



DARRIN HILL/The Battalion

After the dive

Derek Davis, a junior history major from Houston, grimaces from the shock of a high dive at the Wofford Cain Pool on Tuesday.

'The Year of the Gulf of Mexico'

EPA, state groups sponsor environmental awareness campaign

By Erin Bradley
The Battalion

The Year of the Gulf of Mexico, which officially began last month, will seek to promote awareness of the environmental issues and the economic importance of the Gulf to the entire country until the end of July 1993.

The program, titled "America's Sea. Keep It Shining," has identified eight issues with both environmental and economic impact on the vast Gulf region.

Five states, including Texas, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida and Louisiana, share the Gulf coastline, as do Mexico and Cuba.

The Environmental Protection Agency founded the Gulf of Mexico Program in 1988

to unite representatives of the five states, and from the program came the eight issues currently in focus during the Year of the Gulf.

"We take the Gulf for granted without fully appreciating the benefits that this vast natural resource provides," said Buck Wynne, Regional Administrator of the EPA, in a released statement.

"The importance of the Gulf is clear. Everyone must play a part in protecting this national treasure."

Statistics, such as the 170 million tons of freight which New Orleans, the busiest port in the nation, handles each year, indicate in part the importance of Gulf waters.

The Gulf is the ninth largest body of water on earth and is traveled by almost half of all U. S. import and export cargo. It produces more than half of the U. S. seafood market, including more finfish, shellfish and shrimp each year than the South and mid-Atlantic,

Chesapeake Bay and New England areas combined.

But on the negative side, Gulf statistics include the fact that Texas, Louisiana and Florida all exceed the national average for plastics found in waste.

Also, 460 municipalities and industrial facilities pipe pollutants directly into the Gulf, with more than one billion gallons from sewers and septic tanks flowing into Gulf waters each day.

In Galveston Bay, 95 percent of seagrasses are dead due to sewage and toxic contamination. As a result, half of the oystering in that area has been closed.

The Gulf program is seeking to involve participants from federal, state and local agencies, private organizations, educators and academicians, civic groups, businesses, scientists and technicians, the media, and concerned citizens.

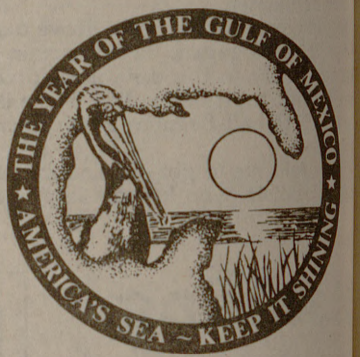
Mote Marine Laboratory, a non-profit marine and environmental research and education center in Florida, which is in charge of the public outreach aspect of the program, wants the public to stay informed.

"Before assuming, however, that the entire Gulf is a simmering stewpot overflowing with toxic wastes and suffocating doses of nutrients, it is encouraging to recognize that the farther offshore one goes, the cleaner the Gulf gets," according to Pamela Casteel, editor of Texas Shores, a quarterly published by Texas A&M University's Sea Grant College Program in her Summer 1992 issue which is dedicated to the Gulf.

"I think our main problem is probably the cleanup of near-shore areas," said Dean E. Letzring, Port Captain of the Texas A&M Oceanography Department's Marine

Operation in Galveston.

Sponsoring the program are the Mote Marine Laboratory, Roberts Communication & Marketing, Inc., The Gulf of Mexico Foundation, The Harlequin Group, and EPA.



The Year of the Gulf is focusing on eight issues:

- Marine debris, or anything from human waste to plastic
- Toxic substances and pesticides
- Coastal erosion
- Public health, or toxins found in water and seafood
- Nutrient enrichment, or nutrient overabundance in water
- Freshwater inflow, which is vital to the mix with saltwater
- Habitat degradation, or the loss of organisms' homes
- Living aquatic resources, or any organism depending on Gulf areas for

Tattoo safety depends on artist's precautions, medical officials say

By Ursula Simms
The Battalion

Although an investigation into the rumor of a relationship between the occurrence of hepatitis and tattoos turned out to be false, Texas A&M medical officials at A.P. Beutel Health Center warn of the dangers of tattoos.

If needles are not cleaned properly, those who get tattoos risk getting hepatitis, AIDS, septicemia and excessive scarring. Sharon Arnold, a Registered Nurse at the A.P. Beutel Health

Center, said she does not approve of tattoos medically and "all needles should be used and thrown away."

"If people do not do proper cleaning techniques or change needles, you will get hepatitis," said Dr. Don Freeman, also of the health center.

The risk is such, said Freeman, that if blood can be transferred from one patient to another, then the risk of hepatitis and HIV is real.

It all depends on if the tattoo artist is using proper sterilization procedures if risk is there or not, Freeman said.

"The most common problem with students with tattoos is how to get rid of them," said Freeman.

Professional tattoos are deeper and are harder to get rid of. Their removal depends on their location and size, said Freeman.

There are basically three removal procedures, Freeman said. Small tattoos can be cut out and the area sewn up. Larger tattoos may require the use of a laser, which superficially burns the skin, removing the tattoo.

A tattoo can also be removed by a tattoo artist by injecting the tattoo with a natural skin color paint that covers up the tattoo.

Professor researches post-polio syndrome

By Robin Roach
The Battalion

An almost extinct disease in today's day and age, poliomyelitis (polio) once claimed thousands of lives nearly 30 years ago. But today, polio survivors may be faced with post-polio syndrome.

Dr. William P. Fife, professor of hyperbaric medicine at the Texas A&M Health Science Center, is conducting experiments to test his hypothesis that breathing high-pressure oxygen in a hyperbaric chamber will relieve the symptoms of post-polio syndrome.

"With post-polio syndrome, what I think we're doing is providing more oxygen so that the nerve can produce more acetylcholine. That is my working hypothesis," Fife said.

Polio is a viral disease which attacks and destroys nerves at random. When the nerve is destroyed, there is a scarcity of acetylcholine, a neurotransmitter, which causes pain in the muscles that are affected.

Supplying a post-polio sufferer with hyperbaric oxygen will supply the body with more oxygen and produce more acetylcholine to alleviate the pain associated with post-polio

syndrome.

"They start getting pain usually in the same muscles that were hit with paralysis before but not always. Sometimes muscles, that they didn't notice had any trouble before, get the pain," Fife said. "It is pain, stiffness, very quick fatigue and exhaustion, so they can't really do anything."

Although polio was extremely contagious and easily transmittable in the past, post-polio syndrome is not. When post-polio sets in, it is no longer classified as a virus.

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