

Student's summer in sticks provides lessons in life

BY SHEA WIGGINS
THE BATTALION

This summer, Nathan McFall cooked his meals on a fire in the deep valleys of the wilderness. He went without showers, air conditioning and electricity for 28 days. He rescued hypothermia victims from the claws of a raging river. Now the senior environmental science major is back in civilization to fight the battles of the college front.

McFall spent his summer at two outdoor wilderness programs. "The programs are like college level courses," McFall said. "It is summer school in the woods."

McFall went to the New Hampshire Stonehearth Open Learning Opportunities (SOLO) Wilderness Medicine course for one month of medical wilderness training. He worked with students from Antarctica and the Navy Seals to be certified as an emergency medical technician.

"It was a lot of interactive learning," McFall said. "There were scenarios set up for us in the wilderness with fake blood and terrified victims. We were responsible for saving and treating them."

McFall also went to Wyoming for 28 days away from civilization in a Wilderness Education Association program. He was certified as an outdoor leader, placing him in the top 20 percent of all wilderness participants in the nation.

McFall said the programs changed his outlook on life. "The wilderness gives you a new perspective on society," McFall said. "The things I thought were so important were no longer my top priorities. The courses are all about getting back to your roots and remembering what you started as."

McFall's interest in the outdoors began in a high school outdoor education course. He worked at TAMU Outdoors last summer.

McFall is the 1996 director of the Conference on Student Government Associations (COSGA) at Texas A&M. He has been a Fish Aide, a member of Aggie Leaders of Tomorrow (ALOT), assistant director of Hosts and Reception for MSC Town Hall, a representative in Student Government and a member of the Texas Environmental Action Coalition (TEAC).

Brandon Casteel, COSGA programming executive and international business major, works with McFall and said model to students.

"He is the guy who does it all," Casteel said. "He can spend a day in the woods and come back to help direct countless programs in the University. He does what a lot of people only think about doing."

McFall uses his wilderness and his environmental knowledge to help in his leadership at A&M.

"I think we could have more recycling bins all over campus," McFall said. "I also have ideas for recycling for somewhere to throw a Coke can."

"There is a lot of paper waste on campus. I would like to see more recycling bins as well as more outdoor awareness in the University."

McFall said he also has many ideas to address this year in TEAC.

"I have heard that pollution is a problem in Research Park, and I would like to look at it," McFall said. "I also have ideas for arsenic levels are way too high in Bryan and College Station golf courses. These are some serious concerns."

David Salmon, MSC program manager, worked with McFall on MSC Town Hall events.

"Nathan has a wonderful and unique outlook on life," Salmon said. "He is involved and dedicated to nature as a student, a giving volunteer and a wonderful musician."

"He can choose any of these paths and be a success," Salmon said. "I see two career paths after college."

"I either would like to open an outdoor education company to take people rafting, climbing, or work as a wilderness teacher," McFall said. "Either way, I would get paid to do what I would pay to do in the wilderness."

McFall said he is attracted to the challenge of simple living. "I have been places where if I took the wrong step, I could die," McFall said. "It is the challenge of these problems and the inclination to go out and live in complete simplicity that makes me want to get back to basics. Don't we all want to sometimes?"

"If I could, I would walk into the woods naked, make my own shelter and weapons and just start living."



Pat James, THE BATTALION

Senior environmental design major, Nathan McFall, spent his summer participating in survival schools.

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PEJO
Continued from page 3

of the U.S. Tae kwon do Union, making him the most respected master in the country, Pejo said.

Pejo said a certain amount of personal talent was also necessary.

"I've always been a fighter," he said. "There are things in life you do better than anyone else, and for me, it's fighting. I can see something in a fighting technique, and do it."

His natural athletic ability and "street experience" as a bartender and doorman in

Dallas further honed his self-defense skills, Pejo said.

Now, Pejo teaches what he has learned to others.

He owns the Martial Arts Center, where he also teaches combat hapkido, a more "practical" form of self-defense, he said.

In addition to coaching the A&M tae kwon do team and the Center's elite team, Pejo works with the University Plus program, local school programs, rape prevention workshops, attention deficit disorder sufferers and a "second shot" juvenile delinquent program.

"If everybody was required to do martial arts," Pejo said, "there would be no gangs."

Martial arts provides a focus and self esteem to help come the draw of gangs, he said, and creates leaders.

"If you're a leader, you don't succumb to peer pressure," he said.

At 28, Pejo is a young master, he said. He follows protocol — including making his students bow to him, to show respect for his knowledge — but he said martial arts simple and enjoyable, he said.

"My classes are fun," he said. "I can't do it if it wasn't fun."

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