

# YOUR VOICE

The Newsletter for International Students

St. Mary's University

Volume 1, Issue 9

## St. Patrick's Day

### Bizarre March Holidays:

- Go Commando Day
- Unibrow Action Week
- Spring Fever Week
- Cabin Fever Day

St. Patrick's Day is celebrated on March 17, his religious feast day and the anniversary of his death in the fifth century. The Irish have observed this day as a religious holiday for thousands of years. On St. Patrick's Day, which falls during the Christian season of Lent, Irish families would traditionally attend church in the morning and celebrate in the afternoon. Lenten prohibitions against the consumption of meat were waived and people would dance, drink, and feast—on the traditional meal of Irish bacon and cabbage.

The first St. Patrick's Day parade took place not in Ireland, but in the United States. Irish soldiers serving in the English military marched through New York City on March 17, 1762. Along with their music, the parade helped the soldiers to reconnect with their Irish roots, as well as fellow Irishmen serving in the English army.

Over the next thirty-five years, Irish patriotism among American immigrants flourished, prompting the rise of so-called "Irish Aid" societies, like the Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick and the Hibernian Society. Each group would hold annual parades featuring bagpipes (which actually first became popular in the Scottish and British armies) and drums.



<http://www.historychannel.com>

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## Vernal Equinox

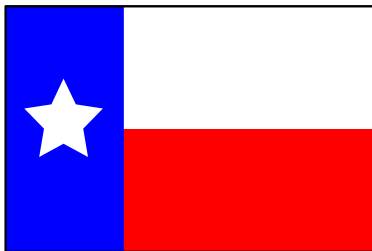
March 20, 2004, is a date that most of us recognize as symbolic of changing seasons. As we welcome spring, people south of the equator are actually gearing up for the cooler temperatures of autumn.

Translated, equinox means "equal night." Because the sun is positioned above the equator, day and night are about equal in length all over the world during the equinoxes. A second equinox occurs each year on September 22 or 23; in 2004, it will be on September 22. This date will mark the autumnal equinox in the Northern Hemisphere and the vernal equinox in the Southern (*vernal* denotes "spring"). These monumental moments owe their significance to the 23.4 degree tilt of the Earth's axis. Because of the tilt, we receive the Sun's rays most directly in the summer. In the winter, when we are tilted away from the Sun, the rays pass through the atmosphere at a greater slant, bringing lower temperatures. Thanks to this we experience the four seasons.

<http://www.infoplease.com/spot/riteofspring1.html>

## YOUR VOICE

### Texas Independence



*Texas Independence is celebrated on March 2nd.*

*Texas was the 28th state to join the United States.*



During the Texas Revolution, a convention of American Texans meets at Washington-on-the-Brazos and declares the independence of Texas from Mexico. The delegates chose David Burnet as provisional president and confirmed Sam Houston as the commander in chief of all Texan forces. The Texans also adopted a constitution that protected the free practice of slavery, which had been prohibited by Mexican law. Meanwhile, in San Antonio, Santa Anna's siege of the Alamo continued, and the fort's 185 or so American defenders waited for the final Mexican assault.

In 1834, Antonio López de Santa Anna, a soldier and politician, became dictator of Mexico and sought to crush rebellions in Texas and other areas. In October 1835, Anglo residents of Gonzales, 50 miles east of San Antonio, responded to Santa Anna's demand that they return a cannon loaned for defense against Indian attack by discharging it against the Mexican troops sent to reclaim it. The Mexicans were routed in what is regarded as the first battle of the Texas Revolution. The American settlers set up a provisional state government, and a Texan army under Sam Houston won a series of minor battles in the fall of 1835.

In December, Texas volunteers commanded by Ben Milam drove Mexican troops out of San Antonio and settled in around the Alamo, a mission compound adapted to military purposes around 1800. In January 1836, Santa Anna concentrated a force of several thousand men south of the Rio Grande. On February 2, Bowie and his 30 or so men were joined by a small cavalry company under Colonel William Travis, bringing the total number of Alamo defenders to about 140. One week later, the frontiersman Davy Crockett arrived in command of 14 Tennessee Mounted Volunteers.

On February 23, Santa Anna and some 3,000 Mexican troops besieged the Alamo, and the former mission was bombarded with cannon and rifle fire for 12 days. On February 24, in the chaos of the siege, Colonel Travis smuggled out a letter that read: **"To the People of Texas and All Americans in the World.... I shall never surrender or retreat.... Victory or Death!"** On March 1, the last Texan reinforcements from nearby Gonzales broke through the enemy's lines and into the Alamo, bringing the total defenders to approximately 185. On March 2, Texas' revolutionary government formally declared its independence from Mexico.

In the early morning of March 6, Santa Anna ordered his troops to storm the Alamo. Travis' artillery decimated the first and then the second Mexican charge, but in just over an hour the Texans were overwhelmed, and the Alamo was taken. Santa Anna had ordered that no prisoners be taken, and all the Texan and American defenders were killed in brutal hand-to-hand fighting. The only survivors of the Alamo were a handful of civilians, mostly women and children. Several hundred of Santa Anna's men died during the siege and storming of the Alamo.

Six weeks later, a large Texan army under Sam Houston surprised Santa Anna's army at San Jacinto. Shouting "Remember the Alamo!" the Texans defeated the Mexicans and captured Santa Anna. The Mexican dictator was forced to recognize Texas' independence and withdrew his forces south of the Río Grande.

Texas sought annexation by the United States, but both Mexico and antislavery forces in the United States opposed its admission into the Union. For nearly a decade, Texas existed as an independent republic, and Houston was Texas' first elected president. In 1845, Texas joined the Union as the 28th state, leading to the outbreak of the Mexican-American War.

## Texas' Independence, a Mexican perspective.

Texas was part of the Spanish Empire until Mexico declared its independence from Spain. Mexico included what is known today as Mexico, plus an area of two million square kilometers, which are now in U.S. territory. While Mexico was still part of Spain, it allowed Anglo-Saxon settlers to come into Texas and live there. The permit was given to 300 families, but soon after they grew in number. With time the settlers outnumbered Mexicans in the area.

As a consequence of the imminent implementation of a centralist government and the freedom restriction in the states, Texas – mainly inhabited by Anglo-Saxons – found a pretext to declare its Independence from Mexico. Supported by very influential Mexicans, like Lorenzo de Zavala and Valentin Gomez Farias, Stephen F. Austin declared Texas' independence on 2 March 1836.

Antonio Lopez de Santa Ana was in charge of the Mexican Army and was in charge of bringing Texas back under Mexico's control. He achieved great successes like the battles of El Alamo, and El Encinal. Nevertheless, while he rested on the banks of the San Jacinto River, he was taken prisoner by Sam Houston. Santa Ana was taken to Galveston and agreed not to attack Texas again. Even though the Mexican Parliament never ratified the treaty signed by Santa Ana, Texas independence was imminent. The independence of Texas and its decision to join the Union marked the beginning of U.S. expansion into Mexican territory.

<http://amolt.interfree.it>

## Health Insurance at St. Mary's University

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Information taken from Health Center Q&A for International Students. Now available at <http://www.stmarytx.edu/iss/display.php?go=hea>

**Coverage:** The Student Health Insurance Plan is designed to provide reasonable medical insurance coverage for accidents and sicknesses occurring during your studies at St. Mary's University. The plan is designed to complement the services available at your on-campus Student Health Center.

**Rate:** The rates for coverage each semester are determined by the amount of medical expenses that were incurred and paid for the insured attending St. Mary's University. By partnering with the Student Health Center and working aggressively with a Preferred Provider Network, the Student Health Plan has been able to increase your benefits and maintain a reasonable amount of coverage for a reasonable premium. St. Mary's University Health insurance is the cheapest one compared to those premiums paid at other universities in the area. St. Mary's Health Insurance Premium (\$480 per year) is about 50% less expensive than the average premium of the schools in the area (\$907.50 per year).

**Why do we need insurance?** Ideally, everyone should have health insurance. If a person incurred a serious medical illness or injury and had to be hospitalized, the financial burden would be tremendous without insurance. In the case of a student, the hospital expenses could financially devastate them.



St. Mary's University

Phone: 210-436-3714

Fax: 210-436-3300

Email: [iss@stmarytx.edu](mailto:iss@stmarytx.edu)

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**Does it really cost that much to go to a doctor?** The Student Health Center is able to provide all students with access to a General Physician at a nominal fee for basic care. However, the Student Health Center is not able to treat all sicknesses, emergency care or all accidents. Thus, students are often referred to a Preferred Provider for treatment, x-rays, physician visits, etc.

**Why purchase the St. Mary's Student Plan?** The University endorses a Student Health Insurance Plan in order for our St. Mary's students to maintain continuous coverage from semester-to-semester and year-to-year. Many individual insurance plans and association insurance plans marketed to international students on an individual basis can be (and have been) cancelled by the insurance companies in the middle of a semester or academic year. This puts insured students and dependents at risk of having no medical coverage for a condition being treated at the time of cancellation, and any new company would have a new waiting period for the pre-existing condition.

By pooling your insurance premiums together, St. Mary's students have a stronger plan and more reliable protection for the duration of their studies, and the University acts as an advocate on their behalf.

**Why do I have to pay for lab work?** Laboratory and pathology professionals charge fees for providing their diagnostic services.

## ISS Announcements

### **DON'T FORGET TO FILE YOUR TAXES BY APRIL 15**

***(EVEN IF YOU DIDN'T WORK!!!!!!!!!!!!!! )***

ALL international students are required to file with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), whether you worked or not. Unfortunately, the IRS can no longer provide tax seminars for students. There is, however, a tax program held on campus in the SBC Center (behind Casa Maria, near the Culebra entrance). The VITA program offers free tax advice and will help you prepare your taxes. Their hours are on Tuesday and Thursday from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. and on Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. The program lasts through April 3.

In addition, there is an excellent website that gives easy step-by-step instructions. The website was designed by tax specialists at the University of Texas at Austin. [www.utexas.edu/international/taxes](http://www.utexas.edu/international/taxes) Please go to that website first to learn how to do your taxes. Should you have any specific questions, you may contact the IRS at the following toll free number: 1-800-829-3676.

(Announcements continued on next page....)

### **NEED HELP FINDING A JOB? CAREER EXPLORATION OPPORTUNITY**

Do you know what employers in the U.S. are looking for in an employee? Are you interested in finding out what it takes to be successful in the U.S. job market? Do you want to learn what tools are needed to find the job you're looking for? Do you need help with your resume and interview techniques? Are you interested in finding out more about yourself and your career identity?



If this sounds like you, join the "Career Exploration" group. (Please sign up for sessions). Sessions are open to all current international students and will be held beginning March 30th at 3:00 p.m. in the Career Service Center Conference Room.

To sign up for the group or for more information, contact Norma Guerra Gaier ([ngaier@alvin.stmarytx.edu](mailto:ngaier@alvin.stmarytx.edu)) or Michelle Moreno ([gmorem@lake.ollusa.edu](mailto:gmorem@lake.ollusa.edu)) in the Career Service Center.

### **EASTER BARBEQUE**

International Student Services will be hosting a barbecue, Easter egg hunt, and "cascarone bash" on Easter Sunday, April 11. The festivities will begin at 12:30 in the picnic area between Dougherty and Lourdes. (Please note that the cafeteria will be closed this day and that there will be no food outlet open on that day).

