

GONG XI FA CAI (Happy New Year!)



SALLIE TURNER/THE BATTALION

Yintong Zhang, a six-year-old College Station resident, performs a traditional Chinese dance at the opening of Chinese New Year celebration Saturday night. The celebration, sponsored by the China Club, was postponed one week due to scheduling conflicts. This year is the "Year of the Dragon."

Prairie View tragedy

Campus, students mourns after 4 die, 6 injured in van accident carrying the men's track team

BY APRIL YOUNG
The Battalion

A cloud of darkness came over the Texas A&M University-Prairie View campus Friday as thousands gathered for a memorial service to mourn the loss of four members of the university's men's track team killed in a car accident Thursday night.

Former President George Bush and Texas A&M President Dr. Ray M. Bowen attended the memorial service.

The team was en route to a track meet at the University of Arkansas-Pine Bluff the night of the accident. The accident occurred in Marshall, Texas.

Tito Escobar, a long distance runner and a sophomore electrical engineering major at Prairie View, would have driven the van to Arkansas, but did not attend the meet because of an injury received in an earlier meet.

Escobar said that he was told that 21-year-old driver Houston Watson was overcome by a blind spot on the top of a hill.

"The car in front slowed down to turn into a grocery store, but they didn't see the car slowing in front since they were going over the hill," Escobar said. "They swerved to avoid hitting the car in front of them and lost control of the van causing it to flip over."

According to police investigators, the van Watson was driving did not come into contact with another vehicle during the accident, but may have swerved to avoid hitting an oncoming vehicle. Authorities said that although there have been reports that another vehicle was involved, they are still conducting an investigation to determine if that is a fact.

Escobar lost four teammates in the accident: freshman Vernon James II, from Vallejo California; sophomore Jerome Jackson, from Dallas; senior Houston Watson, from Greenville; and sophomore Samuel Stern, from Jasper.

Six others were injured, including the team's coach, Hoover Wright.

As of Sunday, Wright's condition was upgraded to good, and he was moved out of intensive care at Marshall Regional Medical Center.

Lewis Edmonson also was upgraded to good condition at Good Shepherd Medical Center in nearby Longview.

Rashad Shelton's condition has been upgraded from critical to good, and he was moved out of intensive care at Marshall Regional Medical Center.

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serious condition at Louisiana State University Medical Center in Shreveport.

Larry Raab, vice president for university operations at Prairie View A&M, compared the fatal accident to the 1999 Aggie Bonfire collapse.

"This tragedy is similar to that which happened at A&M in that anytime a large population of young people passes, it is a very sobering experience," Raab said. "This is a small campus where most kids know many others and quite a few athletes were very well known, so it's like it happened to a family member."

Escobar considers the strained calf muscle that prevented him from attending the meet a blessing in disguise.

"I was supposed to be driving the van for that meet, but since I was hurt, I didn't go," Escobar said. "When I first heard about it, it was hard for me since I was supposed to be driving, but after talking to my family, I take it as a blessing. I guess I got hurt for a reason."

Escobar said the athletic department at Prairie View is relatively small and cannot afford charters, so it was typical for students to drive the van to track meets.

There has been an outpouring of support for the university following the tragedy.

A moment of silence was held prior to the singing of the "Star Spangled Banner" before the A&M men's basketball game Saturday.

Lt. Gov. Rick Perry issued the following statement in a press release: "It is profoundly sad when individuals representing the future of our state are unable to live out their hopes and dreams of a better tomorrow. My thoughts and prayers are with all those impacted by this tragedy. May they be sustained and strengthened during this time of loss."

The team spent the weekend reflecting on their fallen teammates. "We have just been reminiscing about the people that died and the people that are hurt and some of the things we are going to miss about them," Escobar said. "It's going to be hard [without them] because these are people we would see at least six times a week."



CODY WAGES/THE BATTALION

Flowers cover the track field at Prairie View A&M Sunday in memorial of the four track students who lost their lives in van accident Friday.

Former Corps of Cadets commandant, Army colonel dies at 93

BY BRANDIE LIFFICK
The Battalion

Col. Joe E. Davis, commandant of the Corps of Cadets from 1952 to 1964, died Saturday morning at the age of 93.

Davis, an Army colonel before taking his position as the faculty head of the Corps, was being treated for complications of pneumonia at Harris Methodist Hospital in Stephenville, Texas.

Davis served at the helm of the Corps of Cadets during the years in which Texas A&M College became Texas A&M University (1963), when the Corps became non-compulsory (1954) and when women were first admitted to A&M on a full-time basis (1963).



Davis

Texas A&M President Ray M. Bowen was a member of the Corps of Cadets when Col. Davis served as commandant.

"He was a very decisive man, yet gentle and kind," Bowen said. "You always knew that he was the boss."

"Colonel Davis served during a

"I remember him as a very inspirational and wonderful role model. He was a wonderful leader who taught us skill and responsibility."

— Gen. Ted Hopgood
current Corps of Cadets commandant

period of great tension on campus. He was here when they were first experimenting with the Corps being optional," Bowen said. "He and his people did a great job handling the changes."

Gen. Ted Hopgood, current Corps commandant, was also a member of the Corps when Davis served.

"I remember him as a

very inspirational and wonderful role model," Hopgood said. "He was a wonderful leader who taught us skill and responsibility."

"Colonel Davis was a great commandant and a wonderful Aggie who made the changes occurring at the University at the time an easier transition," Hopgood said.

Services for Davis will be held Tuesday, Feb. 15 at Gardens of Memory Cemetery in Stephenville, Texas.

"We always have to remember the great people that contributed to this University, who strive to make it better," said Forrest Lane, Corps commander and senior political science major.

"We need to be thankful for the time that we had Colonel Davis here."

Trainer seeks help for dog

BY SARA PROFFITT
The Battalion

Anya, an eight-month-old German shepherd, was returning from a trip to Wal-Mart with her trainer, Melissa Sullivan, when she escaped and was hit by a maroon sport utility vehicle. The car never stopped.

She was left with a broken rear left foot, injured jaw, facial trauma and a cracked cheekbone.

Anya is not just any German shepherd — she is a guide dog in training being raised by Sullivan, a junior animal science major, as part of the non-profit group Aggie Guide Dog and Service Dogs.

Soon after the accident, Sullivan found a clause in her training contract that held her, as a trainer, financially responsible for Anya's medical bills.

"Two thousand dollars isn't something I can easily come up with," Sullivan said.

But Sullivan has not been left alone with the burden. The animal clinic which treated Anya discounted services, an anonymous donor paid the first medical bill, and a local cafe in Bryan donated \$1000.

A public fund, called the Anya Relief Fund, was established by the Aggie Guide Dog and Service Dogs to help aid in Anya's medical bills, which are still increasing from repeated visits to the animal clinic.

Shelly Novotny, president of Aggie Guide Dog and Service Dogs, said that at the time of the accident, Anya



MELISSA SACKETT/THE BATTALION

Aggie guide dog, Anya, gets personal attention from her trainer, Melissa Sullivan, a junior animal science major.

was the club's best prospect to next be placed with a national organization, placing her estimated value at \$2,500. As a fully trained guide dog, Anya would fetch \$10,000.

Novotny said her primary concern is if Anya will be able to finish her formal training.

"We're willing to invest a lot now in order to make her more profitable for someone later," she said.

Novotny believes a possible fear of cars could be a major hindrance to Anya's training.

"As long as she doesn't have any fear of cars, she should be great," Novotny said. "I don't think she has any clue what hit her."

Any donations to the Anya Relief Fund beyond the cost of Anya's medical bills will be used for unexpected future incidents with other guide dogs. Donations can be made at the Student Center in the Koldus Building, cubicle nine.

Novotny says the club's purpose is to educate the

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Rec center fees may rise for the Fall 2000 semester

BY DANA JAMUS
The Battalion

Playing a game of racquetball or hitting the weightroom at the Student Recreation Center may cost a few extra dollars next semester if a proposed fee increase is approved.

The Rec Center is proposing a net \$7 increase in fees to enable the center to cover costs without reducing the amount or quality of services currently offered, said Dennis Corrington, director of Recreational Sports.

The increase will appear as a \$27 increase in the fee statement, said Will Hurd, student body president and senior computer science major. However, the net increase will be only \$7.

The \$20 set aside for the Rec Center under the Student Services fee will now be added to the current Rec Center fee of \$50.

Approximately three of the seven additional dollars to be collected from students will be devoted to covering the Rec Center's current costs, Corrington said.

Corrington said increases in minimum wage have meant an increase in the costs of student

labor, and the Rec Center utility costs have risen approximately \$300,000, he said.

The remaining \$4 will go toward building renewal and modification and equipment depreciation, he said.

This amount will cover the long-term maintenance of the center.

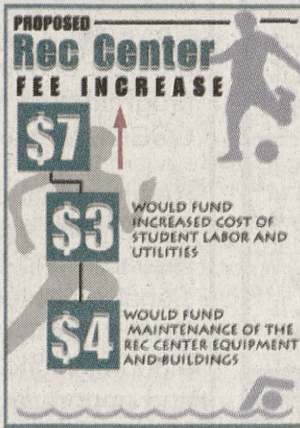
This proposal is still in its initial stages and will be brought up for consideration by the Student Senate this Wednesday.

If it is approved, the student body will then vote on whether to adopt the new fees. After following all the procedures, a final decision should be reached by March 28 or 29, Corrington said. Hurd believes that this proposal is a "great plan," because it allows the gradual buildup of funds to maintain the Rec Center instead of having to drastically raise prices when the need arises.

This plan distributes the costs of long-term building and equipment maintenance across all the students and over the life of the facilities, Hurd said.

He applauds the Rec Center's desire to manage their costs responsibly and thinks other departments in the University should follow suit.

"[The center is] looking out for the best long-term interest of students," he said.



RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

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