

TCU DAILY SKIFF

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Fort Worth, Texas



Photos by Brian R. McLane

Catchin' some rays - Freshman business major Lou Walker, right, gets a little sun by Frog Fountain Wednesday afternoon. Freshman elementary education major Susan Crites, above, lays out and tans on Colby Beach between Colby Hall and Sherley Hall Thursday afternoon. Students study, talk with friends and listen to music while they lay out.



Foreign graduate students accent lab difficulties

By Andrea Heitz
Staff Writer

His voice was soft and accented; his English perfect, as he spoke of the "invisible bridge" between foreign and American students.

Vangipuram "Nath" Dwarakanath, a graduate biology student from India, is one of the many foreign graduate students who teach labs in the science departments.

The "bridge" he spoke of is language.

It is a problem, he said, but it is not one that cannot be overcome.

Because many of the graduate stu-

dents in the biology, chemistry and physics departments are foreign, some language barrier is to be expected, faculty members of the three departments said.

The foreign students who teach as part of their work toward a degree are, without exception, qualified to do so, they said. But communication can sometimes be difficult.

They also said the problem is not as great as some might think, and the benefits of foreign students teaching labs outweigh the inconvenience.

The disadvantage is obvious.

English is not a first language for most of the foreign graduate students,

said Richard J. Lysiak, chairperson of the physics department.

All of the foreign students are required to take a Test of English as a Foreign Language examination when they apply to become graduate students at TCU. But, said Kyle Hoagland, assistant professor of biology, the TOEFL tests comprehension skills and not speaking skills.

Students' accents or pronunciation can still be a problem, even if they pass the TOEFL, he said.

Dwarakanath said his accent has been a cause of communication problems with students.

"In many cases, the students do not seem to understand," he said.

He said his rate of speech has also been a difficulty. His language is spoken more rapidly than English, and "when it comes to speaking in English, it translates into the same speed," he said.

But such difficulties do not stop students from getting the information they need, said David E. Minter, associate professor of chemistry.

Labs in the physics department always have at least two graduate students teaching, said Chris Hardage, a sophomore physics major.

"If you can't understand one, you

can probably understand the other," he said.

Jimi Anne Thompson, a sophomore biology and chemistry major, said she had a chemistry lab last semester in which neither of the graduate students could be understood.

"We (the undergraduate students) would go and get lab TAs from the organic (chemistry) lab next door to explain things to us," she said. "It was a serious inconvenience."

Minter said undergraduate students should be able to get whatever information they need either from a graduate student or from the faculty member who supervises the lab. All

chemistry labs have a faculty supervisor, he said.

"Complaints (about language problems) come from an inconvenience and not from not being able to get the information," he said.

Halim Lehtihet, a graduate student in physics from Algeria, said there is another dimension to the language problem: intimidation.

"I remember when I was assigned to teach here," he said. "I was kind of scared. I thought, 'Me, teach here? I don't even speak English very well.'"

Lehtihet said he found the students "very helpful and understanding."

See FOREIGN Page 3

Minister's wife victim of beating

DALLAS (AP)—A Methodist minister whose civil rights activism prompted threats against his family came home Wednesday and found his wife critically injured from a vicious beating and choking attack, police said.

Margaret Railey, 38, remained in critical condition Thursday afternoon at Presbyterian Hospital of Dallas, said a spokesperson for the hospital. The spokesperson refused to give any other details, but John Godol, the church's minister of evangelism, said Railey was in a coma.

Her husband-Walker Railey, senior pastor of First United Methodist Church of Dallas—and their two small children were under guard Wednesday while police investigated the incident, officials said.

Walker Railey told police that he came home early Wednesday and found his wife in their garage, beaten and choked nearly to death.

The FBI and Dallas Police Department checked into leads that hate letters, some critical of Walker Railey's civil rights activism, may be related to the attack, said homicide Lt. Ron Waldrop.

"If you look at the wording in the letters, there's references made

that they're upset over one or two issues, but they don't have all the same theme," Waldrop said.

Walker Railey has been receiving the letters for the last four to six weeks, said Karen Spencer, his personal secretary. She said the letters are typed and not signed.

Spencer said Walker Railey wore a bulletproof vest while conducting his Easter Sunday service.

Randy Ford, the Raileys' yard man, said Railey told him nearly a year ago that she was afraid for her safety.

"Last summer, she confided in me, after she gave me an unlisted number, that someone had been calling at random threatening to kidnap her children," Ford said.

Members of the downtown congregation, which numbers about 6,000, met to pray for the minister's wife Wednesday night.

"I don't know exactly how big our church is, but last night our sanctuary was full," Spencer said.

She said additional prayer vigils, one at a nearby Presbyterian church, would be held Thursday and today.

"We're all just praying for Peggy," she said.

Staff writer Michael Hayworth contributed to this article.

Congress increases speed limit to 65

By Eric Loomis and
Jerry Madden
Staff Writers

Congress passed legislation early this month that would allow states to raise the speed limit from 55 mph to 65 mph on all interstate highways.

The increase in the speed limit is cause for celebration for some and worry for others.

Texas drivers will be able to drive 65 mph soon, but the Texas Highway

Department thinks there will be an increase in the number of accidents on Texas highways.

Highway Department spokesperson David Wells said the death and injury rate on Texas highways will probably go up.

"Our experience in working accidents . . . indicates to us that we will have a higher rate of fatalities," Wells said.

Wells said a federal study shows the number of people killed in accidents doubles when the speed is increased from 55 mph to 70 mph.

"I don't think anyone can dispute the fact," Wells said, "that when the vehicle is traveling at a higher speed and there is an accident, the occupants are much more likely to be seriously injured or killed."

Wells said even wearing seat belts will not prevent serious injuries at 65 mph.

Tarrant County's Chief Medical Examiner Nizam Peerwani said he does not feel the new speed limit will affect the number of accident fatalities.

Peerwani said more than one-third of the deaths by automobile accidents

occur in city areas, which are not affected by the change in speed limits.

"We contend the major culprit in most of the fatalities is alcohol and not the speed itself," Peerwani said.

Peerwani said the high mortality rate in U.S. auto accidents as compared to Western European countries is due to lax attitudes toward drinking and driving, not speed limits.

Wells said the number of deaths on the nation's highways has been going down every year since the 55 mph law went into effect. The only exception to this was 1986. Wells said.

See Speed, Page 4

Frog Finder's success lies in students' input

By Lisa Touye
Staff Writer

Frog Finder is an "extended friend" for people who don't know many people in their major when it's time to choose classes, said Jennifer Melfi, former chairperson of the Academic Affairs Committee.

Melfi said she and Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Peggy Barr based the booklet of course descriptions on one used at the University of Texas at Arlington.

Work on Frog Finder began in the fall of 1986 because Melfi said she saw a lack of peer advising at TCU.

Frog Finder, available free at the Student Center Information Desk,

lists course descriptions for most departments in AddRan College of Arts and Sciences.

The course number, title and instructor are listed by department. The descriptions tell the class content, text, assignments, labs, grading system and prerequisites.

The information in Frog Finder is by no means a contract, Melfi said. The class schedule and information listed are subject to change at the will of the instructor, she said.

Steve Partain, current chairperson of the Academic Affairs Committee, said last semester consisted mainly of planning and designing the forms to be sent to instructors.

The actual work started the second week of this semester, he said. Each committee member went to two department chairs to persuade them to have instructors fill out the forms, said Ann Winkler, committee member.

Committee members then checked back with their departments each week. A two-week period was given to fill out the forms before members came to pick them up, Winkler said.

Survey forms were then sent out to evaluate the form and method used, Partain said.

The Student House of Representatives budgeted \$1,400 for the production of Frog Finder, but the final cost was \$1,100, Partain said.

"For a first-time program, it turned out pretty well," Winkler said.

"The political science department participated 100 percent," Partain said.

Departments that responded negatively to the booklet said it would just be a shopping guide for people looking for easy classes, he said.

"Why try to trick someone into something harder than what they want to take?" Partain asked. "It gives them a choice before the add/drop period."

Partain said he would like to see the M.J. Neeley School of Business and the School of Fine Arts involved in next year's Frog Finders.

ENTERTAINMENT/ARTS



Photo Courtesy of TCU News Services

Simon memoirs to close curtain for Theater TCU

By Kym Alvarado
Entertainment Editor

Neil Simon has had a lucrative career as an American playwright. His autobiographical "Brighton Beach Memoirs" was just too good for TCU to pass up.

Theater TCU will close its curtain to a successful season this weekend with Simon's comedy-drama, which is based on his life growing up in a struggling Jewish family plagued with unemployment and sickness.

"Brighton Beach," just released for area production last fall after a successful Broadway run with Matthew Broderick, ("Ferris Bueller's Day Off") tells of Simon's teen-age years growing up in a lower-middle class Brooklyn household in 1937.

"We are very fortunate to get the play, because it was just released. The professional theaters had it until now," said Henry Hammack, chairperson of the TCU theater department and director of the play.

From the reaction of patrons who have already seen the TCU production of "Brighton Beach," the cast has given the Simon play just the right touch of youth and charm.

"The students have given the play a great deal of justice in their inter-

pretations. They are our top performers," said Hammack.

For junior Randal Berger, his role in "Brighton Beach" marks the second time he has been cast in the Simon play. Berger portrayed the older brother Stanley in the Stage West production last fall.

He will play the title role of Eugene Jerome, the young Neil Simon, for TCU. Eugene's mind is filled with strong fantasies about baseball and curiosity about girls.

Playing the part of the older and more experienced brother, Stanley, is Matthew Guidry. Guidry played the role of playwright Clifford Anderson in the Theater TCU production, "Death Trap." Portraying the hard-working Jewish head of the household is Tim Wilkendorf, who battles it out with his vocal wife Kate, played by Lauren Halyard.

Remaining tickets for the weekend performances are few, said box office supervisor Ovella Hall. Friday and Saturday shows begin at 8 p.m. and the Sunday matinee at 2 p.m. at the University Theater behind Ed Landreth Hall Auditorium.

Tickets are free for TCU students and staff, but reservations are recommended. Call 921-7626. Senior citizen and student tickets are \$3. All other general admission tickets are \$5.

Christian Song of the Year writer, TCU grad performs in Metroplex

By Jerry Madden
Staff Writer

TCU has produced leaders in the fields of politics, science, theater—and now contemporary Christian music. Although it isn't one of the more popular fields to enter after graduation, TCU graduate Billy Sprague has made a name for himself as one of the hottest new Christian singers.

Sprague recently returned to the Fort Worth area when he performed with Michael W. Smith April 17 at Six Flags Over Texas in Arlington.

Sprague is one of the more recent successes in Christian music. Since 1981, he has won Dove awards (awards in Christian entertainment) for co-writing Song of the Year "Via Dolorosa" and the musical "The Race Is On."

Sprague graduated from TCU in 1977 as an English major before attending the University of Texas for graduate work.

Sprague had a number of problems while at TCU. He had back surgery in his first year here after he was diagnosed as having scoliosis. He was confined in a body cast for nine months.

He said during that time he came closer to his mother, read his Bible more and began practicing the guitar.

The time in the body cast allowed Sprague to develop his talent. After he was free to move about again, Sprague returned to complete his studies at TCU.

He said he never had any plans while at TCU to become a singer.

His first song was written in the summer of 1975. Sprague said it was just a little, spiritual song.

"I never really imagined (singing) full-time," Sprague said. However, in 1981 a friend of his persuaded Sprague to start recording Christian music.

The friend had heard Sprague before and told Sprague his talents could be used to convey the Gospel musically. "We really wanted to communicate a message to the kids in America musically," he said.

His friend eventually offered him a job touring with Emmy and Dove award winner Amy Grant.

Sprague was convinced and soon joined as a member of Amy Grant's band. He toured with Grant nationally in 1981 as a guitarist and back-up vocalist.

Sprague continued working with Grant and other Christian artists such as Michael W. Smith (also a one-time member of Grant's band), Brownie Bannister and Kathy Troccoli.

Sprague moved to Nashville in 1981 as a song co-writer, and later that year began writing songs by himself.

His first album, "What A Way To Go," was released in January of 1985. His second album, "Serious Fun," came out in October of 1986.

His latest album has been described as a "clean, clear sound."

Billboard magazine said "Sprague has all the tools to strike large—a hot label, plenty of talent and a new album with new songs on the cutting edge of rock."

Sprague said performing is much more difficult than he ever thought it would be.

"It's difficult being a musician," Sprague said. "I don't think people

realize the lengthy incubation process that goes on when you make a record.

Sprague said the hardest part about producing records is the amount of time each record takes. "It's like having a baby," he said. "It takes well over a year."

Sprague said he enjoys working with other Christian artists, but "I commonly do a lot of stuff on my own."

Sprague said he has not given up his primary goal, working with kids, for the concert circuit. He said he often travels to high schools and colleges to put on performances.

Sprague said he recently spent four weeks in Europe working with Youth With a Mission. Sprague said he had a chance to travel and perform in West Germany, France and Holland.

"My first exposure to Europe this summer reminded me that a lot of people have tried to change the world with ideas and bullets and causes and wars, but no one changed it more than Christ," Sprague said in an interview with Contemporary Christian Magazine.

He returned to TCU last year for a performance but said he has no plans to come back anytime soon.

"I'd love to come back to play at TCU," Sprague said. "We'll just have to see what happens."

Sprague said he still keeps in touch with some of his teachers at TCU. He said he especially writes to some teachers from the English department.

Sprague is currently on a tour of the southern states with Smith's "The Big Picture Tour." The tour began March 5 and will end April 26.



BLOOM COUNTY



TCU DAILY SKIFF

The TCU Daily Skiff welcomes letters to the editor and guest columns. The opinion page is designed to offer a forum of thought, comment and insight concerning campus, state and national issues. All letters and columns must be typed and double spaced. Letters should be no longer than 300 words and must be signed. Both letters and columns must be

accompanied with the writer's classification, major and telephone number.

Views expressed herein are solely those of the individual writers and contributors. Unsigned editorials represent the consensus of the editorial board. Signed editorials are the opinion of the writers.

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More bank buyouts, mergers likely

By Troy Phillips
Staff Writer

As the Texas banking industry sags with the rest of the state's economy, more buyouts and mergers of large banks could be expected in the future, said Richard LeCompte, assistant professor of finance.

As a result of the Texas Legislature's approval of interstate banking last summer, Texas Commerce Bank was bought out by Chemical Bank, and Texas-based Republic Bank merged with Interfirst.

LeCompte, assistant professor of finance, said the legislature didn't see the necessity for interstate banking until it realized so many banks were in trouble and needed the outside capital to save themselves.

"If Texas banks had branches in other states through interstate banking, they could diversify in other states," LeCompte said.

He said the major lobbying groups for the law were the six largest banks in Texas. Most of the state's smaller banks opposed the law because they feared takeovers of small-town banks by large, out-of-state banks.

Few other banks have taken advantage of the law since it was passed, but LeCompte said he thinks that soon other large ones will follow suit.

"Banks outside of the state are waiting to see if the first big mergers will be successful," he said.

"There's uncertainty of what the real value of other Texas banks are," he said. "A lot of secrecy is involved concerning the value of a bank's assets."

LeCompte said much of the problem lies with the state's undiversified economy.

"The energy business is a dominant part of the state's economic future," he said. "The best customers during good times were the energy-related businesses."

"When times were bad, banks were stuck with bad energy loans."

He said Houston, which for years has been a major center for the oil industry and is struggling economically, is slowly becoming more diversified with the compact computer industry.

"With cities diversifying, banks will have to start looking for more diverse lending customers," he said.

LeCompte said many people who lost jobs in energy businesses could not make payments on homes and other real estate investments.

Many bad loans in real estate are in some way related to the faltering oil industry, he said.

An alternative to interstate banking that many banks are finding is downsizing or reducing the scale of a bank's operations.

LeCompte said that by cutting employees and operating expenses, writing problem loans off the books and

selling off fiscal capital such as buildings and other real estate, banks are attempting to generate cash flow.

"The main disadvantage of downsizing is in personnel," he said. "Banks have to lose good employees when they downsize."

"If things ever turn around, those people will be somewhere else, and the bank will have to start fresh."

LeCompte said if interstate banking catches on in Texas, consumers will benefit.

"There will be more competition to get consumers to deposit their money," he said. "That's something we haven't seen a lot of in the past."

LeCompte said consumers won't see any significant changes in operations for at least a year after any interstate mergers or buyouts occur.

"A bank like Texas Commerce has to analyze the situation with its newly acquired assets and see what its marketing strategies will be for competing with other banks," he said.

Building collapses, at least 5 dead

BRIDGEPORT, Conn. (AP)—A downtown apartment building under construction collapsed Thursday, trapping up to 40 workers under tons of concrete, killing at least five people and injuring 12 others, authorities said.

Police Superintendent Joseph Walsh estimated it could take a week or more to clear the rubble and find all the victims.

He said about 40 workers were believed trapped when stacks of concrete flooring and steel beams collapsed at the L'Ambiance Plaza project at about 1:30 p.m.

Rescue workers "have to lift the rubble before they can actually work," Walsh said. "The state police have their dogs here. We have sounding devices. We have

everything. But it's a question of taking time."

Families of the workers gathered at a high school to await news.

Joe Grabarz, an aide to Mayor Thomas Buccini, said four bodies were pulled from the rubble and placed in a refrigerated truck at the site. A fifth person was declared dead at Bridgeport Hospital, a spokesperson there said.

"I can see blue jeans sticking through the collapsed concrete from where I'm standing," said WICC radio reporter Tom McCormack, who was across the street from the accident scene.

About 50 construction workers were in and around the building at the time, Grabarz said.

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Foreign students bridge language gap

Continued from Page 1

Lehtihet said he found the students "very helpful and understanding," and he now has no real problem with the language barrier. Such problems, even when they do occur, are not all that frequent, faculty members said. Lysiak said he knew of only one complaint from one student in the physics department last year. Minter said the chemistry department has only three foreign graduate students teaching this semester, and there have been no serious communication problems with them.

"I've never seen a class where everyone had a problem (understanding the graduate student)," he said. And the departments do take steps to remedy problems when they occur. Foreign graduate students teach only labs, not lecture classes, and usually the labs are taught by more than one student. In the chemistry department, no graduate student has ultimate control over the undergraduates' grades, and all labs are supervised by a faculty member, Minter said.

The biology department has some undergraduate teaching assistants in the labs, Hoagland said, and those students help some with language barriers. Some of the remaining problems are caused as much by the undergraduate students who are in the labs as by the graduates who teach, he said. "In some cases the (undergraduate) students are simply unwilling to try," he said. "They tend to develop a bit of a mental block." Carrie Campbell, a sophomore pre-med major who served as an

undergraduate TA in the biology department in the fall, said she agrees. "It goes both ways," she said. "You (the undergraduate) do have to make an effort to make things clear." The problem of language is singular, but the benefits of foreign graduate students teaching labs are plural, faculty members said. Foreign graduate students add much to the learning process through the cultural interaction they offer the American students, they said.

Speed limit debated

Continued from Page 1

Wells said in Texas there was a decrease of 3 percent in the number of auto deaths in 1986. "That was another reason why we as safety professionals didn't think it would be a good idea to change it (the speed limit)," Wells said. Peerwani disagreed and said most accidents occur in speed zones of 40 mph to 50 mph within freeways and not on highways. He said it really wouldn't matter if the speed limit were raised since not many accident fatalities occur in rural highway areas. Some states, like Louisiana, have already raised their speed limits. Texas is not expected to follow suit until later this summer. Some state officials have said the new law will free up to \$850 million in

federal funds to be used for construction and related activities. Chuck Becker, an associate professor of economics and finance at TCU, said the increase will help the economy by creating new jobs. According to Becker, Texas will employ more people to work on improving the highway system. One of the reasons for raising the speed limit, Wells said, was to save time. For example, a typical drive from Fort Worth to Austin will now take only three hours instead of four, he said. Wells said he doesn't believe the new speed limit will reduce the amount of speeders on highways. "The speed limit now is commonly exceeded," Wells said. "Maybe not immediately, but within a reasonable amount of time, we're going to see possibly the same degree of exceeding the new limit."

Report says don't hurry weapons research

WASHINGTON (AP)—A group of leading American physicists said in a report Wednesday that it may take "a decade or more" to determine whether lasers and other high-energy devices can be used in a Star Wars anti-missile defense. The 422-page study by the American Physical Society also warned against accelerating the research to deploy a system quickly for political reasons, as suggested recently by

some Reagan administration officials. Going too fast, it said, "would freeze the technology at levels inadequate for its ultimate goals and absorb resources that could otherwise be used for research on more promising approaches." The power and quality of even the most promising weapons needs to be improved at least 100 times before they could be used in an anti-missile defense system, the report said.

"Even in the best of circumstances, a decade or more of intensive research would be required just to provide the technical knowledge needed for an informed decision about the potential effectiveness and survivability" of lasers and other "directed energy weapons," the report said. The report appeared to undercut recent statements by Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger and other administration officials pushing for a

decision soon to deploy the fruits of Star Wars research by the early 1990s, rather than the mid-1990s, as announced previously. Former Defense Secretary Harold Brown, a physicist, has written that although collision devices could be deployed sooner, they would provide a far less effective defense than lasers and other high-energy weapons that appear to be decades away from becoming weapons.

CAMPUS NOTES

GSP testing

The journalism department's GSP test will be given twice in May for students planning to take Journalism 1113, Media Writing, during either the summer mini-term or the first five-week session. The test will be given May 8 at 1 p.m. for the mini-term and May 29 at 1 p.m. for the first five-week session. Both will be given in Moody Building Room 2805. For more information, see Tommy Thomason in the journalism department.

"Brighton Beach Memoirs"

Tickets for "Brighton Beach Memoirs," the final TCU theater production this semester, are free with a TCU ID and can be reserved by calling 921-7626. Showtimes are 8 p.m. tonight and Saturday and 2 p.m. Sunday. All performances will be in the TCU Theater, Ed Landreth Hall.

Voice recital

Baritone David Bennett will join with pianist Burr Phillips in songs of Handel, Ibert and Schumann. The recital begins at 7 p.m. tonight in Ed Landreth Hall Auditorium and is free.

Senior art show

Seniors Jo-Ann Mulroy, Kathy Webster, Michael J. Magoto and Georgeann Shafer will show their paintings, prints and sculptures in Moody Building Exhibition Hall. The exhibit runs from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. today and from 1 to 4 p.m. Saturday.

Computer Center traineeships

Interviews will begin soon for three graduate traineeships in the Computer Center for 1987-88. The awards include tuition and salary. More information on application procedures is available in the Office of Graduate Studies.

Special library hours

For final exam week, Mary Coats Burnett Library will open May 3 from noon to 2 a.m.; May 4 through May 6 from 7:45 a.m. to 2 a.m.; May 7 from 7:45 a.m. to midnight; and May 8 from 7:45 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The library will be closed May 9 and May 10. Summer hours begin Tuesday, May 12.

Washington internship meeting

A general information meeting for students interested in the Washington Internship Program will be held Thursday at 2 p.m. in Sadler Hall Room 203. Freshmen and sophomores with at least a 3.0 grade point average can apply for fall 1988 internships. For more information, contact Eugene Alpert at 921-7395.

Senior Studios in dance

TCU's department of ballet and modern dance will present its Senior

Studios performance, original works choreographed by senior ballet and modern dance majors, May 1 at 8 p.m. in the TCU Theater, Ed Landreth Hall. Admission is free.

Coors scholarships

The Coors Veterans' Memorial Scholarship Fund awards scholarships on the basis of high school and college academic achievement, extracurricular activities, veteran parents' status and financial eligibility. At least 100 scholarships totaling \$500,000 are available to eligible students for 1987-88. Application deadline is July 1, 1987. Application and additional information are available in the financial aid office, Room 106 Sadler Hall or by calling 1-800-48-COORS.

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Sage St. at Lemmon in Oak Lawn 826-5790
Preston at I-335 387-8818
Sullivan at Preston 980-8884
Greenfield Ave., just north of Levers 892-9750
N.W. Hwy. & Webb's Chapel, across from Buckman Lake 356-7555/video 356-7522

Cole & Fitzhugh 528-9930
Town East at I-335 in Mesquite 886-4505/video 886-1481
Piano Plaza, at Central 424-8263
Bushman & Garland in Casa Linda 324-9485
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3986 Mackinpire, at Central 373-8181
Piano Rd., South of Richardson Square Mall in Richardson 234-8380
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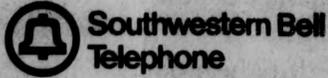
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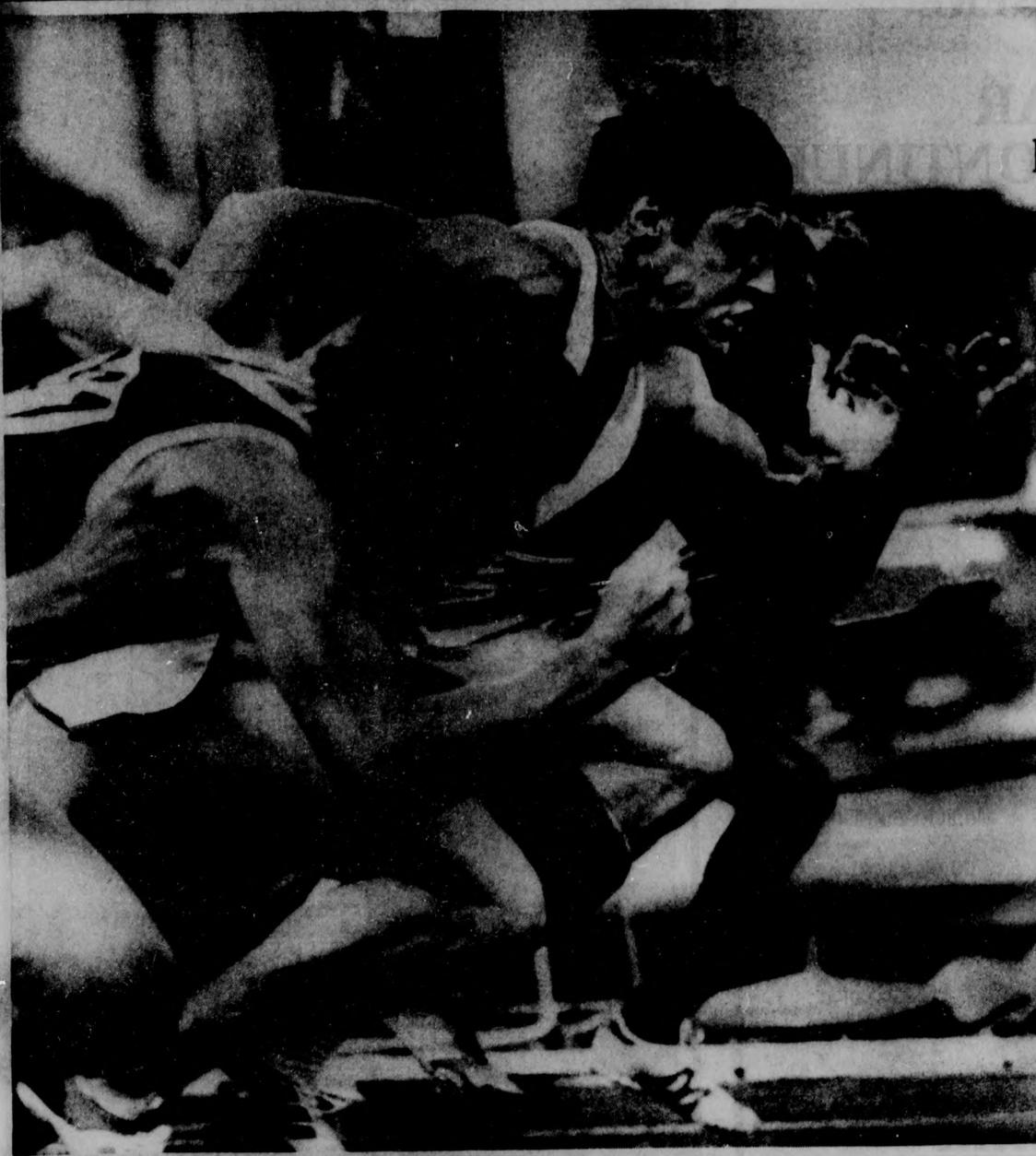
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TCU Army ROTC goes rolling down the Trinity River



Photos by Brian R. McLean

Making a rapid finish - Senior Terry Raymond, far left, awaits team members to compete in the first heat of the ROTC raft race held April 15 on the Trinity River. Sophomore Karen Metscher, left, carries raft paddles as the first of the two-day Raft Race came to a close. Teams competed with each consisting of 12 members.



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SPORTS



Sports fans today make mountains out of molehills



John Paschal

Shall we, in our impeccable insight, consider what is wrong with professional sports, or shall we let it rest in peace?

I mean, do we talk about this, or is it just another piece of gristle to chew while we yap pointlessly onward? Is it boringly old hat, or is the topic worthy of yet more attention? It's all a matter of what people think about it.

But if we are going to talk about it, we need two groups of people to get off this bus right now: anyone who thinks pro sports is all hunky and dory and every other term Aunt Bea can cook up in Mayberry, can take a long hike. And anyone who believes pro sports is the work of Satan, is a communist plot, is the Big Bad Wolf or is otherwise anything else wholly and unremittingly bad, can walk the same long trail.

What we also are tired of, to tell the truth, is this whole issue of, "Pro Sports: What's Wrong With It?" or some similar hogwash rhetorical title a network dimbulb will ascribe something that's about as new as bar soap. Huffing, puffing, and blowing things out of proportion is obviously something the American public and media seem to relish. Molehills are quickly mountains in the sports world. But mostly it's because these "issues" really aren't issues at all, but instead ongoing manifestations of man's unique ability to be man. He is just being himself.

And, yes, most definitely, man is certainly capable of being himself in the world of sports. Greedy. Self-serving. Narrow-minded. All that stuff. But gentlemen, what else is new? What else? In the gleaming, corporate, disco high-rises to the East, is there not egotistic, one-track-mind greed popping out of the metal-

lic structures like popcorn? You bet there is. Offered the opportunity of a million bucks a year plus tantalizing incentive clauses, businessmen surely would drop their briefcases and run posthaste to the ballyard.

So we really aren't talking about a problem in pro sports. If anything, it is a problem with just about everything.

Now what of drugs? What of drugs in professional sports? Again, are we this blind, or just devoid of lucid thought patterns? Dwight Gooden, the 22-year-old New York Mets star pitcher whose fingertips were already touching the world until two weeks ago, is one of the professional athletes in a drug rehabilitation clinic. Yet he is the most famous. If you condemn Gooden, condemn the rest. If you condemn neither, fine.

Len Bias was just the only star basketball player who died last summer.

Not the only person. Scorn all or none.

Yes, there is probably a drug problem in professional sports. But the problem of ballplayers using what we might call mind-altering substances is hardly a new one. In the early- to mid-century, beer and booze were post- and pre-game goodies.

Alcohol destroyed as many careers as did torn rotator cuffs as has cocaine. Sparky Anderson, manager of the Detroit Tigers, once said, "Ballplayers today are much more pure than they used to be. In the old days, 14 of 15 guys were drunks."

One retired baseball player, who played in the '50s and '60s told me in a conversation a year ago, "We had hardly heard of marijuana, and especially not the harder drugs. But there was a lot of drinking. It was so easy to do. We were young and in great shape, and it didn't seem to hurt us. We'd play at night, finish the ball

game and go out all night. We didn't have to wake up for the game 'til late, so it didn't really matter."

They reveled for the same reasons, only with a different substance.

Witness Babe Ruth, whose off-field exploits have finally become rather well-known. The beloved Sultan of Swat, who swatted 714 home runs in his New York Yankees career, has been called things like "fun-loving" and "free-spirited." But hell, the man was a party-er. He boozed it up, plain and simple. We can only speculate about whether he would snort cocaine today.

But man has changed precious little over the years. The athletes were no more pure than the merchant down the block, because they were no less human. And bet on it, they loved the game no more or no less than players do today. Give one a modern contract, he'd sign it. He still would've

loved the game, just a little more comfortably. It's the only difference.

Change is proportional, and the fact of that gets lost over time. Ruth made practically as much, relatively, as anyone playing today. More than likely, the Babe is playing for the "thrill of the game" much more now-as people glorify what they want-than he was when he actually played-when he played for money, nevertheless.

The fact is, athletes are high profile. They slip up, you hear about it. You slip up, the world is silent. The common area is that everyone slips up. From there, interpretation becomes somewhat stilted, and even cruel.

The indiscretion is the same, no matter who the perpetrator. Shortstop or chauffeur, pitcher or preacher. It's all a matter of what people think about it.

And out there somewhere is the first stone, still waiting to be legitimately cast.

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