



Photo by Anthony S. Casper

The Calm Before The Storm

Senior fish camp counselor Gary Hale takes a break with incoming freshman Michelle Hamilton before leaving as part of the second ses-

sion of Student Y Fish Camp. This summer the camp will have four sessions, each containing five camps of 150 freshmen.

Lap belts: A help or hindrance?

Senator calls for mandatory shoulder belts for rear seat

WASHINGTON (AP) — A U.S. senator, citing doubts about lap-only safety belts, is calling on Transportation Secretary Elizabeth Dole to require rear-seat shoulder harnesses in all new cars.

Meanwhile, safety-conscious motorists are finding that installing shoulder belts in rear seats of cars already on the road is far from easy and requires determination and more than a bit of luck.

They get little help from dealers or auto manufacturers.

The call for new regulations and attempts by some car owners to install rear-seat belts were sparked by a National Transportation Safety Board study a week ago that suggested lap-only belts actually cause the wearer to sustain severe, sometimes fatal, injuries in many crashes.

The findings stunned auto safety experts and were attacked for implying that lap belt users might be better off not wearing a belt. But all sides agreed the shoulder belt — already required on front seats — provide the best protection by far.

NHTSA spokesman Ron De Fore said the agency, which is part of Dole's department, expects to decide by mid-September whether to undertake new rulemaking to require rear-seat shoulder belts in new cars. No U.S. manufacturer equips its

cars with rear-seat shoulder belts, although a half a dozen foreign manufacturers do on at least some models.

In a letter to Dole, Sen. John Danforth, R-Mo., chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee, said urgent action is essential for requiring that automakers make rear-seat shoulder belts standard equipment.

"In addition the department should use its authority . . . to provide consumers with information as to how they can retrofit their cars with lap-shoulder safety belts in the back seat," wrote Danforth.

Since 1972, all cars have been required to have reinforced anchor locations for rear-seat shoulder belts so owners may install such belts for added protection. But automakers have never been required to furnish the belts or keep them in stock and few dealers know anything about them, industry officials said.

Barry Sweedler, a staff member of the NTSB, said that since the board's lap-belt report was issued, the agency has received numerous telephone calls from car owners who have had similar stories.

Sweedler suggested people try auto parts stores such as J.C. Whitney in Chicago, which he says offers retractable shoulder belts in its 1986 catalogue for \$22 apiece.

Doctor says seat belt study sends public 'mixed signals'

DALLAS (AP) — The president of an emergency physicians' group said Tuesday that a government agency's study indicating lap safety belts sometimes contribute to injuries was ill-advised and sends the public mixed signals.

Dr. Richard Stennes, president of the American College of Emergency Physicians, said the National Transportation Safety Board acted hastily in releasing a report this month that indicated lap safety belts worn by back-seat passengers contribute to injuries in automobile accidents.

"Our concern now is that the NTSB has come out with a suggestion that lap belts in the back seats of the cars may make things worse rather than better," Stennes said.

Stennes said the board drew conclusions from sparse research and gave the public mixed signals on whether to wear the lap safety belts.

NTSB officials contend the report resulted from more than a year's worth of study and included extensive study of available literature on crash victims who wore lap safety belts.

The report does not recommend that people stop wearing the rear-seat lap safety belts. The study only looked at frontal collisions and did not gauge the safety value of lap belts in other types of crashes.

Barry Sweedler, director of the board's bureau of safety program in Washington, D.C., said, "We said there was a better way and that would be to go with the three-point belt."

However, Stennes said the board's study will most likely be used by passengers as an excuse not to wear the belts.

"I have many specific incidences in my own practice in San Diego where we've seen people who have been wearing (lap) seat belts and have had their lives saved," said Stennes, who was in Dallas on Tuesday.

The board's report recommended that automobile manufacturers install three-point safety belts in the rear seats of cars and also urged emergency physicians to become more informed on the possible injuries that can result from wearing lap belts.

Med center dates to 1886

Hospital's future unclear

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — From Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders to the U.S. Marines injured in the 1983 bombing of their Beirut barracks, the nation's military casualties have flocked to Brooke Army Medical Center for medical attention for decades.

But after 100 years of treating American military casualties and serving as a premier burn treatment center, the future of the aging facility is clouded.

For almost 20 years, the government has been trying to decide what to do with the outdated 697-bed facility, spread out in several buildings on Fort Sam Houston.

The latest proposal, hammered out last month between U.S. Sen. Phil Gramm, R-Texas, and Dr. William Mayer, assistant secretary of defense for health affairs, calls for construction of a new \$129 million 200-bed hospital, which would be expandable to 450 beds.

Despite the compromise, the fate of the medical center still is uncertain and Congress, which has butted heads with the Department of Defense in the past, must go along with the latest plan.

Brooke Army Medical Center has a long and colorful history dating back to 1886, when the first permanent hospital was opened at Fort Sam Houston.

The current main hospital, which

houses the 40-bed burn unit and general care wards, opened in 1938.

Because of the influx of war casualties in World War II, BAMC nearly doubled in size when the military converted three barracks buildings into an adjunct hospital building about three quarters of a mile from the main facility.

Traffic between the buildings is so heavy that the post's ambulances racked up about 125,000 miles last year.

BAMC's original mission, when the main hospital was built in the 1930s, was as a smaller Army hospital. But during World War II, the hospital grew into a major military medical facility that has survived three wars.

The center, one of eight major hospitals in the Army, is second in size only to the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington.

In 1973, the General Accounting Office recommended closing BAMC and building a replacement hospital.

But there was no movement in Washington concerning the hospital until 1976, when the Joint Commission on Hospital Accreditation inspected BAMC and was horrified at conditions.

Congress responded by spending

\$10 million on renovations and repairs.

By 1984, Mayer convinced San Antonio's congressional delegation to give up on a 695-bed replacement hospital. The assistant defense secretary at that time committed to a hospital with a maximum of 450 beds.

Since then, architectural and engineering plans have been in the works for a \$338 million, 450-bed hospital.

A Department of Defense blue-ribbon panel, a private consulting firm and a GAO study all concluded a full-scale hospital was not warranted at Fort Sam Houston.

In June, Mayer announced he had changed his mind and would support only a 150-bed replacement building. The remainder of BAMC's missions, Mayer said, would be consolidated with Wilford Hall Air Force Medical Center at San Antonio's Lackland Air Force Base.

Then on July 21, Gramm and Mayer put their heads together and came up with the 200-bed compromise.

To keep his end of the bargain, Gramm must cajole an austerity-minded Congress to amend the armed services authorization bill to include \$129 million for the new hospital.

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Workers get retraining from grant

DALLAS (AP) — As many as 570 displaced workers in the Houston-Galveston area will get retraining in new job skills through an \$800,000 grant announced Tuesday by the U.S. Department of Labor.

The grant will be used to assist workers who are displaced through layoffs and adverse economic conditions, Secretary of Labor William E. Brock said.

The grant is part of a total \$2.1 million allocated to workers in Kansas and New York as well as Texas.

The Houston-Galveston Area Council will get the \$800,000 to aid the workers dislocated from jobs in the oil, manufacturing, construction and non-electrical machinery industries.

The areas affected are Austin, Brazoria, Chambers, Colorado, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris, Liberty, Matagorda, Montgomery, Walker, Waller and Wharton counties.

Participants will get skills training from community colleges and on-the-job training from local employers.