

Rain, hail and tornadoes entice Texas A&M

STORM CHASERS

The lightning flashes like a strobe light in the background of a large funnel cloud. Ninety mph winds rock cars, as softball-size hail plummets from the sky. Citizens run for cover, but storm chasers run to the storm.

Storm chasers are common in the "Tornado Alley" region of the United States, which includes Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska and North Texas. A new organization this fall will bring Texas A&M student storm chasers together in the hunt for severe weather conditions.

Texas A&M Mobile Severe Storms Data Acquisitions (TAMSSDA), plans to offer meteorology club members and graduate students a chance to see what nature's most powerful forces are all about.

The students will aid the National Weather Service in verifying severe weather warnings.

Jason Jordan, an organizer of TAMSSDA and a sophomore meteorology major, has chased storms for three years.

"You only get so much from textbooks," he said. "Books show you one picture of a tornado, but when you go storm chasing, you see that no (two) tornadoes are the same."

Storm chasers in TAMSSDA will be notified when there is a chance for storms, Jordan said. He said he wants the organization to have three vehicles chasing storms, and other students in the Eller Oceanography and Meteorology Building can report severe weather to the chasers on walkie talkies and possibly cellular phones.

Senior meteorology major Adam Houston, who is also helping start TAMSSDA, said storm chasers enjoy the chase.

"It is kind of a cult," he said. "Like a hunt—it is very testosterone-laden. We get together and tell old war stories and [boast] whether we forecasted storms correctly or not. It is like a boy's club."

He said student storm chasers typically set aside a week at a time to chase, because long drives to severe weather are hard for students to fit in their schedules.

Houston has seen many tornadoes in the seven years he has been chasing. A large tornado in Thorton, Texas, surprised him and four other chasers taking pictures of a storm.

"We heard the tornado warning, and we were

looking and looking," he said. "We felt that quiet eerie calm, and suddenly one of the drivers said 'What the hell is that?' A tornado crossed the road five miles ahead of us, and we could see it through the lightning."

Houston said he and Dr. Louis Wicker, an assistant professor of meteorology, saw multiple tornadoes in the Panhandle in 1995.

"The storm was a F5 rating—the highest for a storm, based on damage," Houston said. "A smaller tornado was going around a larger tornado, and an 82-knot gust nearly rolled a car in front of us over."

"We felt that quiet eerie calm, and suddenly one of the drivers said 'What the hell is that?' A tornado crossed the road five miles ahead of us, and we could see it through the lightning."

Adam Houston, senior meteorology major

"We didn't know whether to go forward or not. We couldn't see the tornado, even though it was one-and-a-half miles wide, because the visibility was so bad."

Wicker, who has chased for about 18 years, said he has seen about 35 to 40 major tornadoes.

"When I started, it was an oral tradition," he said. "You just talked to people who did it in the '70s. Now there are storm-chasing web pages."

Wicker said a typical storm chase covers 300 miles a day, and longer chases can average 700 to 800 miles.

"It amazes me more people haven't been hurt, going 12 hours or more on the road in poor weather conditions," he said. "But there has only been one person I have been aware of that died."

People who do not understand meteorology should not make storm chasing a hobby, Wicker said.

"It is a big commitment of time, energy

and knowledge," Houston said. "I guess that is why it is not as attractive as something like playing baseball."

Jordan said TAMSSDA members will be limited.

"It is dangerous, and we have to keep the risks down," he said. "Eventually, once we get started, maybe we can take other students."

Wicker said storm chasers chase on highways, not fields, and chase in all vehicles, except motorcycles.

John Fulton, a sophomore meteorology and computer science major who has chased for three years, said his father influenced his love of chasing.

"He was a relay guy for those who spotted storms," he said. "I am more of a hurricane guy myself, but growing up in North Dakota, there are not a lot of hurricanes."

Fulton said he has seen funnel clouds, but nothing he could prove was a tornado. He has had more luck when he was just driving than when he actually chased.

He said storm chasers must be trained to go out into the danger.

"The people in *Twister* acted like idiots," he said. "If you don't know what you are doing, you shouldn't go."

Weather services offer "sky-warn" seminars to train people properly to be storm chasers and spotters, Fulton said.

Wicker said College Station has not seen a tornado since 1989, but warns students that the next two months is the most likely time of the year for tornadoes.

"Keep your eye on the sky," Wicker said.

Houston said the organization will use members forecasting skills and knowledge of storm forms to call in severe weather to the National Weather Service.

"We are not just a bunch of yahoos out there running off of adrenaline and endangering lives," he said.

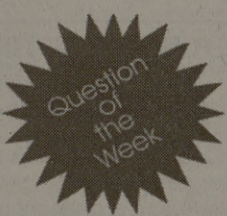
Story by Shea Wiggins

Artwork by James Palmer

On the left is all the knowledge squeezed out of students going to all other leading tutors.



On the right is the knowledge squeezed out of students going to



Question:

4.0 & GO

Which appendage might suffer from "taresthesia"?

(First 5 to call with answer get free review!)

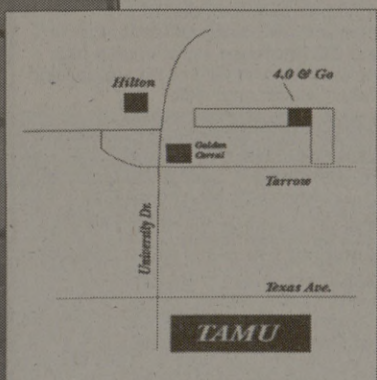
Answer appears Thursday

Last Thursday's answer: The biggest playing field is used in polo, over 12 acres.

The week of April 20 - April 27

Acct 229	Part I Tue Apr 22 6pm-8pm	Part II Wed Apr 23 6pm-8pm	Part III Thu Apr 24 6pm-8pm	Part IV Fri Apr 25 6pm-8pm
Acct 230	Part I Mon Apr 21 4pm-6pm	Part II Tue Apr 22 4pm-6pm or 8pm-10pm	Part III Wed Apr 23 4pm-6pm or 8pm-10pm	Part IV Thu Apr 24 4pm-6pm or 8pm-10pm
Acct 327	Part I Sun Apr 20 6pm-9pm	Part II Mon Apr 21 6pm-9pm	Part III Tue Apr 22 6pm-9pm	Part IV Wed Apr 23 6pm-9pm
Flnc 341	Part I Mon Apr 21 9pm-11pm	Part II Tue Apr 22 9pm-11pm	Part III Wed Apr 23 9pm-11pm	Part IV Thu Apr 24 9pm-11pm
Math 142 Review for Finals	Part I Sat Apr 26 3pm-6pm	Part II Sun Apr 27 3pm-6pm		
Math 151	Test Review Sun Apr 20 9pm-12am			
Math 152	Test Review Sun Apr 20 9pm-12am			
Math 152 Review for Finals	Part I Sat Apr 26 6pm-9pm	Part II Sun Apr 27 6pm-9pm		
Mgmt 212	Part I Sun Apr 20 9pm-12am	Part II Mon Apr 21 9pm-12am		

Tickets go on sale Sunday at 8:30 p.m.
4.0 & Go is located behind Golden Corral and next to Slidepockets.



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Look for our ads on Mondays and Thursdays

CLASS OF 1997 ANNOUNCES

STEP OFF... INTO THE SPOTLIGHT

SENIOR WEEK

KARAOKE KICKOFF

TUESDAY, APRIL 22

BULLWINKLE'S BAR AND GRILL

KARAOKE ALL NIGHT STARTING AT 10PM

DOORS OPEN AT 9PM

WHAT'S IT LIKE AT THE PLASMA CENTER?

To the staff of the Plasma Center,

I would like to start by saying thank you to each and every employee for making the past three years enjoyable in a professional, efficient and courteous environment. As a donor since 1993, I have been more than satisfied with every aspect of your operation, which allows myself and others to contribute what we can to community service, all the while being serviced by diligent, but relaxed, workers. Everyone at the Plasma Center, from those behind the front counter to the phlebotomists to the supervisors, have made great efforts to insure that each donor feels hygienically safe, as well as keeping the atmosphere light.

Like most, I started coming to the Plasma Center for monetary reasons, but I soon developed acquaintances that appealed to me almost as much as the original need for money, enabling me to look forward to each donation, not only for my wallet's sake but also

to see my friends. Like I commented to someone recently, talking to people at the Plasma Center was like getting mail from a far-off friend that you don't get to do much with, but who you can talk to as often as you write. For those acquaintances and for your continual services. I would like to thank all of those I've come to know and appreciate over the past three years - Emily, and Tracy, Heath, and Marty, Ada and Josie, etc... more I can't remember or those who have gone on to better things.

So, as I graduate from this great University, I bid you all a fond farewell and strong commendations on such a successful blend of quality medical practice and friendly service. Thank you all and have a great summer. Thanks, C.F.

WESTGATE
BIOLOGICALS
THE PLASMA CENTER

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