

Four escaped inmates arrested in Colorado

One commits suicide, others still at large

WOODLAND PARK, Colo. (AP) — Acting on a tip, authorities on Monday captured four of the seven convicts who broke out of a Texas prison nearly six weeks ago and allegedly gunned down a policeman on Christmas Eve.

A fifth inmate killed himself inside a motor home that had been surrounded by authorities in this foothills community about 50 miles southwest of Denver.

The whereabouts of the two other inmates were unknown. Authorities said they may have been in Woodland Park as recently as Sunday and may have left to get more money.

"The story is by no means

over," said Mark Mershon, the top FBI official in Colorado. "We have two suspects that are still on the loose."

"This story is by no means over."

— Mark Mershon
FBI official

The heavily armed inmates — including murderers, rapists and armed robbers — had puzzled and alarmed authorities by remaining together after bluffing their way out of prison Dec. 13. The slaying of the Dallas-area officer 11

days later only increased fears that the inmates might want to go out in a blaze of gunfire.

Among those arrested was George Rivas, 30, the suspected ringleader who was serving a life sentence for robbery and kidnapping. Investigators have portrayed Rivas as fearless and shrewd with a powerful hold over the others, but authorities said he expressed remorse as he admitted to the slaying of the policeman.

"He stated that he had a change of heart, change of life and he wanted this to end," said State Patrol Trooper Eric Zachareas, who was at the convenience store where Rivas and two

others were arrested.

Rivas had dyed his hair blonde and another inmate had dyed his hair orange in an apparent attempt to avoid scrutiny, Zachareas said. He also said some of the fugitives may have been at a Colorado Springs bar late Saturday.

"Apparently, they were out partying," he said.

The convicts arrived in the area on Jan. 1, said Teller County Sheriff Frank Fehn. He offered no other details of their activities, nor how they covered the more than 800 miles from the prison in south Texas.

Authorities said a week-end tip prompted by the show "America's Most Wanted" led to the capture.

ESCAPE CHRONOLOGY

Dec. 13, 2000 - The gang breaks out of the Connally Unit in Kenedy, southeast of San Antonio

Dec. 15, 2000 - Two of the fugitives, ringleader George Rivas and Donald Newbury, are suspected of robbing a Radio Shack in Pearland, a suburb southwest of Houston

Dec. 24, 2000 - The convicts are suspected of robbing an Oshman's sporting goods store in Irving and killing responding officer Aubrey Hawkins.

Jan. 3, 2001 - The U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms in San Antonio charges the men with weapons violations. An autopsy report is released showing that the slain Irving officer suffered 11 gunshot wounds — six in the head — and was run over by a vehicle.

Jan. 4, 2001 - FBI agents in the Dallas area file separate federal charges of unlawful flight to avoid federal prosecution for capital murder, making the manhunt nationwide.

Jan. 11, 2001 - The Texas Board of Criminal Justice releases a "serious incident review," which says prison staff missed opportunities to prevent the escape.

Jan. 15, 2001 - The FBI adds \$140,000 to the \$300,000 reward fund.

Jan. 22, 2001 - Law enforcement officers outside Colorado Springs, Colo., arrest four of the seven and a fifth commits suicide.

RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

Student assaulted on campus

By BRADY CREEL
The Battalion

A 19-year-old Texas A&M student was assaulted at about 12:30 a.m. Monday as he walked on the A&M Golf Course, said Bob Wiatt, director of the University Police Department (UPD).

The student, whose name has not been released for security reasons, was walking on the jogging path along George Bush Drive when he heard footsteps behind him.

Wiatt said the student stepped to the side, assuming that the oncoming footsteps were those of a jogger. However, the person struck the student in the back of the head with an unknown object, knocking him to the ground. As the student fell, the assailant grabbed the student's backpack, ripping one of the straps off.

"He went into the young man's pocket, took his wallet and fled," Wiatt said. "[The student] described the assailant as a Caucasian or Hispanic male, approximately 6 feet tall, clothed in all black and a hat."

The student's wallet was later found and the contents scattered on the ground.

"The only things taken were the Texas driver's license and \$7," Wiatt said.

Further details of the incident are sketchy, Wiatt said, and the investigation is ongoing.

One factor that played an important role in the assault was the student's use of his cell phone. Wiatt said the student's girlfriend's phone number was programmed in the phone's one-touch memory, and the student was able to call her. She alerted the police, who responded within minutes.

"The cell phone got immediate attention," Wiatt said.

Since the assailant was not identified, he has not been apprehended, he said. Although patrols have not been increased, UPD officers are especially alert to suspicious activity.

Wiatt said students must take a proactive role in safety on campus, and despite popular misconceptions, the campus is not always a safe place.

"This is nothing more than a microcosm of society on this campus," he said. "You have to be alert and if you are walking, thinking about your next class, there are people out there looking forward to making you a victim."

Wiatt said it is impossible to tell if this was an isolated incident, but students should take precaution when walking by themselves.

"If you have two or more people, it is very unlikely that anything would happen," Wiatt said.

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Student rule changes finalized

By DAVID JOHNSON
The Battalion

Annual changes to student rules, which usually occur in the fall semester, arrived in the spring semester this year instead.

"Final approved revisions had not been returned prior to the start of the fall semester," said Brent Paterson, Dean of the Department of Student Life.

Changes affect policies on registration, stu-

dent conduct code and sexual assault.

Until this semester, any undergraduate or graduate student was required to have at least six registered hours to run for or hold an elected office at A&M. Now, graduate students can run if they are taking fewer than six hours.

The idea for the new rule originated in 1999 when Tracey Forman was working on a master's degree project that

required a proposal of a fictitious policy. As a graduate student and a student worker, she knew that graduate students' larger workloads make taking six hours difficult. Using the classroom assignment to tackle this problem, she turned her "fictitious" proposal into a reality.

"I wanted to give grad students the same opportunities as undergraduate students," she said. Forman proposed to

the Graduate Student Council in January 2000 that graduate students taking fewer than six credit hours be allowed to run for office.

Changes in state laws also affected student rules. The Cleary Act requires all state-sponsored schools to report crime statistics annually.

Kim Novak, director of Student Judicial Services, said the law allows the University to hold students account-

able for off-campus misconduct related to student organizations, such as fraternity parties.

Registration rules have been modified to clarify that a student must be registered for 12 hours at A&M to achieve full-time student status.

"You can't split six and six between A&M and Blinn; it has to be A&M only," said Rob

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CHANGES to Student Rules HANDBOOK

- 1) University can punish students for off-campus misconduct
- 2) Students must take at least 12 hours at A&M to be enrolled full time
- 3) Undergrads must have 3.0 GPA to enroll in graduate courses

Read rules at <http://student-rules.tamu.edu>

RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

Food Services gets technological update

Touch-screen registers cause few problems, new hours established

By SHANNON GALARY
The Battalion

Adjusting to new hours and new equipment caused a few headaches last week for the Food Services Department and the students it feeds, but officials say the problems are only short term.

The checkout equipment at campus dining centers was more than 10 years old and severely in need of an upgrade, said computer systems manager Jon Gardner. "The cash registers were old and slow, and they didn't provide a whole lot of flexibility," Gardner said.

He said the old equipment was so outdated that it was diffi-

cult to find replacement parts.

The new system uses the ethernet instead of telephone lines and allows Aggie Bucks, cash and meal plans to be processed at one register.

The new system, which will cost about \$400,000, will be upgraded as new software becomes necessary and available.

Food Service workers have hit some snags trying to use the new computers, and many students' cards are being rejected.

"The card readers on the new terminals are not as sensitive as the old card readers," Gardner said.

Mary McFarland, a student worker at

Sbisa Dining Hall and freshman sociology major, attributes some of the problems to the large number of new workers and the need for more training on the new computer system.

"Once they get up and running, they'll be fine," McFarland said. "There's still a few kinks to work out."

The new hours for the Sbisa and Commons Dining Halls also caused some unexpected problems, said Cynthia Zawieja, associate director of Food Services.

Sbisa and the Commons are now open for dinner on Sunday evenings but closed

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Student worker and senior geology major Kate Wiederkeher uses one of the new touch screen computer cash registers at the Commons Market

to serve a customer on Monday. The new registers have been installed at all Food Services dining locations on campus.

STUART VILLANUEVA/THE BATTALION

Sbisa Dining Hall begins Internet access program

By TAMARA RUSSELL
The Battalion

After receiving a facelift last year, Sbisa Dining Hall will leap into the 21st century with a new program called E-meals that allows students with laptop computers to access the Internet while eating.

"We thought since so many people had laptops they could bring them in and work while they eat," said Cynthia Zawieja, associate director of the Food Services Department. "It's kind of like a cyber cafe."

Jon Gardner, computer systems manager for Food Services, said he has received a lot of requests for an Internet cafe, but getting enough computers and maintaining them would be too difficult.

Gardner said any Macintosh lap-

top with an Airport, or a PC with a wireless card that is compatible with an 802.11b wireless network protocol, will work in the building.

"Most laptop computers come with an Airport or wireless card," Gardner said. "Then students will have to run virtual private network (VPN) client on their laptop to get access to the network."

"We're not charging the students anything for the service and it doesn't cost us much because we need it for our staff anyway, so it's just a perk that we can give back to the students," Gardner said.

Gardner said Food Services does not know how many students will use the service.

"We can run 20 to 30 users per base station, and we have three base stations set up for student use,"

Gardner said. "If we end up having more than 30 users per base station, we will add more base stations."

Right now, students without VPN client on their computers will not be able to use the wireless service in Sbisa, but Gardner said it will soon be possible.

Sbisa is the only location on campus set for wireless service, but Gardner said he hopes that more locations will offer service once the network is finalized.

"My goal is to have every Food Service location offer wireless service by the end of the year," Gardner said. "The long-term goal is to have the entire campus covered by a wireless umbrella so you can access the Web from anywhere, even outside, but that is still a couple of years down the road."

Property missing from hall

By BRADY CREEL
The Battalion

Three Spence Hall residents filed complaints with University Police Department Monday, reporting that items were missing from their rooms after they returned from winter break.

Bob Wiatt, director of the University Police Department (UPD), said the reports indicated that jewelry and money were taken from the rooms with no evidence of forced entry. "Somebody had to use a key to get in," Wiatt said.

Amy Sandlin, a sophomore civil engineering major, said her pearl necklace was taken during the break. She said that Saturday night was the first time she had wanted to wear the necklace since she returned, but when she opened her jewelry box, it was not there.

To ensure she had not taken her necklace home during the break and forgotten it, she waited until Sunday and called home to see if she had left the necklace there.

Sandlin said the necklace was the only item of any value left in her room. She said her roommate was not missing anything, but she had taken almost everything home with her.

Sue Foster, Residence Life assistant director for residence education, said that items are often stolen before the break, sometimes weeks before residence halls are closed.

"Sometimes we have (reported theft) situations, when in reality, something could have been missing for some time," Foster said.

Foster and Wiatt said reports of missing personal items after a break are not unusual.

"It is pretty common, especially during winter break when people are not in their rooms," Wiatt said.

Tom Murray, manager for custodial and maintenance services, said two access card databases are maintained

See SPENCE on Page 6.

Degree hours change

Faculty Senate amends engineering criteria

By BRANDIE LIFFICK
The Battalion

The Faculty Senate approved many changes to the Dwight Look College of Engineering's curriculum at its monthly meeting Monday. If approved by Texas A&M President Dr. Ray M. Bowen, the changes will appear in the 2000-01 course catalog.

The biomedical engineering department decreased the number of hours needed to graduate from 135 to 130 hours. The nuclear engineering department decreased the total

number of hours required for a degree from 135 to 132 hours. The aerospace and mechanical engineering departments each eliminated two kinesiology credits that are no longer required by the core curriculum.

The emeritus status policy now includes faculty members who die while employed by the University. Faculty members can be awarded emeritus status if they are in good standing when they die, and if the

See SENATE on Page 12.