

Autopsies performed at judge's discretion

By GIGI SHAMSY
Reporter

Death inquests are conducted by elected or appointed justices of the peace in 243 Texas counties. A state mandate requires that justices attend an annual 2-hour workshop and read a 13-page handout on death investigations.

This is the justice's sole requirement for deciding a person's cause of death. Because Texas has no law making autopsies mandatory, the county justice of the peace is free to do as he pleases. He can order an autopsy or just sign out the cause of death with no questions asked.

In 11 Texas counties, trained medical examiners determine the cause of death and order death inquests. Medical examiners are always physicians and occasionally pathologists who are specially trained in forensic pathology.

Charles Petty is Dallas County's Chief Medical Examiner. Petty's training and skill paid off shortly before 6:00 p.m. on Friday, Aug. 5 when he was called to the scene of Texas' worst airplane disaster.

Petty is still identifying the bodies of the 131 victims who

were aboard Delta's Flight 191 from Ft. Lauderdale.

The forensic pathologist is not relying on guesswork in this, or in any, of his investigations.

Medical examiners readily tell about personal experiences where they've seen the justice of the peace system go awry.

Dr. Vincent DiMaio, a Bexar County medical examiner, cites a case in Wyoming where a justice of the peace signed out the cause of death as a heart attack when there was "an obvious knife wound to the abdomen."

Granted, no one is free from fallibility. But why leave something so important as the correct reporting of death in the hands of unqualified individuals?

The predominance of this outdated justice of the peace system is a nationwide problem.

Legislative changes on the local, state and national level should begin with the creation of a consistent regional or statewide medical examiner system, an increased amount of autopsy training for justices of the peace and increased funding for new and old medical examiner systems across the country.

A&M recruiter: attitude of blacks toward the University improving

By WASH A. JONES
Reporter

Some blacks say Texas A&M, despite its academic programs, has little to offer them culturally and socially. But the situation for blacks at A&M seems to be improving.

Barry Davis, a black associate director for the Office of School Relations, said A&M's image is improving even though many students and faculty members, especially blacks, still have negative attitudes about the University. He said most of today's black recruits, unlike those four or five years ago, have a more positive image of A&M. He said more students are being advised by their families to attend schools like A&M because they offer a better education overall.

Davis is responsible for recruiting, and he said he tries hard to improve A&M's image by explaining misconceptions and capitalizing on the good aspects of the campus.

"A&M is a unique place," Davis said. "Not enough positive things are said or written about A&M. There are some good things happening for students here. And that's what we need to talk about more."

He offered an opinion why many

blacks may feel socially or culturally deprived at the University.

"It depends on what blacks are looking for as to whether they think A&M offers them something," he said. "However, I'm not saying that most blacks are looking for the wrong things."

He said many blacks worry about "losing their identities" at predominantly white universities, but that the worries are often unnecessary.

"People must realize that times have changed," Davis said. "This is 1985, not 1920 or 1890. People are not looking for skin color any more."

He said A&M is preparing students to survive in the real world where black identity does little toward helping one to survive. He said he believes more students are realizing that and are becoming less inclined to seek a black identity in choosing a school.

As a recruiter, Davis said, he tries to help all students, regardless of race, "fulfill their dreams." He said he corresponds with many of the students after they enroll at A&M in order to make them feel less alienated in a new environment. He also counsels students if they have problems after they enroll. He said he be-

lieves this helps in retention of students.

An increase in the retention and admission of blacks has increased the number of blacks at the University. The increased number of blacks has helped A&M get closer to its goal for minority representation. And higher minority representation, say many blacks, improves A&M's image.

Dr. Bill G. Lay, director of admissions, said the average denial rate of black applicants at the University is about 15 percent. Of the 350 blacks who applied in 1984, 232 were accepted for admission.

Since 1980, the number of blacks at A&M has increased from 300 to 601 in 1984, Lay said.

The admission requirements for all students are the same generally, he said. All students are required to have a certain rank in their graduating class and must get a designated score on the Scholastic Aptitude Test, a standardized test taken by most persons preparing to enter college.

The range of admission requirements allows all students to be considered. If students are ranked in the top 10 percent of their class, no minimum SAT score is required.

And, normally, the bottom range for resident students is that students in the bottom 20 percent of their class score 1200 SAT. He said all nonresident students are required to be in the 25 percent of their class and 1000 on the SAT.

Lay said any students who meet the initial minimum requirements are given special attention to determine if extenuating circumstances are responsible for their not meeting the requirements. He said they consider such things as family hardships, type of school attended, involvement in extracurricular activities, part-time jobs during high school or a long absence during high school.

Other reasons exist for a student's poor image of A&M.

Bobby Bisor, a student leader who is black, said that many blacks at A&M are happier because they have more opportunities to become involved in various activities than other students with similar backgrounds. Bisor, vice president of cultural programs in the Memorial Student Center Student Programs Office, believes the situation for blacks improved since he enrolled at A&M years ago.

Texas A&M students learn while in Europe

Study abroad an enriching experience

By DIANA HENSKE
Reporter

"My advice would be, anyone who can do it, should."

That's the advice of Chris Bowers and a number of other students who have joined various study abroad programs.

Bowers, a senior psychology major from College Station, recently returned from Texas A&M's summer study abroad program in Italy. He spent almost two months living in La Poggerina, a former seminary in central Italy.

During the week, his teachers lectured at La Poggerina or took the group on field trips to see the artistic, historical and literary landmarks they were studying. On long three- or four-day weekends, Bowers traveled.

"It was up to the student to take advantage of the opportunities," he

says. "I tried to take advantage of the chances to meet people and learn the language. The opportunity was there."

Bowers spent one long weekend traveling about 1400 miles in Yugoslavia.

"They were so amazed to see an American in the interior of the country," Bowers says. He explained that the few American tourists that visit Yugoslavia usually go to towns on the coast or the border. One young man gave Bowers a tour of his city and treated him to lunch and dinner because he was interested in learning about Americans.

"It's hard to imagine that people could be friendlier," he says.

Louis Plank, of San Antonio, says he also felt welcome as a student in Europe. He lived in Germany his junior year in high school as a Youth for Understanding exchange student. His host mother took him on

trips to Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, France, England, Italy and Austria.

Plank says he liked staying for a year because after the newness wore off, the people treated him less and less like an American and more like a German.

Plank worked hard to learn German well enough to sound like a native. He had to discourage the German students from practicing their English on him so he could learn their language.

Another Youth for Understanding student, Sian Morris, spent three months in Holland. She had to return early because of a family illness but she says she enjoyed her visit and learned a great deal about the culture and the people.

"The people were really curious," Morris says. "They asked a lot of political questions — to a kid!"

Morris' host mother took her on a trip touring Holland. "Everybody had flowers," she

says. "The Dutch take good care of their gardens. We even went to a flower auction. It was huge. Buyers came from all over the world."

Morris says she had to learn to adjust to many cultural differences. The Europeans ride bikes, walk or take a train or bus wherever they need to go. She says the transportation system is well-developed, and the people take advantage of it.

She also noticed a difference in their attitude towards alcohol.

"It's not cool to get drunk there, not at all," she says. "But there's no drinking age. If you can reach over the bar, you can drink."

Bowers says he had learned to respect the Italian's tradition of dressing nice when visiting cathedrals. He couldn't wear shorts or sleeveless shirts, even in warm weather.

He says the students also had to shop around at the Italian siesta. Shops close at 12 or 1 o'clock for lunch and then reopen at the store owner's discretion, usually about 3 or 4 o'clock.

Arleene Spear, of College Station, went to Germany as a high school exchange student, and says she couldn't learn to accept the nude beaches along the North Sea.

"They were everywhere — the beaches, I mean. I never did get used to them," she says.

Plank saw cultural differences he won't forget either, but they weren't amusing. Plank went with his German high school class to tour East Germany.

"That part of the trip wasn't as fun as the rest," he says, "but we learned so much. All of the students say they've countered problems while studying abroad. However, all of them want to go back. Bowers also works in a foreign country, and Morris and Spear want to return to Europe to tour the countries. Plank has joined the U.S. Air Force and will eventually work in foreign intelligence.

"As of yet, it's the best thing I've done in my life," Plank says. "Anyone should do it."

accept it they get their pride taken away. But they were nervous because they're still asking you what's going on out there."

Plank says he felt that Berlin facade for the tourists. It was ornate and kept clean since tourists went beyond Berlin to the rest of the country. Plank's most tourist probably thought East Germany was like Berlin.

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