

# Young get arthritis, too

By TRACY PROBST  
Reporter

Arthritis, the nation's number one crippling disease, affects one out of every seven people. It is known for afflicting older people, but also is found in young adults and children, said Donna Rogers of the Arthritis Foundation.

Rogers said people often have the misconception that arthritis is only an old-age disease. Young adults and children get it as frequently as older people, she said.

Rogers, who works with the Texas Gulf Coast Chapter in Houston, said there are 101 different classifications of arthritis, although ankylosing spondylitis and rheumatoid arthritis are the most prevalent in young adults.

Dr. Sonja Geerling, professor of human pathology at the Texas A&M College of Medicine, said ankylosing spondylitis is "common, particularly in younger men." This form of arthritis affects the bones in the base of the spine. The bones may actually become fused together, she said.

Mild, early morning stiffness in the back is a symptom of ankylosing

spondylitis, Geerling said. Young women with arthritis are usually affected by rheumatoid arthritis, the pathologist said. This form causes chronic inflammation of the joints, usually in the hands and wrists. Fusion of the bones may occur, causing disfigurement, she said.

In both ankylosing spondylitis and rheumatoid arthritis, "the actual joint tissue itself inflames and the joint thickens, thus making movement painful," she said. The rubbing of bone against bone also causes discomfort, she said.

Arthritis also causes "fever, changes in the blood, inflammation of eyes and intestinal tracts and atrophy of muscles," Geerling said.

Geerling said even though arthritis is not hereditary, there is a "familiar trend that family members may have increased instances." She said some kinds of arthritis "are associated with complex gene makeup, particularly ankylosing spondylitis."

Treatments of these diseases begin with exercise and therapy. Doctors then like to give mild analgesics,

such as aspirin, which is extremely effective, Geerling said.

"Treatment should start out as minimal as possible," she said.

Geerling suggests that an arthritic joint be kept moving, however, an acutely inflamed joint requires rest.

Cortisone and other steroids can be taken to reduce the inflammation in a joint, but side effects may occur, she said.

Geerling also suggested to keep inflamed joints warm.

"Improvement might not be due to treatment," she said. Arthritis often goes into remission, which is a temporary relief of pain.

"Younger people are more likely to have complete remission," she said.

Remission doesn't occur as frequently in older people who suffer from osteoarthritis, which causes degenerative changes in the joints, especially in the legs and hips.

Degenerative arthritis also can occur in a joint that has been broken or injured.



Photo by CHRISTINE COCHRAN

## Showers for flowers

A grounds maintenance employee sprays a flower bed by the back of the Coke building.

# Calls combat game thieves

By DIB WALDRIP  
Reporter

Operation Game Thief, a program designed to combat illegal hunting and fishing practices in Texas, has produced 532 arrests in the past 36 months, Capt. Stanley Brooks, coordinator of Operation Game Thief, said Tuesday.

Convictions from the arrests have produced more than \$114,000 in fines and \$24,350 in rewards paid to 133 informers, Brooks said. One out of every 10 calls results in an arrest, he said.

Since starting in October 1981, the program has received 2,400 calls. The conviction rate for arrests through the program is more than 99 percent, he said.

"Success of the program depends on public participation," Brooks said.

"Success has been astronomical." Operation Game Thief has a toll-free telephone number for citizens who witness illegal hunting or fishing practices. The number is 1-800-792-GAME. Callers can remain anonymous, and they are given a code number for identification, Brooks said.

Calls about a hunting or fishing crime in progress are transferred immediately to a game warden nearby, Brooks said. If an arrest is made, informers are eligible for a reward, he said.

The program is governed by a six-member commission appointed by the executive director of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. The six commissioners are private citizens from around the state who determine

the reward amounts by the seriousness of the crime, he said.

Fifty-five percent of the calls dealt with illegal hunting practices and 32 percent with illegal fishing practices, Brooks said. The other 13 percent of the calls dealt with illegal shrimping, fur trapping, killing of endangered animals and penal code violations.

Any time illegal game is found in the possession of hunters or fishers, the meat or fish is confiscated and given directly to orphan homes, old-age homes or other institutions for the needy, he said. Thousands of pounds of meat are given away each year, he said.

No accurate study has been done on the number of animals killed illegally in Texas, Brooks said, since not all of the violators are caught.

The New Mexico Game and Fish Department estimated that more game was killed illegally than legally in New Mexico, he said. Brooks said he hopes the same is not true for Texas.

# Unusual wildlife attracts 'cavers'

By MARYBETH ROHSNER  
Reporter

Question: What wears a carbide lamp on his head, climbs rocks several hundred feet under the earth's surface, and whoops in dark, damp places?

Answer: A member of the Aggie Speleological Society, otherwise known as a "caver."

"Speleology is just another word for caving," club chairman Jim Mueller says. Members have a common interest — cave exploring.

Caving brings different rewards

for everyone, Mueller said. The adventure of exploration attracts some. Others take advantage of the unique photographic opportunities and others examine unusual wildlife.

"You find some strange looking animals in caves, like blind salamanders and blind catfish," Mueller said.

Though the club met for the first time Wednesday night, a few club members are experienced cavers. Mueller and others explored New Mexico caves last year through Outdoor Recreation. Some practice rappelling at the Texas A&M Fireman

Training School's tower.

The club is planning several weekend trips to the Edwards Plateau, as well as an expedition to Mexico with the University of Texas Speleological Society.

"New Mexico and Mexico have the prime caves," Mueller said. Mueller said he encourages beginning cavers to get involved with the club.

"It's not like we're going to say 'O.K., try to keep up. See you later.' We'll take care of you," he said.

## Hope here

University News Service

Tickets for Bob Hope's Oct. 5 performance at Texas A&M will go on sale Friday, Sept. 28 at the MSC Box Office in Rudder Tower.

Tickets will be \$11 and \$12.50. Hope's concert will be at 8 p.m. in G. Rollie White Coliseum Oct. 5.



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