

Four organizations

More entertainment to be had this fall at TAMU

By STEVEN OUALINE

Entertainment has come a long way at A&M in the 40 years since interested students and townspeople presented the first loosely organized Town Hall productions to offer the students an alternative to studying or going home every weekend.

On-campus entertainment today consists of dozens of clubs and committees to insure that students will have activities avail-

able to suit individual tastes.

There are four university-sponsored organizations, all members of the Memorial Student Center Council, which promote programs directed toward political and social involvement, current interest topics and light entertainment. Town Hall, Political Forum, SCONA and Great Issues are the elements from which many university entertainment activities are built.

Town Hall can be considered the father of all organized entertainment activities, other than sports, on the A&M campus. This organization, founded over 40 years ago, broke the ground which enabled related activities to grow.

It was originally an informal group of students trying to inject some life into campus social activities. Prior to its organization, campus entertainment consisted

primarily of spectator sports and beer drinking.

The first efforts of Town Hall were directed toward bringing theatrical groups to A&M. The future of the organization was shaky until the late '30s when growing financial support and a wider variety of entertainment began enticing students to stay on campus during weekends.

A significant boost came in 1957 when, with the financial aid from the Journalism Club, Town Hall booked "The Louisiana Hayride," one of the most popular touring groups of the '50s. The entire show was broadcast over national radio. This was the beginning of a new era in A&M entertainment.

With the increase in enrollment in 1964, resulting from the admission of coeds and dropping ROTC training as a requirement, Town Hall began receiving funds from the Memorial Student Center to finance its productions.

For more information concerning Town Hall's structure and plans for the coming year, see the related article on page 7.

Political Forum has as its primary function to act as the "recognized organization in the Memorial Student Center which annually invites prominent figures on the state and national political scenes to take part in nonpartisan programs," according to Paul Turner, last year's chairman.

The group is composed of politically interested young people whose goal is to provide stimulating and informative programs of political thought.

Political Forum members must organize all aspects of program activities, from issuing invitations to prospective speakers to deciding on a menu, if necessary, and

arranging for the speaker's reception.

Also included in the responsibilities of members is the distribution of posters and press release to the public, securing room reservations for guests, printing a program bulletin to publicize upcoming features and gather a biography, which includes educational background, occupation and political activities, of each of the prospective speakers.

Turner mentioned the administration had loosened its policy toward speakers on campus.

"Our speaker's policy changed somewhat last year," he said. "The council approved speakers who would have been considered too liberal two years ago."

SCONA (Student Council on National Affairs) is a once-a-year affair and perhaps the most carefully organized of all campus activities. It started 17 years ago to promote student concern for and participation in national affairs.

Ben Thurman, 1972 SCONA chairman, said the conference is based on roundtable discussions, each co-chaired by authorities on the subject being treated.

This format, developed at A&M, has served as a model to similar conferences at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and Auburn University.

Planning and preparation for SCONA go on year-round, according to Mrs. Pat Ramsey, SCONA secretary. The topics for this year's conference were chosen immediately following the awards

dinner for last year's meeting.

SCONA prides itself on being the only self-supporting organization of its type on campus.

"A&M doesn't grant any funds to us," Thurman said. "We receive our funds entirely from contributions of former students, corporations, foundations and interested individuals."

Last year's \$22,400 budget went to room and board for delegates and speakers, honorariums and funds for sending A&M delegates to similar conferences across the nation.

SCONA has sponsored some of the most controversial figures of the last two decades. Included as speakers in past conferences were Lyndon B. Johnson, Hubert H. Humphrey, Birch Bayh, John Tower and H. Ross Perot.

The SCONA conferences have been sometimes controversial, sometimes spirited, but always enlightening.

Great Issues offers the A&M student a chance to hear, in person, the views of the policy-makers of today.

"The purpose of Great Issues," according to last year's chairman, Sam Drugan, "is to bring to the campus informed speakers who will acquaint the student body, faculty and community with the issues and problems of our society."

How do they go about this? Drugan said it is a rather complicated affair.

A list of prospective topics is narrowed to about 20, which are then researched by committee

members. The Dean of Studies okays the program and can remove a speaker from the list if he feels that the speaker will incite campus unrest, according to Drugan.

He said Jane Fonda, an anti-war activist, was the only recently proposed speaker canceled because of fear that she would cause disquiet on campus.

Great Issues sponsors an average of 20 speakers each year. The programs are financed primarily by funds from the Student Services fee.

An honorarium of \$250.00 is paid to speakers, but Drugan added that a fee of up to \$1,750.00 has been paid to particularly successful speakers.

Great Issues is different from most entertainment functions on campus in that students play a very big role in deciding on the speakers. A planning committee gets ideas from students and faculty members in questionnaires distributed during the year.

Great Issues serves the student body of A&M by bringing stimulating and controversial personal views from across the nation to campus and enabling speakers to come into close contact.

Yes, entertainment has come a long way at A&M over the 40 years, but planners and organizers of the various groups will not be content with past successes. They plan to continue to strive for the very best quality speakers and entertainers coming to A&M.



ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR gathering places between classes at A&M is the bell in the rotunda of the Academic Building. (Photo by Bob Leitz)

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