

# Cowboy Country News

Published each Wednesday in the county seat of Yoakum County, Plains, Texas Volume XI, Issue 14, December 15, 2004

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## Boosting The Spirit Of Christmas



Anna Gonzales, CSCD Officer, presents Toni Jones check for \$235 to be used in local Christmas Assistance program here. Jones has been chief organizer of the assistance program a number of years. Denver City's Toy and Food program received a check in the same amount.

Some nine years ago, the Community Supervision and Correction Departments (CSCD) of both Terry and Yoakum County implemented a joint effort which, over those years, has played a significant role in making Christmas Holidays a bit brighter for many residents in the two counties.

Here in Yoakum County, aluminum cans are gathered, then stored at the Precinct Four barn until sold.

The sales earnings are then divided among Plains' Christmas Assistance Program and Denver City's Toy and Food Drive.

This year the profit from the sale of 1,480 pounds of aluminum cans is being donated to the two communities. Plains share of the proceeds was \$235. CSCD personnel of both counties wish to thank all who helped make the program another success.

## PHS Cowgirls win home tournament, improve record to 7-4



Desiraye Broome, 22, about to go up for shot. She was named to All-Tourney Team

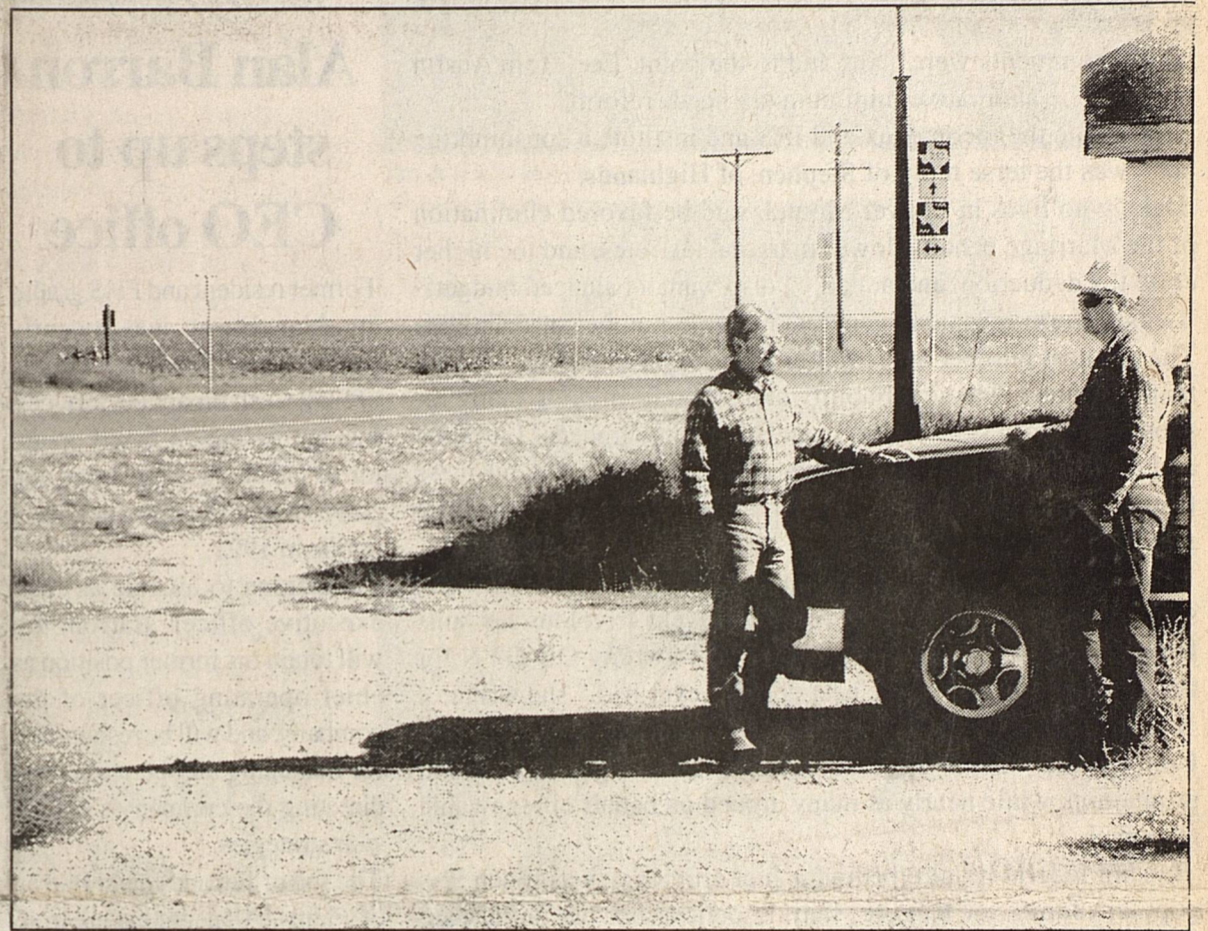
## County, TxDot to collaborate in making dangerous intersection much safer

Yoakum County now has two rather famous - make that infamous - highway intersections: where east-west US 82/380 crosses north-south bound Hwy-1780 near the Tokio CoOp Gin, and ironically enough, another intersection on Hwy. 1780, this one with east-west bound Hwy. 213, some ten miles from Yoakum County Park on Hwy. 214.

The latter site, near the old Pleasant Hill Gin, is the scene of the lethal wreck occurring December 3, taking the lives of three Denver City elementary school teachers, Veronica Flores, Marina Natividad and Rosie Garza. They were declared dead at the scene after being broadsided by an oilfield truck/trailer belonging to a company in Post and driven by Guadalupe Medina, slammed into the teachers school van after failing to stop at the intersection, called for by a state maintained Stop sign on both north and south bound 1780.

Yoakum Pct. 1 Commissioner Woody Lindsey and Precinct 1 Foreman Galen Ford were on the scene of the crash last Friday, mapping out the ground near the intersection where the county can either bull doze or blade blown in sand dunes, long dead trees, brush and an old, abandoned building. Removing these obstacles "Should allow motorists on 1780 or 213 approaching from either the north, south, east or west to have an un-obstructed view of the intersection and the two stop signs," Lindsey told CCN. "Drivers traveling in either direction on 213 would have a much clearer view of the approaching intersections with the trees and building cleared off".

Lindsey said the owner of the property, Curtis Griffith of Morton, had discussed the matter with him, "and assured us he was willing for us to have Carte Blanch doing anything necessary to his property to make the intersection safer for drivers on either road." While Commissioner Lindsey offered his comments to CCN Friday, a crew of TxDot employees were busy working on 1780, installing "rumble strips" some yards from the stop sign for both north and south bound motorists. As a vehicle hits the strips, the noise and vibration alerts drivers to some cause of concern ahead. These rumble strips were installed at the Tokio Gin intersection earlier this year. The most recent wreck which



Pct. 1's Woody Lindsey and Galen Ford discuss plans for improving safety of the 1780 & 213 highway intersection, above, and TxDOT crew lays down 'Rumble Strips' to alert drivers to stop sign at intersection.



took the lives of three highly thought of and talented teachers is not the first deadly collision at Pleasant Hill. No official numbers were available, but there have been other fatal crashes when drivers failed to heed the state stop signs. The same scenario has occurred a number of times near the Tokio gin where State Highway 1780 crosses 82/380.

In the December 13 session of Commissioners Court, Court, Lindsey moved to approve the clearing of the Pleasant Hill intersection of anything which could impede drivers vision of the present stop sign, and of the approach on either highway to the intersection. The motion was approved unanimously. The court will seek county attorney Richard Clark's opinion if any agreement in writing should be approved by Mr. Griffith and county officials, but actual work on the project should start in the next few days.

**In Loving Memory Of .....**  
**The family of .....**  
**For My Brother ( Or Sister ) .....**  
**Remembering the Class of .....**  
**The Plains Lions Club.....**  
**The Plains Chamber of Commerce.....**  
**Thanks From The XYZ Stores.....**  
**PHS VB State Champs .....**  
**The Lonesome Lonesomes Ranch.....**  
**These are but the tip of an iceberg of ideas a commemorative brick could be dedicated to for the Chamber's Electronic Sign Project, for just \$50! See how long a \$50 Ad in the Lubbock AJ ( or CCN ! ) will run - the brick is forever. BUT Your Time Is Running Out !!**



**CAPITOL COMMENT**  
U.S. SENATOR  
**KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON**

This January, a new Congress will be sworn in and will begin setting its legislative priorities. As I contribute to the process on behalf of Texas, I use information I gather from many sources, including my annual Listening Post. In this year's survey on domestic issues, you provided excellent feedback and suggestions for dealing with energy, transportation, tax relief, legal reform, and more.

The largest number of responses came in support of tax relief measures that, without congressional action, are set to expire in 2011. More than any other provision, the respondents said, relief from the Marriage Penalty was the item to preserve. Permanent elimination of the Death Tax, lower marginal tax rates on all income brackets, and maintenance of the higher child tax credit were also heavily supported.

Gordon and Nancy, form Richardson, summed up their position on tax relief in this way: "We don't want this relief so much for ourselves as we do for our children and their children. We had hoped to leave them with a better world than the one we have now, or at least similar to what we remember from our growing up years."

Other comments were short and to the point. Lee, from Austin wrote, "The alternative minimum tax needs reform." "Eliminate the income tax and IRS and institute a consumption tax," was the terse reply of Stephen, of Highlands.

Dale, who lives in Flower Mound, said he favored elimination of the Marriage penalty, lower marginal tax rates, and the higher child tax deduction, and added, "I also want a balanced budget." Legal reform questions generated a large number of reactions. The greatest number approved prohibiting lawsuits against gun manufacturers. Medical liability and tort reform drew many responses on both sides. Fern, from Beaumont, argued, "Lawsuits and the threat of lawsuits are the only way to keep big business from putting out bad products and taking advantage of the little guy."

Carolynn, who hails from Friendswood, had a different take, saying she wants to see tort reform prevent frivolous lawsuits from driving up insurance for doctors. "I lost my OB-GYN for this reason, and he was the best doctor I ever had," she wrote.

Energy policy generated many comments. Most of you said the United States should increase domestic oil and gas drilling and production, while nearly as many argued on behalf of renewable resources.

Raising federal requirements for fuel efficiency was much less popular. James, of Kilgore, said, "I believe our tax dollars are wasted on funding for solar and wind energy," John, of Pflugerville, counters that he wants, "Massive emergency federal funding research and development of alternative energy sources. Get out of dependency on foreign oil. NOW."

William, form San Antonio, speaks bluntly, "We have had 31 years since the OPEC oil embargo of 1973 and still we have no comprehensive energy policy. This is a disgrace."

The final category of questions addressed our state's transportation needs. On a topic that generated the most answers for any single question in the survey, Texans wanted a fairer share of the gasoline taxes paid to build more roads. Raising those excise taxes received the lowest backing of any proposal in the survey. Almost as unpopular was the suggestion of an alternative way to finance highways through methods such as tolls. Conversely, many agreed we should increase funding for light rail and mass transit.

Michael, a Dallas resident, replied, "New taxes and tolls are not the answer. Increasing efficiency is. I, and everyone I have spoken to, find it hard to believe that there is no high-speed rail system connecting major Texas cities."

Marc, from Houston, agrees with half of what Michael says, "Tolls are bad because they are discriminatory," he wrote. "Gas taxes should be MUCH higher."

Thomas, of Bryan notes, "I do not believe gas taxes should be raised. However, getting people out of their vehicles and onto mass transit will be tough. I do not really have an answer."

With the help of your responses and other input from my fellow Texans, we can work together to develop practical answers to these and many other challenges face our state and nation. I really appreciate the time you took to weigh in..I am listening.

## Texas Signs Concealed Handgun Reciprocity Agreements With Georgia and Montana

Texas has signed reciprocal agreements with Georgia and Montana, allowing citizens with concealed handgun licenses issued by those states to legally carry handguns in Texas, and vice versa.

Governor Rick Perry signed the reciprocity agreements with Georgia and Montana, allowing licensees to visit Texas with their concealed handguns.

"These agreements allow licensed Texans to enjoy the same or similar privileges their licenses give them at home," DPS Director Thomas Davis Jr., said.

With the additional of Georgia and Montana, Texas currently

has reciprocity agreements with 14 states. (These agreements were made possible by 1997 and 2003 changes to the Texas concealed handgun law.) Texas also has reciprocity agreements with Arkansas, Arizona, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Utah and Wyoming.

"Texans should remember that laws may vary from state to state, and before traveling, license holders should educate themselves about laws in other states that govern where and when they can legally carry their concealed handguns," Davis said.

## Alan Barron steps up to CEO office

Former resident and PHS graduate Alan Barron was recently named Chief Executive Officer of First Cash Financial Services, Inc., an Arlington based operator of check cashing stores and pawn shops. The company went public in 1991.

In addition to his role as chief executive officer, Barron, 43, will retain his former position as chief operating officer of the company, and will be responsible for managing all operations and directing the company's expansion strategies.

The son of Jim and Joann Barron of Plains, Alan graduated from Plains High in 1979. He has been with First Cash since 1994.

## JP Court Summary

The following is a summary of cases filed and bonds set in Precinct 1, Justice of the Peace Court, Judge Melba Crutcher presiding. Cases filed:

77 traffic cases, 1 public intoxication.

Bonds set:  
2 aggravated assault-\$6500.  
DWI w/child under 15 years of age-\$2500. 2 cases assault causing bodily injury-\$1500. 3 cases motion to revoke probation-bond denied. Fugitive from justice-held for state of Missouri. Aggravated assault with deadly weapon-\$7500.

## SPC Registration Dates Announced

South Plains College's regular spring registration will be January 12-13. Sign-up at SPC Levelland will be 12:30-1:30p.m., January 12 in the Administration Building.

Registration at the SPC Reese Center campus in Lubbock will be 8:30-11:30 am, and 1:30-6 pm., January 13 in Building 8. Sign-up is for classes at Reese and the Byron Martin Advanced Technology Center. Registration permits are required. New student orientation

at the Levelland campus will be 8 am-4 pm., January 11, and orientation students will register for classes January 12.

SPC's spring 2005 classes begin January 18. Late registration is January 18-21.

SPC' spring class schedules and general information about the college are available online at [www.southplainscollege.edu](http://www.southplainscollege.edu).

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## PLAINS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE P. O. BOX 364 PLAINS, TEXAS 79355

Plains Chamber of Commerce is initiating a fund raiser to replace the marquee sign that is located south of the courthouse. At this time we are taking orders for bricks that will be used at the base of the new sign. The price of a brick will be \$50.00. The brick can have up to three lines with a maximum of 16 letters and spaces per line.

Please complete the form below and return to the address above with your check in the amount of \$50.00 for each brick ordered. This is not a war memorial, but you can honor a veteran if you wish. We would like family names, clubs and businesses (with the date of establishment), events, in memory of, and anything that might be a part of the history of our town.

DEADLINE IS DECEMBER 31, 2004. All monies will be refunded in the event that we do not receive enough money to complete this project. Any donation will also be appreciated.

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## It's Not In The Mail

Running a little low on funds at the end of the month? Better not count on the 'float', the time between writing a check and the time it clears the bank.

A new federal law allowing banks to eliminate the traditional grace period went into effect October 28, said Robert Coalter, the Comptroller's assistant director of Treasury Operations. "The Check Clearing for the 21st Century Act, known as Check 21, allows banks to stop returning the original paper checks to check writers' banks," Coalter said.

"Banks can continue to send paper checks to if they chose, but they don't have to. They can send an electronic image of the check, which is much faster and cheaper than the cost of physically transporting checks."

Consumers who bet on the float could bounce more checks, Coalter said.

The demise of the float depends on how quickly individuals financial institutions begin using electronic image exchange, said Diane Holloway, Dallas Federal Reserve Bank assistant vice president.

"A consumer might see a float of several days reduced to hours, but there is no way to predict what any one consumer will experience in the beginning," she said.

On September 11, 2001, when the government grounded the nation's air traffic, the banking industry's check transporting operations grounded to a halt. With checks stuck at airports across the nation, banks had no paper checks to process.

On a normal day in the United States, about \$350 million is in float. That means consumers have written \$350 million in checks, but the checks haven't cleared, so their accounts don't reflect the deduction. From September 11 to September 14, 2001, the float escalated to \$47 billion, Coalter said.

To prevent a similar disruption, the Federal Reserve Board encouraged Congress to enact Check 21, coalter said.

The new law allows banks to turn any paper check they receive into an image that can be transmitted electronically.

If a bank refuses an electronic image, the bank that sent it must provide a substitute paper check.

All institutions, including law enforcement agencies and courts, must accept a substitute check as the true legal document for checks drawn on U.S. banks in U.S. dollars.

By eliminating the cost of moving, clearing and returning checks, Check 21 may save the nation's banks an estimated \$2 billion annually, according to Consumers Union, a nonprofit consumer advocacy organization. But banks are not under any obligation to speed up consumer's deposits.

"People may make a deposit in the morning and write a check in the afternoon and find that the check cleared before the deposited funds became available," said Gail Hillebrand, senior attorney with Consumers Union's West Coast office.

By mid-2005, consumers could be bouncing nearly 7 million more checks each month and paying an additional \$170 million in fees for them, according to Houston-based Pinnacle Financial Strategies.

At first, the biggest impact of Check 21 will be to the consumers who are accustomed to getting their original paper checks back with their bank statement, said Rich Hickman, Bank of America senior vice president.

When more banks participate in image exchange, Hickman believes the biggest impact will be more efficient check clearing systems, which means banks can reduce the cost of paper checks, move money faster and create a more economical electronic infrastructure.

"I think we're going to have paper checks for a long time, but this legislation is the first step to all-electronic banking", Hickman said.

Material for this article courtesy Fiscal Notes, publication of the Texas Comptroller office.

## Neugebauer Votes Against Flawed Security Bill

Congressman Randy Neugebauer voted against a weakened intelligence reform bill because the bill did not include provisions that would have strengthened security at the nation's borders.

"My objective throughout debate over the legislation was to get a bill that fully addresses all of this country's security concerns," Neugebauer said. "That means not only reforming how we gather and use intelligence, but also how we fight terrorism at home. The bill that came before the Congress today doesn't do the job because it fails to fix several glaring holes in how we secure our borders and keep the enemy out."

Neugebauer supported an earlier version of the bill that passed the House in October, which included several provisions that would have enhanced border security. However, the Senate did not include these provisions in its bill, and they were not included in the final bill voted on Tuesday.

Among the measures supported by Neugebauer were several provisions that would make it more difficult for potential terrorists to obtain driver's licenses. These provisions include requiring applicants to show proof of their legal status in the United States and proof of Social Security number. Decreasing the possibility for driver's license fraud

wad particularly important to Neugebauer because of the widespread fraud that aided the 9/11 hijackers.

"The way that we issue driver's licenses and other forms of identification is in desperate need of repair," Neugebauer said. "The 19 hijackers had a total of 63 validly issues driver's licenses which they used to open bank accounts, rent cars, and ultimately board the planes they used to murder 3,000 Americans. The 9/11 Commission said we need to make these changes, yet this bill fails to do so."

Neugebauer also pushed for measures that would expedite the removal of illegal aliens who make it into the United States and make it more difficult for terrorists and foreign criminals to delay their removal from the country. Another notable provision cut from the original version of the House bill is a measure that would have made it easier to deport all aliens who have engaged in or been affiliated with terrorist activities.

"This bill falls short of what is needed to protect the homeland," Neugebauer said. "These issues will not go away because border security is national security. I look forward to the 109th Congress when we will work once again on making our borders more secure and the country safer."

## Hydrogen Sulfide Safety Training On Tap

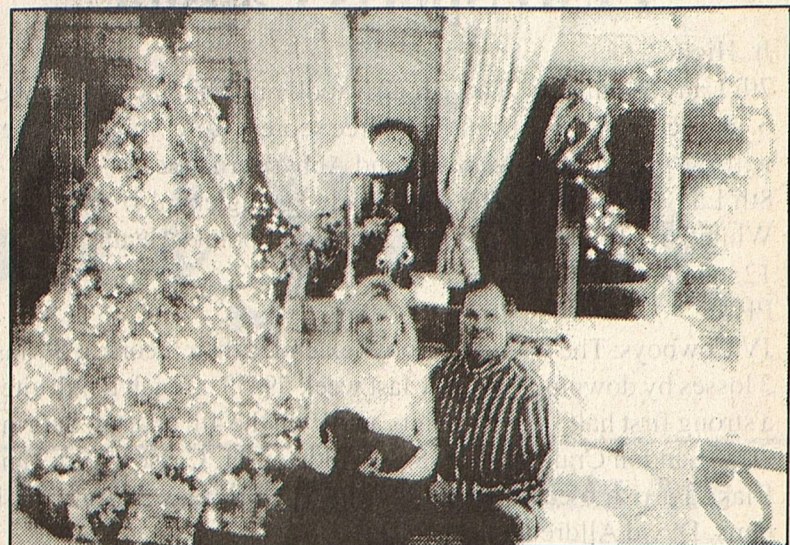
South Plains College in Levelland will offer a three-hour course in Hydrogen Sulfide Safety Training in the spring which meets safety-training requirements for work in the oilfield.

The class covers all aspects of hydrogen sulfide, including detection, safety procedures and demonstration in the use of safety masks.

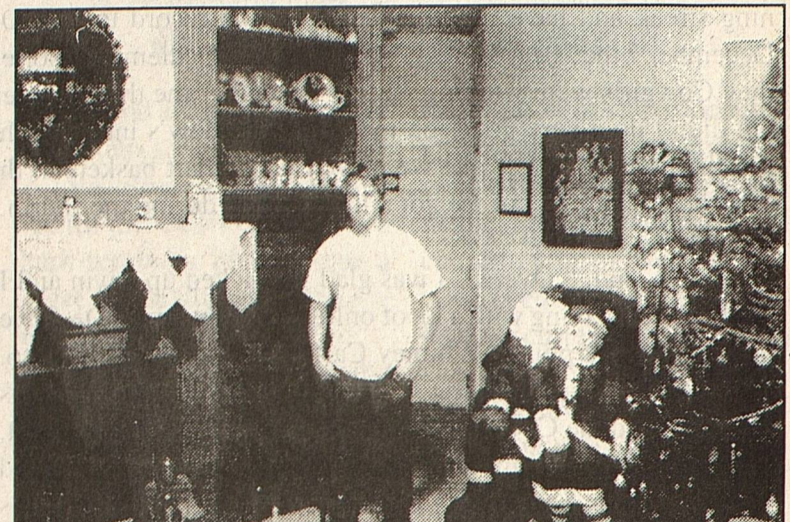
Classes will meet 6-9 pm. Mondays February 7, March 7, April 4 and May 2, 2005 in the Petroleum Technology-Law Enforcement Building, Room 108.

To pre-register or obtain more information, contact the SPC Division of Continuing and Distance Education at 894-9611, ext. 2341.

## Scenes on the PHS Honor Society Home Tour



Ace & Dana Hamm home



Jim & Kathy Haynes home



Pam & Monty Bean home



Vaughn & Carolyn Culwell home

(Blake & Amber McWhirter photo unavailable)

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## PISD Sports Capsule

Jr. High:

7th Lady Wranglers: The 7th girls took on Whiteface December 6, and scored a 33-10 win. Top three scorers were Sydney Caffey with 11 pts, Jasmine Mares 9, and Abby Hernandez 6.

8th Lady Wranglers: The older Lady Wranglers also dominated Whiteface, 48-28. Reyna Gallegos had 15 points, Heather Parrott 12, and Kimber Williams 8.

PHS

JV Cowboys: The young Cowboys extended their record to 5 wins, 3 losses by downing Meadow last week 59-53. Coach Brink cited a strong first half with 35 points and 19 in the 4th quarter. Scoring were Landon Craft with 29, Scott Addison 11, Casson Curtis and Blake Parrish 6 each, BJ Lester and Zach Ramos 3, Todd Williams, David Alldredge 2 each.

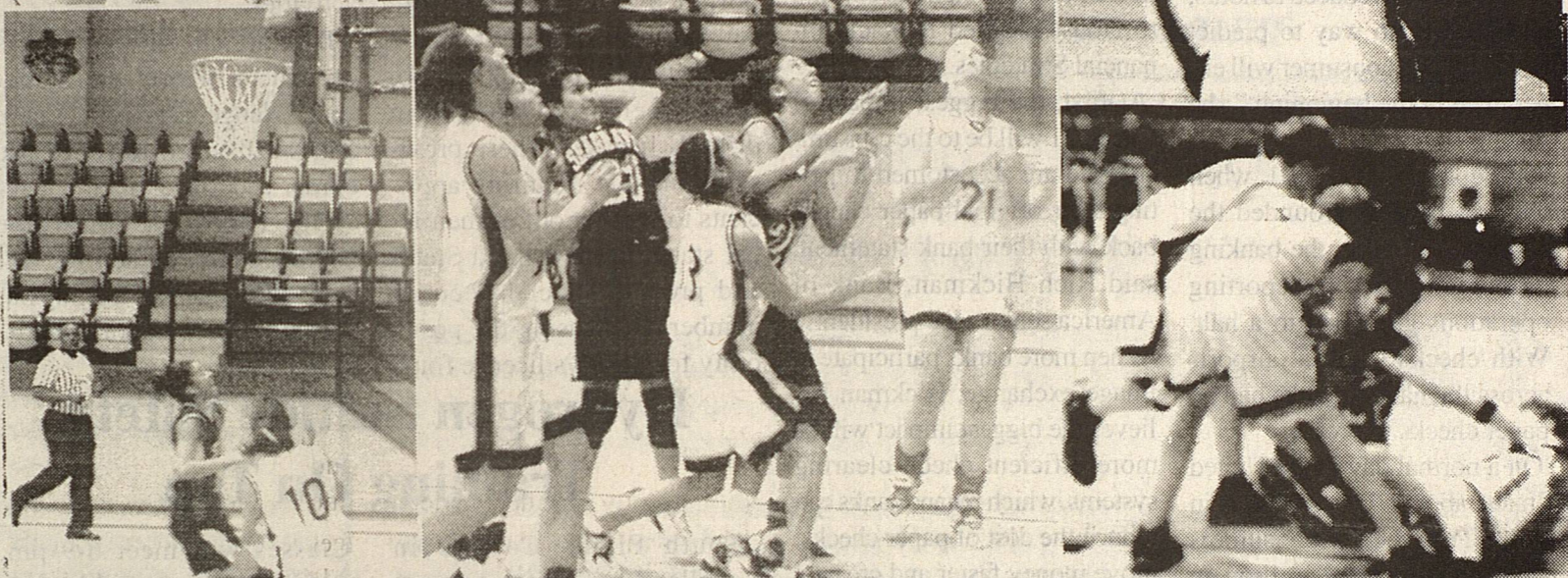
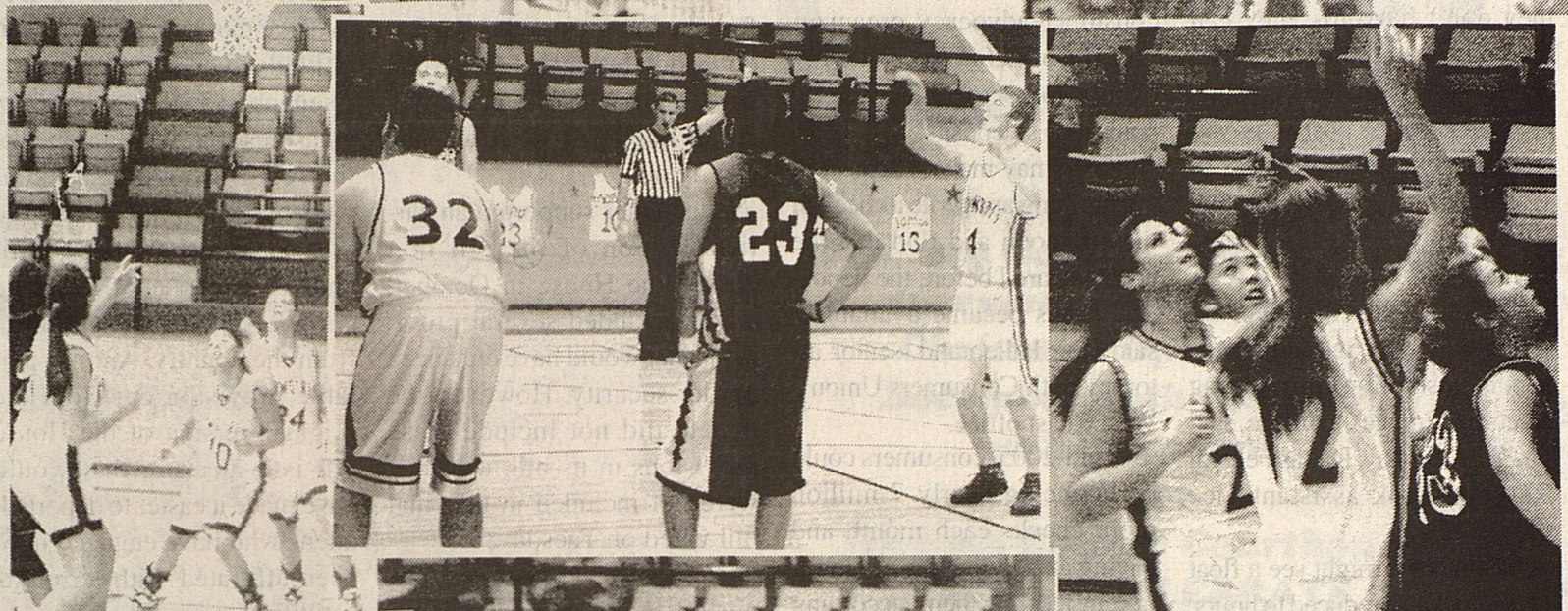
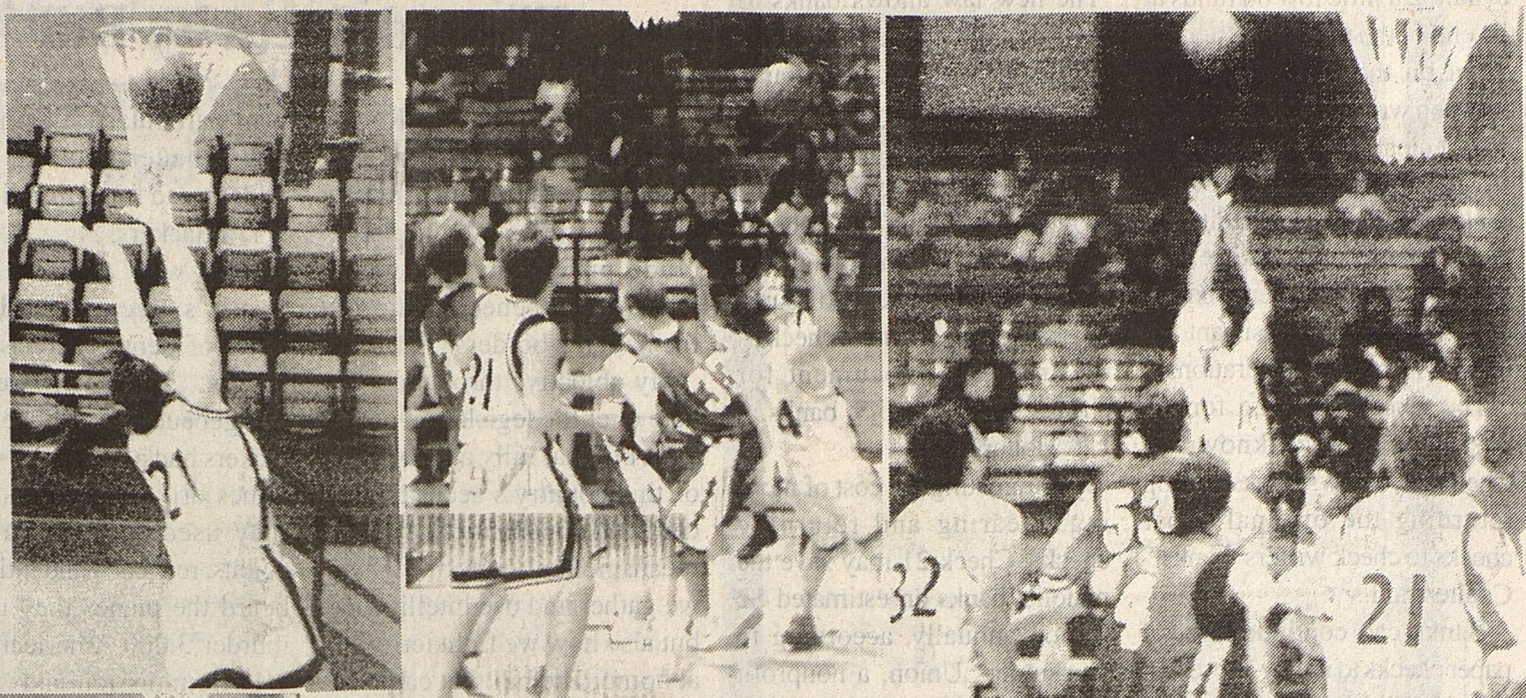
Varsity Cowgirls: The Cowgirls are currently on a six game winning streak and have improved their season record to 7-4. On December 7 they beat Meadow 49-29. Coach Eddleman reported they Cowgirls were winning 32-9 at the end of the third quarter, but didn't do a very good job matching Meadow's intensity the fourth quarter. "I felt like we played very smart basketball the first three quarters, but we got a little sloppy during the fourth," Eddleman said.

Eddleman said. "Overall, I was glad we picked up a win and I think we are playing with a lot of onfidence right now." Desiraye Broome had 22 points, Whitney Caffey 10, Regina Morales 6, Joani Bell 5, Lauren Davis 4, and Jamie Covarrubias 2. This past weekend the Cowgirls competed in the Plains Tournament. On Thursday, December 9, the Cowgirls beat a very good Klondike team, beaten only once 42-36. "Overall, I think this was our best performance of the year on defense and offense," Eddleman said. "The girls were just really determined to win this game because we knew if we beat Klondike we would probably win our tournament." Desiraye Broome had 18 points, Joani Bell 12, Regina Morales 6, Whitney Caffey 5, and Meghan Garcia 1. On December 10 the Cowgirls beat Seagraves JV 57-29. Regina Morales had 15 points, Lauren Davis 10, Whitney Caffey 8, Desiraye Broome 8, Joani Bell 8, Meghan Garcia 4 and Jamie Covarrubias 4. On Saturday, the Cowgirls played Wellman/Union in the girls championship game and won, 58-37. "I was really happy for the girls because they set a goal at the beginning of the year that they wanted to win our tournament," Eddleman said. "I feel the team is doing a great job of playing team basketball and playing smart on both ends of the court." Whitney Caffey had 21 points, Desiraye Broome 15, Joani Bell 8, Lauren Davis 6, Regina Morales 5, Jamie Covarrubias 2, and Meghan Garcia 1. In addition, Desiraye broome and regina Morlaes were named to the girls All Tournament Team. The Cowgirls will be playing in the Meadow Tournament this weekend, December 16-18.

In the JV Tournament here, the boys demolished Crane 83-23. Good defense pressure led to many easy baskets and fast break points. Scoring were Curtis 17, Lester, Addison and Craft, 12 each, Parrish 11, Ramos and Alldredge 8 each, J.L. Vasquez 3. In their second game, they outscored Olton 67-60. Craft topped scoring with 18, Curtis 17, Parrish 13, Lester and Addison 8, Vasquez 2, Ramos 1. They faced The Lubbock Warriors in the Championship game and had four strong quarters. Coach Brink was extremely pleased with how the Cowboys came out in the third quarter and held the Warriors to just 7 points. Their free throw shooting improved to 17 of 28. Addison topped scoring with 24, Craft had 13, Parrish 11, Curtis 10, Lester 8, Ramos 6, Vasquez 2. Their season record is now improved to 8 and 3.

Varsity Cowboys: On December 7 the Cowboys fell to the Meadow Broncos 48-44. 29 turnovers did not help their cause. Cody Flores topped scoring with 12 points, Tyler Caffey had 9, Evan Cain and Kerry Sisson 6, Brandon Hise 5, Payton Bean and Blake O'Quinn 2 each. In the Plains Varsity Tournament, Started with a good 81-57 win over Klondike, shooting over 50% from the floor. Tyler Caffey poured in 21 points, Flores had 14, Cain 3, Hise 9, Sisson 7, O'Quinn and TJ Cordova 6 each, Bean 4, Ramos and John Wagnon 2 each. In the second tourney game, they fell to the Lubbock Warriors in a squeaker, 48-46. Caffey was again top shooter with 18 points, Flores 8, Cain 7, Hise 6, Cordova 3. Fighting for a third place finish in the tourney, the Cowboys were downed by Coronado JV 53-50. Turnovers and only 5 of 14 free throws spelled their doom. Caffey managed 16 points, Hise 10, Cain 7, O'Quinn 6, Sisson and Flores 4, Bean 3. Tyler Caffey was selected to the All Tournament team.

## PHS Tournament Scenes



## PHS Student of the Week

PHS Student of the Week is Ryan Crump, a freshman and the son of Brad and LeAnn Crump.

He was nominated by Mrs. O'Quinn, who said, "Even though Ryan has an impish sense of humor, he takes school seriously and works hard to maintain good grades and apply what is learned in the classroom to other areas. Although English is probably not this student's first love, he understands the necessity and impor-



...tance of the subject. I appreciate his work ethic and ability to adapt."



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# Lifelines & Styles

## Seniors Corner

And so it comes again, that special season in which every heart rejoices. Whether we are two, or twenty-two, or ninety-two, this is the season when we let our heart do the thinking. It is that time which engages the whole world in a conspiracy of love.

This season's first shared joy for those of us in this little West Texas town was the annual Christmas Parade! I sat, warm and comfortable, in my car and watched the panorama with enjoyment. People lined the streets awaiting the first vehicle to come past, signaling the beginning of the parade. It was a few moments after five o'clock. The osmometer read fifty-four degrees and there was a cool breeze blowing. People grouped together and visited, and shivered, as they waited. Grandpas and grandmas were there along with the family groups and tiny tots, barely able to walk, took their place on the tailgates of pickups and along the curb as they awaited the music, the vehicles, and most of all the candy! Pet dogs on chains were part of the activity and a lone, black crow sat atop a leafless tree and watched the excitement.

Again we thank our Site Council ladies for their hard work in making our dining room look like something out of Good Housekeeping! Each holiday is exciting because of their attention to detail and their willingness to give of their time and talents in this area of our Senior Center life. The new location for the Christmas tree, where everyone can view it as they sit down for their lunch, and the white Christmas angels adorning it fill all of us with the true Christmas spirit.

No one can fracture a Christmas carol better than a child. Some interesting ways children sing the Christmas carols may

surprise you. Listen with me:

1. "Deck the Halls with Buddy Holly." 2. "We Three Kings of Porridge and Tar." 3. "On the first day of Christmas, my tulip gave to me." 4. "Later on we'll perspire as we dream by the fire." 5. "He's makin' a list, chicken and rice." 6. "In the meadow we can build a snowman, then pretend that he is sparse and brown." 7. "Oh, what fun it is to ride with one horse, soap, and hay." 8. "Noel, noel, noel, Barney's the king of Israel."

Anna Taylor came this week and right here before the holidays reminded us once more about the proper foods we need to be partaking of. The advice is great, Anna, and right after the holidays we will get out that literature and read it again!

Anna shared with us that she is retiring from her position at the Yoakum County Hospital and will be joining us at the Center after the holidays. She introduced Joyce Rice, who will be replacing her at the hospital, and Linda Dawson, who has faithfully come and helped distribute literature and goodies each month.

A lovely Christmas greeting for the Center family was received from Mola Moorhead this week and was read by our Site Director, Rosa Lopez. We miss Mola, and others like her, who have moved away to be near children in other areas. We send best wishes to each of them.

Visitors this week at lunch were R.E. Matthews and J.D. Wahl. Come back, you fellows. Our kitchen staff rates at the very top of the list, and no kitchen cleaning. Who says growing older doesn't have some really great benefits!!

Thought for today: The new year lies before you like a spotless track of snow. Be careful how you tread it for every step will show.

## New Girl In Town



Michael Valdez and Melissa Martinez announce the birth of their daughter Serenity Paige Valdez. She was born December 2, 2004 at UMC in Lubbock. She weighed 6 lbs. 14 ounces and was 19 inches long.

Serenity Paige was welcomed by Big Brother Justice and grand parents Johnny and Ester Martinez of Plains, and Irene Valdez and Pete Escanilla of Lubbock and Joe and Angie Valdez of Slaton.

Her great grand parents are Mary Alvarado of Plains and Raymond and Brune Martinez of O'Donnell.

## SPC Spring Online Registration Underway

Spring 2005 web registration at South Plains College is continuing now through January 5 for currently-enrolled students who have passed all portions of the Texas Success Initiative or who are exempt.

Through TSI, all new students entering Texas public colleges and universities are required to take a placement test prior to enrolling in college-level courses.

Students can web register using Campus Connect through

the SPC website at [www.southplainscollege.edu](http://www.southplainscollege.edu) under Current Students. Deadline for payment of tuition and fees is 4 p.m., January 5.

SPC's regular spring registration will be January 12 at the Levelland campus and January 13 at the SPC Reese Center campus Lubbock.

For more information, contact SPC's Admissions Office in Levelland at 894-9611, ext. 2572 or Reese at 885-3048, ext. 4660 or 2902.

## Healthcare Lawsuits Are Making Texans Sick

By Dr. Evelyn Tobias Merrill

The flood of personal injury lawyer ads recruiting plaintiffs to join class action lawsuits against the maker of Vioxx is a stark reminder of how ripe a target our healthcare system is for lawsuits.

While Vioxx is the du jour, the sad truth is that on any given day, you will find an abundance of personal injury lawyers suing every element of our healthcare system. It has become the favorite target for some personal injury lawyers looking to make millions. They started with doctors, moved on to biomaterials and pharmaceutical companies, and have even thrown charity hospitals into the mix for good measure.

Why should patients care? Because this isn't a doctor versus lawyer issue, it is a much bigger problem that affects patient care and the course of healthcare in this country. While some personal injury lawyers are making a fortune on these types of lawsuits, patients are paying the price with higher costs, less innovation and less access to care. Consider the following: \*Not-for-profit hospitals provided \$23 billion in free care in 2003 but are now the target of more than 40 lawsuits claiming that the hospitals have overcharged uninsured patients and failed to provide charity care as mandated by their tax-exempt status. The money spent defending against these suits means that less money is available for treating needy, uninsured patients.

\* Each year more than 7.5 million lives in America are either saved by or improved through implantable devices or products like pacemakers and stents. Yet, the fear of lawsuits has caused manufactures to limit

distribution or stop production altogether. Seventy-five percent of suppliers, numerous medical device producers still chose to remain overseas.

One needs to look no further than the current shortage of flu vaccine for an excellent example of how our litigation environment ultimately hurts patients.

In 1985, there were six injectable flu vaccine manufacturers licensed by FDA. In 1984, there were five. Today, there are two. Companies abandoned the vaccine business, in part because of the threat of litigation. If the liability risk wasn't so high, perhaps more companies would be making vaccines today, and we wouldn't find ourselves dependent upon such a fragile supply system.

Are all these lawsuits really because our healthcare system, widely acknowledged as the best in the world, is so bad? I don't think so. I think it's because some personal injury lawyers know there's a lot of money to be made suing our healthcare system.

The question to our elected officials is how bad will they let the healthcare liability crisis get before they decide that healthcare for the public good is more important than profits for personal injury lawyers?

We need to work now for a system that will compensate those who are injured without costly and time consuming litigation. Patients should be able to receive compensation for injuries without worrying about how long it will take and how much personal injury lawyers will take off the top. They should also be able to rely on a healthcare system that isn't bankrupted by litigation when they need it later.

## National Honor Society Christmas Home Tour

The PHS National Honor Society (NHS) will host a Christmas Home Tour 6 to 7:30 PM Monday, December 20. The homes on the tour are James and Kathy Haynes, 905 4th, Blake and Amber McWhirter, 1209 5th, Pam and Monty Bean, 502 11th, Ace and Dana Hamm, 1409 2nd, and Vaughn

and Carolyn Culwell, 1002 1st. All proceeds will benefit the NHS scholarship fund. Advance tickets for the tour are available at the high school or Yoakum County Library, or purchased at the door for \$5. Additional information is available from Cindy Davis, 456-7498.

**Our local citizens deserve a big Thank You for the patience shown following the huge rains in early October. Our repair work is now complete, and future problems with high water in Sulphur Draw should be remedied. Thanks for supporting our efforts.**  
Ty Earl Powell, Commissioner Pct. 4

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# From The Hack

Very recently I received a summons - wait, not *That* type summons - I had already paid that past due thing.

This was from the office of my favorite eye Doctor. I have no fear of the good Doc getting the fat head from this seeming compliment, for he fully understands I only have ONE eye Doc.

Well, on second thought, I do have one other, the eye Doc in Midland who does David Copperfield stuff with lasers and other magic gear on faulty eyes like he did on mine fairly recently.

No, this appointment was with the kinder and gentler Doc who only EXAMINES my eyes, and all the time he is looking deep inside my shifty eyes, he is making HHMMM noises, and occasionally HHMMM-WOW! sounds, which immediately alerts me to think, "He has just discovered something TERRIBLY WRONG in my eyeball, or one of his nurses/assistants/technicians/helpers, I never know what to call them, has reported for duty very scantily clad, which always makes me jerk from under the examining thing my eyeball is affixed to. I am always disappointed his (?) girl Friday is always fully and modestly clothed.

This trip, when he muttered the dreaded HHMMM-WOW code word, he cleared things up very nicely. "MAN, you've now got eyes like a HAWK!" For a moment I beamed in pleasure at his comment, and then a twinge of uncertainty crept in. What does he mean, "Like a Hawk!" The last hawk I shot... er, found dead, shot by some unthinking, some PETA hater, had little bitty, beady, incredibly dark, incredibly cruel eyes. Is THAT what the Midland Doc had done, make me look like a staring HAWK?

Upon questioning, the good Doc chuckled, and said, "No. NO, I just mean you are reading my charts, seeing better than when you were going thru puberty, studying girls".

## Labeling livestock

Under a new federal program, Texas farmers will assign identification numbers to all commercial livestock and poultry in the state. In 2002, more than 42 million animals, including cattle, hogs, sheep, goats and chickens populated Texas ranches and farms.

	Number of head (in thousands)		
	2001	2002	2003
Cattle*	13,700	13,600	14,000
Hogs	900	930	930
Sheep	1,150	1,130	1,040
Goats	1,400	1,250	1,200
Chickens**	26,101	25,506	25,984
<b>Total</b>	<b>43,251</b>	<b>42,416</b>	<b>43,164</b>

\* Includes beef and milk cows.  
\*\* Excludes commercial broilers.

SOURCES: Texas Agricultural Statistics 2002, Texas Agricultural Statistics Service; National Agricultural Statistics Service.



I then realized he was right.

I forget the puberty thing... I COULD see better. Elated, I beamed and immediately told him I wanted to order a new pair of outdoor, single vision glasses, to wear playing golf.

Attempting to flatter me, perhaps pad my bill a bit, the good Doc asked, "So you can see your long, driving shots better now?" "No," I told him. "I want to be able to look all around me more carefully, check and see who's watching me. I've been caught a couple of times lately, way too often, in fact, nudging my ball out of 13 inch rough into the fairway. I need your help, good Doc!"

I got it, too. Unfortunately, I was right about the bill padding. But I've only been caught once the last three rounds. Not bad for an amateur. (In all truthfulness, I did get a great checkup and report from good Doc Wright! My Thanks!)

I shall refer to the next item as a dumb BRUNETTE joke. I'm getting tired of being slapped by blondes.

A brunette young lady went to her Doctor to have him examine her two very, very red ears. "My goodness," he muttered, "What in the world happened?" The brunette simpered, "Well, I was getting ready to iron a blouse and the phone rang. By mistake I grabbed up the iron instead of the phone and stuck it to my ear."

Almost in disbelief, the Doc muttered, "Wow, I'll bet that really hurt. What happened to the other ear?"

The brunette ducked her head, blushing, and murmured, "That same person called back."

Another BRUNETTE tale:

This brunette gal goes into an electronic store and asks the sales clerk, "How much is this TV?" The clerk says, "Sorry, we don't sell to brunettes".

She storms home, searches thru her cosmetics, and the next day comes back to the store as a flaming red head. She asks the same clerk, "How much is this TV?", and again he says "Sorry, we don't sell to brunettes."

Now furious, she speeds home again, and works furiously changing the color of her hair to dazzling blonde. The next morning she hurries to the store, and again asks the clerk the price of the TV, and he again tells her, sorry, he can't sell to brunettes. "I don't get this!" she screams. "I've come here as a brunette, changed to a redhead, then a blonde, How can you tell I'm a brunette?"

The clerk says, "Easy. That's not a TV. It's a microwave."

How can you tell a bag pipe is out of tune? When some one blows in it.

## Labeling Livestock..... An Animals Who's Who

Say goodbye to Elsie and Flossie, and hello to a couple of 15-digit numbers! Under a new federal program, farmer and ranchers across the country will begin identifying livestock by number for a national database. Animal health officials will use the database to track livestock disease, like mad cow or hoof and mouth (FMD) disease.

In June the US Department of Agriculture announced it would distribute \$116 million to states in 2004 to help implement a national animal ID system (NAIS). States will register farms and ranches, called premises, and tag or track all commercial livestock, including cattle, sheep, goats, swine and poultry. The goal is to control outbreaks of disease faster, said Ron DeHaven, with USDA's Plant Health Inspection Service.

During an outbreak, the NAIS would allow animal health officials to trace back or track infected animals and any animal that has had contact with the infected animal within 48 hours, said Dr. Bob Hillman, director of the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC).

The USDA initially calls for states to volunteer for the NAIS. The program could become mandatory as early as 2007, Hillman said.

In 2004, TAHC received \$1 million from the USDA for a pilot NAIS program. Hillman said. In the pilot, TAHC will begin assigning numbers to all Texas premises that have livestock, and will begin tagging animals and TAHC will work with private companies to collect, track and retrieve data.

Farmers will embed radio frequency identification tags in the ears of cattle, said Jon Johnson, associate director of commodities and regulatory activities with the Texas Farm Bureau. Farmers will probably track poultry and swine in collective 'lots', rather than by identifying individual animals.

"You don't want to hang a tag in a chicken's comb, and swine, if you put a tag in their ear, they're pretty bad about ripping them out."

It's not clear whether farmers will pay for identification tags - which could cost \$2 to \$2.50 a tag - or whether the government will help with the cost.

Rosalee Coleman, who raises and sells cattle in George West, Texas, said she hopes the beef industry can share the costs.

"It will either have to be a government program or it will have to be spread throughout the industry segments," she said.

The USDA has said it will take private and public funding to implement a national animal identification system, and it's not certain how much it will cost. An additional \$33 million is earmarked for the NAIS in President Bush's proposed fiscal budget, according to the USDA.

Some Texas ranchers worry about the security of information kept in a national database. Hillman said some farmers and ranchers are worried that data on their farms and animals might be used to manipulate markets.

Implementing the NAIS will be challenging but could help ranchers in the long run, said Matt Brockman, executive VP of the Texas and Southwest Cattle Raisers Association, which has 12,750 members.

"The electronic ID and database will allow the industry to do a better job of managing records, sorting animals and allowing information to flow through the various production systems," he said.

The Texas pilot program will run for at least a year or two with state animal health officials and raisers to work out the kinks. "I think we're looking at three to five years for the entire nation to get this thing in place," Johnson said. "It's going to be a massive undertaking."

### REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL MANAGEMENT SERVICES TEXAS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM PUBLIC NOTICE

The City of Plains is soliciting proposals from qualified individuals or firms for management, administrative, and planning services in conjunction with the Community Development Fund and Community Development Supplemental Fund from the Office of Rural Community Affairs (ORCA) for program years of 2005/2006. Accordingly, the City is seeking to contract with a qualified management firm to administer the contract. Please submit your proposal of services and a statement of qualifications for these proposed services to the address below:

Mayor Shane McKinzie  
City of Plains  
City Hall  
P.O. Box 550  
Plains, Texas 79355-0550

Proposals must be received by the City no later than 5:00 p.m. on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of January, 2005 to be considered. The City reserves the right to negotiate with any and all individuals or firms that submit proposals, as per the Texas Professional Services Procurement Act and the Uniform Grant and Contract Management Standards.

The City of Plains is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.

The advertisement is for December 15, 2004.

### REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL ENGINEERING SERVICES TEXAS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM PUBLIC NOTICE

The City of Plains is requesting proposals for engineering services in conjunction with Community Development Fund and Community Development Supplemental Fund from the Office of Rural Community Affairs (ORCA) for program 2005/2006. Accordingly, the City is seeking to contract with a qualified engineering firm registered to practice in the State of Texas to prepare all preliminary and final design plans and specifications, and to conduct all necessary interim and final inspections for the application's project that is awarded a contract by the Office of Rural Community Affairs (ORCA).

Please submit your proposal of services and a statement of qualifications for these proposed services to the address below:

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P. O. Box 550  
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