

The Dallas Morning News

Texas' Leading Newspaper

Dallas, Texas, Monday, February 25, 2002

DallasNews.com

50 cents

Grad schools put to the test

New state law promotes diversity, complicates decisions on who gets in

By LINDA K. WERTHEIMER
Staff Writer

The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas used to automatically reject applicants with lousy grades and low test scores. It's not that easy anymore.

Because of a new state law, the admissions process is more complicated for the medical school and for all graduate schools in Texas. The measure, passed in June, says graduate programs may not use test scores as the sole or primary factor in admissions.

Instead, the law throws in 11 other factors schools must consider, including applicants' hometowns and whether they grew up in poverty.

The law is now having its biggest effect, as schools are scrambling to weed through applications for the next school year. Some officials say the process hasn't been easy.

In medical schools, officials have long considered entrance exam scores an indicator of a student's likely success on medical licensing tests, said Scott Wright, director of admissions at UT Southwestern. Now, it's just one of many factors to consider.

"We're trying to walk on a path that's a difficult one," Dr. Wright said. "We want to make sure we can enroll students who can make

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Peace plan doomed from start

Rebels failed to commit to ending civil war in Colombia, experts say

By TOD ROBERSON
Latin America Bureau

SAN VICENTE DEL CA-GUAN, Colombia — From the first minute of the first day of Colombia's now-dead peace process, there were serious warning signs about the rebels' commitment to negotiate an end to Colombia's 38-year-old civil conflict.

The warnings began when President Andrés Pastrana arrived here in November 1998 to inaugurate the peace talks, only to be stood up by his guerrilla counterpart, Manuel "Sureshot" Marulanda. An embarrassed Mr. Pastrana was left sitting alone onstage as Colombians, diplomats and the international news media looked on in confusion.

Brushing off the slight, Mr. Pastrana formally handed over control of San Vicente and the surrounding 16,500 square miles of territory to Mr. Marulanda's Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, creating what the president called a "laboratory for peace."

For three years, FARC commanders repeatedly made clear that peace was going to come on their terms or it would never come at all, Colombian and foreign military analysts said. The rebels insisted on conducting negotiations even as they unleashed wave after wave of attacks, kidnappings, assassinations, bombings and extortion threats across the country.

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THE WINTER OLYMPICS

'Something magical happened here'



Photos by DAMON WINTER/Staff Photographer

The closing ceremony of the Salt Lake City Olympics included vivid hues and energetic performances. The theme was a celebration of American popular music, and the show featured songs by Kiss, 'N Sync and Gloria Estefan, among others.

Games glide to an end

Colorful finale caps Utah's victory over security concerns

By JOSHUA BENTON
Staff Writer

SALT LAKE CITY — When Olympic organizers announced Kiss would be performing at Sunday night's closing ceremony, conservative Utahans weren't sure how to react.

The *Deseret News*, a local daily owned by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, ran a story quoting several local citizens concerned that the band "has long been criticized as being satanic."

"Maybe if they did a mild performance, that would be OK, but that's not likely," Utahan Kathy Curtis was quoted as saying. "This is really in poor taste."



Flag bearers carry banners of the 78 participating countries. "Olympians and people of Salt Lake City, we did it!" said Mitt Romney of the Salt Lake Organizing Committee.

That the choice of an aging rock band was worthy of controversy shows just how smoothly the last 17 days have gone. Like any Olympics, the 19th Winter

Olympic Games began with worries: over security, over religion, over how prepared Utah was to host the world. But they ended with the largest party the state

Closing concert was an epic TV spectacle. 21A

has ever seen.

"Olympians and people of Salt Lake City, we did it!" said Mitt Romney, president of the Salt Lake Organizing Committee, to a huge worldwide television audience. "Something magical happened here."

Sunday night's theme was celebrating American popular music — something Utah has admittedly contributed little to since the Osmonds peaked. 'N Sync opened the show with an a cappella version of the national anthem and was followed by jazz singer Dianne Reeves, Earth, Wind & Fire, Gloria Estefan and Harry Connick Jr.

And, of course, Kiss, doing its

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Gold reality: Team Canada tops U.S.

Canada, led by two goals each from Jarome Iginla and Joe Sakic, dominated the United States, 5-2, to capture its first gold medal in hockey in 50 years. The win snapped a U.S. home-ice unbeaten streak that dated to 1932. "I think we had a little destiny on our side," Canada's Theo Fleury said. Canada's executive director, Wayne Gretzky, revealed that one of his team's good-luck charms was a Canadian coin buried in the ice by the NHL crew preparing for the tournament. IIB



Captain Mario Lemieux skates with the Canadian flag after his team won the gold medal with a 5-2 victory over the United States.

ERICH SCHLEGEL/Staff Photographer

INSIDE

Two stripped of medals

On Sunday, the final day of competition, Olympic officials stripped gold medals from two cross-country skiers for using a performance-enhancing drug. IIB

A record haul for U.S.

The silver medal won by the men's hockey team gave the United States 34 medals, burying its previous record of 13. IIB



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III



Among S. Texas mesquites, memories of fateful anthrax

Heifer stricken in '81 pinpointed as source of bacteria used on letters

By TODD J. GILLMAN
Staff Writer

HEBRONVILLE, Texas — Robert Fulbright surveyed the land his grandfather settled in 1906, thick with mesquite and prickly pear cactus. Not the lush-est part of Texas, but fine country for raising cattle, he said — if you don't mind the anthrax.

"They fever so bad, they look like they've been dead longer than

they've been dead," he said, recalling an outbreak in 1975 that claimed at least 100 cattle. He spent much of the summer burning carcasses. "Fire's the only thing I know that'll kill it for sure. It's a nasty son of a gun."

A killer lurks beneath the soil of Jim Hogg County, awaiting the right combination of rain and sun and hungry cattle to come to life.

And this is no ordinary killer. The anthrax that was sent to the Senate and that killed a Florida tabloid editor, a handful of postal workers, an elderly Connecticut woman and a New York hospital worker, was traced this month to

this remote corner of South Texas — to a 14-month-old cow that died on a vast and lonely ranch an hour's drive from the Rio Grande.

Veterinarian Michael Vickers took tissue samples from the cow, never imagining that the bacteria they contained would end up wreaking havoc two decades later. He was as shocked as anyone to learn of his connection to the attacks. But having struggled to contain outbreaks that claimed 30 cows in a day, it made some sense.

"This is a very lethal strain of anthrax that we see down here," he

See SOURCE Page 11A

Iraq search may be futile

Rumsfeld says more arms inspections won't mean more discoveries

By RICHARD WHITTLE
Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — Imposing new inspections for weapons of mass destruction on Iraq is unlikely to work, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said Sunday.

"You could put inspectors all over that place, and it would be very difficult to find anything," Mr. Rumsfeld said on CBS-TV's *Face the Nation*.

European allies and other nations oppose any U.S. military intervention in Iraq, which has been widely predicted. Many have argued instead for forcing Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to accept United Nations weapons inspectors. Mr. Hussein expelled U.N. inspectors from his country three years ago.

Iraq has repeatedly denied possessing such weapons and has accused the United States of war-mongering.

The U.N. inspections were imposed on Iraq after the 1991 Persian Gulf War. The U.N. Security Council is to reconsider the issue in May. Many analysts predict that President Bush will order a military attack to topple Mr. Hussein if Iraq rejects new inspections, or if a new inspection system proves unsatisfactory.

In his State of the Union address last month, the president identified Iraq as part of an "axis of evil" that includes Iran and North Korea. He declared that the United States would not allow such nations to develop weapons of mass destruction.

See RUMSFELD Page 5A

Hearing risky to Skilling

Executives could rebut former Enron CEO at Senate inquiry Tuesday

By JIM LANDERS
Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — Jeffrey Skilling faces Congress again this week when the former Enron Corp. president and chief executive shares the witness table alongside two company executives whose stories have battered his reputation.

Mr. Skilling's testimony that all was well with Enron when he resigned last August was derided by several House members.

Tuesday's scheduled appear-

Angela Shah: Auditors' secrecy could harm faith in investing. 1D

ance before the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee could be even more difficult if fellow witnesses Jeff McMahon and Sherron Watkins are asked for instant rebuttals.

Mr. McMahon, Enron's current president, complained to Mr. Skilling in March 2000 when he was Enron's treasurer that the company's finance department was rife with conflicts of interest. Internal investigators found

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Source of anthrax pinpointed to S. Texas ranch

Continued from Page 1A

said. "It's very, very severe, and it kills with extreme prejudice."

No one is sure where the Jim Hogg anthrax came from. Perhaps the conquistadors brought it to the Americas, or it hitched a ride on some Chinese wool a half-century ago. The FBI, the CIA and others are still hunting the person who milled it into a lethal powder and sent it to the Senate, NBC News and other targets.

About all that is certain is that 20 miles south of Hebbronville, in a county where cattle outnumber people 4-to-1, a gruesome death in May 1981 provided the raw material.

"I kind of freaked out when they said they traced it back to Hebbronville. I've been around Dr. Vickers maybe 15 years," said ranch hand Meme Avila, 34, spending a warm winter's afternoon helping Mr. Fulbright brand some cows. "That was kind of scary. There are cruel people that want to do bad things out there."

The phones at Dr. Vickers' clinic and in his pickup ring continually. Ranchers in 10 counties trust him to keep their herds healthy. He scribbles phone numbers on his palm. By dusk, it's an inky rash. "I do an awful lot of autopsies," he said as he drove. "I see anthrax just about every year."

Mysterious death

He had been doctoring horses and cows for eight years when the call came. A 700-pound Beefmaster heifer had died mysteriously near a concrete water trap. That's not uncommon with anthrax. In the last hours, victims go wild with thirst and fever. So stricken cattle or deer often die near water or in it.

The cow was on the Lytton place, owned by longtime Kenedy County Judge Lee Lytton Jr. and his brother, Arthur, both dead now. They had bought the 26,000-acre spread from heirs of the legendary King Ranch. They ran 900 cattle, and this was the third loss in three days.

The cow was found that morning beneath a windmill that pumps water for the cattle. She was unable to rise. By noon she was dead.

His diagnosis leaned toward black leg, a virus that is somewhat more common than anthrax but with similar symptoms. Bloating. Heavy bleeding internally and through the mouth, nose or rectum. Rapid death.

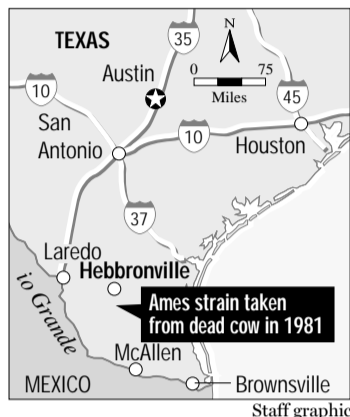
The cow was "in excellent flesh," Dr. Vickers hand-wrote in the report he sent with organ slices to the Texas Veterinary Medical Diagnostics Laboratory at Texas A&M University.

Two decades later, driving the dusty ranch road, Dr. Vickers confessed that he didn't remember the exact spot of the postmortem. Anthrax is so unremarkable around here that two years after that autopsy, he bought 1,542 acres of the



Photos by J. MARK KEGANS/Staff Photographer

Veterinarian Michael Vickers looks out to where he examined a dead cow two decades ago. Postmortem specimens are thought to be the origin of the anthrax that killed people last year.



ranch.

His pickup reaches a lonely home a few miles off the highway, past a cattle fence with a combination lock. Ranch hand Barney Baldeschwiler jogs his memory. It was near the windmill yonder, he recalls, talking loud enough to cover a tractor's engine, though none is running.

He's 90 and has worked the ranch for 40 years, outlasting several owners. He's seen healthy cows fall over dead. He's seen bulls bleeding in agony an hour after mating. He laments the pronghorn antelope that disappeared 25 or 30 years ago.

"What killed them off, I think, was anthrax," said Mr. Baldeschwiler.

Like most ranch workers, he's never suffered from anthrax. Only the animals catch it, when it pops through the soil on fresh shoots of grass, often in spots contaminated years earlier. So he frets more about mesquite thorns, rattlesnakes and the summer sun.

"I'm not worried about it," he said. "I haven't seen any dead cows lately."

Dr. Vickers bids farewell and drives a few minutes back toward the highway along another dusty road. He stops a couple of hundred feet from the windmill that stands

near the spot. That's where he dug through the heifer's organs, obtaining the germs that 20 years later set the nation on edge. He stays on his side of the barbed wire, because Mr. Baldeschwiler's boss has been ill lately and unable to grant permission to get on the property.

He burned the carcass in place. Piled old fence posts and mesquite limbs on it, poured diesel on top and set the pyre ablaze. When the lab results came back two days later, he ordered the surviving herd inoculated and the water trap fenced off for a few weeks as they built up immunity. He burned the clothes and gloves he wore and sterilized his tools.

"We live with it. There's other things that'll kill you out here first — rattlesnakes... drug smugglers," Dr. Vickers said. "Anthrax is way down on the list."

The United States halted its offensive germ warfare program in 1969, but research on vaccines and treatments continues.

Standing request

Unknown to Dr. Vickers, the Army's biodefense lab at Fort Detrick, Md., had a standing request for anthrax samples from the A&M lab, which handles 130,000 specimens a year. The lab sent a culture from the Lytton ranch to Army biologist Gregory Knudson, using a prepaid mailing label provided by a national veterinary lab in Ames, Iowa.

Five years later, Dr. Knudson published a vaccine study that referred to the "Ames strain," which turned out to be unusually hardy and deadly and fast-growing. Researchers shared their gem with as many as 20 labs in the United States, Canada and Britain.

"I've seen some reports that it only went to five labs," said Dr. Ronald Blanck, former Army sur-

much the same for years.

"A bacterial life is pretty short, and it requires probably a million generations to begin to see any changes at all in the DNA structure," said Dr. Bradley Perkins, chief of the meningitis and special pathogens branch of the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the agency's top anthrax investigator.

The slow evolution has proven "highly relevant to the criminal investigation," he said.

Although all Ames-strain anthrax is basically identical, investigators may yet pinpoint the lab where the spores originated. Microbial geneticist Paul Keim of Northern Arizona University, who has been working with the FBI, recently announced that he had found a way to distinguish between five samples of Ames strain, four from labs and one taken in 1997 from a goat in Terrell County, Texas, 300 miles northwest of Hebbronville.

That year, spring rains broke a four-year drought. Foraging animals got a deadly bonus with the fresh undergrowth. About 90 sheep, cattle and goats died in two months, a quarter-century after the last outbreak at the same ranch.

Statewide, the Texas Animal Health Commission documented 158 anthrax cases from 1974 to 2001, including 11 last summer.

Cases were confirmed in eight states in 1999 and 2000: Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Nevada, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota and Minnesota. Most Texas cases occur in a triangle bounded by Uvalde, Ozona and Eagle Pass, a few hundred miles northwest of Hebbronville.

But anthrax is far more preva-

lent than the figures indicate.

Only a handful of animals get tested in an outbreak, for one thing. And heavy brush in places such as South Texas makes it impossible to account for every piece of livestock that dies. Coyotes, wild pigs and buzzards often erase the evidence — and spread the disease — before anyone notices.

Autopsies not popular

On top of that, ranchers often prefer to burn a diseased carcass rather than order an autopsy. Autopsies cost money, and some worry about having trouble leasing their land for grazing or deer hunting.

"They don't want their neighbors and friends and the Texas government to know about it," said Donald Kelso, the extension agent in Terrell County. "If they have a problem, they try to take care of it themselves without the outside world knowing about it."

Hebbronville rancher Bill Holbein, 65, figures it's "silly" for anyone to deny the prevalence of anthrax, though.

He grew up on the ranch where Dr. Vickers obtained the Ames strain. His father managed the place for years, and he remembers a big outbreak in the late 1940s or early 1950s.

"We lost an awful lot of cattle, probably a couple of hundred cattle over a couple of years, over a hundred one summer," he said. "It's just kind of a seasonal thing."

Now he runs 400 head of cattle, some on a 12,000-acre parcel next to the Lytton ranch. He vaccinates every year, religiously.

"Oh, yeah. It's in the soil," he said. "I was surprised they were able to trace it down here. I wasn't surprised that we had it."

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From left: Robert Fulbright, Eddie Cremar and Bill Prude brand cattle at Mr. Fulbright's place, which is near the South Texas ranch where anthrax was taken in 1981. "Fire's the only thing I know that'll kill it for sure. It's a nasty son of a gun," said Mr. Fulbright.

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