

# Local / Features

## Astronomy prof expects students to work for 'A'

By TIM FOARDE  
Battalion Reporter  
Easy A's in a three-hour stargazing course come with hard work in this part of the galaxy.

Supernovas, black holes, the birth and death of stars and the planets are covered in the course, as well as thorough coverage of basic astronomy.

Lestrade believes there is value in truly learning the material in any college course just for the sake of being educated. He uses this philosophy in the way he teaches his astronomy class.

"If a student wants to get out of this course with an A, B, or C, he will learn the material," Lestrade said. He said there is a basic problem with the way students approach many of their courses.

"They don't understand the value of being educated just for the purpose of knowing things," Lestrade said. "They just want to get the grade and get out. That's not the purpose of a university," he said.

Lestrade, who traces his admiration of self-improvement to his experiences at a difficult high

school in Ireland, spends extra time in his office to help students having problems in the course.

His office walls are decorated with posters of Saturn, Jupiter, and Irish proverbs, but he has many other areas of interest. "As a student I hated literature and history, now they fascinate me," Lestrade said.

He encourages students to broaden their interests and learn the material in all their courses.

Lestrade pointed out two advantages of learning astronomy, even though it may not seem relevant to one's goals or interests.

"When you study physics you learn to think logically," Lestrade said. "It really does straighten out your mind as far as the quantitative process of working out problems."

Lestrade applied this principle to everyday life. "Getting the milkman to deliver the right

amount of milk can be a problem that requires logic," Lestrade said.

Lestrade said it is unfortunate that students lack the motivation

**"When you study physics you learn to think logically. It really does straighten out your mind as far as the quantitative process of working out problems."**

to learn, but he said the blame must be shared by teachers. "Students don't care to learn to the degree they should and professors don't care to teach to the degree

they should," Lestrade said.

Lestrade said many teachers in the science department at Texas A&M care more about their research than teaching students. "On the one hand they will criticize the athletic department and say, 'There is no place on this campus for football, this is a university, it's for teaching.' And on the other hand they will say, 'I don't have time for office hours, I have to go do my research.'"

Lestrade said university instructors should do both teaching and research, but the tendency is drifting away from teaching. "It's getting to the point where we only have people who do research and they cannot teach," Lestrade said.

He said the reason many instructors cannot teach is that they don't want to teach. "If their job depended on it, they would become very good teachers," Lestrade said.

Lestrade said he likes doing

research, but his first priority is being a good teacher. He said students have two different concepts of good teachers. "There is the kind where they say, 'Wow, that guy really knows his stuff and makes you work for it.' That's the kind of good I want to be."

Lestrade said another kind of teacher is his idea of a good teacher. "... then there is the kind where they say, 'Wow, that guy really knows his stuff and makes you work for it.' That's the kind of good I want to be."

**"They don't understand the value of being educated just for the purpose of knowing things. They just want to get the grade and get out."**

the class interesting, informative and even entertaining, but students who expect to do well in the course must go a step beyond stargazing.

## Woman boasts 90 granddaughters

By SHELLEY EMSHOFF  
Battalion Reporter

The residents of the Brazos Valley Geriatric Center sit hunched in their wheelchairs, slowly nodding their heads and mumbling to themselves. The tile floor and vinyl furniture add no warmth to the depressing scene. Walking down the hall, the pungent odor is not masked by the smell of antiseptic.

The atmosphere changes entering Eva Ashcraft's room. The walls are lined with brightly colored paintings and pictures of her family. It looks as if a portion of her previous home has been established in the little room.

"I have plenty to be happy about," said Ashcraft. "I have a lovely family and 90 granddaughters."

Ashcraft, a nicely dressed 70-year-old woman with a radiant face, is the grandmother for Delta Zeta Sorority. She was chosen by the center's recreational director.

Pointing to pictures of each of the girls in the sorority, she said, "I always thought sorority girls were a bunch of high hats, but these girls are the nicest group I've ever met."

Ashcraft said that the receptionist told her that she had been chosen to be Delta Zeta's grandmother and that she had company coming to see her.

Her soft green eyes became larger as she said, "I thought one or two people were coming, but I looked down the hall and, my lord, there were at least 25 girls coming to my room, singing 'Get to Know You'."

She said that at least two girls come to visit her each week. "They know my favorite color is yellow, so they usually bring me a yellow rose or something real cute," she said.

Ashcraft and her husband are able to share a room, which makes her feel more at home. "Daddy loves those girls who come to visit," she said as little wrinkles came across her smiling face. "They love him too and want to adopt him as their grandpa," she added.

Ashcraft pointed to pictures of her son and daughter. "Jack and Judy didn't want us to live out here, but I had a stroke and Daddy broke his hip, and we just couldn't manage alone," she said. "I always said I would never live with my children and interfere with their lives, and I mean just that," she added.

Ashcraft said that her children decorated the room to be just like

home. "One year the children came here for Christmas and we had it right here in this room," she smiled and said. "We had a ball just being together."

Looking at a picture of her son in uniform, Ashcraft said he was an Aggie. "I love the Aggies," she said. "They're the best bunch of kids around."

She said, "When my little Maggie granddaughters aren't here, there is always a group of Aggies here singing and visiting."

Ashcraft said, "I love to meet people and that's one of my favorite reasons for being a grandmother for Delta Zeta."

Ashcraft explained that there are many activities to be involved with at the center. She said she loves to go to the parties and different functions. Church services are held twice a week.

"My granddaughters were proud of me when I became the Valentine Queen for this year," she said.

She said that recently they had a beer bust and a belly dancer performed. She slapped her hand on her knee and said, "There's nothing slow about us here."

"We've always got something going on, but it's best when the

Aggies and the granddaughters come to visit."

Looking back at the picture of the sorority, Ashcraft said, "I just hope that when this young generation gets as old as I am, they will be treated as nice as I am by this lovely group of granddaughters."

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