

THE BATTALION

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Students brave severe weather to chase storms

By Pammy Ramji
THE BATTALION

While most flee from natural disasters, students in the Texas A&M Mobile Severe Storm Data Acquisition program take their video cameras and run toward tornadoes and hurricanes.

The program allows participants to observe severe thunderstorms and tornadoes in the field and is run by the A&M Student Chapter of the American Meteorological Society, a student organization that brings all who are interested in meteorology and the atmospheric sciences together.

Kevin Walter and Jason Sippel, graduate students in the A&M Department of Atmospheric Sciences, are the group coordinators this year.

"To learn about thunderstorms and weather in the classroom is one thing, but to see it

actually develop in the field right before your eyes really solidifies the knowledge in your mind," Walter said.

Mobile spotting teams of organization members go out to places where thunderstorms are occurring or are expected to occur to observe them in as safe a manner as possible.

Walter said some storm chasers will say they chase only for the thrill, but that puts it in the same category as an amusement park, which it is not.

"Storm chasing is much more as you go through an entire process of preparing yourself and your team, making educated decisions even a day in advance about both the forecast and your chase attack plan," Walter said.

On May 5, 2001, the group formed a team of three mobile units to chase a tornado in Cordell, Okla.

This was the first tornado Sippel experienced with the organization, and he said it is one he will never forget. The group had to make quick decisions such as whether to go east or north so they could intercept the storm.

The group chose to go north and when the storm came, everyone ran out to videotape it, Sippel said. The tornado grew as time went on and caused damage to the city before diminishing, ending the chase.

About 90 members are currently a part of the chapter. To qualify for participation in field operations, individuals must be 18 years old, pay dues and be a meteorology graduate student, a Ham Radio Club member or a faculty member.

Potential members must also attend the storm spotting safety seminar, which is held at



JOHN C. LIVAS • THE BATTALION

Wind speeds greater than 90 mph drove sand and salt into graduate student and storm chaser Kevin Walter during the landfall of Hurricane Claudette in Port O'Connor, Texas, on July 15.

See Chasers on page 2

UN adopts plan to stabilize Iraq

By Edith M. Lederer
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

UNITED NATIONS — The Security Council unanimously adopted a resolution Thursday aimed at attracting more troops and money to help stabilize Iraq and speed its independence — a diplomatic victory for Washington after the bitter dispute over the war.

The resolution's success hinges on whether it generates additional funds for Iraq's reconstruction at next week's donors conference in Madrid, Spain, and whether countries decide to send new forces to Iraq.

In a dramatic shift, France, Germany and Russia — key opponents of the U.S.-led war against Iraq — supported the resolution. But they immediately

ruled out any new military or financial help, reflecting ongoing concern about the speed with which Washington would transfer authority to Iraqis.

The resolution gives U.N. authorization to a multinational force under unified command that will be led by the United States and calls for troop contributions as well as "substantial pledges" from the 191 U.N. member states at the Madrid donors conference on Oct. 23-24.

The 15-0 vote was a coup for Secretary of State Colin Powell, who called the outcome "a great achievement" — although he cautioned that the resolution should not be seen as "opening the door to troops."

See UN on page 2

High hopes



RANDAL FORD • THE BATTALION

Senior economics major Justin Sutton practices pole vault Thursday afternoon at the Texas A&M track field. After a long offseason, the pole vaulters began

jumping again this week. They will continue practicing throughout the fall and into the spring track and field season.

Twins make progress, not yet in clear

By Jamie Stengle
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DALLAS — While 2-year-old Egyptian twins continue to make progress after separation surgery, the boys have reacted differently as coma-inducing drugs have been reduced, a doctor said Thursday.

Mohamed, known as the more rambunctious twin, started to breathe spontaneously over the ventilator Wednesday night and has moved his left arm and left leg. He is now off the coma-inducing drugs.

Ahmed, known for his calm demeanor, had some involuntary twitching on his right side that was interpreted as seizures.

While that was treated and appears resolved, doctors increased the dosage a little on the coma-inducing drugs for Ahmed and will reduce the dosage again on Thursday, said Dr. James Thomas, chief of critical care at Children's Medical Center Dallas.

"I think they're doing extremely well," Thomas said.

The reduction of the coma-inducing drugs began Wednesday. Thomas said that even once the medication is stopped it may take several hours to a day or two to wear off. The boys were surgically separated Sunday during a 34-hour surgery.

Both boys have had several drains removed and are off blood pressure medications. Thomas said that pulmonary function remains excellent and their routine head CT scans continue to look good.

While both had low-grade temperatures Wednesday night, the fevers appear abated and antibiotics were stopped as planned, he said.

Thomas said that on Thursday, Mohamed's ventilator support will be decreased throughout the day. The goal for Ahmed is to stop his drug-induced coma.

Meanwhile, the boys parents are being encouraged to touch and talk to the boys, who are still being sedated.

"We tell them that they probably hear," Thomas said. "They may not remember, but they're hearing."

Resolution on postwar Iraq passed

The U.N. Security Council unanimously adopted a U.S.-backed resolution Thursday aimed at attracting aid to restore and stabilize Iraq. But there was no immediate commitment of troops and money.

The new resolution:

- ▶ Gives Iraq's governing Council until Dec. 15 to submit a timetable for holding elections and writing a new constitution.
- ▶ Emphasizes the U.S.-led administration of Iraq is temporary; recognizes the Governing Council as embodying Iraq's sovereignty during transition.
- ▶ Gives greater prominence to Iraqis' right to determine their own political future. Gives U.N. a slightly larger role in Iraq's political transition.
- ▶ Authorizes a multinational force led by United States to help maintain security, and calls for financial contributions to the reconstruction.

SOURCES: Associated Press

A&M Liberal Arts service workers receive awards

By Jacquelyn Spruce
THE BATTALION

Four Texas A&M faculty members recently received a College of Liberal Arts Superior Service award, one of the most honorable awards for staff workers in the College of Liberal Arts, said Cheryl Hanks, assistant dean in the College of Liberal Arts. Lorie Lapaglia, administrative assistant in the

Department of Psychology, Linda Shaw, assistant director for operations in the Public Policy Research Institute, Amy Ford, undergraduate adviser in the Department of Psychology, and Carolyn Teeter, business administrator in the Department of Economics, were all recognized for their outstanding commitments to their jobs. Each recipient was nominated by someone within her department and the winners were chosen by College of Liberal Arts Dean Charles A. Johnson.

"The purpose of the award is to recognize and reward superior service by the roll of the liberal arts staff members," Hanks said.

Teeter said she enjoys her work in the economics department.

"I do all the accounting for the department, and I have for 20 years," she said. "I'm very honored to

See Awards on page 2

Investigators focus on ferry pilot error

By Michael Weissenstein
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — The investigation into the Staten Island ferry wreck that killed 10 passengers focused Thursday on whether the ship's pilot blacked out and slumped over the throttle before the vessel crashed into a concrete pier.

City Councilman Michael McMahon, after a briefing from city emergency and transportation officials, said the crash may have been related to the pilot's health and medication he was taking for a possible blood-pressure problem.

The pilot, Assistant Captain Richard Smith, attempted suicide

after the crash by slitting his wrists and shooting himself with a pellet gun, police said.

"The assistant captain at the controls collapsed," McMahon said. "By the time the other captain could get control of the ship, it was too late."

The 310-foot ferry slammed into a concrete pier as it approached the Staten Island shore in choppy, wind-swept waters Wednesday afternoon, ripping a giant hole along its right side and severing the limbs of three passengers. Some passengers leaped into the water.

The crash left more than 60 people hospitalized, eight in critical condition. The dead, one woman and nine men, ranged in age from 25 to 52.

There was one bit of good news: A

missing woman, presumed to have died in the water, turned up safe at a friend's house, police said.

The fractured ferry sat at the docks Thursday as thousands of commuters boarded boats for the morning rush hour.

"If you look at any photograph of a terrorist attack on a bus or train in the Middle East, that's your idea of what it looks like," Staten Island Borough President James Molinaro said.

Witnesses said the vessel appeared to speed up as it approached the shore. A source close to the probe, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the captain told investigators that Smith "slumped forward" on the controls in a way that could have made the boat accelerate toward the pier.

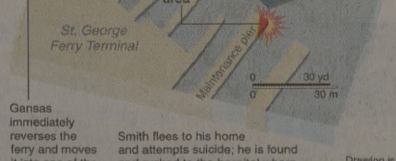
Investigation continues in ferry crash

The investigation into the Staten Island ferry wreck on Wednesday focused on whether the ship's pilot blacked out and slumped over the throttle before the vessel crashed into a concrete pier, killing 10 and injuring more than 60.

Leaving Manhattan The ferry departs around 3 p.m. with Assistant Capt. Richard Smith piloting and Capt. Mike Gansas also aboard; the 5.2-mile trip to Staten Island normally takes about 25 minutes.

Nearing Staten Island Passengers line up at the front of the ship to get a head start while disembarking. Witnesses say the boat did not appear to slow as it approached the terminal. Gansas tries to contact Smith, but there was no response. Gansas takes control of the vessel, but is unable to avoid the pier.

Collision The ferry crashes into a pier ripping a 250-foot-long gash at the first floor window line, extending 8 feet into the right of the hull.



Gansas immediately reverses the ferry and moves it into one of the passenger slips. Smith flees to his home and attempts suicide; he is found and rushed to the hospital where he remains in critical condition. Drawing is schematic.

SOURCE: Associated Press

Nebraska Yell plans finalized

By Sarah Szuminski
THE BATTALION

Plans for Friday's Nebraska Yell Practice have been finalized after organizers were forced to change the location because of scheduling difficulties.

Yell practice will be held at the Upstream Brewery Company at 514 S. 11th Street in downtown Omaha.

Junior yell leader Ryan Bishop said he had a difficult time contacting alumni in Omaha to help set up a location. Finding a venue for an event that most Nebraskans were unfamiliar with was also challenging, he said.

"It's hard over the phone to describe what Yell is to someone who's not from A&M," he said.

Bishop said a maximum of about 75 people are expected to attend the practice, which will be held indoors.