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# Aggie ignores disability, leads productive life

By KIM WALTERS  
Reporter

When you enter Belinda Lane's home, you see a Labrador retriever sleeping by the sofa and Belinda straightening up the house.

She appears to be an average woman cleaning an average house, but Belinda, 23, has been blind since she was 7. Numerous operations to regain her sight failed, but Belinda doesn't let that get her down.

"I don't really consider myself handicapped," she says. "I can walk around the house pretty easily and even straighten it up without much problem."

But she says she is cautious where she steps.

"Ziti will surely let me know if I step on her tail," she says with a smile. Ziti, her retriever, is her Seeing Eye dog whose favorite pastime is sleeping by the sofa.

But Ziti does more than sleep.

When a person unfamiliar to Ziti approaches the front door, the retriever puts her nose up to the screen door and shows her teeth. Anyone — friend or foe — thinks twice before entering the house, Belinda says.

As you watch Belinda pick up the newspaper and step over Ziti on her way to the sofa, you find it hard to believe she is blind.

But sometimes she gives herself away.

"Mike, where did you put the telephone receiver?" she asks. Her husband, Mike, sometimes forgets to put the receiver by the telephone.

When you ask Belinda about the problems she encountered as a student at Texas A&M, she thinks for a moment, chuckles a bit, then tells you that mopeds and motorcycles were her biggest obstacles.

"The only real problems I had were when I would walk with Ziti to school and hear something come barreling past me at 99 miles an hour," she says. "They never ran over me but came close."

"I also had trouble trying to get around all the bicycles with my cane. It's like going through a maze."

Belinda doesn't have to worry about dodging mopeds and motorcycles anymore. Now she dodges students in the halls of A&M Consolidated High School.

Belinda started teaching at the high school after she graduated with a bachelor's degree in secondary education in December 1984.

"I teach Spanish over there and I love it," she says. "Even though I'm blind, the students respond very well to me and Ziti."

But she says she's not going to let the students spoil Ziti.

"I allow them to pet her only when she does not have her harness on," she says, explaining that petting a Seeing Eye dog while it's in its harness breaks its concentration.

"Being blind does have its disadvantages however," she says with a laugh. "Sometimes, the students see just how much they can get away with in class. They love to throw spit wads at each other thinking I don't know what's going on."

Mike laughs as he joins Belinda on the sofa.

"Sometimes our friends wonder if she's really blind because there isn't anything they can do or an expression that they can have that she doesn't know about," he says.

Belinda explains this, saying, "It's just a feeling I get when I know they are up to something."

Being blind doesn't keep Belinda from being active.



Belinda Lane, a former student at Texas A&M, sits in her home with her Seeing Eye dog, Ziti.

She enjoys water skiing, but she says, "I'm not really good at it. I still have trouble staying up on those stupid things."

"I also like to go to the Texas Hall of Fame on Thursdays to dance. Country dancing is easy. All you have to do is hold on to the guy while he leads you. Sometimes if he's a bad dancer, he'll lead you right into the walls."

Her eyes twinkle mischievously when she tells you her secret: "If I don't want to dance with the guy at all, I just simply say 'I'm blind.' Usually that scares them off so fast

they forget their drinks." Belinda says she always has at least one pet around the house.

"The most uncommon pet I had was a rat named Benatar," she says. "Her full name was Rat Benatar."

She likes to have fun, but Belinda also has her goals.

"As far as my goals are concerned," she says, "I would like to see as many students learn as I can. She also says she wants to help blind children and the visually impaired work with computers."

## Madrigals transport guests in time

# Dinners mimic Renaissance

By MELANIE WEINMANN  
Reporter

From the authentic period costumes down to the multicourse medieval feast, every detail is calculated to help transport guests to the Renaissance period, which is considered to be a time of rebirth for European civilization.

The goal of the MSC Madrigal Dinners is putting the guests in the holiday spirit while teaching them about Renaissance culture, says Patricia Fleitas, artistic and music director for the annual yuletide feast.

Madrigal Dinners tries to accomplish this goal by doing more than providing a window to the past, she says. The committee strives to bring a touch of medieval times to the community.

"Our aim is to involve the audience in the fantasy," Fleitas says.

The event, which will be held Dec. 4 through Dec. 7 at the Hilton, starts at 6:30 p.m. with a reception in the hotel's Long Gallery.

Strolling musicians and jugglers will mingle with guests and get them in the spirit of the season, Fleitas says.

Fleitas, who has worked on the program since the first dinner in 1981, believes the floor performers, the people actually out among the guests, do the most to get the audience involved in the illusion.

After most of the guests have arrived and are in sufficient good cheer, the court jester welcomes them to the hall of Lord and Lady Raleigh of Nottingham and informs

everyone of the court rules of etiquette.

Next, guests are ushered to their seats, and at the sound of a trumpet, the procession, led by Lord and Lady Raleigh, begins. The nobility enter singing authentic madrigal music.

During dinner, the cast continues to entertain with more music, wandering minstrels and jugglers, the jester's antics and a magician or two.

Fleitas, who has a master's in music from the University of Texas, is also in charge of the Century Singers and the Women's Chorus at A&M.

She says she sought out MSC Director James R. Reynolds when she heard he was forming a committee, and she asked him if she could help with the program.

"Mr. Reynolds worked with a

madrigal dinner program in Oklahoma and thought it would be a tradition to start here," Fleitas says. "I wanted to be involved because I love the music of the period."

One of Fleitas' jobs is auditioning singers at the beginning of each semester. Cast members are chosen from the community and the student body and are judged on the basis of solo and ensemble voice talents. Places in the string and wood ensemble also are filled by audition.

"To give the show continuity, we only take enough new performers each year to fill the holes created by people who have left the program," she says. "If you're in, you're in until you want to get out."

# George Strait comes to A&M tonight

By SAM BUCHMEYER  
Reporter

Since George Strait released his first single, "Unwound," in 1981, his career has gone nowhere but up.

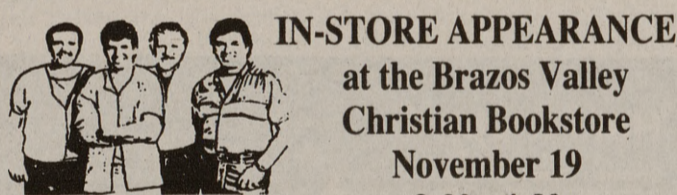
Unlike many performers, Strait has managed to harness his talents into a string of hit records. His hits include such memorables as "Fool Hearted Memory," "Marina Del

Rey" and "You Look So Good In Love."

Strait will perform at 8 p.m. in G. Rollie White Coliseum, promoting his latest album, "Something Spec-

al," which features the hit "The Chair."

Strait played the small clubs years before he was discovered, signed on MCA Records.

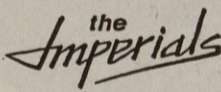


## IN-STORE APPEARANCE

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IN CONCERT  
November 19 7:30 pm  
Bryan Civic Auditorium



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November 22 7:30 pm  
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