

The Houston Post

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THURSDAY, September 6, 1990

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Rice alumni ask school to snuff tobacco holdings

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OF THE HOUSTON POST STAFF

Rice University is being asked to divest millions of dollars of tobacco stock from its investment portfolio by a group of alumni who say it is socially irresponsible for the university to invest in a product that kills an estimated 390,000 Americans each year.

The divestment request follows similar movements

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this year in which Harvard University and City University of New York dumped their tobacco holdings after ethical concerns were raised.

Rice officials refused to say how much tobacco stock the school owns, but according to the last quarterly report the university filed in compliance with Security and Exchange Commission rules, it owned 739,000 shares of Philip Morris stock. At its closing price Wednesday of 45¼, that much Philip Morris stock

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did."

The startled deputy, aware that Houston police were investigating what they thought was a hit-and-run accident only blocks away, called those officers, Schaefer said.

Police said Gonzales gave them information leading to the arrest a couple of hours later of Rodriguez,

as eight shots at a 19-year-old Meadows man over a traffic confrontation.

The Oldsmobile Gonzales was driving was nearly out of gas, and police said that apparently was the reason Rodriguez decided to shoot Gee as she sat in her car.

Police said he fired a .30-caliber

Rodriguez's stepfather, were found in the Oldsmobile after it was stopped, police said.

Rodriguez was charged late Wednesday with capital murder and held without bond. Gonzales was charged with aggravated robbery and remained in the Harris County Jail in lieu of a \$20,000

and friends described the 1986 Belaire High School graduate as a lovable, happy-go-lucky young woman with a keen sense of humor and a stubborn streak a mile long.

She had a penchant for clothes shopping, collected stuffed animals — heavy on the teddy bears — and spoiled her 14 nieces and

TOBACCO: Alumni ask Rice to drop Philip Morris holdings

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would be worth \$33.4 million.

Rice University President George Rupp referred questions on the divestment request to Rice Treasurer Scott Wise.

"I've had discussions with the president about it," Wise said. "At this point we haven't decided what course of action to take."

Rice alumni who approached Rupp about the divestment question said the university president told them in a letter that he agrees with their position.

"It was actually quite a nice letter," said Dr. Philip Huang, who graduated from Rice in 1982 with a degree in civil engineering. "He said he shares our concern and agrees with our overall analysis."

An estimated 390,000 Americans die of smoking-attributable diseases each year, according to the U.S. Surgeon General.

"It's hypocritical for an institution of higher learning to support such an industry," Huang said.

"As an alumnus and contributor, I certainly don't want my contributions going toward the marketing

of tobacco products to Third World countries or advertising a product that is the number one preventable cause of death in the country."

Huang played a leading role in persuading Harvard University to divest its tobacco holdings.

Huang, who received a master's degree in public health administration at Harvard this year, started a petition drive at Harvard's School of Public Health calling for the university to sell its holdings in Philip Morris and U.S. Tobacco.

Harvard sold its tobacco holdings this year, as did City University of New York. Yale University is considering doing the same thing.

Huang hopes Rice joins a nationwide effort being mounted by anti-tobacco activists to persuade states, universities and hospitals to divest their tobacco holdings.

"Our hope is they'll be a leader on this issue and demonstrate through their financial means that it's unethical to invest in the tobacco industry," said Huang, who now works as a public health officer with the Illinois Department of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control.

"A lot of what we want to do is raise the public's consciousness on this issue, like the divestment of South Africa," Huang said. "If this could be the next major divestment issue on college campuses, this could have an important effect on societal values."

Huang was joined by three other Rice graduates, all of them doctors, in writing to the president of Rice concerning the tobacco issue.

"We argued that it's not ethically sound to invest in an industry that survives at the expense of other people's health and welfare," said Dr. Walton Sumner, who graduated in 1981 with a degree in biochemistry.

Sumner said a few faculty members in Rice's biochemistry department have suffered heart attacks and undergone bypass surgery as a result of their smoking habit.

"These are people who are literally working on ways to avoid heart attacks and yet they smoke," he said.

Sumner said the Rice president told them he has been following the tobacco divestment issue on college campuses and had been

considering what course Rice should take.

"He did not really promise to divest in any particular amount of time," Sumner said.

If Rice sold its Philip Morris stock, Sumner said he would expect the value of the stock to be affected by no more than a quarter point to a half point.

"There will be somebody there to buy them up, somebody that's not interested in that issue," he said. "But if all the universities followed the lead of Rice and Harvard and City University of New York, it would be a major statement. . . . Pretty soon it'll be the trendy thing to do."

George Knox, vice president for public affairs for Philip Morris, said there's little the company can do if Rice decides to sell its tobacco stock.

When asked if he is concerned that divestment campaigns will catch on at other campuses around the country, he said, "I really can't say how far this is going to go. I am neither concerned nor unconcerned. I'm watching it at the moment."

CPS: Agency seeking more beds to cope with influx of children

From A-1

the children, one of the children, Morris, 3, stayed at the hold-over area Tuesday night before being placed in a home Wednesday afternoon.

The youngest child, a 2-month-old infant is in intensive care at

CPS looking for few good families

The Children's Protective Services is looking for families willing to provide foster homes

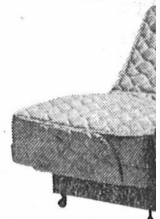
stead to suck on a lollipop, Smith could only shrug.

"I don't know if the candy made her full," says Smith, "or if she's just used to only eating sweets."

Most of the children admitted into the hold-over area, Hay said, come with just the clothes on their

no one thinks the child is at risk of death or serious injury," she said, "and that we're working with the family to reduce the dangers." This recent flood of children admitted to the hold-over area, she added, is common in August because many parents cannot cope with the add-

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