

Fake bomb leads to evacuation of Shields

A fake explosive was found in Shields Building after an unidentified female called University Police Services and said that a bomb was placed inside Shields Building yesterday.

Officer Mark Stringer said at 2:18 p.m. a woman called University police, claiming there was a bomb somewhere in Shields.

David Stormer, director of University Safety, said employees were informed about the threat as police searched the building.

Brad Hemstreet, assistant manager of the University's Office of Public Information, confirmed that a hoax device was then located in the first floor restroom.

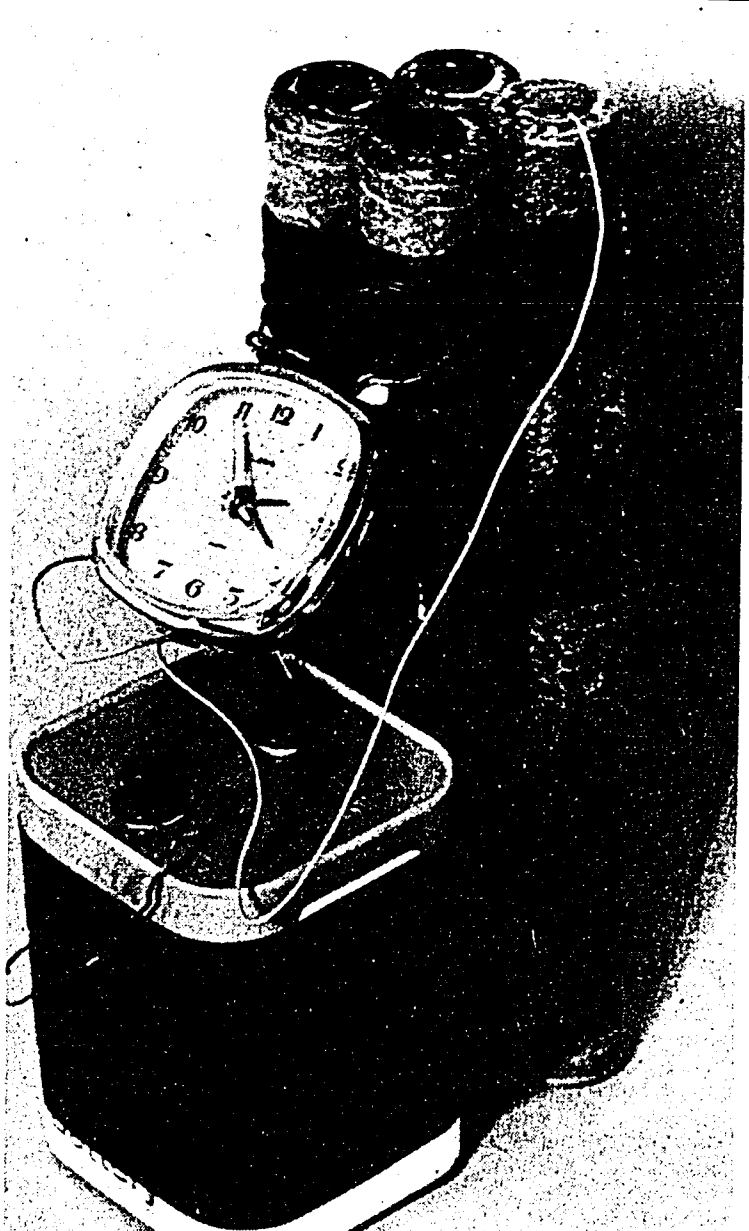
University Police sounded a fire alarm and then sealed off the building, said Stringer. By 2:38 p.m., the building was evacuated.

"The device was a hoax device, consisting of four automobile fuses taped to a clock and a 6-volt battery," Stormer said.

At 2:58 p.m. the device was removed by an officer on the Hazardous Materials Response Team and the building was immediately reopened.

No motive is known for the incident. University police will continue the investigation but have no current leads.

—by Lori Lincoln



Brit brings Stretch to PSU

By MAUREEN SEABERG
Collegian Science Writer

There is more than the Atlantic and accents separating us from the British these days. Current exercise trends are another difference in our cultures.

While Americans continue to participate in high-intensity aerobic workouts, the English people's newest fitness craze is called Stretch.

Stretch is a combination of low-impact techniques, including yoga and ballet. It also incorporates mental disciplines like Feldenkrais and the Alexander technique, which develop self-image awareness, as well as posture re-alignment.

In an effort to bridge the difference between our respective current trends, a British exercise physiologist, Pauleen Ashly, conducted an open workshop in the White Building yesterday with the assistance of Penn State instructor Sharon Warwick.

Ashly was visiting Penn State during the past 10 days to find out what the fitness scene is here and to find out what our facilities are, as well as how we use them. Ashly said she hoped to create some interest in Stretch here, while learning more about aerobics.

During her visit, Ashly observed Penn State gym classes. "The structure varies," she said. "The aerobic intensity is much greater in the U.S."

"But you must back up all the contraction you're getting with stretching, for greater flexibility and prevention of injury," Ashly said.

"One stretch class per week combined with aerobics would be extremely beneficial," she said. "It's sad that it's not used more in the states — it's so good for your body."

The benefits of Stretch include improvements to circulation, stress release, and greater flexibility to help prevent injuries, according to Ashly. Participants also improve their posture through increased awareness of exercise positioning encouraged during the classes.

U.S. media coverage of aerobic injuries combined with an overabundance of untrained aerobic instructors in Great Britain, has the British searching for alternatives to aerobic exercise, said Ashly. The trend in aerobics caught on for a while there but now people are afraid of it, she said.

Many have turned to sports such as squash and cycling

for the cardiovascular benefits. But there are eight times as many Americans exercising, said Ashly. The British would benefit from an organized aerobic program, she said.

"In England, we have to be more disciplined. There is more discipline in exercise in the United States," said Ashly.

In America, however, a "more is better" attitude may not be the answer to fitness either, said Ashly. Injuries here and research indicating the benefits of lower-intensity work have caused some instructors here to re-evaluate existing programs. Low-impact, or soft aerobics incorporated into fitness programs involving four or more intense classes weekly are being used more now.

The addition of stretching classes would also be beneficial for students, said Ashly.

Stretch is to Great Britain right now what aerobics is to the states, said Ashly. "I would like to see a positive compromise between the two methods. Classes would be safe and fun if done properly. I say — let's give it a try!"

Sharon Warwick, the Penn State instructor assisting the visitor in her workshop studied with Ashly in England. Warwick currently incorporates soft aerobic work into her classes and is open to the idea of stretching as an additional necessity for fitness.

Warwick stated, "It's almost as if each country is at an extreme and we need to find a middle ground. My opinion is that each approach is valid — but we need to incorporate the two for a successful total program. The combination of the two — aerobics and stretching is ideal."

Approximately 25 women participated in the workshop yesterday. During the workshop, the participants paired off to perform stretching and toning dynamics at the end of the session.

Warwick and Ashly spotted the class as they exercised to music. The women were encouraged to check their posture in the large mirrors on the walls in room 133 in White Building.

"Bend! Forward! Stretch! Down!" yelled Ashly, walking through the parallel lines of stretchers clad in leotards and aerobic shoes who had gathered for the workshop.

After an hour-and-a-half, participants cooled down to relaxing music.

Erika Reed (sophomore-history) said at the close, "I've tried this before. I prefer higher intensity, but I would do this again. You feel good afterwards."

Earth-shattering Ancient asteroid may have hit North America

By NAN CRYSTAL ARENS
Collegian Science Writer

An asteroid that struck the Earth 65 million years ago may have impacted somewhere on the North American continent, a geologist with the U.S. Geological Survey said Tuesday.

Douglas J. Nichols, a geologist who studies the fossil spores and pollen of ancient plants, said a variety of evidence points toward a major catastrophic event at the end of the Cretaceous period 65 million years ago.

The Cretaceous was the last period of the Mesozoic era, when dinosaurs lived.

Nichols spoke at a geosciences colloquium.

"I'm sure you've all heard the theory that the Cretaceous and the Mesozoic era came to an abrupt end as the result of a visitor from space," Nichols said. "We want to put together a picture of what may have happened."

Theories suggest that a large asteroid struck the Earth, throwing dust into the upper atmosphere that blocked out the sun and caused a cold period called "impact winter."

Nichols studied rocks from a series of sites within a swath of country that runs from Arizona to Alberta, Canada. These rocks were all formed in streams, rivers and swamps on the continent, so their fossils record what happened to land plants and animals, he said.

First, Nichols and his co-workers had to locate the precise boundary between the Cretaceous period and Tertiary period that followed it.

"The boundary was located by the

study of fossil pollen and spores," Nichols said. Certain pollen are characteristic of the Cretaceous, while other forms are found only in younger rock layers.

"Dinosaurs get a lot of attention in the popular press, but when it comes to paleontology, the plants tell the story," Nichols said. "Plants are at the bottom of the food chain and they are especially sensitive to the darkness and cold of the impact winter scenario."

"Characteristic Cretaceous (plant pollen and spores) disappeared abruptly at the boundary," he added.

When studying rocks found immediately above the boundary, Nichols and his co-workers found that the pollen life was dominated by a few varieties of ferns.

"There's a sudden dominance of the assemblage by fern spores just above the boundary," Nichols said. "And within a few centimeters above the boundary, things return to relative normal in terms of the ratio of pollen to fern spores."

This means that for a brief time, ferns took over the landscape, Nichols said. Later, a more normal variety of plant life returned.

"The dominance of ferns, we believe, is the reclamation of a devastated landscape by a pioneer species," Nichols said.

Ferns were also the first plants to return to volcanoes like Mount St. Helens after an eruption destroys the native vegetation.

But the change in plants is not the only evidence boundary marker, Nichols said. Geologists have discovered a concentration of the rare el-

ement iridium in a thin clay layer that marks the boundary.

"They found the iridium concentration at precisely the same place as the boundary (indicated by fossil pollen and spores)," Nichols said.

The iridium layer, first discovered in rocks formed under ocean waters, was the key evidence that led Louis and Walter Alvarez to originally propose the asteroid impact theory.

Asteroid fragments that fall to earth as meteorites have a higher concentration of the rare element than rocks of the Earth's crust.

The iridium concentration in the clay layer, found in more than 70 sites worldwide, is more than 100 times the amount normally found in the crust, Nichols said.

Geologists have also found tiny grains of quartz and feldspar minerals that bear a peculiar series of microscopic fractures, Nichols said.

Minerals with fractures like this, caused by intense shock waves, are found only in meteorite impact craters and at the sites of nuclear explosions, Nichols said.

The fractured mineral grains were found at most of the sites Nichols studied, suggesting that they were blown out of the crater by the force of the ancient impact.

This is strong evidence that the impact occurred somewhere on North America, he said.

One major stumbling block to the theory is that geologists have not found a large crater of the right age.

"We've got some candidates — one in Iowa, that is conveniently covered up by rocks carried by Ice Age glaciers — but nothing conclusive," Nichols said.

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