

Texas A&M The Battalion

Special Spring Break Insert

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Spring Break '90

Scuba diving opens doors to underwater world

Texas offers diving sites to enthusiasts on budgets

By SEAN FRERKING
Of The Battalion Staff

Scuba diving is a great way to get your feet wet and spend spring break.

Tom Meinecke, a lecturer in the physical education department and instructor of the scuba class offered at Texas A&M, said scuba divers can discover a new, exciting world hidden under water.

However, before students can dive into the sport, they must complete a two-week training course.

Meinecke said several agencies around the area provide

complete their training with the supervised dives and then are issued a certification card which is good for life, Meinecke said.

Once students receive their certification, they can begin their odyssey into the sea, Meinecke said. They can purchase diving gear, fill their scuba tanks and charter diving boats for off-shore excursions.

"However, most divers use their certification cards to rent their gear unless they dive a lot," Meinecke said.

Adventure is the major reason for most dives, he said, and Texas can provide financially limited divers with some interesting places to go.

The A&M Scuba Club often travels to the Blue Lagoon in Huntsville. Old ships have been sunk in the abandoned stone quarry for divers to investigate. Meinecke said the water is incredibly clear at the lagoon.

Another area frequented by the scuba club is Lake Travis near Austin. Meinecke said the lake is great for scuba diving. He also said Canyon Lake is a good spot for scuba enthusiasts.

For the adventuresome diver, the best spot in Texas is the Flower Garden, a coral reef 118 miles south of Galveston and on the continental shelf.

"The Flower Garden is absolutely the best dive in Texas," Meinecke said.

Some people even dive around non-active oil rigs, Meinecke said.

"The spear fishing is good



Photo Illustration by Fredrick D. Joe

around those rigs," he said.

For those with a bigger budget, Belize, Cozumel, off the coast of the Yucatan peninsula and the Caymen Islands, offer

an incredible spectacle of beauty, Meinecke said.

"Almost anywhere in the Caribbean is amazing," he

said.

Meinecke said scuba diving gives people a different perspective of their world and is a great experience to try.

Students work for vacation

Substitute teach during spring break for cash

By STACY E. ALLEN
Of The Battalion Staff

While many students are heading for the sunny beaches of Colorado for spring break, other students are opting for something more constructive — making money.

One way students can make money over spring break is by substitute teaching.

Ken Ballard, a senior journalism major at Texas A&M, substituted last spring break in the Deer Park Independent School District and recommends it to students who will be home for the week.

"It's fun and I made money instead of spending it," Ballard said.

Pay can range anywhere from \$35 per day in the Killen Independent School District to \$50 per day in Deer Park and the Bryan Independent School District.

Most school districts require that a student have 60 college credit hours to be considered for a position as a substitute teacher, but there are exceptions to this.

Paula Chambers, a personnel clerk with BISD, said students who want to substitute teach must have completed 60 college credit hours and be available to teach at least two days a week.

To apply, fill out an application and schedule an interview with the administration of special services.

If the interview is approved by the director of personnel, the applicant's name is put on a list of substitute teachers to be called. Chambers said the process takes anywhere from two days to one week to complete.

This process may seem simple, but requirements do get a little stiffer in some districts.

In the College Station district, students need not apply because a four-year college degree is required.

Dorothy Adkinson, personnel clerk for Deer Park ISD, said in addition to 60 college credit hours, Deer Park requires an applicant to pass a 12-minute, 50-question test of general academic knowledge before they can be considered for a job. If the prospective substitute passes the test, an interview process takes place.

Although substitute teaching may not seem like the most glamorous way to spend spring break, Ballard said, it does have its advantages.

"It's a good experience because it gives you the chance to decide if you ever want to go into teaching while you're still in college," Ballard said. "There aren't many college students home over spring break, so you usually get called every day and make good money."

"The Flower Garden is absolutely the best dive in Texas."

— Tom Meinecke,
A&M scuba instructor

training that will enable students to obtain their divers' certification cards.

After 28 hours of class and five open-water dives under the supervision of the class instructor, any adequate swimmer can get certified, Meinecke said.

The scuba class usually consists of 14 hours of in-class lecture coupled with 14 hours in the pool. It costs anywhere from \$100 in the United States to \$350 in the Caribbean.

In class lecture, beginning divers learn how to care for their equipment and what to do in case of an emergency. Time spent in the pool tests swimming ability and emphasizes techniques important in scuba diving, Meinecke said.

Those enrolled in the course

Specialist warns: water, alcohol bad combination

By KATHERINE COFFEY
Of The Battalion Staff

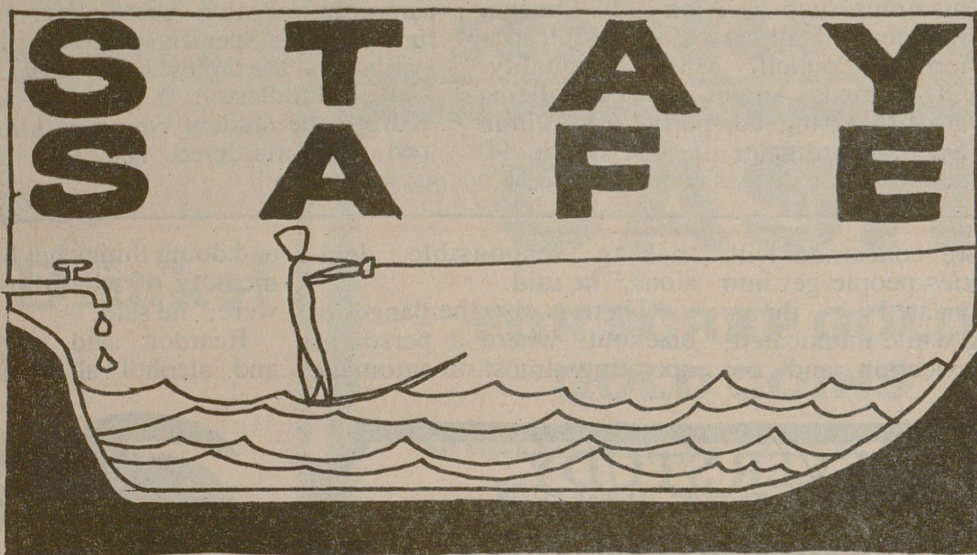
Drinking and swimming elicits the same advice as drinking and driving: don't do both at once, an American Red Cross water safety specialist said.

Martha Nix, one of 10 appointed specialists in Texas, said it's not realistic to tell people not to drink because students are going to anyway, but taking precautions while swimming could save someone's life.

In an American Red Cross Basic Water Safety Book, the Red Cross said there are four major causes of drowning in the U.S.: alcohol and drug use while participating in water recreation, accidents involving small boats, overestimation of ability and stamina while swimming, and diving into unknown or shallow water.

Nix, who is also manager of the Texas A&M Swimming Pool, said when spring breakers get in the sun, drink alcohol and then swim in cold water that they aren't used to, it becomes very dangerous.

Reaction time is slowed, and they overestimate their abilities, she said. When a crisis occurs, someone might not know what to do and could panic, and this is when it could become fatal, she said.



Graphic by Norzaini Mufti

Nix, a lecturer in the health and physical education department, said if people are going to drink then they need to designate a person who will not drink to watch over people who are swimming and drinking, she said.

According to the National Safety Council, she said, about 6,000 Americans drown every year. Many of the drowning victims are reported to have been good swimmers, she said.

"If someone was going weightlifting or jogging, they wouldn't drink before they began," Nix said. "When it comes to swimming, people don't realize the physical exertions it demands and therefore don't take it as seriously as they should."

Boating and water skiing are other water sports that people don't think are dangerous, she said.

Boats are as dangerous as cars and

should be used with the same precautions, she added.

"People see boats as just fun, but if you are hit, your chances of being thrown into the water are great, and you could be knocked unconscious when thrown," she said.

Nix said that there are precautions to take before going on spring break:

- If you drink alcohol or use drugs, do not go into the water.
- Don't drink and drive, whether it is a car, boat or wind-surfing board.
- Pay attention to how long you have been in the water.
- Don't swim far from the shore or boat.
- Wear a life jacket or at least a ski belt while boating and skiing.
- Know specifically about the water you are near: how deep the water is and where the currents or tides are that may be under the surface.
- If you can't see the bottom of the water, don't dive.
- Never swim or boat alone.
- Swim in an area where supervision, such as a lifeguard, is available.

"People need to respect water and the reasons why water accidents happen, because it could happen to you this spring break," Nix said.