

Thursday, June 14, 1990

American pen pals facilitate European grasp of democracy

By ELIZABETH TISCH
Of The Battalion Staff

Even Texas A&M college students and faculty can help Eastern European citizens adjust to the many changes taking place there through letters.

A program called World Contacts Network is a U.S.-based international correspondence exchange organization.

The idea for the "pen pal-type" service was inspired after nights of watching on the news the democracy movement spreading through the Eastern Bloc.

Mike Walsten, program creator, thought the people of Eastern European countries have an incredible task of catching up with the economy and social life that goes with a self-ruling government.

Walsten said he believes correspondence will help strengthen communication between countries and the democratic movement in the East.

Walsten said he gets many letters from students and adults in the East asking questions about starting businesses, running political campaigns, and implementing educational programs.

A professor of thermodynamics at Budapest Technical University wrote to Walsten.

"I should like to go ahead with such a correspondence, mainly because of my firm belief that people living in the free world simply cannot understand the

phenomenon that has taken place in Central and Eastern Europe in the last half century," he said in the letter.

Boris, a 23-year-old medical student from Czechoslovakia, also wrote.

"I wish to have a pen friend in the United States very much," he said in the letter. "The communists affirmed that the United States is the seat of rotten imperialism, but I never have believed it. I always looked to the United States as the advocate of freedom."

Walsten said World Contacts Network, a non-profit organization, operates by matching an American student by age, interests, and vocational or career goals to a European student.

Some of the "duties" of serving as a pen pal are to answer questions about democracy and market economies and share knowledge about life as a U.S. citizen.

Approximately 8,000 people in Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, and East Germany have requested pen pals in the United States. An average of 1,000 letters arrive weekly.

Students wishing to correspond should write a letter describing themselves and their desired pen friend(s).

The letter should be addressed to World Contacts Network, 14370 Fairway Drive, Eden Prairie, Minn., 55344.

Correspondents need to include \$4 per contact for handling costs.

Oil continues to seep into Gulf Firefighters work to quench remaining flames of tanker

GALVESTON (AP) — Oil from the burning Norwegian supertanker Mega Borg continued to spread in the Gulf of Mexico Wednesday as firefighters worked to put out the remaining flames on the crippled ship.

"A minimum of 3 million gallons has left the cargo tanks and I'm presuming that most of that has gone into the water," Coast Guard Capt. Thomas Greene said Wednesday.

But he said only between 12,000 and 40,000 gallons remained in the waters of the Gulf of Mexico because most of the oil had burned off or evaporated.

"I don't see any risk of losing cargo from the other tanks," he said.

Greene said investigators had found a hole in a center tank in the vessel, which was carrying 38 million gallons of oil when its

pump room exploded Saturday.

A board of inquiry was convened Wednesday by the government of Norway to interview crewmen to find out the cause of the explosion and fire on the tanker. Two of the 41 crewmen died, two were missing and presumed dead and 17 were injured, none seriously.

The captain of the 886-foot tanker, C. M. Mahidhara, told the panel Wednesday everything seemed normal before the explosion and he didn't know what sparked it.

Six fireboats aimed a dozen streams of water on the rear of the ship Wednesday, leaving the back of the ship shrouded in a cloud of steam and gray smoke.

Unlike previous days, however, the smoke hovered close to the surface of the Gulf and was not billowing into the sky, although

an occasional puff of brown smoke gusted from the ship.

"There is still fire under the deck," Greene said. "It's not completely out."

The fire was declared under control Tuesday.

The ship's superstructure and stack are collapsed and waves from the Gulf wash over the deck in front of the bridge. The rear of the Mega Borg has dropped more than 60 feet since the tanker caught fire while transferring cargo to a smaller vessel.

At least 25 boats, many of them equipped with skimmers, also worked the area around the tanker 57 miles southeast of Galveston on Wednesday, collecting spilled oil from a slick that extended for 10 to 15 miles from the ship.

Richards berates Republican opponent

Candidate accuses rival of eluding joint events

AUSTIN (AP) — Democrat Ann Richards charged Wednesday that her Republican gubernatorial rival, Clayton Williams, is dodging public events where the two candidates would appear side by side.

She charged that Williams cancelled three June and July appearances that he previously had agreed upon after learning that Richards also would be there.

"He's ducking her," said Richards spokesman Monte Williams, adding that the Democrat's campaign staff thinks it sees a trend.

"It became apparent when Richards won the primary that Clayton didn't really want to have any joint appearances because he can't match her expertise, her knowledge on the issues, her ability to solve problems," Monte Williams said.

He said the closest the two came to a joint appearance was giving separate speeches on the same day in the Panhandle town of Floydada.

A spokesman for the Republican candidate,

Gordon Hensley, said the Richards rhetoric was designed to cover up weaknesses in her own campaign.

"If Ann Richards wants to continue whining about not having adequate campaign funds and our schedules not coinciding to meet hers, that's her problem not ours," Hensley said.

Clayton Williams and Richards are scheduled to make back-to-back speeches to an association of elementary school principals in Austin on Thursday, he said.

"We're not particularly concerned about Ann Richards' personal viewpoints about Clayton Williams," Hensley said. "We are interested in why Ms. Richards is being so evasive in saying whether she would support strong anti-flag burning measures."

Days of not taking a position, Richards said Wednesday she favors a constitutional amendment to outlaw flag burning.

"I would support a constitutional amendment

to prohibit flag desecration, and I want to include politicians who wrap themselves in the flag for political gain," she said.

Richards charged that Williams cancelled a joint appearance with her before the Texas Association of Secondary School Principals in Austin on Friday.

She said he also declined to appear with her at a July 19 gubernatorial forum planned by the American Association of Retired Persons, which then was scrapped. And Richards said Williams refused to appear with her before the Texas Association of Mexican-American Chambers of Commerce.

Williams gregariously made dozens of appearances and freely granted news interviews before winning the GOP nomination on March 13.

But since then, his campaign has been dogged by a series of blunders, and as those piled up, Democrats have charged that he has become less accessible.

Houstonian endures mounting family losses after alleged drunken driver sparks collision

Father struggles to hold children's lives together

HOUSTON (AP) — Larry Reibenstein worked hard to hold his family together after his wife and newborn son died last spring. But tragedy struck again when he took his three remaining children on a long-awaited trip to Disney World.

His aunt, cousin and 7-year-old son, Ryan, were killed Sunday when an alleged drunken driver sparked a three-vehicle collision on a Mississippi highway. Reibenstein, his two other children and his sister were injured in the accident.

"It's a lifetime of grief compressed into one year," the Reibensteins' pastor, the Rev. Godfrey Hubert at Foundry United Methodist Church, told the Houston Chronicle.

Reibenstein, 33, already had faced the sudden loss of his wife and son last year when complications with a strep infection prompted the premature delivery of his fourth child. The

practice or all the children to church choir practice.

"Larry seemed to want to do everything for the kids," Norma Ault, principal at Emmott Elementary where Ryan and Matthew attended school, said. "He fixed their lunches, he laid their clothes out. He might get to bed at 2 o'clock in the morning, but everything was taken care of for his family."

Hubert said, "He did everything he possibly could to keep life normal for his kids."

The young father started a new job as senior vice president for Sterling Bank two months ago. His boss, Chairman of the Board George Martinez, said Reibenstein's devotion to his family was one of the first things that stood out about the man.

Martinez and Hubert flew to Alabama to be with Reibenstein after Sunday's accident.

"He's a very gracious, strong individual," Hubert said. "Needless to say, there were a number of times when he wept bitterly, as any father would. But his faith is strong. He holds together. He knows that he has two other children depending on him."

Averil Quackenbush, 35, of Alabama, was charged Tuesday with two counts of manslaughter in Jackson County, Miss. A third charge was expected to be added for Ryan's death.

Quackenbush is accused of driving drunk westbound on Interstate 10 outside Pascagoula, Miss., about 2 a.m. Sunday. He lost control of his car, hit a ditch and soared across the highway median to crash on top of the Reibensteins' station wagon.

Within seconds, an 18-wheeler crested a hill behind the Reibensteins and plowed into their car, ripping away the entire right side of the vehicle.

Reibenstein's aunt, Virginia Wohlwend, 66, of Houston, and his cousin, Carol Davis, 43, of Pflugerville, were killed instantly. Ryan lived on a life support system in Mobile until Tuesday.

"Larry seemed to want to do everything for the kids. He fixed their lunches, he laid their clothes out. He might get to bed at 2 o'clock in the morning, but everything was taken care of for his family."

—Norma Ault, principal

baby, who was two weeks premature, died soon after his birth. Peggy Reibenstein then slipped into a coma and later died.

Reibenstein, described as a devoted parent, took on the duties of both mother and father to his remaining children: Ryan, Matthew, 6, and Ashley, 3. He dressed them for school each morning, made sure his little girl's hair was curled for church on Sunday and rushed home after work to take Ryan to Little League

Super collider survives second round of funding

WASHINGTON (AP) — The superconducting super collider passed the second funding stop in the House Wednesday, hanging on to all \$318 million recommended by President Bush.

House Speaker Tom Foley said leaders plan to bring the appropriation measure to the House floor next week.

The House Appropriations committee approved the \$318 million in a \$20.9 billion package of federal energy and water projects.

The measure passed the committee on a voice vote with little discussion. The subcommittee on energy and water development gave it unanimous approval last week.

The subcommittee chairman, Rep. Tom Bevill, D-Ala., said, "We have no problem recommending \$318 million."

But Rep. David Obey, D-Wis., said he was concerned the collider's \$8 billion cost would rise unreasonably. He said the Department of Energy's previous cost estimates for the project have been "outrageously and atrociously" low.

DOE is expected to make another estimate of the collider's cost later this summer. The report that accompanies the bill expresses concern about the "continued viability" of the project because of cost increases.

"I think this project is an absolute budget-buster," Obey said.

He said he'd prepared an amendment imposing certain milestones the collider must reach during construction to maintain its funding. But Obey did not formally offer the amendment, indicating he may support changes during floor debate.

Rep. Jim Chapman, D-Sulphur Springs, said amendments offered on the House floor would likely be to reduce funding.

"We'll be braced," Chapman said. "I really don't know what to expect."

Last month, the House by a 3-to-1 margin authorized a five-year, \$5 billion plan to build the super collider south of Dallas.

Appropriations are done separately from authorization bills. But the authorization bill's passage was widely viewed as an expression of support for the super collider.

What's Up

Thursday

NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS: will have a general discussion at 8:30 p.m. Call the C.D.P.E. at 845-0280 for more information.

ADULT CHILDREN OF ALCOHOLICS: will have a general discussion at 6 p.m. Call the C.D.P.E. at 845-0280 for more information.

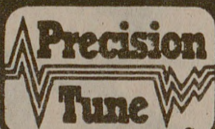
A&M CYCLING TEAM: will have a bicycle training time trial at 7 p.m. on Greens Prairie Road near Greenleaf Hospital. Helmets are required. For more information, call Larry Boyd at 845-6924.

Friday

STUDENTS OVER TRADITIONAL AGE: will have a supper club at Mama's Pizza at 6 p.m. Call Donielle at 845-1741 for more information.

Items for What's Up should be submitted to The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald, no later than three business days before the desired run date. We only publish the name and phone number of the contact if you ask us to do so. What's Up is a Battalion service that lists non-profit events and activities. Submissions are run on a first-come, first-served basis. There is no guarantee an entry will run. If you have questions, call the newsroom at 845-3315.

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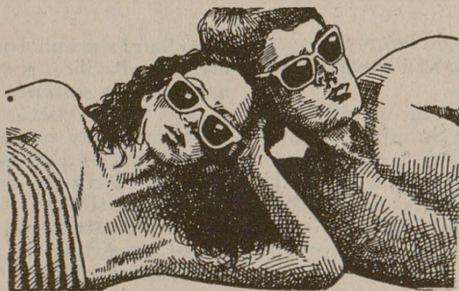
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