

said. In addition, the "fund" for Jimmy and to keep the Christmas tree Extension Center County Extension Christmas as a new

Gregg County Extension Agent Rex Youngblood explained that while different species of Christmas trees are grown in different areas of Texas, "We've done some demonstrations with other species here, but the Virginia pine is the only one that grows for us."

Over the past few years, the number of Christmas tree growers in the nine-county area surrounding Longview has increased to about 100, Youngblood said. Statewide,

See ETexans, 10-A

100 feet because it had smoke in the cabin, smoke in the cockpit," Mauritius controller Servan Sing told The Associated Press.

He said the jet was cleared to begin an instrument landing system approach.

"It said, 'Roger.' It was going, moving for that, going to that point, and after that we had no contact," he said.

There was no immediate indication what caused the smoke.

Search boats were on their way

gers and 19 crew members, a baby not on the register was taken on board in its mother's arms. The baby's nationality was not immediately available.

"I feel so guilty. I have sent my best friend to his death," said Yu Wen-su, who learned of the crash in the airline's office in Taipei, Taiwan. Yu said he had instructed Lin Wu-hsuing, a technician, to go to Johannesburg to repair a machine his company had sold to a South African firm.

## ces cuts

large part of their diet, but McClurg said, explaining the program include those with low incomes and SSI supplemental pay-

been purchased by the cultural as part of the agricultural programs.

commodities and then do-ent agencies, food banks, military forces, prisons and

aced recently that the sup- been reduced so much that ut its donations by about

## opponents options

ned is a facility planned Thermal Kinetics, a subsidiary Lone Star Technologies of

ponents of the incinerator its site between Lone Star Hughes Springs is too near water supplies in Lake Pines and other waterways such endangered species as Southern Bald Eagle.

opposition groups as Citi- opposing Pollution also say ocation could endanger health since the facility burn 80,000 tons a year of wastes which have been to cancer.

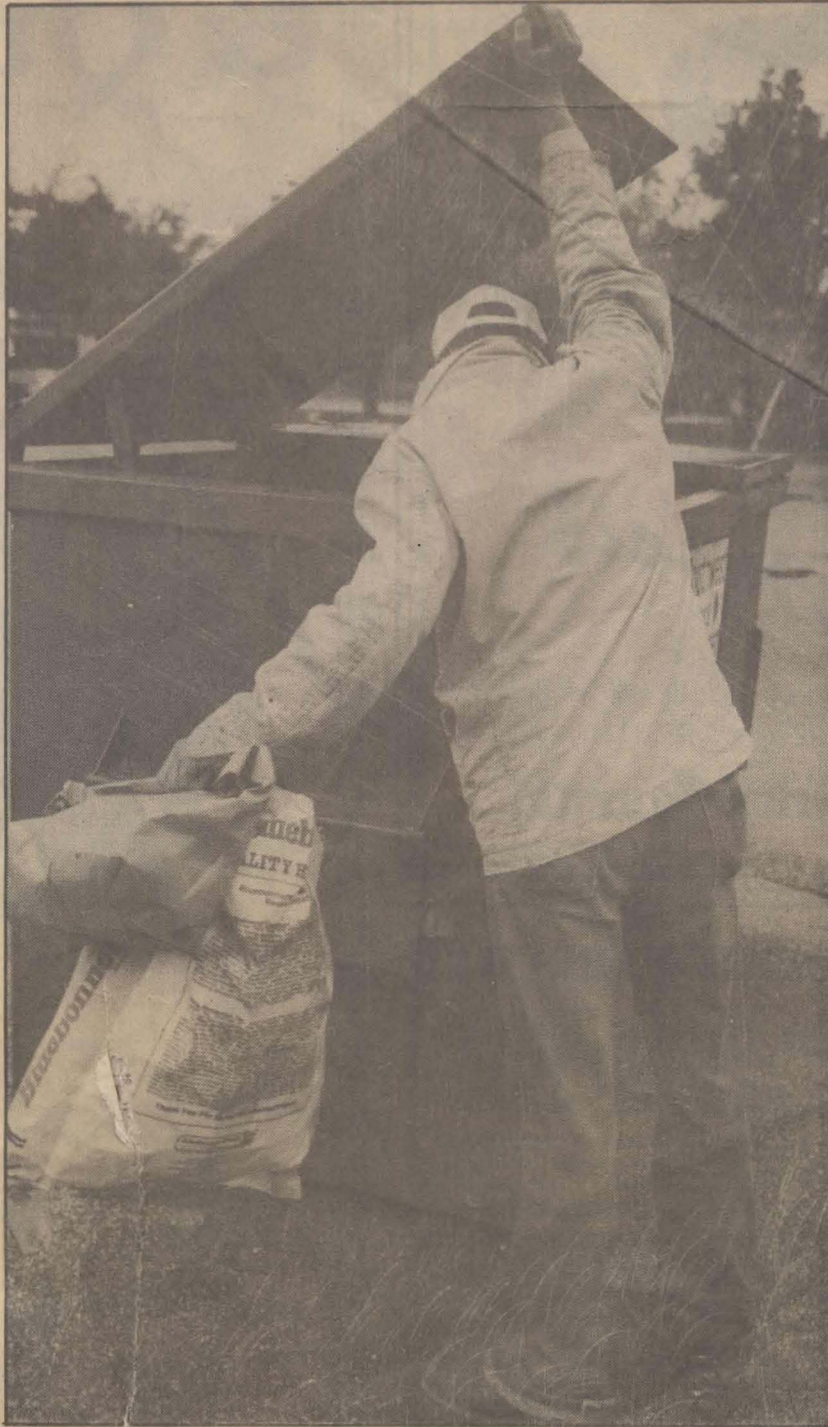
COP officials will address health concerns at TWC's hearings.

fully intend to go through hearing procedures," said ones, vice president of COP. ust found this opening in governmental process, and k to take advantage of it."

erator supporters also e at the hearings to discuss ents favoring construction nerators.

Plant's, 10-A

## King of the road



Staff photo by Ricky Russell

Hobo looks through dumpster during stop in Longview.

## True hobo loves his freedom

By CRAIG PUGH  
Staff Writer

He is a sandy-haired fellow, slight of build and sees the world through watery blue eyes that look as if they have cried over the years.

And indeed they have.

Vernon is a hobo, and on this cold November night he has come out of his ramshackle lean-to in the woods along the railroad tracks west of Longview for a hot dinner and bunk at the Highway 80 Rescue Mission.

"It's not like you might think," he says. "Sure, I've seen hard times, but not like some people. I don't feel sorry for myself."

He has picked oranges in Florida, dipped his toes in the Gulf of Mexico, watched the desert moon rise over Albuquerque and felt the cool Pacific rain on his face in Oregon.

Even though he is 52, he seems a picture of youth and innocence.

But this all-American image he conjures up is only an image. The realities of his life weren't so idyllic.

Vernon, which is not his real name, was born poor in Houston, the son of a janitor. There was little motivation to excel in much of anything, so he never finished high school. Then he began having psychological problems. They are not easy for him to talk about, but he nonetheless ended up in a series of mental hospitals. This was in a day and age, in the '50s, when mental patients were given electrical shock treatments

See Real, 11-A

# Real hobo chooses freedom of road over

From 1-A  
for therapy.

"I'll tell you, that electricity really got your attention," he said. "They would put a rubber tube in your mouth — I think it conducted the current — and then give you a blast. You would flop and jerk, and sometimes, well ... once I woke up after a shock treatment and I had an oxygen mask over my face and they were rushing me down the hallway on a stretcher. I think my heart had stopped."

He was in and out of various hospitals, holding down menial jobs between visits. Then one day it just kind of hit him. He looked at his life in Houston, added it up and decided that the balance came out short. He wasn't married; he didn't have children or a mortgage. Besides, America was out there waiting for him, just around the next bend of a

railroad track.

Vernon went down to the freight yard and caught the first train he could. Neither did he know nor care where it was headed. The important thing was that he was leaving town, starting fresh.

There were cold days and hot ones, hard times and easy living. Not knowing what he might find in every new town or state was half the excitement.

"It is a good life in many respects because of what you can see," he said. "Now, if you like sitting with your family around the TV at night, or regular home-type activities — like church on Sundays or Saturday-morning cartoons — don't be a hobo."

Not that hoboing is milk and honey and trips to the Grand Canyon or Yellowstone Park for Vernon. There are the rules of the road to get familiar with. And

those rules sometimes came hard and fast.

"Sure, I've been beat up a time or two. You might be walking through a town and some people will just pull over and hit you. Or you can get a beating in a hobo camp in the woods. It's rough out there," he said.

"Let's face it: Very few people like or trust a hobo. And I can't say as I blame them. Even with us hoboes, few of us trust each other. So you're always careful who you run with. Most of us, we just keep to ourselves.

"You give up a lot if you go the route I did. Like having a family. It makes you feel pretty bad. Then, sometimes you'll be walking through a neighborhood and you can just hear the door latches being set in place. What's that verse in the Bible, about looking at a man's heart instead of his outside? I know that's hard

to do," he said with a sigh.

There is hunger, too, the road, hunger that soon goes on for so long that will swear he'll go straight next town he gets to — the life he's been leading.

This has sort of happy Vernon now. There's a Texas where he has made friends over the years, and he's found himself ca

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**EAST TEXAS FURNITURE**

# road over normal way of life

to do," he said with a sigh.

There is hunger, too, out on the road, hunger that sometimes goes on for so long that a man will swear he'll go straight in the next town he gets to — give up the life he's been leading.

This has sort of happened to Vernon now. There's a town in Texas where he has made some friends over the years, and lately he's found himself catching

more and more trains over that way.

"They have a family with three kids," he said. "I just really like them and they seem to like me. I do chores around the house and they let me stay in a little place they fixed up for me. You see, I'm getting on in age now, slowing down, and I can't ride the rails like I used to. And sleeping on the ground all these years has

sure made my back ache. I'll tell you, I'd really be in bad shape if it wasn't for the Lord. He's been with me since 1959."

Vernon brushes the shock of hair back from his eyes.

"Oh, sure, there's things I'd change. I wish I'd finished high school. And all my life I've been fascinated by the weather. Now, to be a meteorologist — wouldn't that be the thing?"

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