

Texas man performs ritual to predict weather 'spirits'

United Press International
POST, Tex. — Two days after spring begins a man dressed in rugged buckskins and a full feathered headdress rises at dawn, gathers a small bundle of sticks and builds a tiny campfire.

He drops dried grass on the flicking flames and watches the billowing smoke.

"I will do a dance and drive the evil spirits out and evoke help from the wind spirits and rain spirits," Frank A. Runkles says.

"At the end of that we'll wind it up with a little act of kneeling and pointing an eagle feather in the direction the wind comes from."

And the folks who gather today to watch the man they call "Chief" as the smoke is blown from the

east or northeast, a sign of a bumper crop.

If it is from the north or northwest crops will be average and if from the west or southwest farmers may expect parched fields and bad crops. A southeast wind means a poor crop.

Runkles said the dance is an authentic Comanche ceremony that has been done in West Texas since early in the century. Old-timers and newspaper accounts say it's been correct 94 per cent of the time.

Although the Indians who inhabited the Cap Rock vanished long ago Runkles said he was able to piece together the ceremony from various sources.

"We've tried to be as authentic as possible," he said.

He calls the sunrise ceremony taba'na yaan'e.

In 1906 an Indian gave a man named J.A. Wilbourn the idea of checking the wind each March 22, Runkles said.

Through the years the annual test was performed by several persons, but without the colorful dances and costumes Runkles uses.

An avid student of Indian lore, Runkles said the Chamber of Commerce five years ago asked him to do the old ceremony.

"Because of the accuracy of this thing, they thought it was a good idea to sponsor it and have a local breakfast."

"I have been doing this around the South Plains so long when they decided to have this Indian entertainment they called on me."

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House calls' to Capitol urged

Texas doctors seek bill revision

United Press International
AUSTIN — Hundreds of doctors were asked to make "House calls" to the Texas Legislature today in an effort to influence action on a medical malpractice bill the Texas Medical Association (TMA) contends is too weak.

The TMA sent bulletins to each doctor in the state, asking them to converge on the Capitol for today's session. TMA officials say the malpractice bill needs revision in at least six major areas, and debate on those proposed changes could take hours.

Speaker Bill Clayton warned House members to "come prepared for a good long debate."

The malpractice bill, approved last week as a compromise by the state Affairs Committee, sets a \$500,000 limit on malpractice claims, establishes a general two-year statute of limitations for adults to file claims and permits persons under 12 to file malpractice claims until they reach their 14th birthday.

Two other major groups involved in the malpractice issue, the Texas Trial Lawyers Association and the

Texas Hospital Association, agreed to the compromise.

W. Page Keeton, chairman of an interim committee which studied the malpractice problem, said yesterday the House bill would not have any significant impact on malpractice insurance rate.

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