

THE BATTALION

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

Duncan landing



STUART VILLANUEVA • THE BATTALION

A group of Army ROTC cadets tour an Army Chinook transport helicopter at Duncan Field on Wednesday. The helicopter was one of three that were flown to the field. The demonstration gave the cadets a chance to gain hands-on experience.

Comstock lies in intensive care unit

By Sommer Bunce
THE BATTALION

John Andrew Comstock, the most severely injured student in the 1999 Aggie Bonfire collapse, is in intensive care this week after painful kidney stones and seizures wracked the survivor's frame.

Comstock was admitted to St. Joseph's Hospital in Bryan Monday night after he called his mother and complained of pain in his side. Dixie Edwards, his mother, said a friend drove her son to a doctor, and then to the hospital.

Once at St. Joseph's, physicians placed him in the intensive care unit to monitor his seizures, Edwards said.

But, she said, as of Wednesday night, no one was sure why her son was seizing and his kidney stones had yet to be diagnosed.

"He's in a lot of pain," Edwards said after visiting Comstock in his hospital room. "If he does have stones, Lord knows it's like giving birth."

Comstock was on the Bonfire stack in the early morning hours of Nov. 18, 1999, when the logs beneath him began to sway and people below ran from the teetering 60-foot structure. Forty-five feet

up, Comstock grabbed a log in front of him and rode it down.

Seven hours later, the broken but spirited young man was pulled from the fallen Bonfire and shipped to the emergency room at the College Station Medical Center. He spent months in a coma, waking up just before New Year's Day 2000 with an amputated left leg, nerve damage from the waist down and a crushed right hand.

He almost died, he said in August.

After a year-and-a-half of physical therapy, Comstock returned to campus last fall with an electric wheelchair and a prosthetic leg for good days when he had more strength.

And now, his mother says, "I never thought this would be happening again."

After Bonfire fell, more tragedy visited Comstock's family. Her other son, Chris, a midshipman at the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md., was in a motorcycle accident in November 2001 — two years to the day after John was trapped under Bonfire.

Like John, Chris may also lose his left leg below the knee. Edwards said she has tread a path between Chris' Pensacola, Fla., hospital room and her Richardson, Texas, home in the past months.

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Bonfire memorial design selected

By Sarah Darr
THE BATTALION

A memorial to the 12 Aggies killed in the 1999 Aggie Bonfire collapse will be built on the Polo Fields where the 60-foot structure once stood, officials said Wednesday.

Jurors of the Texas A&M Bonfire Memorial Design Competition chose a circle design with 12 bronze-lined gates connected by 27 panels to represent the 12 Aggies killed and 27 injured Nov. 18, 1999. Each gate is positioned toward the hometown of each of the victims.

The total cost of the memorial will be between \$4 million and \$7 million, \$3 million to \$6 million of which still has to be raised, said Cynthia Lawson, executive director of University Relations. \$1 million already is available for the project from interest earned on contingency funds, she said.

The design was prepared by Robert L. Shemwell, Class of 1982, of Overland, Inc., along with team members Jeff Russel, Ryan Jones, Michael Rey, Steve

Fong and Elizabeth Day.

Design competition juror Jaan Holt said Shemwell's design was chosen because of its originality and appropriate nature for Texas and the University.

"This will be a memorial we are proud to visit, and a place of remembrance that hit the mark of the Aggie spirit," Holt said.

The memorial will continue the Bonfire tradition of bringing

people together, he added.

A walkway leading to the memorial will consist of 89 large granite stones, each representing a year that Bonfire was built.

Lawson said a building time line has not yet been established.

The winning design will be on display in the Memorial Student Center through March 30 and can be viewed online at <http://bonfire-memorial.tamu.edu>.



JOHN LIVAS • THE BATTALION

Memorial designers stand behind their designs as they are interviewed on Wednesday.

Negative ads hit media

By Rolando Garcia
THE BATTALION

The positive tone of the District 31 congressional race turned ugly Wednesday when Brad Barton launched an 11th-hour attack against opponent Peter Wareing just days before the March 12 primary.

In new television and radio ads, Barton challenges Wareing's Republican credentials, accusing the Houston businessman of contributing money to Democrats, including outspoken liberal Congresswoman Shiela Jackson Lee. He also charges that Wareing profited from investments made by the University of Texas System while his father-in-law served on the UT Board of Regents.

The allegations plagued Wareing during his unsuccessful bid in 2000 for a Houston-based congressional seat, but had gone unmentioned during this campaign. Jason Johnson, Barton's campaign manager, said Barton chose to wait until the last

minute before airing the charges to give Wareing a chance to come clean with voters.

"Peter Wareing was given an opportunity to be honest, but his time has run out," Johnson said.

Barton's attacks are a desperate attempt to save a faltering campaign, Wareing said, and diverts attention from the issues voters care about.

"These issues have been vetted before and are full of distortions and flat out mistruths," Wareing said.

According to a 1997 report in the *Dallas Morning News*, the University of Texas lost \$10 million when International Cargo Network (ICN), a Houston-based fruit import firm, whose initial investors included Wareing, went bankrupt just 10 months after the University's investment. Wareing's father-in-law, Jack Blanton, was a UT regent when the board approved the deal with

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March primary turnout low

Officials puzzled by low student voting for primaries

By Amy Dosch
THE BATTALION

Of the 4,200 on-campus students registered to vote in the Brazos Valley, only 415 have participated in early voting for the primaries so far this week.

On-Campus VOTERS

10,000 students live on campus
4,200 on-campus residents are registered to vote in Brazos County
415 of those had voted as of Wednesday

Election Day is Tuesday, March 12 - during Spring Break
Early voting sites in the MSC will be open through Friday, March 8, at 8 p.m.

Source: Brazos County Voter Registration Office

RUBEN DELUNA • THE BATTALION

Early voting ends Friday at 8 p.m. Until then, students can vote in MSC 138 and 146. Lack of student participation and apparent apathy is puzzling, said Shannon Dubberly, president of the College Republicans and a sophomore political science major.

Dubberly said he is frustrated with students' unwillingness to accept the responsibility and privilege of choosing a candidate to represent them on the federal level.

It is doubtful that students will vote if they have not done so by the time they leave for spring break, he said.

"The nation is watching, we (the University) can change the course of the election," Dubberly said.

Some students have shown their passion for the political process, such as Dustin Greene, a senior in the Corps of Cadets and a political science major who, along with a group of other cadets, set a goal to register the entire corps.

"We knew this was a big goal," Greene said.

Cadets said they saw voter registration cards were passed out throughout the Corps and each company was encouraged to register. Current, 90 percent of cadets are registered to vote and efforts to get them to the booths are still going strong.

Announcements are made everyday at Duncan Dining Hall, the Corps dining facility, reminding the cadets of the location and dates of voting.

In February, Former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich came to A&M and encouraged students to take the initiative through voting.

"You can make the difference," Gingrich said. "If all of you vote, you can single-handedly determine the outcome of this election."

Buddy Winn, Brazos County voter registrar, said the "ho hum" attitude of residents in this county has led to low voter turnout.

A&M is known for the influence it can carry, not only because of its large numbers, but because of individual student involvement, Winn said.

RHA searches for unity

By Araceli V. Garcia
THE BATTALION

The Go Big Committee, a branch of the Residence Hall Association, held a forum Wednesday night to hear student ideas of how to bring unity back into residence halls.

University President Dr. Ray M. Bowen's decision last month to discontinue the 90-year tradition of Bonfire also affected the residence hall involvement associated with the tradition.

Since the decision, RHA has been

focusing on the fall semester and ways, other than looking to future Bonfires, to recreate dorm unity.

"There is no more unity and spirit in the halls, [and there will be] no more excuses for next year," said Jorge Barrera, president of RHA, in a previous RHA meeting.

The Go Big Committee is not trying to replace Bonfire, said Geoff Keogh, a member of the committee and sophomore business administration major.

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