



Happenings in Campus

August 24
WTC Fun Day
Making College Count
 10am
 Fine Arts Theatre
Inflatable Games
 (Bungee Run, Obstacle Course, Sports Arena)
 1pm, Behind SS
Baseball Scrimmage
 1pm, Moffett Field

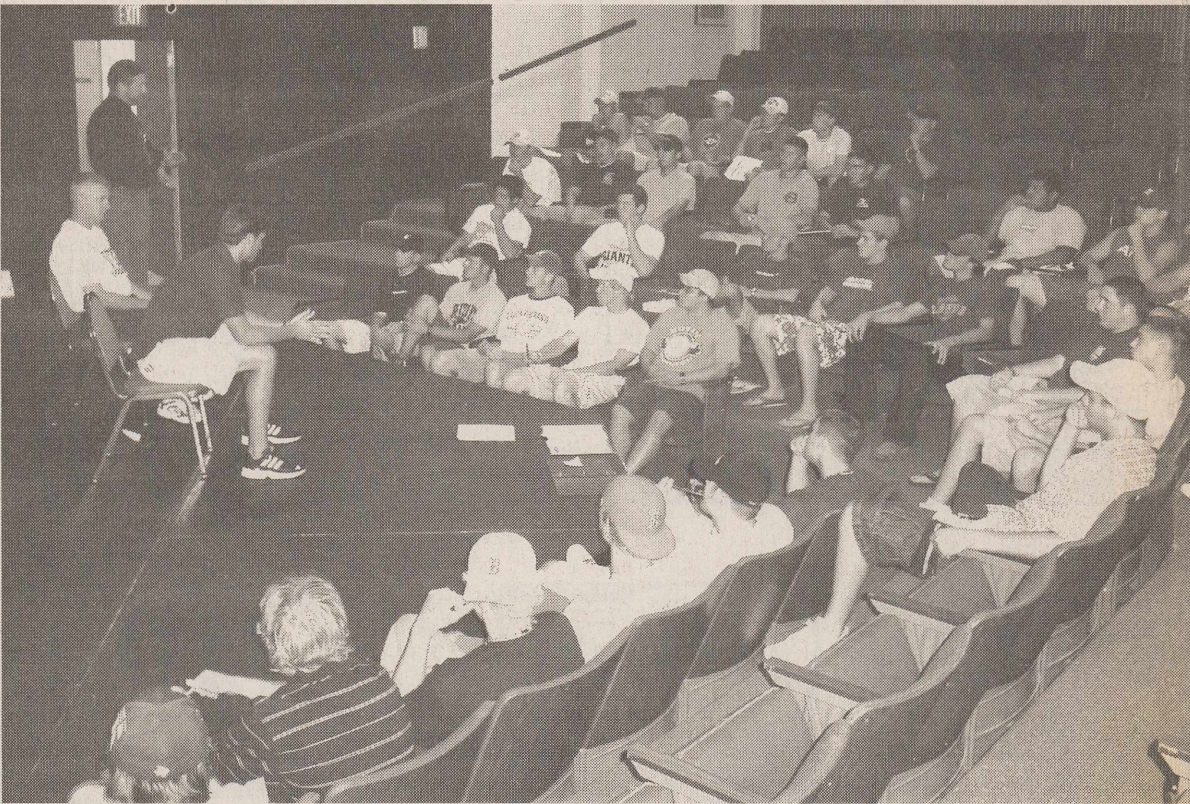
August 26
 Fall Semester Classes Begin
August 28
Welcome Dance
 9pm-midnight
 Patio behind Student Center
August 26
 Last Day to Register/Add/Change

Weekend, August 24-25, 2002

Western Texas College, 6200 College Ave. Snyder, TX 79549

Excitement Builds as the Fall Semester Opens

New Sports Teams Gearing Up and Dorms Nearing Capacity



Head Baseball Coach, James King, and Assistant Coach, Billy Hefflinger, meet with recruits and hopefuls for the inaugural WTC baseball team. Over 50 student athletes were on hand for the first meeting. Right: Head Softball Coach, Rodney McNeill, and Assistant Coach, Christy Cerecedes, visit with new recruits during practice at Cates Field. Coach McNeill says he has 18 signed players and has visited with 10-15 more who have expressed an interest in competing for a spot during tryouts scheduled for Monday.

Former 'Big City' Student Offers a Fresh Perspective on WTC

By Debra Burke

Editor's Note: The following is the second in a series of articles written by current and former WTC students highlighting areas of growth and change during their time at the college. Debra Burke is the daughter of Social Science Division Chair, Lee Burke. She currently lives in Granbury, where she is an administrative assistant for the CEO and chief legal advisor at Brinks Security. She is a senior studying with the University of Phoenix, where she is pursuing a degree in Business Administration.

Making it to my senior year in high school was a monumental occasion. I wasn't a bad student. I just didn't like school. All my parents wanted was for me to graduate. For some reason, they had doubts about me, their teenage daughter. Can you imagine? Sixteen years have passed since that defining moment in my life and looking back on me as a teenager, no wonder they had doubts.

My parents were cool about not pushing the "college thing" on me. I greatly appreciated that because as worried as they had been about me graduating high school, I was just as thrilled about getting out of school and doing my own thing. Upon graduation, I quickly found a job as a secretary for a commercial security business making \$7/hr. I also worked a part time job. Having both incomes and the initial help of mom and dad (THANK YOU, THANK YOU) I was able to acquire an apartment. The secretarial position turned into an amazing opportunity for me. This company trained me fully on all office software as well as the intricate operations of a multi-million dollar business. I truly loved that job and worked very, very hard. Within six months, I was promoted from secretary to office manager. I was nineteen and I had every one in that office coming to me for answers or help. I knew everything about that business and it felt great.

A couple of months passed and I had become very comfortable in my job. I was working at my desk getting ready to do some billings and that's when the realization came to me. All of a sudden I realized that I would never go any higher within that company without a higher education. I had worked hard and earned the position I was in but to attain the type of position that my bosses had would require a single sheet of paper declaring my completion of an upper education degree. I also realized that it wasn't just my company that would hold me back without a degree. It was a nation wide epidemic. Companies hire people with degrees. Companies pay more to people with degrees. Having a degree showed commitment to something and companies really liked that.

I knew I couldn't stay in Dallas alone, working 55+ hours/week and try to go to school. So, I called my Mom and asked for help. In my perfect world I had created in my mind, Mom had the perfect set up to accommodate my college dream and me. Her company had relocated her to Louisiana shortly after I developed my independence in Big D. She was living in a three-bedroom house all alone. I told her about my strong desire to want to go to college and how I knew it was something I had to do. (Okay, just to give some background, my dad, Lee Burke, had been a professor at WTC for 19 years at the time I'm talking to mom about wanting to go to college. I didn't even give WTC a second thought because I was a big city girl. There was nooooooo way I could live in a place called Ira, TX and go to college in Snyder. It just wasn't happening folks). Now back to my story. Mom was thrilled and told me to come on down. I packed my things and moved to Louisiana. (Another tidbit for those



I'm trying to do! The responses became a broken record. Bottom line...I couldn't find a job either. I remember feeling very guilty because Mom and I had made an agreement about me living with her. The agreement was based on me working at least part time to help offset some of the costs. So, my thoughts consisted of something like this... "Hmmm, Deb, nice going. In a time period of just a little over a month, you've moved 1,000 miles away from anything and everyone you know just so you can go to school. Now that's become a distant joke, plus you made a promise to your mother and you can't even keep that." Not a good day! Not a good month!

But then...THE PHONE RANG! Would anyone like to guess who it was calling? Yes, it was Dad. I talked (blubbered was more like it) about my bummer situation. He just listened quietly. Then there was a lull in my blubbering and he made his move. I'm going on a ten year memory of what he said to me that moment but it was very similar to the following: "Deb, I know how you feel about living in a small town. You don't want to. But, if you will just give me one semester at WTC, I won't ask anything else of you. Pack everything you absolutely need in that little car of yours, leave the big stuff at Mom's and come on. Please consider trying it for just one semester. You can enroll for the fall. No waiting here. If you hate it, I won't say a word because you at least tried and that's all I ask." Another lull. My brain was going ninety to nothing. How would I survive in Snyder, TX? Would I be able to adapt to such a drastic lifestyle change? Wait a minute, thirty days ago, this wasn't even an option and now I'm asking myself could I do it for three months. (Another secret...my mind was already made up when he told me I could enroll in the fall. That's how badly I wanted to go to school). So, I accepted Dad's challenge, packed my car to the hilt and trekked off back to Texas, through Big D and on further out west.

Upon my arrival in Snyder, TX, Dad greeted me at the door of my new home with a big hug and a smile. I got a tour of the place and my new digs. I spent the next couple of days unpacking, organizing and trying not to think about the fact that there was nothing but pastures and cows right outside my window. I remember feeling kind of isolated and a little scared. What if this was a mistake? My first venture had been a total flop so why should I feel any different about this one. I'll tell you why I felt different. Because I knew that I would be enrolled in college in just a few weeks. That was the only true definite in my life at the moment and it was strong enough to keep me grounded about everything else I was trying to not have issues with (i.e., cows, country music, small town living).

Early enrollment for the fall semester begins and I'm there and I'm terrified. I was so grateful to Dad for his being there and helping me. But what I remember realizing very quickly was that he didn't need to be there. Everyone I came in contact with that day was genuinely kind and helpful and welcoming and friendly. There was no way a stranger could feel strange for long because the hospitality was overwhelming. I couldn't stop smiling.

Enrollment wasn't the only thing going on in the Student Union. There was information available about all of the student organizations on campus. Sophomores involved in these organizations were available to answer any questions. This was about the time my head started spinning. I began reflecting on my time in high school and how miserable I had been. I didn't participate in anything because I didn't want to. Student Counsel, Honor Society and Cheerleading were a joke to me. My head stopped spinning and I had another realization. All of those things I had hated in high school didn't sound so bad now. They sounded like a lot of fun actually. I could do this. I could do it all. I wanted to do it all. It was at that moment that I knew I was going to spend a full two years at WTC. After only four hours on the WTC campus, my whole persona had changed as well as my plans for the next two years of my life. I wanted to be President of the Student Counsel, I wanted to be in the Honor Society. I even thought I might try out for cheerleading but that was a fleeting thought thank goodness. This body was not meant to do flying herkies, splits or anything of a gymnastic nature. I was okay with that. I accepted it and moved on.

I was a head-bangin', Dallas girl with a closed mind and a stereotypical mentality. I had already pre-determined the lifestyle and pre-judged the people of Snyder, TX before I had even landed. I'm telling you this because WTC is a place that will change you; change you for the better and change you for good.

The following is a list of the things that WTC allowed me to accomplish in the two years I was a student. Take special note of the last item: President of Student Counsel, Member of Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society, Who's Who Among American Jr. College Students, Academic All-American Nominee, Phi Theta Kappa Hall of Honor member, Institutional Effectiveness Committee member, Campus photographer, Brown belt in Aikido, Student Life representative, Stage manager for three semesters of drama productions, Lead actress in three plays, Brown belt in Aikido, Learned how to two-step.

WTC was the pivotal change in my life that made me the person I am today. Looking back on all that had to transpire in order to get me on that campus, well, I'd like to use a term taught to me by the coolest man I know, my Dad... "It's a God thing". It's an awesome experience that I challenge anyone to try; especially those of you who are like I used to be, (i.e., afraid of small town, country living). You won't regret it.

'All of those things I had hated in high school didn't sound so bad now. They sounded like a lot of fun actually. I could do this. I could do it all. I wanted to do it all.'

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of you that are considering changing states of residence to try to go to college...RESEARCH FIRST!!!) I did not. I just knew I was ready for college and I was going to move in with Mom in Louisiana and being 21, I had all the knowledge I needed to make it happen. This was first part of May of 1992. By the end of May, I had exhausted all efforts to apply at the two big colleges near my mom's house. Being a non-resident of Louisiana, I discovered I had only two options. 1) Pay out of state tuition for the first year until I could obtain residency status, OR 2) wait a full year, become a resident of the state, and then enroll. When I made up my mind to go to college, I was so excited about it that I would have started that day if I could have found a school that would take me. There was no way I could wait a year and there was no way I could ask my parents to dish out double tuition because of my sense of urgency. I remember feeling physically sick to my stomach because nothing was going right and I wasn't going to be able to go to college. (Yes, I will admit to you all that even at that lowest point of despair, WTC never crossed my mind).

I truly felt defeated and heartbroken. Well, to add to the pile...while I had been fighting desperately to get into school, I had also been madly searching for a job. I thought surely my previous job experience in Dallas would shine like a beacon off of my resume and impress at least one of the 30 prospects I forwarded my information to. The response I was receiving from prospective employers only darkened my mood. One would say, "Well, you appear to be over qualified for this position" and the next would chime in with "We were really looking for someone with a degree". UGH! There's that word again. People don't you know that's what