



Marching in memory



SHARON AESCHBACH • THE BATTALION

Minister Robert Smith (from left), Pastor Anthony Brown, the Rev. Carl Idlebird, Pastor Charles Jefferson and Pastor Kris Erskine lead the 7th Annual Martin Luther King Freedom Walk at 10 a.m. on Monday morning with a song of praise. Local supporters gathered at Sadie Thomas Park in Bryan to walk down Martin Luther King Jr. street to Kemp Elementary School. The walk, sponsored by Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, consisted of various organizations including the Bryan High marching band and Habitat for Humanity.

Students urged to live the dream

By Natalie Younts
THE BATTALION

Prairie View A&M President George C. Wright urged Brazos Valley community members Monday to keep Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream alive and remember the true meaning of the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday.

"I often worry that when we do something every year that for some people it may lose some of its meaning, that after a while, we'll just think about it as a celebration, as a day off of work, or something like that," Wright said. "But I think there's so much more to this day than that."

Wright said Martin Luther King Day is a

time to step back and think about the history of black people and King's life and what he would be doing if he were alive today.

If King were alive today, Wright said, he would be concerned about poverty, war and black-on-black crime. He would also want every black person over the age of 18 to be registered to vote and for blacks to take advantage of educational opportunities.

Bryan-College Station community members met at Sadie Thomas Park in Bryan and walked down Martin Luther King Jr. Street, singing and marching to tunes from the Hearne High School Eagle Band.

The march ended at Kemp Elementary, where the participants heard inspirational

speeches from Wright and U.S. Congressman Chet Edwards.

Entertainment was provided by Karan Chavis, Marian Anderson String Quartet and a step routine from Omicron Omega, the A&M chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority. Agnes Gray, program chair, said 850 people participated.

Edwards said that, as a white person, he will never fully understand the life of a black person.

"I have to believe that Dr. King challenged me and every one of us in this country and in this audience today, including our

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Verdict expected soon in cavalry case

By Elizabeth Webb
THE BATTALION

State District Judge Rick Davis said he expects to have a ruling on the Parsons Mounted Cavalry case by the end of the month.

The cavalry was suspended in October 2002 after a member came forward with allegations of hazing.

Twenty-three members of Parsons are suing Texas A&M for a permanent injunction that would keep them from being punished for underage drinking, hazing and physical abuse.

Lawyers in the Parsons Mounted Cavalry case presented their closing arguments Jan. 9.

Ronald Hole, an attorney who represents members of Parsons, said A&M had been negligent in its execution of disciplining the students.

Hole said University employees did not adequately notify students of the charges, assumed the students were guilty and did not observe due process laws.

"You're entitled to a hearing in the same semester," Hole said. "That wasn't done in this case."

Assistant Attorney General Russ Harris said A&M had complied with due process laws and that the students understood the University rules they had broken.

"We gave constitutionally adequate time of response under the Texas due process standard," he said. "All of the students received a form letter that listed the rules the student had violated. All of the students said they understood the charges against them."

Hole also said that University officials had violated the students' free speech rights when they were asked not to talk about the investigation.

Harris said officials were trying to prevent the accused students from joining together and concocting a story.

"What you're trying to do is preserve the integrity of the ongoing investigation," he said.

Brandon Baate, an attorney for the plaintiffs, said that the

University's definition of hazing is too vague.

"We tried to nail the University down on what they considered hazing, and we got a different response and interpretation from everyone we talked to," he said. "How can you expect 18- and 19-year-old boys to understand something that Ph.D.s and University officials can't explain?"

"We tried to nail the University down on what they considered hazing, and we got a different ... interpretation from everyone we talked to."

— Brandon Baate
plaintiffs' attorney

In addition, Baate said the University had previously condoned the use of hazing. He said the University was making an example out of Parsons members after instituting a new policy against hazing, which was not clearly communicated to Parsons members.

Harris said University President Robert M. Gates and Corps Commandant Lt. Gen. John Van Alstyne had made it known that they were not going to tolerate hazing of any kind.

"(Parsons members) knew what they were doing was wrong, but they didn't want to betray their friends," Harris said.

Tom Matlock, an attorney representing the plaintiffs, ended the session by saying that the University had been neglectful by ignoring due process of law.

"I don't think there's any way to fairly administer this because of the passage of time," he said.

Former Corps of Cadets member killed in Iraq

By Rhiannon Meyers
THE BATTALION

Capt. Ernesto Blanco-Caldas was never without his guitar. The classically-trained guitarist only had to be in one spot for a short time before he would reach for his guitar and start taking requests.

"Ernie had such a beautiful voice and you didn't have to ask him twice to sing, ever," said his sister, Carmen Pendergraft. "He would perform anywhere. He would know you for 20 seconds, and then pull out his guitar and play for you."

When Blanco-Caldas was deployed to Iraq in September 2003, his guitar went with him. The easygoing, passionate soldier, who was never without a smile, last performed when he

sang "Happy Birthday" for a fellow soldier's wife only a few days before he was killed.

Blanco-Caldas, Class of 1998, died Dec. 28, 2003, when an explosive device hit his vehicle in Qaryat Ash Shababi. On Jan. 6, 2004, he was buried at Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery. About 400 people were in attendance at the funeral, including Texas Gov. Rick Perry.

"My heart is broken," said Blanco-Caldas' mother, Gloria Caldas. "He was amazing. He made everyone feel special and he made me feel like I was the best mom in the world."

Pendergraft said that it was incredible how much of an impact her brother had on everyone.

"My brother touched so many people," Pendergraft said. "Everyone that knew him felt like they were Ernie's favorite, and that is

a great gift."

Blanco-Caldas, a native Puerto Rican, moved to San Antonio with his mother and sister when he was 15. Caldas said her son immediately fell in love with Texas.

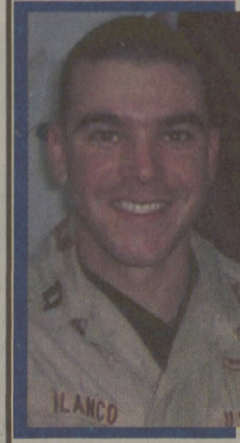
"The minute he hit the ground here, he knew he was home," she said. "He went from being Ernesto Blanco to Ernie Blanco, wearing cowboy boots and learning how to country dance."

Blanco-Caldas loved everything about Texas, from country music and Shiner Bock to the Texas Hill Country.

In San Antonio, Blanco-Caldas attended Churchill High School where he became involved in the school choir. In 1993, Blanco-

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MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP FUND



The family of Ernesto M. Blanco-Caldas has set up a scholarship fund specifically aimed at helping Hispanic students in the Corps who are interested in music.

For more information, write to:

Ernesto M. Blanco-Caldas
Memorial Scholarship Fund
7510 Camomile Cove
San Antonio, TX 78249-2550

RUBEN DELUNA • THE BATTALION
SOURCE: CARMEN PENDERGRAFT

Area beef consumption unaltered by mad cow scare

By Sonia Moghe
THE BATTALION

The unyielding importance of beef to local culture has managed to survive the blow brought by last month's mad cow discovery in Washington state, as area vendors and consumers report their confidence in the quality of their beef.

Pat Shields, the Brazos Valley Livestock Commission general manager, estimated that when beef markets opened for the new year in January, prices for beef had dropped 8 to 10 percent. However, last week's sales indicated an upward trend.

"The markets had been closed for a few weeks for Christmas so we really didn't know where the market was going to be," Shields said. "But this week, prices are right back to where they were before the mad cow thing came. In fact, last week's prices went up about 10 to 15 percent."

Mad cow disease, technically known as bovine spongiform encephalopathy, is a slowly progressive, degenerative and fatal disease affecting the central nervous system in infected adult cattle, as reported by the Food Drug Administration (FDA). When infected beef is consumed by humans, a similar condition known as Creutzfeldt-Jacob Disease may develop. The FDA also reports that the disease cannot be transmitted through cow's milk. The



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Northgate eatery brings attention to area's confidence in beef quality.

reason for the current scare of infected cows stemmed from reports of an infected cow, imported from Canada, which was found in Washington in December 2003.

The Brazos Valley Livestock Commission discourages the sale of downer cows — cows that are too sickly to walk to sale barns on their own. While a downer cow may not necessarily indicate a cow infected with mad cow disease, Shields says it's safer to disclude them.

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Redman selected as new VP and chief of finance

By Carrie Pierce
THE BATTALION

A new senior vice president and chief financial officer will join the Texas A&M staff in February.

Susan Redman, vice president for finance and corporate controller for Irving-based AdvancePCS, will succeed William B. Krumm, who retired from his position Jan. 1, 2004. Krumm has served as vice president since 1996. Redman will begin her duties as senior vice president and chief financial officer on Feb. 16.

Krumm said he will remain with the University for the remainder of the current fiscal year.

Upon the announcement of Krumm's retirement, A&M President Robert M. Gates established an eight-member committee in September to find a new vice president and chief financial officer. The committee was chaired by Dr. Jerry Strawser, dean of May's Business School.

The process to find Krumm's successor began with ads for applicants in The Wall Street Journal, as well as at various accounting firms and through personal contacts, Strawser said. More than 100 applicants were found.

S. Jane Schneider a member of the hiring committee and assistant

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