

The Battalion

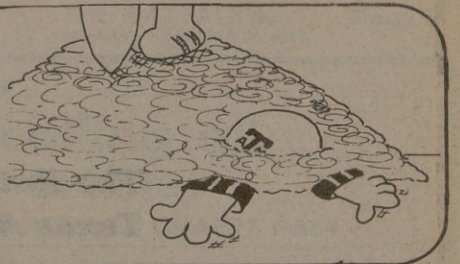
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Forestry teaches tree climbing

By CLAY COCKRILL

There is an art to climbing a tree, and that, among other things, is what students in Forestry Science 420 are learning this semester.

The three-hour course in arboriculture, the science of shade tree care, will be offered for the first time in the spring at Texas A&M University in the upcoming semester. Dr. Robert S. Dewers, who teaches the class, said it has been offered only twice previously: in the fall semester of 1976 and this semester. He said the course is being offered in the coming semester because of its high popularity with students.

FS 420 offers practical material for all parks and recreation, horticulture, and forestry majors. The course is not concerned with timber production, said Dewers, but centers around the care of trees which are kept for aesthetic quality and shade purposes.

Dewers said students learn the proper way to climb trees with ropes and safety harnesses. Pruning, bracing and fertilizing large trees is also covered.

He said students get to observe operation of heavy forestry equipment, such as the tree spade and the chipper. Dewers explained that a tree spade is a machine which can extract a tree from the ground without destroying its roots. The chipper is used to cut up tree limbs into small pieces which are more easily transported, he said.

Students also learn how to diagnose tree diseases and to estimate the cost of removing or pruning a large tree, said Dewers. This makes the course ideal for students who plan to go into the private nursery business, he added.

FS 420 consists of two lecture classes and one two-hour lab each week. Most of the labs are spent at the Brazos County Arboretum, said Dewers, which is adjacent to Bee Creek Park in College Station. An arboretum is a park designed for exhibiting trees. Dewers said tree physiology is covered in the lecture classes.

"The course is a lot of fun, I think, because we get outside so much," said Dewers.

Junior classification is a prerequisite for the course, he said.



Battalion photo by David Keahy

Climbing trees is more than an escape for these students — it's part of Forestry Science 420, a course to be offered at Texas A&M next semester. Jon Harrington, left, a graduate student in forestry, and Gary Beacher, right, a forestry major, learn the proper way of climbing. Beacher is president of the Texas A&M Forestry Club.

Grade point ratio could be over-rated

By KYLE CREWS

Some 716 students at Texas A&M University post grade point ratios (G.P.R.s) between 0.000 and 0.499 at the close of each fall and spring semester.

There is also an average 679 students whose ratios are 4.000 or better each semester.

The remainder of the students at Texas A&M have G.P.R.s somewhere between these two extremes. Lately, critics of this system have expressed skepticism over the validity of G.P.R.s as an accurate indication of a person's scholastic achievement.

The mechanics of the system vary at different schools. Texas A&M uses a scale of four in calculating this ratio. G.P.R. is determined by dividing the number of points earned in a semester by the number of credit-hours taken.

A criticism of this method of rating students is that a greater number of students nationwide are making higher grades. This rise in grades is supposedly causing G.P.R.s to become consistently higher and a less reliable form of judging a student's academic performance.

"Grade-point inflation" is the term commonly used to describe this situation. Those who believe in it are convinced that the G.P.R. is not as reliable as it once was in separating superior students from the rest of the class.

Statistics gathered by the registrar's office on campus show that the mean of the G.P.R.s for the entire student body remained between a 2.485 and 2.536 for the last six consecutive semesters. According to their figures there has been an increase of 5,083 students attending classes during this period (fall 1974 through spring 1977).

Does the average Aggie with a 2.5 G.P.R. have the same motivation and intelligence of other 2.5 G.P.R. students across the nation? Is he or she really a bet-

ter student than indicated by the ratio, or are grades at Texas A&M inflated?

Gordon Echols, associate dean of the College of Architecture and Environmental Design said he has been concerned about the possibility of grade-point inflation at Texas A&M.

"I have called this to the attention of our department heads and faculty members and I have asked them to be honest in their evaluation of the student's performance," Echols said.

Echols said the current policy of dropping courses with a grade of Q is a possible factor when students have G.P.R.s higher than what they would have if they didn't drop the course.

"We are making an effort to discourage the use of the Q-drop. Unless there are unusual circumstances prevailing, our general policy is to advise the students to continue courses they may be failing. Most of the students who try to drop a course do so around mid-semester, but we encourage them to pull it out if at all possible," Echols said.

R.A. Lacey, University registrar, said the Q-drop policy has allowed many students to remain at Texas A&M.

"The current policy allows students to wait until the sixth class day after mid-semester grades are posted to decide if they want to drop a class," Lacey said.

Dwayne A. Suter, associate dean for the College of Agriculture, said the G.P.R. is over-rated in importance by many students looking for a job after they graduate from college. He said he felt a student's development of leadership qualities is equally important as the G.P.R. in most professions.

"The G.P.R. is meaningful only when it is used as a comparison to other students' G.P.R.s at similar universities. It should not be compared to graduates of 10 to 15

years ago from the same school," he said.

Suter said a certain percentage of the student population will usually have personal problems attributing to grade standings.

"A person may have a 3.0 one semester and completely bomb out the next semester," he said. "I think that this may be the reason for some of the very low grades that some upperclassmen have in a given semester."

An average 221 seniors have posted G.P.R.s below a 1.000 at the close of each semester since fall, 1974.

Associate Dean of the College of Liberal Arts Diane Strommer said these figures do not necessarily indicate the number of seniors at Texas A&M who are doing poorly.

"It is possible that a student may have started here and made very low grades or dropped out that first semester. The student may have then transferred to another school and then returned to A&M their senior year," she said. "If this is the case, they would be considered seniors due to their credit-hours by transfer, but they would retain their miserable first-semester G.P.R."

Strommer said grade-point averages from other colleges and universities are never figured in with a student's G.P.R. at Texas A&M.

"My talks with job recruiters indicate that people hiring A&M graduates seem to value the grades given here as a fair indication of the student's performance. However, the tendency lately has been less on grades and more on other factors, such as extracurricular activities," Strommer said. "I don't think that the present Q-drop policy is that big a problem. There are many good reasons for having Q-drops, espe-

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Upperclassmen: good tickets still eluding them

Editor: We would like to know who in the hell is getting all the good football tickets. After three years at A&M we should be able to get better seats. We are all juniors and have been sitting in the horseshoe since we were freshmen.
—Letter to the Battalion

By CAROLYN KEMMERER

Juniors sit in the horseshoe, freshmen in the bleachers and sophomores somewhere in between. Trying to get a good seat in Kyle Field has been one of the major problems many Texas A&M University students have had to contend with this football season.

Increased student enrollment and more people wanting to see the team are some reasons for increased attendance at A&M football games, says Joe Young, a student representative of the athletic council.

Twenty-three thousand student coupon books were sold for the 1977 football sea-

son, meaning that about 79 percent of A&M's student population intended to go to every home game. Most of these students preregistered for coupon books at the end of the spring semester or during summer conferences, thus guaranteeing themselves a seat in Kyle Field. However, the location of a student's seat is not as easily guaranteed.

Wally Groff, assistant athletic director for business affairs, attributes the seating problem to the large number of tickets picked up on Monday, when seniors and graduate students are eligible to get their tickets. Groff says that while the number of tickets picked up on senior and graduate day has increased, the number of tickets picked up on sophomore and freshman day has decreased considerably. He added that ticket pickup on junior day has not decreased by much. More seniors are taking underclassmen to football games as guests, Groff says.

When the guest policy began, students were only allowed to bring one guest. The

Student Senate's present policy allows students to pick up as many as 10 student tickets on the days they are eligible to draw tickets. However, half of the coupon books must be of that day's classification.

Currently there is a proposal before the Student Senate concerning reducing the number of tickets a student may pick up from ten to six. Groff agrees that there might be a need to change the ticket distribution system, adding that the athletic department will do whatever the Student Senate wants if "humanly possible."

The section reserved for students and their guests is on the east side of Kyle Field, from the 50-yard line north. Groff says there are no cases of alumni sitting in the student section, nor can a student buy a full-priced season ticket book usually sold to alumni. Seats on the track are sold to the general public.

Groff says the Kyle Field expansion would provide adequate seating for several years to come. He adds that he doesn't foresee any students left sitting in the

bleachers after 14,600 seats are added to Kyle Field by 1979. But the growing number of students graduating and becoming alumni should also be taken into consideration.

Ticket prices provide 70 percent of the athletic department's gross income and are set by the department. Groff says the department operates within the confines of the Southwest Conference, which sets a minimum ticket price. The athletic department set the student ticket price at

half the regular ticket price, on a recommendation from the Student Senate. Students have no other influence in setting ticket prices, although they are involved in ticket distribution, says Groff.

For the past four years the athletic department has been reducing the amount of financial support from Student Government student service fees. This year was the fourth year of the plan to phase out the use of student service fees and the athletic department received \$50,000 from student government. Groff says he assumes

that next year the athletic department won't get any Student Government funds.

He said the athletic department is probably making more money selling coupon books than if it continued to rely on student service fees.

With the lack of student service fee support next year, student ticket prices will be raised. A student coupon book will cost about \$20 next year and students will also be charged admission to see basketball and baseball games, says Groff.

Irish gunmen hold six people hostage in Dublin

United Press International

DUBLIN, Ireland — Eight Irish Republican Army gunmen armed with a sub machinegun, shotguns and a hatchet held six people hostage in a Dublin supermarket for 13 hours this weekend, but surrendered without any loss of life. Police said Sunday the surrender may have broken up a gang that has stolen

about \$3 million in a series of spectacular holdups this year.

"We may have bagged them at last," a police source said.

The drama began Saturday afternoon when the gunmen were surprised by police in the middle of a holdup at a wholesale supermarket.

The gunmen, some of them in their

teens, fired a volley of shots at the police and then retreated to a second floor storeroom, dragging nine shopkeepers with them as hostages. Three of the hostages were quickly released.

Roman Catholic Bishop James Kavanagh, brought in to mediate the siege, said the gunmen held out because they thought they would be "ill treated" if they surrendered.

"We were able to convince them that they would be perfectly safe," Kavanagh said.

Police Commissioner Edmond Garvey described the surrender of eight of the men Sunday and the safe release of their six hostages as "very satisfactory."

A ninth member of the gang was captured by police before the hostages were taken.

Garvey said the hostages during the 13-hour siege had been in "extreme danger" because the gunmen "were all nervous young men and not trained in the use of weapons."

The gunmen surrendered shortly after midnight Sunday.

"They all looked disheveled and distraught. There was not much fight left in them," a police spokesman said.

"We made no promises at all," said Kavanagh. "We just pointed out the hopelessness of their position."

Shopkeeper Patrick Ward, one of the hostages, said one of the gunmen gave him a bullet to keep before he surrendered.

"Keep it as a memento," the gunman said. "It's the best way to be given one."

British firefighters still striking despite deaths

United Press International

LONDON — Britain's striking firefighters are vowing to hold out past Christmas if necessary in their already two-week-old strike for a 30 percent pay increase.

"Our members see this as a fight to the death," union leader Dick Foggie said Sunday.

But political sources said the striking firefighters, on strike for 15 days, may soften their demands when their pay runs out at the end of the month.

The firefighters, who have never before walked off the job, have no union strike fund, and the political sources said this week could be a turning point in the walk-out.

"Without strike pay they know they have a grim Christmas in store," Foggie

said. "But they are prepared to accept it. The government is trying to starve us out but we won't budge an inch."

Three people died in fires this weekend, pushing the death toll during the past two weeks to 24.

Strike leaders were gathering in London today to discuss their campaign for a pay raise that is 20 percent above the government's anti-inflation ceiling, and repeated their vow to hold out for the full increase.

The government has offered an immediate 10 percent raise and a cutback of hours to the 35,000 firefighters.

About 10,000 strikers Saturday marched with their families through London to Prime Minister James Callaghan's official residence at 10 Downing Street.

Bonfire: a tradition upheld?

Tradition has been upheld in at least one respect last weekend. As told in Aggie folklore, if the Bonfire center pole remains standing after midnight, the team will beat UT. If it falls before 12, the Aggies lose. Not only did the pole fall early Friday night, but it fell hard.

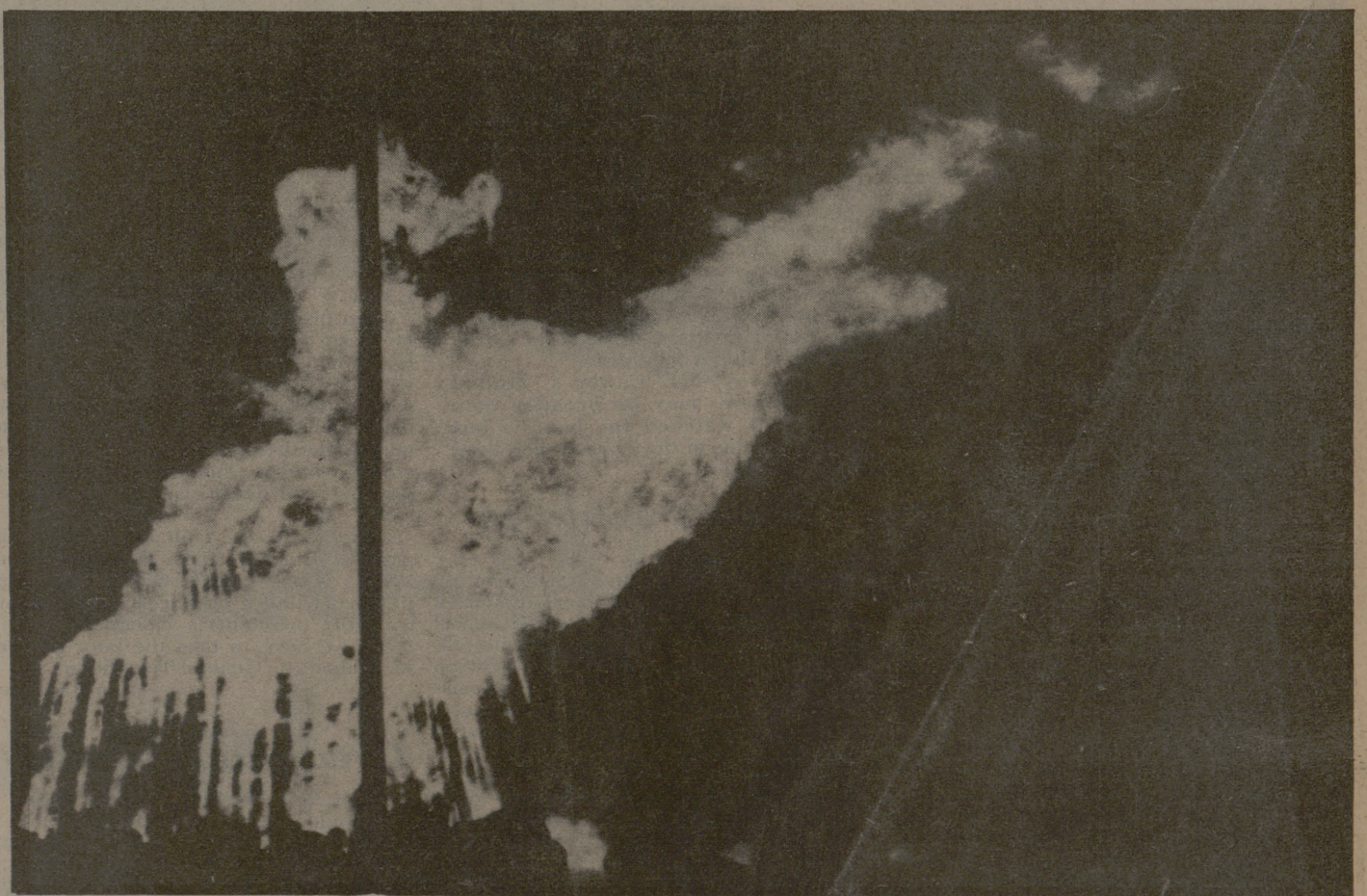
It seemed the Bonfire had just begun, and the crowd of about 20,000 was still waiting for the outhouse on top to begin burning, when the center pole leaned to

the south and fell unceremoniously into the burning stacks below. About 10 minutes later, the logs of the first stack came loose from the supporting wire and fell into the middle of the stack. The top stacks followed the descent, creating a jumbled mass of coals and flames where the Bonfire once stood.

The collapse of the fire had several effects on the spirits of the diverse crowd.

The cameras still clicked, the old Ags still felt good about being "home" for the Bonfire. But there was some discontent expressed by students about the collapse, and what it predicted for the next day's game.

On the positive side, no serious injuries were reported Friday night and the College Station Fire Department reported no other fires caused by the blaze.



Battalion photo by Jim Crawley

A strong north wind whipped the 1977 Bonfire into a one-sided blaze as some 20,000 watched Friday night.