

Biological researchers Nancy and Jerry Jaax speak at Founders' Day convocation

Jaaxes brave the weather to speak to Meredith about their exciting careers.

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Staff Reporter

Despite snow and ice, Army Colonels Jerry and Nancy Jaax still made it to Meredith to speak at the Founder's Day Convocation on global spread of disease, bioterrorism and other topics that correspond to this year's campus-wide theme "The Human Face of Science." The Jaaxes' experiences with the Ebola virus in Reston, Va., inspired the book *The Hot Zone*, by Robert Preston, and the movie *Outbreak*, starring Dustin Hoffman.

Jerry Jaax said that, although he and Nancy are both veterinarians in the military, their job entails more than just playing with animals. "Our mission is a very special one," he said. "That mission is to conduct research to develop strategies, products, information, procedures, and training for

medical defense against biological defense."

Their research and other parts of work is based out of the United States Army Medical Research Institute of Infected Diseases (USAMRIID). The bio-hazard and safety levels are so high that sometimes they must wear space suits that provide filtered air to breath. Jerry led the team of space-suited Army sol-

diers who infiltrated the "hot zone" and contained the Ebola outbreak in Reston.

While Jerry Jaax was leading the infiltration, Nancy was back at USAMRIID in a top security lab conducting emergency autopsies on the monkeys to determine the exact cause of their deaths.

The Jaaxes said the outbreak of Ebola in Reston

was not really scary, but exciting. They were well aware of precautions that needed to be taken though.

"I put on my space suit for the first time not knowing what to expect," said Jerry. "Safety was our top priority."

He also noted that, surprisingly, the majority of the technicians there were underpaid 18- to 19-year-olds working under anonymity.

Ebola is still a mystery -- even to the Jaaxes in some ways. "This is a disease, but we don't know where it is," Jerry said.

The Jaaxes had quite a lot to say about the book and movie when answering questions from the audience.

"He [Preston] did a real service to those who are interested in diseases," said Jerry Jaax. "He clearly has sparked an interest that would not have been sparked if he had not written *The Hot Zone*."

Both Jaaxes agreed the movie is too sensational.

But Nancy Jaax said that, although the book is also sensational, it is still fairly close to the real story. The Jaaxes said, "There were nothing in there that was outright false."

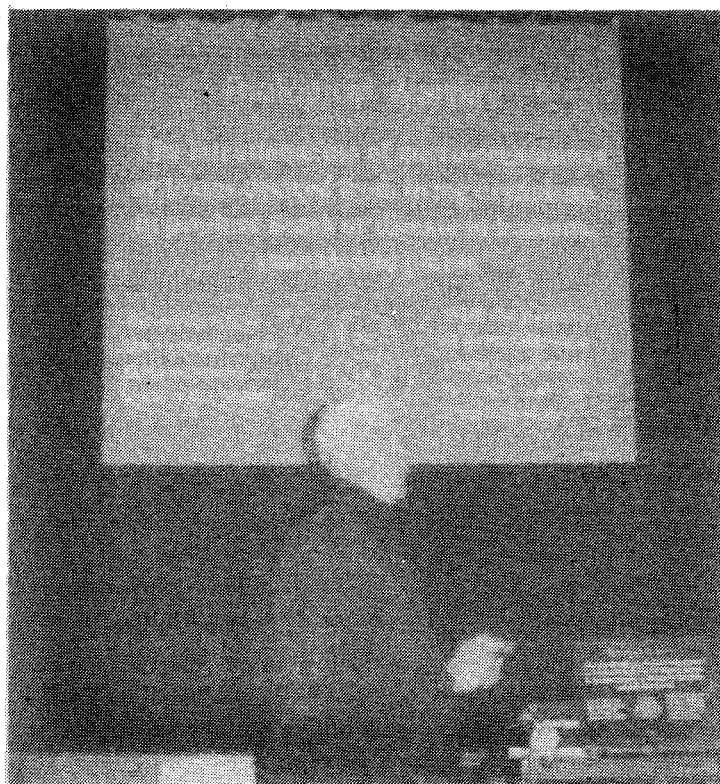
"I was actually interested in [the convocation] because I liked the movie," said sophomore April Garland. "I didn't think that everything that happened in the movie was true, but at least the majority of it was."

"I thought it was going to be more about how they felt and dealt with the situation," said Garland.

"Instead they gave more background on the virus and how it's carried."

Immediately following the convocation, the Jaaxes rushed back to the airport. They had only arrived hours earlier, at 1 a.m. Monday morning although traveling conditions were not very good.

"We've never missed one of these yet," Nancy Jaax said.



Dr. Jerry Jaax explains the science behind biological warfare.

Photo by Julie Stansbury

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Finally, the SGA Executive Committee has made a proposal to the Board that the SGA president be a voting member of the Board. This proposal stems from student concern last year over lack of student input and communication concerning the tuition increase. The SGA president currently attends meetings of the Board but is considered a "visitor" and is not allowed to vote

on College issues.

The Executive Committee researched student representation on other colleges' and universities' Boards of Trustees or Boards of Governors. This proposal will also be presented to the Board of Trustees at the meeting on Feb. 28.

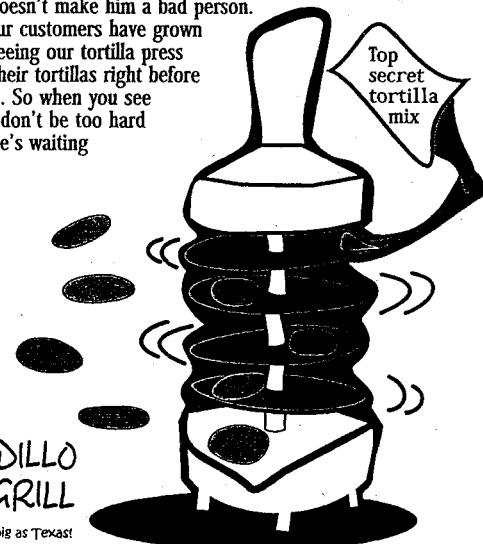
Lora Tillman, SGA president and student representative, strongly supports this proposal. "I am extremely proud of what the SGA Executive Committee has been able to accomplish this year," she

said. "With the progress we have made on these proposals in addition to our work on the academic climate of the College, we have made tremendous strides in many issues and policies that will make Meredith a better place for all students."

SGA thanks all of the students who completed surveys, voted in campus elections, and worked on various committees to make our decisions representative of students' desires.

Our chef is a procrastinator.

But, we're okay with it now. We've learned that just because he doesn't want to press your fresh tortilla until you walk in the door, it doesn't make him a bad person. In fact, our customers have grown used to seeing our tortilla press cook-up their tortillas right before their eyes. So when you see our chef, don't be too hard on him, he's waiting on you!



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