is faced with the company trying to lay her off. She sold her home already, then sold a smaller place and now is living in a small apartment. She is faced with the need to go on welfare—she has nothing to fall back on.

**Thelma Meltzer, artist, community activist and grandmother-to-be:** My husband Saul is 61 and I'm 59. He's getting close to retiring from an oil company job. He has an herb business on the side—purely a weekend thing—that's just blossomed in the last few years. As the recession rate went up, so did our income. Money's never been anything that we worried about. We own our home and for the first time in our life, we are actually reaching comfort. It's nothing to do with the economy.

But we have a daughter and her husband in Austin who are expecting a baby soon. That's where I think about the recession—young people like our children. I don't know how they manage just to buy the necessary things they need to manage a household, much less have any hopes of ever owning a home. We have tried to help them with all the extra things connected with the baby. To help them through this period, Saul got Melinda started on an herb business in Austin, which she, hopefully, will be able to resume in the fall. That will help, but they will feel the recession every day.

The young and the old are most affected by this recession. I have noticed old people in the grocery store taking things out of their baskets just before they come to check out; they have just a tiny bit of money. When I hear someone talking about cutting out subsistence programs, I could just froth at the mouth!

workers, Professor Smith says. Tight money has not slowed consumer purchasing, nor does it stabilize business prices.

"High interest rates," says Smith, "don't really increase costs to business much. You can't even call an 18% interest rate that high, when inflation is running 20%. It's like loaning someone \$100. A year later you get \$118. But it's worth only \$98." So businesses can handle the high rate, given the high inflation, and can pass some of the costs along to consumers and even, if there is a squeeze, transfer money back and forth between divisions, in effect loaning themselves money and staying out of the money market.

"The high prime doesn't stop a consumer from spending all he or she earns," says Smith, "because the average consumer doesn't even face the high prime directly. We grab everything we can off the shelves, color TVs, small items, food and clothes. The upward pressure on prices exerted by the interest rates make us buy now, since things will be more expensive later. Of course, you can't get loans to buy autos or houses, but everything else you buy."

Since the only purchases that are slowed down are houses and cars, which formerly involved bank help, people quit buying these items and the recession hits home builders, auto makers and steel workers. The problems in Detroit and Pittsburgh are worsened by the need to re-tool industry in those cities, but when the prime rate comes down, they will perk up.

"It's a blue collar recession," Smith concluded, "much more so than in '74—a small segment of the population is used as a battering ram to overcome inflation. The worst hurt people are the laid-off laborers, the people who had been depending on overtime or jobs to make ends meet. But, since most of our workforce is still employed, the average American is more worried about price rises than unemployment." So the prime rate jump accomplished little except some rollercoasting on Wall Street.

**The Joys of Poverty**  
The economic downturn has been limited geographically to auto and steel and to the small contractor who builds houses independently. The rich haven't been hurt, nor have the very poor, says Smith. "If you were unemployed going into this recession, you can't complain. Your economic well-being is no longer associated with your employment. People receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children, unemployment compensation, disability and pensions are, more or less, where they were—in fact it may be in their interest to remain unemployed. It would cost them more relatively to have a job than not."

Chandler Davidson, professor of sociology at Rice University, disagreed with Smith about the situation and number of the poor.

"There has been a great deal more poverty in Houston through the 70s than the city's publicists are willing to admit," he claimed. The recession is geographically general. Using the official government measure of poverty of an income of less than \$8,500 for a family of four, and working with data from scientific surveys, Davidson estimated that at least one-fifth of Houston is poor. "About 20% of local households do not even have a checking account, let alone a savings fund," he said.

"It is a widely held misconception," Davidson said, "that these poor are all welfare recipients. Less than half of them are beneficiaries of government cash transfers such as AFDC or food stamps. The great majority of heads of poor households work, many of



Photo: Jane Collings

Tom Sanders: "You can't wait on the government; it's too badly run to be of any help."

# CABIN FEVER

"They're both working, they're not meeting their payments and they're taking it out on each other."

BY MORRIS EDELSON

An interview with Charlene Torrest, Sharon Hanan, and Sam Calderara, marriage and family counselors and psycho-therapists at the Family Service Center.

**Breakthrough:** As counselors, how do you see the economy affecting families, particularly in the past six months?  
**Charlene Torrest:** In marital counseling, much of the time is taken up discussing the money situation, arguments over money and where money is being spent. It's different from a few years ago, when money wasn't tight. Couples are worrying about the next raise.

**Sharon Hanan:** Money problems don't come up the first time a couple walks in the room with a domestic problem, but there's a general feeling of futility that their efforts are not producing anything. They're both working and at the end of the month they're not meeting their payments and they are discouraged. They take it out on each other. Their frustrations are directed at the person near to them and not on the job.  
**Sam Calderara:** Yes, statistically, family violence has increased in the last year. There is more fighting. People are angry about a lot of things that happen in the society and it boils over into their relationships.

**Hanan:** A feeling of helplessness to change anything going on is at the bottom of that and they reach out to some other person for some kind of answer, and don't get it. Then they lash out.

**Torrest:** If it's a one-salary family, there is more burden on the breadwinner. Shift workers are used to having eight to 10 hours overtime, and they're not getting it anymore. They're feeling the pinch and they don't see how they can

pay for their bills. They get angry at their wives, and violence occurs more.  
**Breakthrough:** How do you deal with the violence issue in your counseling?  
**Calderara:** We help people identify where their angers arise. If people become aware that they are really mad at their company, or that they are really mad about prices going up, then they can avoid taking it out on their spouse. I work a lot with men who have a tendency to get angry and violent. I teach them to recognize it when it's still small and tell them to get out of the house. Some of them go



Torrest: "They've lived in a plastic card society."

jogging or beat on a tree with a baseball bat, instead of beating up their wives or kids.

**Hanan:** When one person stays home, that person is likely to see all the things that aren't getting paid for. The woman is usually in that position. She feels frustrated and she expresses her frustration. The husband hears her saying he is a failure. And really she is saying, "I don't know what to do. I don't know how to handle my feelings." So one thing we can do is help people hear each other's feelings without taking it as a personal attack.

**Breakthrough:** Well, what about lowering expectations? I mean, what if you just tell people, relax, you can't afford it? You can't have a new car . . .

**Calderara:** I think people have already faced that. It's not new cars. It's the necessities. Rent has gone up. Food has gone up. They are struggling with utilities, day care . . .

**Hanan:** Day care costs a fortune. People think, well, a second salary check will fix our problem; usually the extra check just barely covers the gasoline, clothes, day care and expenses you have just in order to show up at work. There's not much benefit.

**Calderara:** People are definitely spending their money more carefully.

**Hanan:** They are sometimes forced to be careful, because their credit rating has been lost. We are getting many more calls for financial counseling.

**Torrest:** But we are talking about people who have never been through a depression, so they have an adjustment problem. They have lived in a plastic card society where it has been easy to get what they want, and a television sit-com society where everyone has a new set of clothes each week.

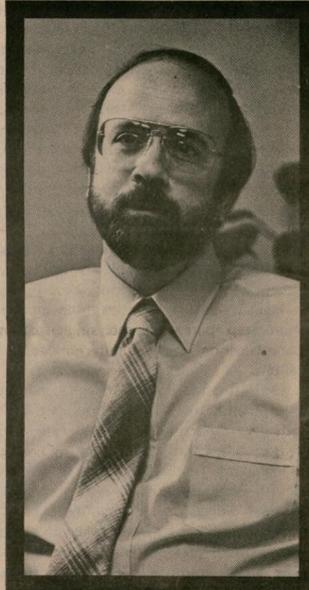
**Breakthrough:** If they aren't doing too well, does the Houston boom depress people further?

**Calderara:** What I see about Houston's expansion is that people are complaining about all the cars and pollution more. Many of them are saying what a hard time they have had on the freeway; there is a lot of anger about it. People talk about their fears of their houses being broken into, or robberies. I have had a number of clients say they won't stay out after dark. Or walk in their own neighborhoods.

**Hanan:** Sometimes we get people rushing into town who think a job is just waiting for them, a house is just waiting for them. If they don't plan ahead of time, they can get caught with some large bills. There may be more jobs here, but costs are high as well.

**Hanan:** Many people who move in are already suffering depression because of years of struggle somewhere else. They arrive here in a bad state to begin with.

**Calderara:** When we get clients, when they finally call us, they are usually in a crisis stage. We provide family and individual counseling and therapy. We ask people to set their own goals and we try



Calderara: "The family is coming back."

to help them get to a place in their family, marriage or life that they want to be. We try to make them aware of what is bringing on their problems and what they can do about it and what they can't do about it. A lot of mothers, particularly as single parents, have unrealistic expectations.

**Torrest:** The Super Mother syndrome—attempting to be a wonderful parent, available for carpooling, there when the child gets sick, there when the child's having fun, holding down a 40-hour job, traveling back and forth, taking care of the household as smoothly as when there were two people in the house and wanting about two hours a week for some personal life. She comes to us saying, "I don't know why I don't have time to do more."

**Hanan:** A lot of men are supporting two households, paying child support to a previous set of children. And then they have new children in another household.

**Torrest:** And as the economy goes down, the child support check goes down, which means more pressure on the single parent.

**Breakthrough:** So you try to help a person become more realistic. Does that

help the client understand no matter what they do, the economy is still bad?

**Hanan:** That's what we do. We help them realize some things are in their control, and some things aren't. It's facing reality.

**Torrest:** We're dealing with all sectors here and you notice different reactions. Poor people are always being thrown out of jobs. The latest statistics say something like 40% of black youths are out of jobs. It's a horrendous figure and that would be considered a depression certainly if that was across the board. But we don't usually get those families—they're used to hard times. We get families in the middle of changes, where things were once good and are now not so good. People that are used to it just don't have the hopes that things can get better.

**Calderara:** And we have professional people coming in. Their income may be higher, but their standard of living is higher and on the inside they feel the pressures, the same way. They have more resources sometimes. But this trouble is affecting everyone across the board.

I see a different attitude towards marriage, a general feeling that two incomes are better than one, so they are staying in them longer.

**Torrest:** Sometimes the economic situation keeps them together, so they sort out their problems, because they both realize that individually they couldn't have a house and car and the goodies they can have together. So it's an economic motivation for them to stay together, and sometimes it's a negative motivation for couples that really would be better off separated. Especially women who may be in a physical or verbal abuse situation and may have children and feel no out because their skills are limited and child care would have to be taken care of. They feel trapped.

**Hanan:** We have been offering classes in step parenting and single parenting and people see that alternatives to the family can be rough, that single parents or step parents have a whole new set of problems.

**Torrest:** Another economic effect we see, it's so apparent we forget to comment on it, is that people are a lot more thoughtful about baby-making, because they can't afford children just now.

**Hanan:** I think in the 60s people became aware of population control efforts.

**Breakthrough:** How has this freedom affected your women clients, as far as their roles in the family are concerned?  
**Hanan:** A lot of the women we see say they are unhappy with their roles and want to do something different. When they start to question that, it causes conflict in the marriage.

**Torrest:** I think it's the economic situation that pushes women into a working role, but household attitudes haven't changed, so she tries to be Super Mom, Super Wife, Super Housekeeper. The household forgets she is already working 40 hours. She's expected to maintain the house the same way. I had a woman in my office yesterday who said, "My mother-in-law keeps asking me why I am not sewing, why I am not canning." Then, we went through it. She leaves the house at 6:30 a.m., drives an hour and a half to work, drops the kids off at a day care center. She doesn't get back in the house until 6:30 at night. For 12 hours, she is physically out of the household. She gets a meal together, throws in her laundry, takes a bath and then it's bed time. And the other generation expects her to can food.

**Hanan:** Men used to think it was a negative reflection on them if the wife worked. Now it's, "I expect my wife to work, but I also expect my wife to be a housekeeper."



Hanan: "I have seen women running away."

**Calderara:** In some families, roles have shifted. In a couple of cases, men take kids after separations.

**Torrest:** Non-married couples are good at that. But the few men that take on the kids don't begin to equal the number of single mothers who do.

**Hanan:** I have seen women running away, just leaving husbands and kids, starting a better life.

**Breakthrough:** Well, where are families today? Are they all struggling to survive? Or is there room for idealism, social concerns and the general good anymore?  
**Torrest:** Yes. It's a survival atmosphere. Most are very family-centered. Very few families come in with concerns that override their own family situation, or with concerns about the city, for example, other than the traffic on the way to work. Traffic is a big complaint.

**Hanan:** There is a trend to conservative politics and religion.  
**Calderara:** A lot of people are turning to religion. And the family is coming back into vogue as a place of security, a place where people listen and share. People said the family was going down the drain, but it's evident that it is changing, but thriving.

**Hanan:** One couple we had here has a written legal contract, not a marriage, which describes in detail the partner's duties and roles. That will be a different, but strong family.

**Calderara:** People I see, either divorced or single, are looking for someone to hook up to. So human beings still have a need to get together. Relationships are still important. It's difficult to live in a relationship and it's difficult to live without it. That's a theme in most of my single clients. They want support and companionship. After the marriage, they keep pining for the same thing.

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The Family Service Center is currently working with approximately 20,000 clients in the 13 locations and 14 social service programs it operates. More than a million people in the Houston area have been introduced to its services which include prevention of physical and sexual abuse of children, marriage and family counseling, a homemaker service for temporarily disrupted families and Plays for Living with discussions to help organizations introduce discussions of problems such as alcoholism, domestic violence, and urban isolation. The FSC central office is at 3635 West Dallas, and their number is 524-3881.

them steadily. Even the majority of poor female heads of household are workers. On these, says Davidson, "the present inflation crisis is having a catastrophic effect."

As for Smith's contention that non-working welfare recipients remain unhurt by the current crisis, Davidson points out that the typical AFDC payment has hardly increased since the early 1960s, which means that continuing inflation has eroded the purchasing power of that payment by more than 50%.

Economist Richard Parker, in a *Mother Jones* review, identifies the problem of recession as one of growing economic inequality. Very few people are still doing well in America, he finds: 2/3 of the national income and capital is held by less than 1/3 of its population. If present trends of concentration continue, he says, only 25 million people in the country will receive 60% of the nation's income. Parker places Americans in three categories facing different problems worsened by recession: a "noneconomy" of 16 million people on welfare or retired; a "subeconomy" of frequently laid off low-skilled workers, single women and minority groups; and a middle class, whose lives are slipping toward poverty.

Parker says that developments in the economy may signal a coming collapse, especially if trends toward inequality continue. Among these he notes that cost increases for necessities have run as much as 25% higher than the increase of the official measurement, the Consumer Price Index. Also white males in their 40s continue to win income increases, alone of all the work force. And taxes on business have fallen in the past decade, while taxes on personal consumption and other levies on the individual have risen proportionately.

## We Have Bit the Bullet And It Is Us

Smith agrees that there is inequality. Banks have greater market power than individuals and companies. The institutional arrangement of the economy, the laws of banking, makes it almost beyond individual capability to stop recession. Sacrifice is foolish—savings are discouraged.

"The public bit the bullet already to stop inflation. It did slow in 1975 under Ford, and Carter came into office with a very low rate. We should never have gotten back into this problem."

No incentives, no savings, inflation continues. Smith says, "We haven't had an incentive to save in this country for ages. We can't get the prime rate for our savings—we can't even get a return that matches the rate of inflation. Thus, our savings rate in the United States is only 3-5%, compared to more than 20% in Japan and 10% in West Europe. So we spend, inflation goes on until the government decides to use unemployment as a way of slowing us down. Unemployment is a heck of a way to fight a recession!"

We can pull out of it, and even improve, says Smith. "Everytime something bad happens, it is a chance for us to learn something. We should see our system not as the status quo, but as an evolving process, a changing way of doing things. Even our banking system learns things. We've come a long way from the 19th century when banks printed their own money. Even the Federal Reserve is better than what we used to have. Unemployment has focused us on the problem so we should be able to change things for the better, not just take up some quick, superficial solution."

## A Tunnel at the End of a Light

Smith even sees a slight improvement immediately ahead, before the election, and a recovery in 1981. But he is apprehensive about the more distant future:

"1990 looks bleak to me. I am concerned about the quality of life waiting for me there. If prices and incomes are going to triple, my retirement is going to be peanuts and my life insurance worthless. I want a major step forward in the economy, not a short-term solution, influenced by politics that is no real change and will make more suffer."

Our economic problems were avoidable, he says. "Recession is not inherent in our system. It is always the result of some specific policy. We got sucked in. And the country is not like our bodies. We notice pain in our body immediately. The country doesn't notice it is wounded until it gets faint."

Phil Russell, an Austin economist and author of *Mexico in Transition*, calls recession an integral part of the American economic system and bound to recur: "When times are good," he says, "business bids for labor. Employment and wages rise, so salaries cut into profits. Productivity tends to fall during periods of high employment, since workers who are pushed or speeded up, can quit and find another job. They walk off and get something else across the street."

The falling rate of profit and the saturation of available markets forces companies to cut back. They can't sell and can't produce for profit. Then the recession comes on, when no new buyers can be found and when productivity is down. Recession is a way of disciplining the work force:

"People on the streets will take anything, do anything, just to get a job and they will try hard, be productive, to keep it."

Russell reminds us that recession is not the only way to discipline workers. Giving them a share of the business can work just as well—in Germany and Japan, where all energy needs are met by import, there is presently negligible inflation and unemployment, compared to the U.S. Only a very small segment of business would use these countries as a model, since most corporations fear a power struggle with their work force.

Change of some sort, Russell says, agreeing with Parker and Smith on at least one point, is inevitable. A severe downturn always affects the quality of life in America. "At the turn of the century we had a severe business failure they called The Great Depression, until the 1930s taught us what a depression really was," he said. "From that first near-collapse came the strong monopolies that dominated our business until the second Great Depression. The New Deal response to that second period of joblessness and production stoppage was an increased government role in which the government "regulated" or assisted big business. Some call this period state monopoly capitalism."

"Now," concluded Russell, "we are at a new crossroads. The U.S. position of absolute power, after World War II destroyed its possible rivals, has eroded. The dollar is weak and exchange rates have not worked. Something new is on the way. The Tri-Lateral Commission, for example, speaks openly of there being too much democracy and thus inefficiency in some countries. American industry has not been proven competitive against Japanese and German products. New social developments certainly must come in to restore even a minimal functioning of the market."

And all the experts agree primarily that the one thing promised the American people by the candidates, laissez-faire capitalism, is the last thing the country needs. People may either pray for a sudden enlightenment on the part of the oil companies and others (after all, they do bring us PBS!) or may hope that the candidates don't intend to fulfill even the most often heard pledges.



TMO asks: Shall we gather at the bayou?

Photo: Theresa DiMenno

# URBAN REVIEWAL

TMO wants Houstonians to have a say in decisions that affect their lives.

BY CHARLOTTE MOSER

When the 70 residents of Houston's northside crowded into Harris County Commissioners Court on August 8, they didn't look like political activists.

Like Beatrice Quintero, they were solid citizens, property owners, mothers and fathers and good church goers. Every day folks who cared about their neighborhoods and worked hard to make happy lives for their families, these people had other things to worry about besides political abstractions.

But, one hour later, they left the court chambers with a political victory that stunned both them and Houston's powers that be. Protesting plans to build a new toll freeway that would rupture north Houston neighborhoods from downtown to FM-1960, the group, organized by an entity called The Metropolitan Organization (TMO), faced heavy endorsement of the Hardy Toll Road by the Houston Chamber of Commerce and by Harris County Judge Jon Lindsay.

They came to the courthouse armed with tons of facts. They argued that the freeway would contribute to environmental pollution, that it wouldn't solve long-term transportation problems in north Houston, that a rail transit system was more logical and that a railroad right-of-way already existed.

E. A. "Squatty" Lyons, commissioner of Harris County Precinct 4 where the toll road would be located

*Charlotte Moser, editor of north Houston's The Leader Newspapers, was a National Endowment for the Humanities Journalism Fellow at Yale University this summer. She is former art critic for the Houston Chronicle.*

never liked the idea of the freeway. When he called for a court vote to "go on record" about the toll road, he received unanimous support from the commissioners to oppose the plan.

The vote, taken in the absence of Judge Lindsay, was a blow to the city fathers. Roger Horn, director of the Chamber of Commerce's Transportation Division, was quoted in the *Houston Post* as saying he was "astonished" and "appalled" by the court's action. Another observer told the *Houston Chronicle* that the vote was the "death knell" for the toll road plan.

Beatrice Quintero and her cohorts were also surprised, but they were jubilant. "I prayed a lot that they would come out for us," says Quintero, a physical therapist in the Texas Medical Center. "It took guts for the commissioners to take a stand."

It took more than prayer to win the favor of the commissioners court. Since January, TMO had held 39 briefing sessions about the proposed toll road with members of northside churches from Lindale to Aldine. Members of the Hardy Toll Road Task Force had met with officials from U.S. Rep. Bob Eckhardt and City Councilman Dale Gorczyński, who also opposed the toll road, to Texas Turnpike Authority officials who were drawing up the initial toll road studies. Their request to meet with the Chamber of Commerce was ignored.

By the time the group met with commissioners court, they knew intimately the pros and cons of the toll road. They were aware of the political issues it entailed and their rights as property owners. They also came with the backing of the TMO organization city-wide, a coalition

of 80 churches representing upward of 5,000 upstanding Houston citizens.

The Hardy Toll Road victory was the latest in a growing number of successful challenges TMO has made to the Houston status quo since the group's formation in June 1979. It was responsible last spring for pushing through recommendations from Harris County Flood Control to limit development in southeast Houston to prevent a repeat of the massive flooding these communities experienced last year. In April, a TMO group in the Manchester area near the Houston ship channel called Stauffer Chemical Co. on the carpet for emitting dangerous fumes from a nearby plant, causing the company to alter its policy.

Houston has never seen a group quite like TMO. Its goal is not political action, but "accountability" to the people for Houston area policy and planning. Its objective is not to change the system, but to have a say in decisions that affect the quality of life for Houston families.

"We're not a lobbying group trying to develop power," says George Zukero, a life-long resident of the Airline area who has been active in the Hardy Toll Road issue. "We're here for accountability. We address specific problems and want to keep officials from adopting the most expedient solution."

Some in Houston, however, view TMO as an insidious threat. Louie Welch, former Houston mayor and now head of the powerful Houston Chamber of Commerce, has publicly denounced TMO as a radical group with what he sees as Communist overtones. Houston's daily newspapers, the *Houston Post* and the *Houston Chronicle*, have done their share to sensationalize TMO's motives.

In the last two years, the *Chronicle* has run no less than three major news stories—from the religion page to the front page—largely casting a negative light on TMO.

What strikes fear in Welch's heart, apparently, is the spectre of community protest inspired in cities like Chicago and San Antonio by groups similar to TMO. TMO derives much of its philosophy from Saul Alinsky, the Chicago community organizer of the 1930s and 40s. Known for his work in Chicago's Back of the Yards neighborhood depicted in Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, Alinsky was a sociologist who formed an institute for community study called the Industrial Arts Foundation (IAF). Though Alinsky died in the late 60s, the IAF still runs an active and highly regarded training program in Chicago for community organizers, administrators and policy makers.

One of IAF's top consultants and a member of its national board is Ernie Cortes, a San Antonio native who is now director of Houston's three-member TMO staff. Cortes has a degree in economics from the University of Texas at Austin, where as an undergraduate in the early 60s, he was active in University YMCA affairs. His interest in community-based work led him to IAF in Chicago where he eventually became a member of its consulting staff.

In 1974, Cortes returned to San Antonio and was instrumental in establishing the highly effective COPS (Community Organized for Public Service) program. That group, also organized through a sponsoring committee of primarily Mexican-American churches, has now become a vital part of San Antonio's political process. Cortes later went on to Los Angeles to start up a similar group there called UNO.

According to Cortes, Alinsky defined himself as a radical but with a distinct definition of the term. In IAF terminology, "radical" is defined as one who goes to the root of a social problem and takes action consistent with it.

"We're not liberals," says Cortes, a short and intense bulk of a man. "Liberals talk a good game but they're the first ones to walk out of a room when there's confrontation. Radicals in Alinsky's definition are people who think you only get out what you put in. Our commitment is with people."

Liberals also discourage participation, says Cortes, whereas IAF advocates pluralism and a diversity of special interests.

"The idea that we're all the same in one big happy family is a fantasy," he says. "It's oppressive. It's liberating when the structure allows the conflict of different interests."

The beginning of TMO in Houston came in 1975 when the judicatory forum of Houston Metropolitan Ministries, composed of area ministers, invited a member of the IAF consulting staff to meet with them about forming a local group similar to San Antonio's COPS. The ministers were told that the first step was to establish a committee of churches to sponsor community action in Houston. As a result, Houston Interfaith Sponsoring Committee, generally known as Interfaith, was begun.

The formation of Interfaith was almost short-circuited when the visit of the IAF consultant was "leaked" to the *Houston Post*. For three days, the Metropolitan Ministries action was emblazoned across the front page with Louie Welch making his first statements about the Alinsky "radicals." After a number of years of retreat, Interfaith emerged again, hired Cortes in 1978 and spun off The Metropolitan Organization in 1979. Some observers feel that Welch's current wrath against TMO is vengeance because he thought he'd killed the group in 1975.

"The Chamber of Commerce doesn't mind organization at the local level if it's involved with things like beautification," says Cortes, who feels that the Chamber is the city's 'Shadow Government.' "But it doesn't want neighborhoods to get together to ask questions about flooding or what kind of police department the city has."

TMO, which operates at a budget of \$100,000 annually, is organized into nine clusters in different geographical areas of the city. An executive committee composed of members from each cluster is the group's decision-making body. All decisions are made by TMO members with the staff advising and providing the organizational footwork. Most churches joined the coalition as part of their church development programs to expand congregations and develop church leadership.

At TMO, emphasis is placed on "natural leaders"—PTA presidents, teachers, or neighborhood leaders. "I have personally learned to articulate my thoughts better," says Helen Coogan, a member of St. Theresa's Church off Memorial Drive who led a successful TMO drive to clean up a Weingarten's store on Washington Dr. "We used to shy away from dealing directly with authorities or would work through a friend of a friend. We're not dealing that way anymore."

"It's hard to get people to accept the fact that they know as much as elected officials do," explains Cortes. "They tend to see people in power as authority. If they disapprove of things, they think the official is right."

In its community education, TMO uses two intertwined methods. Weekly scriptural study workshops taught by the staff are based on the Biblical writings of St. Paul, St. Matthew and Corinthians which emphasize reaching out and helping people. The second are workshops about specific community topics which concern residents, like the Hardy Toll Road.

A recent workshop on Houston's Community Development Program provided a history of the federal program, Houston's success in implementing it, examples of how the program has worked elsewhere, and what area residents could do to make it more effective for them.

"What do you want to do about Community Development? It's up to you," says Cortes to a group of about 20 TMO members meeting at St. Peter Claver Church in northeast Houston's Settegast area. The consensus was to form a Community Development task force.

Once a task force is underway, it calls public meetings with area officials who have jurisdiction over the subject, whether flood control, police protection or chemical pollution. The task force develops a list of the most pertinent questions related to the issue for their



Beatrice Quintero lays it on the line.

photo: Theresa DiMenno

area, prints a meeting agenda for participants, and proceeds to formally ask the officials the questions one by one.

"We have only a certain amount of time to get the information," says Zukero. "We can't waste time with supervisory stuff."

The crisp business-like format of TMO meetings, which always end as promptly on schedule as they begin, is part of the accountability aspect of their efforts. For instance, the group is never publicly on first name basis with politicians even if they're as closely allied with TMO as City Councilman Dale Gorczynski who has participated in IAF training.

"We want to establish respect for boundaries," says Cortes. "Public officials often try to destroy boundaries. They ask people to trust them, to consider them friends, so that they don't have to answer anything too specific or put anything in writing. Informality violates accountability."

The TMO staff also sometimes recommends that members watch newspaper reporters on *Meet the Press* to perfect persistence in asking questions.

As effective as TMO is becoming, both staff and members insist that they want no political power in and of itself, but for the betterment of Houston as a place to live. Unlike San Antonio's COPS program, Houston's TMO is multi-racial and multi-denominational with leaders from Protestant and Jewish congregations as well as Roman Catholic churches. As a result of the cluster strategy, church members are traveling around the city to attend meetings in neighborhoods they've never seen or heard of before.

"It's almost like TMO is tying the city together," says Zukero, who traveled recently into the Fifth Ward to attend a meeting at St. Ambrose Church. Almost all TMO members say the strength of TMO lies in its formation within the churches. "We will all come and go," says Zukero, "but the churches and communities will stay."

The church base of TMO also affords a defense against criticism as being self-serving. Its roots lie with Houston citizens who have a deep historical commitment to improving humankind's lot in life. And Houston, even with its growing non-committal urbanity, comprises much of its identity from religious virtue, fundamental and otherwise. TMO is simply taking care of the city's own. **UPDATE:** On August 26th, Harris County's Commissioners Court convened again and voted to support the study for the Hardy Toll Road. The reversal came about after Judge Jon Lindsay, absent during the first vote, issued a release endorsing completion of the toll road study. Also on the agenda for that meeting were four requests from the county engineers office for authorization to begin negotiations with engineers concerning widening of the Hardy Street right of way off FM 1960, preliminary roadway plans for grade separation along Hardy Street, road tests for Old Hummel Road which runs parallel to Hardy, an authorization for Southern Bell to install buried cable lines along Hardy.

City Councilman Dale Gorczynski said the court changed its mind after "being heavily pressured by highway people and Chamber of Commerce people. Studies have a way of becoming reality very soon," said Gorczynski. "This is a thinly veiled attempt to breathe life into a dead corpse."

Brian McCann of the TMO Hardy Toll Road Task Force said that "commissioners owed the public an explanation of why they switched their vote."

Lindsay retaliated by saying that the TMO was using the issue "to the detriment of the entire community for their own political gain. It's narrow-minded and short-sighted."

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# GLOBAL FEMINISM

Women of the world unite.

BY NANCY LANDAU

When I returned from the International Women's Year Conference in Copenhagen I heard someone liken the experience to the proverbial elephant and the blind men tale. An apt comparison, I thought. Each of us there saw a different part, no one saw the whole elephant, and we're still putting the pieces together.

And mammoth it was. Half a decade

*Nancy Landau is a native Texan living in Washington, D. C. She backpacks and travels whenever and wherever possible.*

ago, when the first such UN conference was held by and for the world's women in Mexico City, 200 workshops were offered at the Tribunal, the non-governmental (NGO) counterpart to the official conference. This year's nine day alternative NGO Forum began with 800 workshops scheduled. But because that pre-set program was quickly made more flexible, participants ended up with 1500 possibilities, 150-175 offerings per day.

The range of topics provided a dazzling smorgasbord of choices, and choreographing one's movements was a diffi-

cult, bewildering task. Especially since "our" daily newspaper, *Forum 80*, failed to print a daily schedule after the first day—too little space, they claimed. They did find space, however, for several patently insulting graphics and photos, and many women were angered and frustrated by the internal conference coverage, their lack of access to it, and the dearth of women reporters. Margie Paxton, an American originally hired as editor, was dismissed two weeks before the conference, reputedly to avoid controversy over First World/U.S. domination. Dennis Hackett, her replacement, is British.

There were other problems at the Forum. Workshop rooms were small, and, although there were 8000 women attending, no space was large enough for more than 600 of us to meet together at one time. (Some women expressed concern that there was a "hidden agenda" operating to keep us separate.) There was a scarcity of simultaneous translations and earphones that disadvantaged the non-English speaking women, and the native English speakers needed constant reminding about talking slowly and distinctly for the many who knew English less well. Food was scarce and expensive, and many who were sent on small budgets, and others who paid their own way, literally could not afford to eat.

Perhaps the most surprising oversight was challenged in words writ large on posters that went up the very first morning—"A women's conference without childcare?" Word got around that when a high-ranking Danish official finally grew tired of all the commotion surrounding the issue, he did get a babysitter sent over. The insult was compounded, however, when the price was

set at \$5 per hour per child.

But it seems fair to say that political issues didn't dominate at the Forum. "Networking" was the key word and there were many calls for solidarity and for work to strengthen it. Other positives were the interpersonal and cross-cultural relationships that were formed, and the view we each got of the people from other countries. There were 2000 more women present than had participated in Mexico City—an estimated total of 3000 Danes, 2000 other Europeans, 950 from the US and Canada, 250 Africans, and many from other parts of the world.

The scope of media coverage and the variety of events that took place during the conference was illustrated by the Danish press: when the Nordic women made a plea for peace, called for an end to the arms race, and petitioned the official conference with half a million signatures of support; when the Ukrainians in exile made a plea for their people in the USSR with a 24 hour hunger strike; when there was an animated debate between American reporters and Iranian delegates; when the Soviet feminists who defected were received at the conference; when a coup took place in Bolivia, and the Bolivian women scuffled with police at the Bella Center, attempting a plea for support; when Sarah Weddington made a dramatic speech on women's issues; when the two-time airplane hijacker and the women of the Palestinian contingent received much publicity; when the Group of 77 (most of the developing countries) equated Zionism with racism.

Because of the Zionism issue, the decision to channel funds for Palestinian



photo: Nancy Landau

*The Palestinian question turned women's issues into global politics.*



photo: Nancy Landau

Nordic women made a plea for peace and an end to the arms race, and turned in a petition for support with 500,000 signatures.

women through the PLO, and the wording on the apartheid question, the U.S. was forced to vote against the entire World Plan of Action adopted by the conference delegates. Canada, Australia, and Israel also voted "no", there were 94 "yes" votes and 22 nations who abstained. Sarah Weddington spoke for the many who were concerned that women's issues had been usurped by global politics—"We are denied a consensus by those who want to focus a statement against Zionism, by those who want to advance their special interest in the Middle East. . . They have denied women—whatever their race, religion, or national origin—a unique opportunity to contribute solutions to their own issues in their own way."

In the past 20 years, the focus of UN debates has shifted from East-West to North-South. As many colonies in the southern hemisphere have struggled for self sufficiency, they have gained political independence, but economic independence has not followed. They have also become the largest voting block in the UN system, and for many, the PLO's quest for an independent homeland is a kindred struggle. . . .

The conference women from the northern industrialized countries were basically concerned with the feminist issue: sexual equality. In contrast, the women from the developing world, in their different context, were not willing to settle for "equality of poverty" with their husbands. Their concern is less with fighting male chauvinism than with "bringing about a new international economic order involving more equitable distribution of the world's wealth", wrote Rubina Khan, Inter Press Service (IPS) correspondent.

Khan reported that most of the developed countries favored inclusion of sexism, along with racism and colonialism, as factors explaining the underdevelopment of women. The developing countries, though, focused on poverty resulting from colonialism, and generally denied sexism as a fact in their societies. Some of the developed countries recognize the oppression of women by men "as the result of cultural values which can be changed" once the problem of poverty is solved. As Khan points out, however, the developed, capitalistic countries effectively demonstrate that "materially improving the life of women will not remove the root cause of sexism." Some of the people in developing countries were concerned that the issue of sexism was being raised to divide women from men in their struggle against historical poverty.

Despite difficulties and slow progress, official delegate Virginia Allan saw such discussions as positive. "In Mexico City, everybody laughed when you mentioned sexism," she recalled. They claimed it was untranslatable. This time, "sexism" went in as a footnote to the main document. "So not much," she concedes, "but at least people are going to look at that word, they're going to think about it."

On Women's Equality Day last month, Allan reflected on the Copenhagen Conference at the Clearinghouse for Women's Issues in Washington, D.C. It had pleased her to find women she had met at the last conference introducing themselves as feminists, a label they wouldn't touch five years ago. She was also pleased by "the very fact that the UN made a declar-

ation on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women! I'm really surprised that such a document could come out of the UN, that we can agree on that."

What bothered Allan most about the conference was the way the UN rules were violated. She'd been to many UN conferences and to several seminars and had never seen that happen before. "It was almost like a circus atmosphere", she recalled. Some women were disillusioned by the manipulation and stung by the anti-American sentiment they had heard about but never felt. Some of them don't want another conference. But many agree with Virginia Allan and the priority she has proposed, that we set up a strategic planning committee right away for 1985. She feels that we need to have people who are specialists in the rules of the UN "so we don't get taken by surprise by what happens", that we must find out why the US is isolated, what the true criticisms are.

As Americans, we feminists have some problems in the world beyond our domestic borders. One is our continental isolation between two oceans. We seldom cross national boundaries or come in contact with different cultures. As Charlotte Bunch observes: "while many women outside the US are forced to know something about our culture because it is exported everywhere, not many women in the US know much about other countries." (*Quest*, winter '78) Another problem is the imperialist/colonialist historical role our country has played, and our fearsome strength as a dominant world power. Women from less open societies are sensitive to our relative aggressiveness. And our (often) moralistic (usually) ethnocentric atti-

tudes towards other cultures and customs are offensive to those struggling in their own (a different) reality.

We must learn to listen to women from other parts of the world. They are grateful for our activism and concern. They use our movement publications and literature for inspiration and information, said Madhu of India's feminist journal *Manushi*, but they find our habit of condescension very difficult. Egypt's Maria Assad credited western women with focusing attention on the issue of female circumcision, but asked that we slow down now and not push too hard. "We want your help, but please let us ask for it," she said. A group of African women determined to call on the expertise of their own women, "and not to keep begging to foreigners." But they also encouraged the U.S. women's movement to keep strong, because as a British activist said, "Many of us from around the world are looking to you for ideas and to keep it going, so we can come along and make our contributions."

Women who attended the Copenhagen conference say that it made them into international feminists: they can no longer ignore the international perspective, and it has served to put their own national priorities in perspective. There's a strong feeling that we must educate women in the international women's movement as we educate in the domestic women's movement. "If feminism is to be perceived globally as a viable concept," wrote Charlotte Bunch, "it must not limit itself to a narrow definition of women's concerns. Feminism is not a list of issues. Rather, it is about developing a particular perspective on all matters which touch on our lives."

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## NETWORK

### FILMS

**September 17:** *All Quiet on the Western Front* (Milestone, 1930), Rice Media Center, 7:30.

**September 18:** *Zero for Conduct; A Propos de Nice* (Vigo, 1933, 1930), Rice Media Center, 7:30 pm.

**September 19:** *Dawn of the Dead* (Romero, 1979), Rice Media Center, 7:30 and 10:30; *Man About Town* (Clair, 1947), Museum of Fine Arts, 8:00.

**September 20:** *Dawn of the Dead* (Romero, 1979), Rice Media Center, 7:30 and 10:30; *Francis, God's Jester* (Rossellini, 1950), Museum of Fine Arts, 8:00.

**September 21:** *Sullivan's Travels* (Sturges, 1941), Rice Media Center, 7:30.

**September 24:** *The Great Blondino* (Nelson, 1967) and *David Holzman's Diary* (McBride, 1967), Rice Media Center, 7:30.

**September 25:** *The Battle of Algiers* (Pontecorvo, 1966), Rice Media Center, 7:30.

**September 26:** *Pickpocket* (Bresson, 1959), Rice Media Center, 7:30 & 10.

*No Regrets for Our Youth* (Kurosawa, 1946), Museum of Fine Arts, 8:00.

**September 27:** *Mighty Joe Young* (Schoedsack, 1949), Rice Media Center, 1:30 pm. *Waterloo* (Bondarchuk, 1971), Rice Media Center, 7:30 and 10.

*Europa '51* (Rossellini, 1952), Museum of Fine Arts, 8 pm.

**September 28:** *Love Me Tonight* (Mamoulian, 1932), Rice Media Center, 7:30.

**October 1:** *An Evening with Willie Varela*, Rice Media Center, 7:30.

**October 2:** *Jour de Fete* (Tati, 1948) Rice Media Center, 7:30.

**October 3:** *Hi Mom* (DePalma, 1970) Rice Media Center, 7:30 and 10:00.

*The Pawnbroker* (Lumet, 1965), Museum of Fine Arts, 8:00.

**October 4:** *India* (Rossellini, 1958), Museum of Fine Arts, 8:00 pm.

**October 8:** *Ballad of a Soldier* (Chukrai, 1960), Rice Media Center, 7:30.

**October 9:** *The Music Room* (Ray, 1959), Rice Media Center, 7:30.

**October 10:** *Sunday, Bloody Sunday* (Schlesinger, 1971), Rice Media Center, 7:30 and 10 pm.

*Special Section* (Costa-Gavras, 1975) Museum of Fine Arts, 8:00.

**October 11:** *Sitting Pretty* (Lang, 1948), 1:30 pm; *Young Frankenstein* (Brooks, 1975), Rice Media Center, 7:30 and 10.

*The Rise to Power of Louie XIV* (Rossellini, 1966), Museum of Fine Arts, 8.

**October 12:** *Lifeboat* (Hitchcock, 1944) and *Strangers on a Train* (Hitchcock, 1951), Rice Media Center, 7:30.

**October 15:** *Shoeshine* (DeSica, 1976), Rice Media Center, 7:30.

The Houston Public Library will present a series of 10 films on the family, shown free at the Central Library (Saturdays at 2:30 pm beginning Sept. 13) and the ing Sept. 14). Films in the series called **Featuring Families** include: *Life with Father*, *Breaking Away*, *Popi*, *The Little Foxes*, *East of Eden*, *A Raisin in the Sun*, *Claudine*, *Castle of Purity*, *I Never Sang for My Father*, and *Little Murders*.

### THEATERS

**Black Ensemble**, 1010 Tuam (520-0055). *Once in a Wifetime* by Celeste Colson. From Oct. 16-Nov. 9. Thurs.-Sat., 8:30 pm and Sun. 5pm. Tickets: \$5.

**Chocolate Bayou**, 1823 Lamar (759-9840) *A Moon for the Misbegotten* by Eugene O'Neill. Running Sept. 19- Oct. 11. Thurs. 7:30 pm; Fri.-Sat., 8:30 pm; and Sun., 7 pm; Tickets: \$4.50-\$5.50.

**Channing Players, First Unitarian Church**, Southmore at Main (622-3152). *Dangerous Corner* by J. B. Priestly. Opens Oct. 10 and runs Fri.-Sat. until Oct. 25, 8:30 pm. Tickets: \$3.75 and \$2.00 for students and senior citizens.

**The Comedy Workshop**, 2105 San Felipe (524-7333). *Chrysler Died for Your Sins*. Original comedy written and performed by the resident professional company. Opens September 17. Tues.-Thurs., 8:30 pm and Fri.-Sat., 8:30 pm and 11 pm. Tickets: \$4.00. Next door at the **Comix Annex** (529-7996) is *Comedy Tonight*, an open stage for stand-up comics and specialty acts. Cover charge weekends, \$3 and weekdays, \$1 with show time 9 pm. Weekend late shows at 11:30 pm.

**Equinox Theatre**, 3617 Washington (868-5829). *Angel City* by Sam Shepard. Previews begin Sept. 18 with opening run starting Sept. 25. At 8:30 pm. Tickets: \$5 on Thursdays, \$6 on weekends.

**Main Street Theatre**, Autrey House, 6265 Main (524-6706). Four one-act plays by Israel Horowitz. From Oct. 2-Nov. 1. Thurs.-Sat., 8 pm. Tickets: \$5.00 and \$3.00 for students and senior citizens.

**Nina Vance Alley Theatre**, 615 Texas (228-9341). *To Grandmother's House We Go* by Joanna M. Glass. Previews begin Oct. 10, opening Oct. 16 through Nov. 16. Tues.-Wed., 8 pm; Thurs.-Fri., 8:30 pm; Sat., 5 pm and 9 pm; and Sun., 7:30 pm. Tickets: \$4.25-\$10.25.

**Ripley House**, 4401 Lovejoy, (923-2661). *Los Gesticuladores (The Gesture)* by Rodolfo Usigli. In Spanish. Through Sept. 28. Fri.-Sat., 8 pm and Sun., 7 pm. Tickets: \$2.50.

**Stages**, 709 Franklin (225-9539) *Say Goodnight, Gracie*. Houston premier of recent off-Broadway comedy. Opens Sept. 20 through Oct. 11. To play Thurs.-Fri., 8:30 pm; Sat., 5 pm and 9 pm; and Sun., 7:30 pm.

### ART GALLERIES

**Blaffer Gallery**, UH central campus (749-1320). American Fiber Art: A New Definition (currently on view until Oct. 26). The invitational exhibit features 45 works by 14 American artists. A photo documentary section will examine fiber works by Marcel Duchamp, Claes Oldenburg,

Eva Hesse, Robert Rauschenberg, and Miriam Shapiro. In conjunction with the exhibit, the **Contemporary Handweavers of Houston, Inc.** will host a national fiber symposium at the Museum of Fine Arts on Oct. 3 and 4. The symposium, a tribute to Anni Albers, is the first in the U.S.A. to focus exclusively on American fiber aesthetics.

**Contemporary Arts Museum**, 5216 Montrose (526-3129). Upper Gallery: Nancy Graves: A Survey 1969-1980 (Sept. 20-Oct. 26) and Lower Gallery: Earl Staley, Mythologies (Oct. 3-Nov. 10). Hours: Tues.-Sat., 10 am - 5 pm; Sun., noon-6 pm.

**Cronin Gallery**, 2008 Peden (526-2548). Douglass Sandhage: Recent Work (Sept. 1-Sept. 27); and Fifth Anniversary Exhibition (Oct. 6-Nov. 15). Hours: Tues.-Sat., 10 am - 5 pm.

**DuBose Gallery**, 2950 Kirby (526-4916). Robert Weimerskirch: Abstracts, Oil (Sept. 18-Oct. 3); and A Drawing Show of Contemporary American Artists (Oct. 9 - t.b.a.) Hours: Mon.-Fri. 9 am - 5:30 pm and Sat., 11 am - 4:30 pm.

**Janie C. Lee Gallery**, 2304 Bissonnet (523-7306). Recent Paintings and Drawings by Dennis Ashbaugh (Sept. 5-mid-Oct.); Models for Large Scale Projects by Jim Love (Sept. 5-mid Oct.). Hours: Tues.-Sat., 10 am - 6 pm.

**Kauffman Galleries**, 2702 W. Alabama (528-4229). Contemporary Japanese Printmakers (Sept. 5-Oct. 7); and Harold Altman's New Lithographs (Oct. 10-Nov. 10). Hours: Mon.-Sat. 9 am - 6 pm.

**David Mancini Gallery**, 1200 Bissonnet (522-2949). Photographs by Atget (Sept. 13-Oct. 23). Hours: Tues.-Sat. 10 am - 5:30 pm.

**Moody Gallery**, 2015-J W. Gray (526-9911). A Group Exhibition of Gallery Artists (through Sept. 25); and Lucas Johnson, Recent Paintings and Drawings (Sept. 27-Oct. 18). Hours: Tues.-Sat. 10 am - 5:30 pm.

**Museum of Fine Arts**, 1001 Bissonnet (526-1361). Cliche-Verre: Hand-Drawn, Light Printed, A Survey from 1839 to the present (Sept. 10-Oct. 26); and in the Masterson Junior Gallery: Points of View - The Stereograph in America: A Cultural History (Sept. 23-Nov. 16).

**Rice Museum**, Rice University campus, Stockton Street entrance. Jim Love: Up to Now (Sept. 5-Nov. 16). Hours: Tues.-Sat., 10 am - 5pm; Sun., noon - 6 pm.

**Texas**, 2012 Peden (524-1593). Paintings by James Rosenquist (Sept. 27-Oct. 31). Hours: Tues.-Sat., 11 am - 5 pm.

**Watson/de Nagy Co.**, 1106 Berthea (526-9883). Sandria Hu: Monotypes and Collages and Bob Cole: Paintings and Works



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## NETWORK continued

on Paper (Sept. 13-Oct. 4). Hours: Tues.-Sat. 10 am — 6 pm.

**Watson/Willour, 2000 Peden (524-0865).** Gallery Artists on Paper (Sept. 5-Oct. 5). Hours: Tues.-Sat., 11 am — 5 pm.

### EVENTS

An **Israeli art sale** will take place on Sun., Sept. 28 from 11 am—8 pm at the Jewish Community Center, 5601 S. Braeswood. Films about the Israeli Museum in Jerusalem and **Pioneer Women's** work with women in Israel will be shown at 11 am and 2 pm. For more information, call 728-9362.

**The University of Houston Art Faculty** is holding its 1980 exhibition through Oct. 3 in Atrium I and II, Bayou Building, UH/CLear Lake City, 2700 Bay Area Blvd.

**The Houston Area Women's Center** will begin training volunteers to assist rape victims. The program will begin on Sept. 27 and run for four consecutive Saturdays from 10 am to 3:30 pm at the UT School for Public Health, 6905 Bertner. If interested in volunteering call Adelyn Bernstein at 792-4403.

The theme of the fall semester at the C. G. Jung Educational Center is **The**

**Hour of Woman.** A 12 week course, **Jungian Psychology and Feminism: A Dialogue** begins Sept. 18 and a lecture, **The Women's Hour** by Florence Wiedemann, takes place on Sun., Sept. 21 at 8 pm. For more information, call 524-8253. Admission to the lecture is \$5.00.

The **National NOW Conference** takes place in San Antonio October 3-5. Look for details in your local NOW membership news letters or write: 1980 National NOW Conference, P. O. Box 7813, Washington, D.C. 20044.

**Womanfair, third annual conference of the South Central Women's Studies Assoc.** will be held October 18 and 19 at the UT Arlington campus. For schedules of workshops and activities planned, write: Womanfair, P. O. Box 19528, UTA Station, UT/Arlington, Arlington, TX 77019.

**Saving the Past: Tools for Family History** is a free series offered by the Houston Public Library during Sept. and Oct. to teach family members how to interpret letters, diaries, journals, and other family documents, as well as to discuss the value of taping present-day family history. For more information, phone the library's Public Information Office, 222-4456, or pick up a schedule at one of the following branch libraries where the lectures will take place: Melcher, Kashmere, Kendall, or Cliff Tuttle.

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# “REQUIRED READING”

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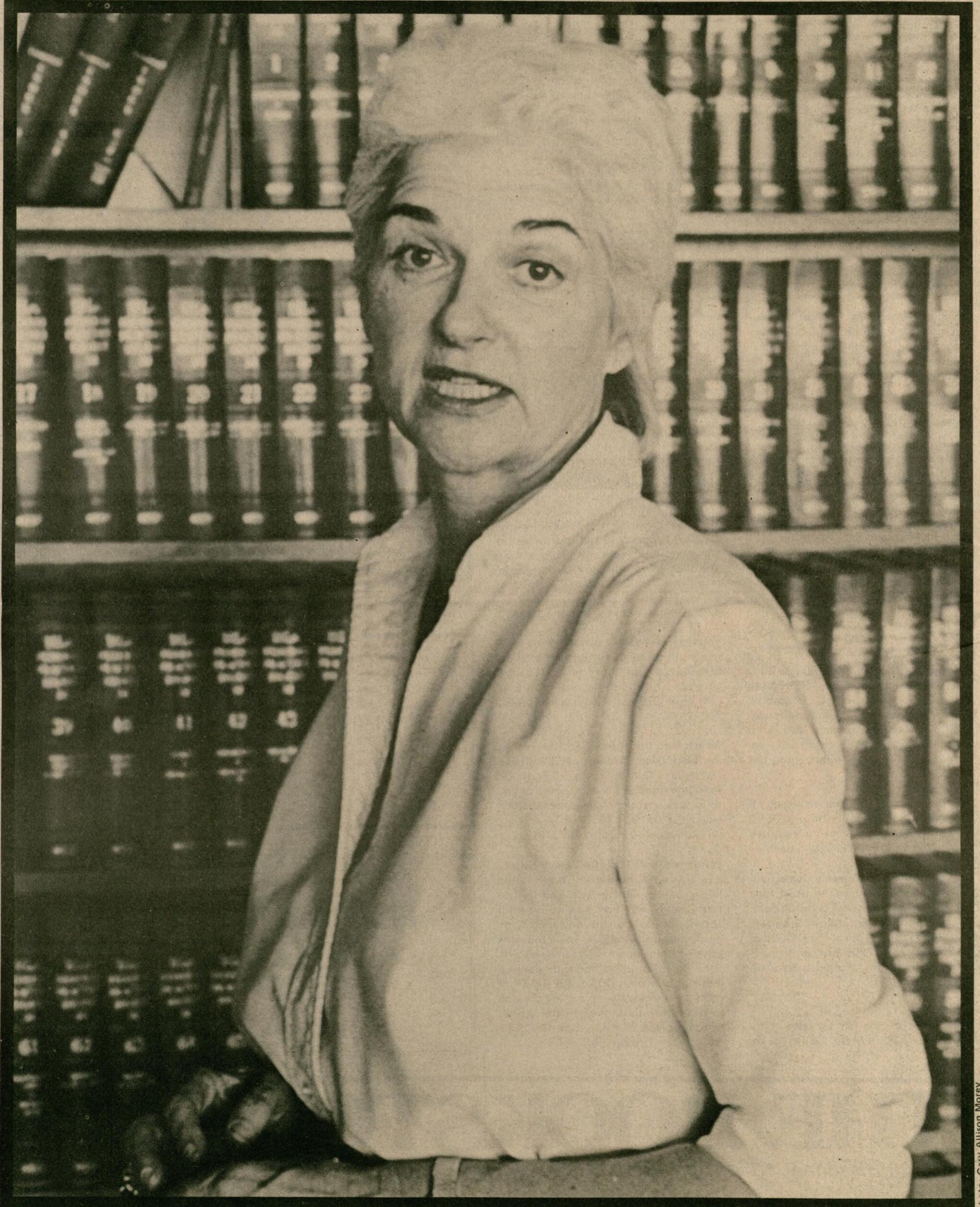


photo: Gary Allison Morey

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