

# Paraplegic finishes 170-mile marathon

United Press International  
HOUSTON — A paraplegic — dubbed the "Iron Man" because of his stamina — completed a 170-mile trip from Austin in a wheelchair outfitted with racing tires, suffering only a nasty sunburn from his four days on the road.

"It was tough because it was more distance than I've tried to do before," Laverne Achenbach said. "But it was worth it. We saw a lot of people along the way and now they know that everyone can take his level of ability and use it."

Achenbach said Monday another reason for his trip was to raise money for the Southwest Wheelchair Athletic Association. He did not know yet how much money his effort had earned.

"What Laverne is dramatizing is that disabled does not

mean unable," said Sheri Nelson of the sponsoring Texas Institute of Rehabilitation and Research.

"He wants to illustrate the

*It was tough because it was more distance than I've tried to do before.*  
— Laverne Achenbach, paraplegic marathoner

physical capability of handicapped people, that people with disabilities are able to be extraordinary contributing people who may even be stronger in some senses," she said.

Achenbach, 40, of Houston began his 170-mile trek Friday from the steps of the state Capitol in Austin. He carried a proclamation from Gov. Mark White declaring April "Mobility Awareness Month" in Texas.

He wheeled from Austin to Smithville on Friday and from there to Eagle Lake on Saturday.

Sunday, he rolled his made-to-order aluminum, hand-driven wheelchair into Rosenberg, where he spent the night before pushing the last 40 miles to the Houston Medical Center on Monday. The wheelchair also is equipped with high pressure racing tires.

"We're having a welcome home ceremony complete with champagne we'll break over his chair," Nelson said.

Achenbach was among 25 U.S. Wheelchair Marathoners who raced in the recent Boston Marathon, the latest in a series of races that have earned him the name of "Iron Man."



Nice guys finish last

Delta Alpha Lambda was the name these mechanical engineering seniors gave their machine after it finished last in Tuesday night's ping pong lift competition. The object of the competition, held

at Zachry engineering center, was to get the ping pong balls moved to another place in the shortest period of time. Group members were James Guillen, John Miller, Kirk Barnes, Pat Draughon, and Scott Ellis.

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## Teachers win forcefeeding case

United Press International  
HOUSTON — A judge has found a teacher and her aide innocent of child injury charges pressed by parents of a 9-year-old special education student who claimed they hurt his arm and forced him for buying two lunches.

Rosemarie Barbalato, 22, and her aide, Patricia Williams, 35, broke into tears at the verdict

Tuesday by Harris County Criminal Court at Law Judge J.R. Musslewhite after a two-day trial. He heard the case without a jury.

Barbalato and Williams were charged with misdemeanor reckless injury to a child by Calvin Herring and his parents, David and Judy Herring, who claimed Calvin was mistreated Jan. 12 at John F. Kennedy Elementary

School.

"I'm very happy to know that justice has prevailed," said Barbalato. "I will continue to be an excellent teacher."

Williams refused comment. Houston Independent School District backed the teachers, who were kept on the job, and paid for their legal defense. The Herring's were not in the courtroom at the verdict and were not immediately available for comment.

Calvin, who a psychologist testified was "emotionally disturbed" and in need of special education handling, testified he bought two lunches against instructions on Jan. 12 because he

liked the pizza that was being served.

He said Barbalato and Williams took him back to his classroom with the two trays, ordered him to sit on a recreation mat, held his arms behind him until they hurt and forced him.

Calvin testified he swore at the teachers, using racial epithets against both even though Barbalato is white and Williams black, spit the food back at them and vomited.

His mother testified she took Calvin to Spring Branch Memorial Hospital Jan. 13 and he was diagnosed as having suffered a strain in his right arm and had to

wear a sling for several days. Both Barbalato and Williams denied they hurt Calvin or forced any food into his mouth. They said they were following policy to try to teach a disabled special education student to obey instructions.

"No one forced him," Williams testified Tuesday. "I don't restrain children. I don't strain them with the intent of hurting them. I was very careful with him. I don't believe he was injured."

The last witness was Ed O'Leary, 8, who was in the class with Calvin. Asked by defense lawyer Carol Williams whether Calvin ever exclaimed, Eddie answered: "Yes." Assistant District Attorney Jim Lindeman said the prosecution was justified even though ended in acquittal. The case prosecuted on a criminal information, without grand jury indictment.

The parents had said they were considering a civil lawsuit.

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