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State Legislature approves tuition hike bill

By Angela Timmons/Staff Reporter

State budget crises are changing the way things are done at Texas universities this year.

The state Senate education committee passed a bill Tuesday that will be responsible for increasing tuition rates at state universities. The bill calls for a 22 percent increase in tuition during the next two years. For example, this fall, tuition should go from \$44 to \$46 per credit hour, and to \$52 in the spring of 2004.

While increases and budget crises are never anything to be happy about, students and uni-

versities should be thankful for one thing: that the education committee did not vote for complete deregulation of tuition, Texas Tech Chancellor Dr. David Smith said.

Historically, the Legislature has set the rates for state university tuition, Smith said, and deregulation would have permitted individual university systems' Board of Regents to set the rates.

Student Government Association President Emeritus Kelli Stumbo said deregulation would have disproportionately hurt Tech students.

"The majority of our students are working or middle class, unlike (The University of Texas) or (Texas A&M)," Stumbo said. "And Tech's resources are much more limited."

Stumbo said UT, for example, has students of higher income levels or students of much lower incomes because the university can afford to supply financial aid.

Tech's students fall in the middle range, with more students shouldering responsibility for paying for their education.

"This way, this doesn't uncouple us from the Legislature, which was always a worry,"

Smith said. "That would continue to erode their support for higher education. This doesn't disconnect them from this responsibility."

Smith said Tuesday's bill is good because it is a graduated plan and a measured response, but one that does not give universities full responsibility over tuition.

"It's a good compromise," he said.

Smith expressed gratitude for the Student Government Association's efforts earlier in the semester, when several SGA members trekked to Austin to lobby against deregulation with the Legislature.

"They listened to the students and some of the things we were saying," Smith said. "We were concerned with our Legislature not supporting higher education. While cuts are being made, there's only so much you can do until professors and classes are cut."

Stumbo commended the tuition increase plan to an extent but called for additional student action.

"I agree it's better than complete deregulation, which was not well thought-out," she

TUITION continued on page 3

U.S. administrator arrives in Baghdad

REVIVING IRAQ:
Former U.S. general will restore power, water, security.

By Niko Price/Associated Press

BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP) — The retired U.S. general appointed as Iraq's postwar administrator arrived in Baghdad on Monday, while two more top members of Saddam Hussein's regime were reported captured.

The *New York Times* reported Monday that a scientist who claims to have worked in Iraq's chemical weapons program told a U.S. military team that Iraq destroyed and buried chemical weapons and biological warfare equipment only days before the war began March 20.

Members of Mobile Exploitation Team Alpha said the scientist led Americans to material that proved to be the building blocks of illegal weapons, the *Times* said.

Maj. Gen. David Petraeus, commander of the Army's 101st Airborne Division, said: "Though much work must still be done to validate the information MET Alpha has uncovered, if it proves out it will clearly be one of the major discoveries of this operation, and it may be the major discovery."

The White House had no immediate comment.

Landing at the Baghdad airport from Kuwait, retired Lt. Gen. Jay Garner said his priority was to restore basic services such as water and electricity as soon as possible.

"What better day in your life can you have than to be able to help somebody else, to help other people, and that is what we intend to do," the 65-year-old Garner said in his first post-war visit to the capital.

With Baghdad slowly returning to normal after days of looting and arson, Marines pulled back Sunday and left the U.S. Army in control of the

capital, where coalition-run radio announced an 11 p.m. to 6 a.m. curfew.

In Texas, President Bush attended Easter services at Fort Hood, joined by two helicopter pilots who were among the seven prisoners of war rescued from Iraq a week ago. The five other former POWs spent the day with their loved ones at Fort Bliss.

Tensions appeared to ease between the United States and Syria, with Bush saying that Syria appears to be heeding warnings against sheltering escaped members of Hussein's regime.

U.S. Central Command said forces had captured Abd al-Khaliq Abd al-Ghafar, Hussein's scientific research minister, on Saturday. Abd al-Ghafar was the four of hearts in the U.S. military's most-wanted deck of cards.

Hussein's son-in-law and one of Hussein's bodyguards, both hiding in Syria, were persuaded to leave that country and surrendered to members of the opposition Iraqi National Congress in Baghdad, according to a spokesman for the group, Haider Ahmed.

Jamal Mustafa Abdallah Sultan al-Tikriti is married to Saddam's youngest daughter, Hala, and was deputy head of Iraq's tribal affairs office. He was the nine of clubs in the U.S. deck of cards.

He was being questioned by the opposition group and will be turned over to U.S. officials, Ahmed said. Central Command had no information on the surrender.

Seven of the 55 most-wanted members of Hussein's regime are now in custody, though none from the very top of the list. An eighth figure, Ali Hassan al-Majid — nicknamed "Chemical Ali" for his use of poison gas against the Kurds — is believed to have been killed in an airstrike.

Ahmad Chalabi, leader of the Iraqi National Congress exile group, told the BBC on Monday that Hussein is alive in Iraq and moving from place to place. He said the INC is receiving

IRAQ continued on page 5

Masking the MASCOT



JESSICA MELVIN, FORMER Masked Rider, ties a mask onto Ben Holland, the 2003-2004 Masked Rider, Friday in the Merket Alumni Center.

Holland takes reins, responsibilities as 2003-2004 Masked Rider

By Matt Muench/Staff Reporter

The new Masked Rider was introduced Friday at the Merket Alumni Center, and for the first time in four years, the symbolic red cape and black mask will be on the shoulders and face of a man. Ben Holland, a senior animal science major from Texline, accepted the position during the transfer of reins ceremony that also honored outgoing rider Jessica Melvin, a graduate student from Pierre, S.D. studying physical therapy.

"I want to thank the committee and the university for giving me this honor to represent Texas Tech University next year," he said. "I am excited to do it. Since the first time I saw the rider I wanted to do it."

During the handing over of cape and mask, Melvin had trouble getting Holland's mask to stay straight. After securing it, she said he would get used

to being comfortable in it.

"Being able to see is the main key," she said.

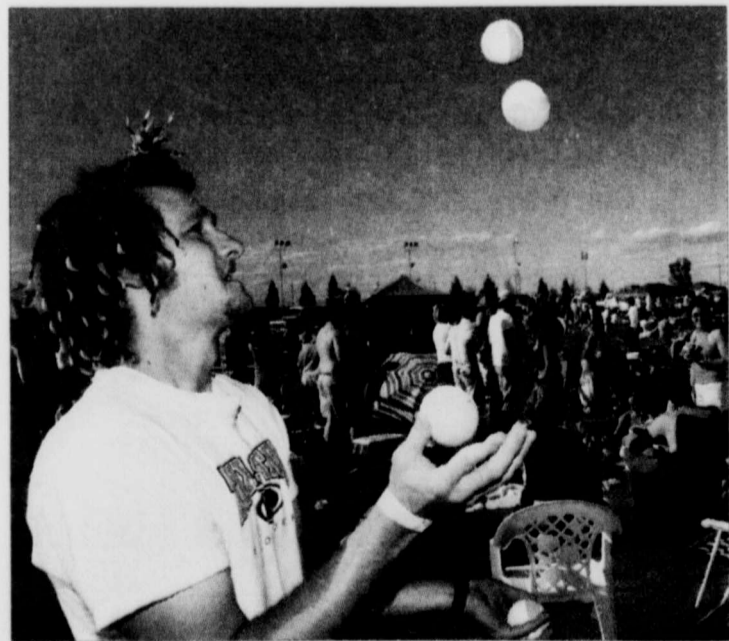
Holland is hoping he will get used to it in time for his first public appearance on the saddle of Midnight Matador on Saturday at the Science Spectrum.

"I hope I get a little more used to it," he said. "I am sure I will. I just have to find the best way to wear it."

Holland went through four stages of a selection process that included five other applicants. He said he felt confident he would win because he tried out last year and was an assistant to 2001-02 Masked Rider Katie Carruth. Because he has seen what the rider does up close, it makes him believe he will

MASKED RIDER continued on page 3

Tech students celebrate holiday at Easter Bash



JAIME TOMÁS AGUILAR/Staff Photographer
JEREMY INGLE, A former Tech student from Conroe, juggles during the 17th annual Easter Bash at the Golf Station on Sunday.

By Matt Muench/Staff Reporter

Instead of Easter egg hunting or staying home for a traditional Easter dinner with their families, many Texas Tech students and Lubbock citizens were at the Golf Station, at 116th Street and Indiana Avenue, enjoying cold beverages and live entertainment at the 17th annual Easter Bash.

People were a plenty at the event. Dogs were present, tents were staked to the ground, shirts were off and bikinis were on.

"This is a good time," said Russ Dibble, a junior English major from El Paso. "You can't beat this. Good music, beer and women. I can't imagine a better time than this."

But why not go home and spend time with parents?

"They live in Alabama," he said. "That is too far. If they were in El Paso, I probably would have stayed here anyway."

His friend, Keith Cardona, a junior marketing major from El Paso, shared the same thoughts.

"I have heard too many good things about this event," he said. "I did not want to miss it. I usually go home, but this is a good time."

Thousands of people were in attendance during the all-day event that took place on a golf driving range. People threw footballs, played Frisbee or just sat back, relaxed, opened a beer and listened to music.

Lubbock families even got in on the fun. Dustin Hatfield, a Lubbock resident, was in attendance with his wife and three kids, who were all under the age of 12.

It was the first time he had been at the event since he graduated from Tech six years ago.

He said he did not want to stay home for a traditional Easter.

"I want to be under the sun," he said. "We did our Easter thing this morning. I remember how fun this used to be. My kids are enjoying it, and most importantly, we are still spending Easter as a family."

Will Meyer, a senior advertising major

EASTER continued on page 3

ON DUTY



CRAIG SWANSON/Staff Photographer
THE LUBBOCK FIRE Department was called to campus Monday morning when smoke was reported in the Physics building in a second-floor office. An air handler unit overheated but did not catch on fire. The only damage to the building was the unit's motor.

ORGANIZATION
REBUILDS
PLAYGROUND
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NEW DEFENSE
REVEALED AT RED
AND BLACK GAME
SPORTS, PAGE 6



SOFTBALL
INCONSISTENT IN
LOSSES TO OU
SPORTS, PAGE 6



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Texans remember Battle of San Jacinto

HOUSTON (AP) — All but nine Texans survived the Battle of San Jacinto, the pivotal moment of the Texas Revolution fought 167 years ago Monday. None survived longer than Bob Dawson's great-grandfather.

Alphonso Steele, a then 19-year-old private in the 6th Company of the 2nd Regiment of Texas Volunteers, recovered from a severe gunshot wound from a Mexican musket and went on to live until 1911, when he died at 94.

"It's almost like I was there with Alphonso Steele on the field that particular day when I go down there to the battleground," said Dawson, a retired Houston mortgage banker. "San Jacinto is one of the most decisive battles of world history. I feel part of it."

The battle lasted just 18 minutes. More than 600 Mexicans lay dead or dying; only nine Texans died. Gen. Sam Houston, who himself was wounded in the left ankle, also listed Steele as among the 30 Texans wounded.

Houston's force, shouting "Remember the Alamo! Remember Goliad!" as a reminder of the two bloody massacres in the weeks preceding April 21, 1836, killed 630 Mexican soldiers and captured another 730.

Texas, which then included parts of present-day New Mexico, Oklahoma, Colorado, Wyoming and Kansas, had declared itself an independent republic on March 2, 1836, and remained that way until its annexation in 1845, clearing the United States' march to the Pacific Ocean.

Lisa Struthers, director of the Albert and Ethel Herzstein Library at the San Jacinto Museum of History, confirmed Steele was the last surviving San Jacinto fighter from the Texas side.

Man charged with killing niece's parents

REHRERSBURG, Pa. (AP) — A man accused of kidnapping his 13-year-old niece after killing her parents may have been obsessed with the girl, authorities said.

Robert Lee Hixon, 42, was captured Sunday after a chase and four-hour standoff with police. He is charged with killing his wife's brother and the brother's wife at their Pocono Mountains home and then abducting their daughter Hadley.

"There is some evidence of an obsession of a sexual nature with the 13-year-old," Monroe County District Attorney Mark P. Pazuhanich said.

Hixon was arraigned on two counts of criminal homicide. He sat shaking in the chair during the brief hearing, quietly answering questions from a judge. He was sent to the Monroe County Correctional Facility without bail.

Pazuhanich said sexual assault, kidnapping and burglary charges would also be filed, the *Pocono Record* reported. Pazuhanich told the paper he would likely seek the death penalty against Hixon.

Myron L. "Butch" Bilger, 40, identified Hixon as the shooter before he would likely seek the death penalty against Hixon. Hixon shot Bilger and his wife, Ellen Bilger, at their Pocono Lake home Saturday, authorities said. Their 5-year-old daughter ran next door to get help while Hixon drove off with the 13-year-old, police said.

Police issued a statewide Amber Alert for Hadley. The alert led to a tip that Hixon's red pickup truck was spotted in Berks County, about 90 miles southwest of the girl's home in Pocono Lakes, police said.

Beijing mayor fired amid SARS criticism

BEIJING (AP) — The mayor of Beijing was fired following the disclosure of a steep increase in SARS cases in China's capital and charges he mishandled the outbreak of the deadly illness, state-run media said Monday.

The dismissal of Mayor Meng Xuenong shortly after he and China's health minister were removed from key Communist Party posts, and the Health Ministry announced the number of cases of severe acute respiratory syndrome in Beijing had jumped from 37 to 339. The number rose to 448 later Monday, when the mayor also reported seven more deaths nationwide from the disease.

A Beijing city government spokesman, Liu Wei, declined to confirm the firing of the mayor, who was appointed three months ago.

Detailed accounts in state-run newspapers said senior party officials accused Meng of failing to gather information on SARS, track new infections and trace people who might have been exposed.

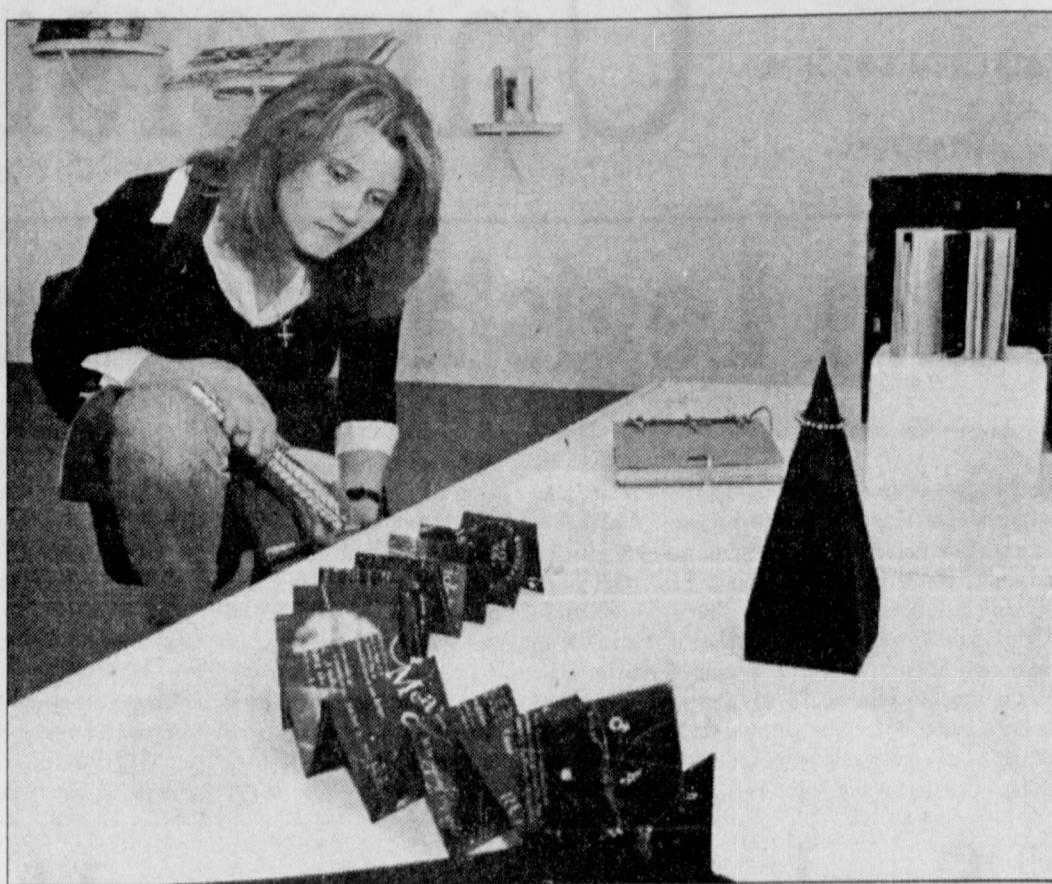
The flu-like SARS has sickened more than 3,900 people and killed at least 218 others around the world, according to health officials in the affected countries.

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Governments in Asia are adopting increasingly drastic efforts to stem the spread of SARS.

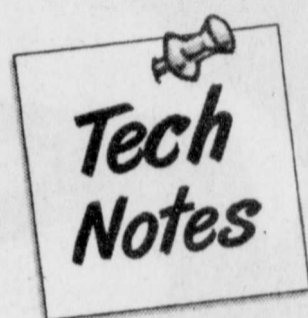
China called off its weeklong May Day vacation in hopes of stopping tens of millions of people from traveling and spreading the virus.

RARE READING



HEATHER DOUGHERTY/Staff Photographer

STACI JOHNSTON, A senior art education major from San Antonio, observes a book, which is contained in the pyramid on the right, during *The Spines that Bind: A Survey of Contemporary Artist-Made Books*. The exhibit is co-curated by Robin Dru Germany, associate professor of art, and is currently on display until May 3 free of charge at the Buddy Holly Center.



The underpass north of the university greenhouse at Main Street and Hartford Avenue will be closed to pedestrian traffic for four weeks while the natural gas line is lowered in preparation for the Marsha Sharp Freeway. Students

and faculty are requested to find an alternative route.

The annual TKE Crawfish festival is from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. April 27 at The Big Backyard at 904 East Broadway. Tickets are on sale for \$20 in the Student Union building foyer and Select-A-Seat locations, and they will cost \$25 at the door. The event will feature free crawfish and parking. For more information, contact Will Turner at (806) 687-2367 or Steve Hozhabri at (806) 744-7913.

Omega Delta Phi is raffling off an autographed 2002-2003 Lady Raider basketball, signed by the team and coach Marsha Sharp. Proceeds will benefit a Special Olympics scholar-

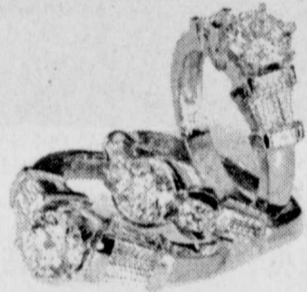
ship. Tickets cost \$2 each or \$5 for three. Tickets can be purchased from members, or contact Jon Bentancourt at (806) 632-0319 or e-mail jonno@hotmail.com. The drawing will be April 30.

Arbor Day begins at 11:30 a.m. Friday in Memorial Circle. The event features hot dogs and hamburgers, a concert and tree planting.

Join Gamma Beta Phi in beautifying Lubbock in project GRIP, Get Ready To Improve and Plant, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. May 3. The event will feature a picnic, guest speaker and beautification. If your organization is interested in joining the fun and helping out, contact Laura at (806) 724-4656.

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Scott Peterson charged in murder of wife, unborn son

MODESTO, Calif. (AP) — Scott Peterson was formally charged Monday with two counts of murder for the deaths of his pregnant wife and unborn son.

The Stanislaus district attorney filed the charges hours before Peterson, 30, was expected to be arraigned in a Modesto courtroom. District Attorney James Brazelton said in the filing that Peterson acted "in-

entionally, deliberately and with premeditation" in killing 27-year-old Laci Peterson and Conner Peterson, the couple's unborn child.

The charges include the special circumstance that Peterson committed more than one murder, allowing the district attorney to seek the death penalty. Brazelton has not definitively said whether he would do so.

Peterson was arrested Friday be-

cause detectives feared he might try to flee the country and was held in a 6-by-9-foot maximum-security cell in the Stanislaus County jail. He spent the weekend talking to his lawyer and making phone calls, said Kelly Huston, a spokesman for the sheriff's department.

Peterson, who wore shackles and a belly chain whenever he was taken from his cell, was "rather quiet" and "very courteous" to his jailers, Huston said.

Peterson, 30, has maintained that he had nothing to do with his wife's disappearance, and was fishing in San Francisco Bay when she vanished just before Christmas. She was eight months pregnant at the time. Last week, authorities found the bodies of Laci Peterson and the baby on the shore of the bay.

Investigators had long declined to name Peterson as a suspect, but even before DNA tests identified the bodies, Modesto police arrested Peterson on Friday near San Diego because they feared he might flee to Mexico, Modesto Police Chief Roy Wasden said.

When he was arrested, Peterson's

naturally dark hair was reddish-blond, and he had grown a goatee. He had \$10,000 in cash with him in his car, said a law enforcement source who spoke on condition of anonymity. Hours later, investigators learned of the DNA results.

In the jail, Peterson was segregated from other inmates and placed in the jail's maximum security section because of the nature of the charges he faces, and because prisoners have made threats against him, have summoned attorneys "definitely have some unfavorable opinions of him," the sheriff's spokesman said.

Peterson has declined all interview requests, authorities said. His attorney, Kirk McAllister, talked with Peterson on Saturday night, but made no public comment on the case.

In an interview with Time magazine Sunday, Peterson's father, Lee, said "police have just bungled this investigation from day one."

"You have a district attorney calling this a slam-dunk before there's even an arraignment," Scott Peterson's mother, Jackie, told the magazine. "I'm feeling like I'm living in Nazi Germany or the Soviet Union."

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Tech organization worked to fix playground during break

By Heidi Toth/Staff Reporter

While many Texas Tech students celebrated Easter by going to church, eating lots of chocolate or drinking the weekend away, a few added another activity to the festivities.

Members of Alpha Phi Omega turned out Friday afternoon to refinish the Child Development Research Center playground, located north of the Human Sciences building.

Eric Larson, a senior management information systems major from Katy and service vice president of the organization, said fixing up the playground was something the service fraternity does annually.

"It's a big involvement with campus," he said. "It's always just been one of our core projects."

The group's commitment does not stop there.

"We are in the works of planning something big for this summer," he said.

Jackie Driskill, assistant director of the center, said students in the fields of human development and family studies, early childhood education, and family and consumer sciences take a course that allows them to observe children, which is why the playground is there.

"The playground is to try and present a model that they can see children and maybe, they hopefully duplicate in the nation," she said.

APO members have done work-

ers for the playground over the years, she said. Every year they refinish it, and last year, they rebuilt a playhouse that was on the lot. They also put in a garden, which Jeffrey Moravec tended.

"It's just an opportunity for us to help out the school and the people that come here," the graduate student from Georgetown studying electrical engineering and computer science said. "It's a way to help out the community and Tech at the same time."

While everyone else had a brush and was varnishing the wooden playground equipment and storage boxes, Moravec was the odd one out, but he said he volunteered for gardening duty and so far had not regretted it.

"I don't mind gardening," he said with a laugh. "It's pretty fun."

Fun was the key word APO members were sticking to Friday.

Amanda Hussain, a freshman undecided major from Houston, said while varnishing was not really her thing, she was enjoying the time outside working with friends, especially knowing she was helping someone else.

"It's kind of nice to have a fun, clean place that looks nice to play in," she said.

Valerie Goulet said by maintaining the playground, they also were keeping it safe for the children who played on it, in addition to being clean and attractive.

"They need service done," the sophomore cell and molecular biology major from Allen said. "It's something we do every spring."

She was having a good time, she said.

"It's fun when you get to work with your friends," Goulet said.

Victoria Miller said despite how dirty she was getting, it was worth it.

"Working on it makes it safer for the kids," the freshman early childhood education major from Austin here better.

Mindy Reeves, a freshman pre-physical therapy major from Wichita Falls, added that keeping the playground in good condition is beneficial for many people, not just the children playing on it.

"It's on the campus, so if we have something that doesn't look good, that reflects on Tech," she said.

She has done many projects of this nature with APO, and she usually sticks to painting, she said, and lets other people do the building.

"Working with wood is a new thing," Reeves said.

It is a new thing for Sandra Reeve, too, and she was thoroughly enjoying it, the freshman mass communications major from Dallas said.

"I think it's valuable so we make the playground look nice for the kids," she said. "We're trying to do more things



SANDRA REEVE, A freshman mass communications major from Dallas, stains wood on the Child Development Resource Center playground during an Alpha Phi Omega service project Friday afternoon.

for kids, and they're part of the community, too — a big part."

The group only hit one snag during

its time at the playground. Larson

chided Miller for making a mess with the varnish around the storage unit she

was finishing. "I don't drip," Miller pointed out with a smile. "It's the paint that drips."

Tuition

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

said. "The Legislature realized what they were doing when students showed up and expressed their opinion. We still need our students to say they're hurt by this, especially with limited financial aid."

Smith said while the current plan for increases over a period of time is better than deregulation, he would have preferred to see higher appropriations from the Legislature, adding the Senate needs to look at other ways to generate revenue, such as a tobacco tax.

"They need to look at other things to generate money and not place as much burden on students," he said. "Of course, this Senate thing is a measured

response — all parties aren't going to be happy; but they need to limit the impact on pocketbooks. The Legislature has a responsibility to fund higher education, especially with more students, not less."

Smith said there is still a bill being worked on in the House higher education committee side of the Senate that would be more of a deregulation plan.

This plan would give university system regents the power to set tuition, with the stipulation of increases in financial aid.

"It's moved into the conference committee to be resolved," Smith said. "There will have to be a lot of compromises."

Smith said he and other university administrators would be in constant contact with the Legislature concerning the tuition matters.

Masked Rider

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

have an easy transition.

Alvin Davis, a member of the Masked Rider Committee, said Holland is definitely qualified to be the mascot because of his background.

"He's coming in with experience," he said. "He has a better chance than most people coming into it."

The ceremony featured speakers, including the first public appearance by Student Government Association President Jeremy Brown.

Chancellor Dr. David Smith, Interim President Donald Haragan and Athletics Director Gerald Myers also went to the podium.

"This is the most powerful im-

age we have," Smith said. "There is no better moment to see when that horse runs the sideline."

Haragan agreed.

"I have seen a lot of Masked Riders," he said. "Certainly it is the greatest tradition in a university, in the nation."

Melvin, who traveled at least 15,000 miles to make public appearances as the rider, compared her experience to the MasterCard commercials.

"In the end, this was all priceless," she said. "The best thing I will remember is showing up and seeing the kids, faces. The year was very exciting for me."

Melvin, whose family traveled all the way from South Dakota to see the ceremony, was presented with numerous gifts. She also will receive a letter jacket from the athletics department.

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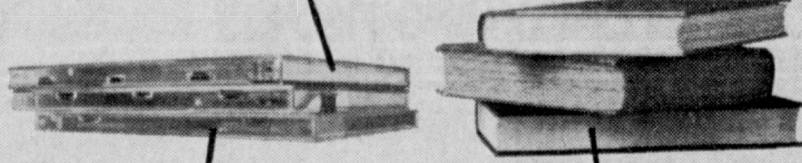
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PERSPECTIVES

Favorite teams are like family

The team is not a member of my family, an old friend or someone I can confide in. However, if the first baseman allows a grounder to split the wickets, the point guard makes an arrant pass or the quarterback decides to throw into a crowd of defensive backs, it hurts me.

I actually become seriously pained when one of my teams fails to perform to its full potential.

With the NBA and NHL playoffs under way, this time of year is especially hard on fans. My pregame ritual is probably similar to many die-hard fans. It usually consists of slipping on a pair of grotesquely unwashed lucky socks, popping a few Roloids in preparation for the final few minutes of the game and slipping into my pregame mode.

As my roommate will happily attest to, from the moment the puck is dropped, the first pitch is thrown or the referee throws the ball into the air for the opening tip, my heart beat and concentration are in complete sync with the scoreboard.

While the connection between the team and the fan is very strong, the connection between a fan and his or her favorite player is perhaps unnaturally strong. There is no other connection between players and fans that can draw comparisons.

When the paperboy comes around my neighborhood and tosses the paper toward my house, I don't hold my breath until the paper slips off the door and lands on my doormat. Nor do I perform a good luck jig before a waiter places my dinner before me, just in case the jig I danced last time made my meal taste any better.

As I mentioned earlier, the NBA playoffs are now under way and my favorite player on my favorite team is attempting to take his team deeper into the playoffs than ever before. And while the only thing I am getting deep into for the playoffs is a big bag of Doritos, his pain and pleasure during the game is just as intense for me sitting on my couch as it is for him on the court.

My favorite player is Steve Nash, and my favorite team is the Dallas Mavericks. As my best friends will point out, we are not the new-age Mavericks fans; we were the kids sitting in the nose bleed section when the signing of Shawn Bradley was called the rise of the Mavericks. We are the same fans who will be cheering for the Mavs as they make their run this year for the championship.

In case you're not a basketball fan, Nash is the point guard for the Mavericks. He is so entertaining to watch dance in and out of defenders, lick his hands as he crosses half court, and laugh as his floppy long hair is pushed to the side that sometimes fans forget he is one of the premier point guards in the league.



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As a fan, I have based my life around certain sureties. I know I will always be able to trust my family, find peace at my church, and that Steve Nash's kiss-the-glass floater is going to fall more often than not.

Admittedly, I have something of a man crush on Nash. While it's in a completely fan enthusiast way, it's probably not the healthiest affection.

I had a feeling that I took my admiration for Nash a little too far when I decided I should grow my hair out like him, and started to find anything Canadian appealing (Nash is from Canada).

As strange as it might be to hear one man's die-hard enthusiasm for another man, it might be even stranger to discover that many fans feel the same way about their own favorite player. How can it be that the actions of another individual have so much bearing on our lives? If that running-kiss-the-glass floater fails to go in, is my life really going to be any different?

The obvious answer is no. However, I beg to differ.

As a fan, I have based my life around certain sureties. I know I will always be able to trust my family, find peace at my church, and that Nash's kiss-the-glass floater is going to fall more often than not.

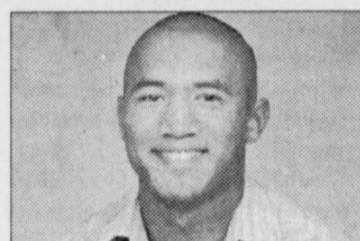
So maybe my chosen team or player is not a member of my family, an old friend, or someone that I can confide in, but it is someone that I can put my faith in to entertain, and maybe every now and then win a game or two.

And if the team is having an off night, or even an off season, I know there is always going to be another game or another season in which I can slip into my dirty lucky socks and pop a few Roloids. Because as long as they keep showing up, I too will continue to show up.



War protestors unfairly labeled

I have some issues I'm going to address that many of you may find upsetting, but I want you to know that I am not doing this to piss everyone off. So if you are going to say I'm your "typical liberal media whatever," put the paper down and go back to your hypocrisy and deformation.



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I'm glad our men and women are coming home. That being said, stop calling it a "coalition." It is not, I repeat, it is not a coalition.

It is the British, with 2,000 Australians and us. Three countries, two of which are only around because the third was an imperial megalomaniac (I'm talking about England, in case you get easily confused by vague historical facts) are the only ones fighting in the so-called "Coalition of the Willing."

All the White House had to do was take a list of all the countries in the world and cross off the "Axis of Evil" and the "Axis of Not-Really-Evil-But-Definitely-Very-Shady." (I'm speaking of Germany, China, Russia and my future retirement country, France.)

Then someone called them up and asked if they opposed a U.S. invasion of Iraq, and if they did, would they be willing to sell out for about \$2 billion in aid money.

In cases of underdeveloped countries (like Macedonia, Ethiopia and the global juggernaut Eritrea) that have yet to discover the telephone or are busy trying to feed their starving populace, I'm sure someone just signed for them, because, come on, what the hell is Eritrea going to do? It's probably too busy looking for itself on the map to care which "coalition" its name gets slapped on.

Stop saying the anti-war advocates are wrong. They aren't. If anything, they were proven more right. Yes, in the scope of our everyday lives, this war was terrible and sad-dening. But in the scope of wars, this was a cakewalk.

If you want to disagree and call

me insensitive, realize that most wars in the past saw more people die in an hour than have died in the past three weeks. Our forces moved through Iraq like Gen. Sherman did through Georgia.

But what happened to the maniacally vicious regime bent on international death and destruction? What the White House and Pentagon painted as one of the more barbaric armies of Satan turned out to be a bunch of dudes with AK-47s and rocket-propelled grenades.

What Fox and CNN touted as apocalyptic chemical and biological agents are turning out to be the same stuff you can get at the Home Depot (if you talk to the right people).

Iraq is smaller than Texas. If Saddam Hussein had enough chemical, biological and nuclear weapons to pose a direct threat to the United States and its allies, he sure did a hell of a job hiding them. Good thing there's no Easter in Iraq; the egg hunt would have been a bitch in the Hussein house.

If you aren't open-minded about your religious beliefs, please re-read paragraph one.

Do not drag western Christianity into the Middle East. Our goals are supposed to be: No. 1, dispose of tyrant; No. 2, instill "democratic" system; and No. 3, get our people home. There are as many good Muslims as there are good Christians, so it is obscenely narcissistic to think the U.S. rebuilding project should involve preaching the gospel.

I'm afraid, however, that this request is in vain. Bush already called the war a "crusade," probably imagining himself in shiny armor, riding beneath

a bright white banner with a shiny crimson cross fluttering in the desert wind as the "heathen infidels" flea before his dogmatic glory.

The Rev. Franklin Graham not only calls Islam an "evil religion," but he also calls for heads to be bowed at White House functions, such as Bush's inauguration and special Good Friday services.

It is enough of a constitutional violation that we have the "Faith-Based Initiative" under way using Taxpayer's money here at home. But I'm afraid that because Bush thinks God made him president (does "divine right of kings" come to anyone's mind?), those poor Iraqis will be subject to Arab-language Bibles with every influenza inoculation.

And finally, I'm tired of some people telling other people (like myself), "If you don't like America so much, you should get your tree-hugging ass out of here." Well here's how you reply.

First of all, we aren't quitters. We aren't going to pack our bags and tuck our tails in the middle of building a nation.

Secondly, stop assuming we don't like America. It is because we want to make this country better that we question and critique the current heads of state and their tactics.

Thirdly, I'm sure if you have seen the French Riviera in person, you wouldn't mind moving there (if you could afford it.)

So now the real challenge of putting down the guns and picking up the pieces of a country in shambles really begins. But don't worry. Soon enough newspaper headlines will buckle to the populace's attention (or lack thereof), and what goes on in Iraq will be stuck as a second-tier story on Page 3.

The Dixie Chicks will still have the No. 1 country album on the charts (even if certain radio monopolies refuse to play their songs). And the common American public will return to its usual state of having its proverbial head up its proverbial ... well, your know where I'm going.

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