State & Local

A&M dancers prepare for second season

Dance team shows spirit

By Liz Tisch
The Battalion

Texas A&M's dance team will kick and spin its way into another busy year of training and performing before A&M basketball and baseball fans as the troupe establishes itself on the University campus.

Twenty-eight female students were chosen last spring as members of the 1991-1992 Texas A&M dance team — the second year for A&M to have a recognized dance troupe.

The team's faculty advisor, Kirsten Brekken, said the dancers were well-received by the student body last year.

"It went very well," she said. "Although we didn't have many performances, we were so well received that we were tickled to death."

During the first year, the dancers performed at five basketball games. They were also invited to dance at various events in the community including "Dance for Heart," sponsored by the American Heart Association.

The team, which performs kick, jazz, and a variety of other dance routines, was created after two female students, Terry Valladarez and Mary Lou Armador, decided A&M needed a recognized troupe. A&M was one of the last schools in the Southwest Conference to organize such a team.

Moreover, the founders said they wanted to contribute to women's image at A&M.

Felicia Hall, a sophomore psychology major and captain of the team, explained that not having a dance team would be taking away from the female students.

"It's how we support our school spirit," she said. "And because dancing comes from the heart, we felt it was being taken away without a dance team."

Brekken said that because they are so new, her main goal is to establish a much stronger team and to create campus and community awareness.

"The girls want to develop a stronger team and see what this year brings," she said. "They will dance at basketball and baseball games."

Brekken said, however, the student body is not quite ready for the dancers to perform at football games.

Hall said they are willing to wait as long as it takes for everyone to accept them.

"Most of our support came from the Corps of Cadets. We were really thankful," she said. "We've received nothing but positive feedback, " Hall said.

Despite the enthusiam from the student body, Hall said the team is lacking financial support.

"Most of the money comes from our own pocket," she said. "We plan to do some fundraisers."

In addition, the team will spend the spring semester training extensively to improve dance techniques, stamina and control. The team, under the direction of Brekken and faculty adviser Shawnee Jones, practices for two hours, four nights a week.

Brekken said the hours increase during performance season. "We expect a big commitment from these girls."

Report: Mars trip could be made sooner

AUSTIN (AP) — The first manned flight to Mars could be made several years earlier than proposed by a Bush administration plan and at a savings of $400 billion, according to a former NASA deputy who now heads the University of Texas system.

According to an article by Hans Mark, University of Texas chancellor, and Harlan Smith, a UT professor of astronomy, the current plan for a Mars mission would not take off until 2019 and would cost $500 billion.

Mark and Smith's plan calls for a much leaner budget, about $100 billion spread over 15 years, allowing three humans to visit the red planet by October, 2003.

"Exactly as we got Apollo to the moon from a dead start in eight years," Smith said, "if we pulled out all the stops, we could be at Mars in a decade."

The two scientists criticize Bush's 1989 proposal and current NASA planning. They say the program is so costly it becomes meaningless considering Congress hasn't funded it for fiscal 1992.

Mark, a professor of aerospace engineering and a former deputy administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, teamed up with Smith in the August issue of Aerospace America, the journal of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics.

"In order to expedite the program, save money, and most important, produce benefits for industry and education ... existing technologies that have not yet been used in space should be used," the two wrote.

Their plan calls for a return to the moon in 1995, where they believe there is ice beneath the polar caps delivered by eons of crashing comets.

Because ice is composed of hydrogen and oxygen, the ice could be used to fuel rockets to Mars more cheaply than hauling fuel from Earth.

But even without moon ice, Mark and Smith say a spacecraft about three times the size of the old moon-mission Apollo capsule could be assembled in orbit on the space station with the help of an international coalition.

The journey itself could be reduced from the more than a year

Alcoholic beverage commission takes wine, beer labeling seriously

HOUSTON (AP) — Liquor labeling is no joke according to the files of the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission.

It seems that other brews have taken the heat of the agency's wrath before the authority was spooked by Louisiana's Dixie Blackened Voodoo Lager or placed limits on the Bud Man's generosity, the Houston Chronicle reported in Sunday editions.

Voodoo Lager was temporarily banned from sale in Texas because the name conjured up images of witchcraft. The commission put a stop to a recent Bud Man promotion because it is illegal in Texas for manufacturers to induce customers to buy their products with any kind of giveaway. The promotion, which is legal in most other states, offered cash and beer as prizes.

Last January, the agency banned the sale of Original Hooter's California Chardonnay and White Zinfindel wines because of the label wording.

The labels stated: "A selection of the Iowa wine valley's finest grapes (just kidding!) delicately stomped into a full bodied, robust, voluptuous, sensuous blend that any wino could savor, bag or no bag."

The commission ruled that reference to "winos should be deleted as alcoholic beverages should not be sold to a person who is intoxicated or is a habitual user of alcoholic beverages."

The agency also objected to the jocular reference to Iowa grapes, even though the label clearly identifies the wine as a California vintage.

Texas was the only state to take action against Hooter's wine.

Another brewery that had sales stopped in Texas was Little Kings' Kentucky Derby Ale.

The commission objected to the beer name because it conjured up images of gambling. Parimutuel betting takes place at the Kentucky Derby.

Then there was Black Death Vodka, which has yet to grace the shelves of Texas stores. The vodka was banned because the label shows a grinning skull donned in a black top hat.

"We feel that the label's appearance and description is detrimental to the alcoholic beverage industry and against the peace, welfare and safety of the general public," the commission ruled.

These kind of rulings have labeled the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission as somewhat stodgy among those in the liquor industry.

"Texas is one of the more rigid states, as far as getting anything controversial through the approval process," said Marie Nikic.

Appliances may cause insomnia

AMARILLO (AP) — Radiation from everyday appliances may be keeping their users up at night, according a researcher who studies sleep disorders.

Dr. Russel Reiter of the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio told the Amarillo Globe-News that electromagnetic fields generated by power consumption reduce the production of a hormone that controls sleep.

Reiter said as a person sleeps, the brain's pineal gland produces a hormone called melatonin. Among other functions, melatonin controls the body's rhythm, telling it when to sleep and when to rise.

When light diminishes the production of melatonin, the person wakes up. Conversely, darkness stimulates the pineal gland, making a person sleepy.

Electromagnetic radiation consists of a large spectrum of wavelengths, including radio and television signals, the infrared radiation we feel as heat, light's visible spectrum of colors, ultraviolet radiation, microwaves, X-rays and gamma rays.

"We live in a heavily electrified environment," said Reiter, professor of cellular and structural biology. "Every time a switch is pulled, the wiring in the wall exposes us to a very complex web of electrical and magnetic fields.

"It appears the pineal gland recognizes this non-visible radiation just as it recognizes light."

Reiter's research measures the melatonin levels of mice and rats after they are exposed to weak electromagnetic fields.

The animals are placed in a cage between two electrified copper wire coils producing a weak magnetic field.

Every five minutes for one-hour periods, researchers throw a switch that reverses the magnetic field's direction. The rodents' melatonin levels are recorded at the end of the experiment.

Reiter's research confirms his hypothesis: The animals' melatonin levels drop after the field's direction is repeatedly changed.

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