

System takes time, but saves \$

# ID check breaks down

By KATHRYN GOFF  
The check-in computers at campus dining halls continue to break down, according to the person in charge of the computers, and several students on the board plan. Yet, Administrative Services Officer Tom Awbery said that the computers thwart cheaters, and track mealtime rush-periods for more efficient meal preparation.

The Validine Corporation-designed computers are similar in concept to price-check computers found at the Memorial Student Center Bookstore and at supermarkets. The master computer is connected to several checking terminals, Awbery said. Like the MSC price-checkers, the meal-ticket checkers scan price bands by means of electronic checking wands or glass plates.

Campus meal tickets are taped on the back of student ID cards and consist of price bands which are really student identification numbers translated into computerized bands. Theoretically, a valid meal ticket — one that is paid for, and previously unused for the current meal period — will be recognized and recorded by the computer. A nonvalid meal ticket — one that is unpaid for, or previously used for the current meal period — will not "scan" on the computer.

In practice, Awbery said, some apparently valid cards are not accepted by the computers. Last fall, when the computers were first installed, many students' board records were "wiped out" by the computers, Awbery said. That meant that many students with valid meal tickets had to receive special permission to enter the dining hall. Eventually, the human readers at the check-in terminals had to examine the meal tickets.

At another instance, the computers failed to "change over" their schedules during the weekend, Aw-

bery said. Students were credited with eating three meals on Saturday, even though the meals were eaten on the Friday before. A major failure last semester was paid for by Validine Corporation, Awbery said. Sophomore Robert Navarro, who eats at Sibisa, said he has noticed the frequent breakdowns. "They've been working fine until the past two weeks," Navarro said. "Before that I can't remember them working for more than a couple of days."

Becki Kidd, senior, says she thinks the lines would go more quickly if the meal tickets were checked visually, not electronically. Her meal ticket failed to scan on at least two occasions. The reader sent her ID number to the office, and allowed Kidd to eat.

Awbery said that whenever a meal ticket doesn't clear or a person claims to have lost an ID card, he allows the student to eat anyway.

Ann Griffin, a checker at Sibisa, said that a meal ticket may fail to clear the computer because the price bands are damaged. ID cards that are laundered in a pants pocket often become limber, causing the meal ticket to warp. The tape attaching the meal ticket to the ID card can easily be damaged through every day wear and tear, Griffin said, making the meal ticket incapable of clearing by the computer.

Awbery said cheating has decreased since the computers were installed. Fewer people claim to have lost their ID cards, because the computers can reveal that "lost" ID cards are still being cleared through the computers, Awbery said.

Also, if the computer records bear evidence that a person's meal ticket is being used by somebody else, then that particular meal ticket will be canceled, and another issued to the rightful ticket bearer, Awbery said.

Last year's meal ticket, which consisted of a small gold seal, could easily be transferred from one ID card to another. The current meal ticket, with its fragile price bands, would not clear if transferred to

another card. Awbery said that he has tried to "cheat" the computers by transferring meal tickets, but has failed.

The black market for illegally applied meal tickets must have plunged as a result, Awbery said. A dining hall employee overheard a conversation last year at a local Northgate store in which a young woman openly peddled illegally transferred meal tickets. The woman couldn't sell meal tickets easily this year, Awbery said, because stickers would be extremely difficult to remove without being damaged.

Awbery said he couldn't tell just how many students have eaten illegally this year. Yet, according to a Validine survey, the national rate of illegal eating in dining halls is two percent, Awbery said. He speculated that illegal eating rate at Texas A&M could be lower because of the relative conservatism of the students. About five students a day try to get into the dining halls illegally, but fail.

Awbery said that computers were installed to track meal-time flows so that food preparation can be timed to meet diner demand. Even though he couldn't say whether the computers are saving money, he said that one area in which the computers would be economically justifiable is in designing efficiency reports in meal preparation. This could be done from meal ticket clearance records.

However, money the computer saves through more efficient food preparation or reduced cheating would not lower the price of food and the minimum wage requirement are rising, Awbery said.

Awbery said he would like to have more readers at the terminals, because the lines are still slow-moving. All four checking stalls are seldom open at once. Awbery said he would also like to see the meal ticket price band placed on front of the ID card because the readers would then take less time checking cards.

## Oat researcher's meeting to be at A&M March 20-22

About 100 persons are expected here March 20-22 for the American Oat Workers' Conference, a series of meetings designed to improve oat production through discussion and dissemination of research information.

Dr. M.E. McDaniel, cereal crops breeding specialist with the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, said this is the first time the event has ever been held at Texas A&M University. The oat researchers meet every four years.

The first session begins at 8:30 a.m. Monday in Room 301 of Rudder Tower. Dr. Neville Clarke, Experiment Station director, will give the welcome address. The Experiment Station is the state's agricultural research agency.

McDaniel, an associate professor in the A&M Soil and Crop Sciences Department, said first-day topics

will cover management and economic aspects of oat production, disease and insect control, breeding for resistance to environmental stress, altering physiological traits of plants and projecting an oat ideotype.

Second-day discussions involve research needs on oat viruses, quality and future use, germplasm use and documentation, and cooperation between state experiment stations and the Science and Education Administration.

Distinguished service awards will be presented at 6:30 that evening during a banquet.

Rounding out the final day's activities will be uniform oat nursery reports, a business meeting and reports from visiting foreign scientists. McDaniel said the conference ends with a 1:30 p.m. tour of oat rust nurseries near Beeville.

# CAMPUS ACTIVITIES

**Thursday**  
CAMAC, Leonel Castillo, director of U.S. Immigration & Naturalization, 7:30 p.m., 206 MSC  
National Eagle Scout Association, organizational meeting, 7:30 p.m., 701 Rudder Tower  
El Paso Hometown Club, 7:30 p.m., 203 MSC  
Snow Ski Club, 7:30 p.m., 701 Rudder Tower  
Dance Arts Society, modern jazz, 7:30 p.m., 266 G. Rolfe  
Modern Languages, "Baroque Concert," 8 p.m., Rudder Theater  
Aggie Players, "A Streetcar Named Desire," 8 p.m., Rudder Forum

**Friday**  
Baseball, Houston vs. Texas A&M, 3 p.m., Travis Park  
Aggie Players, "A Streetcar Named Desire," 8 p.m., Rudder Forum  
Aggie Cinema, "7 Percent Solution," 8 p.m., Rudder Theater and "Slapshot," 12 midnight, Rudder Auditorium

**Saturday**  
Baseball, Houston vs. Texas A&M, 1 p.m., Travis Park  
TAMU's men's soccer, SMU vs. A&M, 2 p.m., soccer field north of Olsen baseball stadium  
Aggie Players, "A Streetcar Named De-

sire," 8 p.m., Rudder Forum  
Military Ball, 8 p.m., Exhibit Hall  
Aggie Cinema, "7 Percent Solution," 8 p.m., Rudder Auditorium  
Management Society, wine & cheese party, 8 p.m., Treehouse Apartments party room

**Sunday**  
Aggie Cinema, Comedy Orgy, 2 p.m., Rudder Theater  
TAMU's men's soccer, UT vs. A&M, 2 p.m., soccer field north of Olsen baseball stadium



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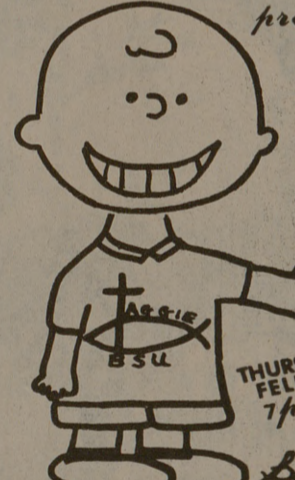
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**FOOTBALL BUSING SURVEY**

Please check the appropriate box.

- Do you live off campus?  yes  no
- I would be willing to ride a special bus from near my residence to home football games if available.  yes  no
- I would be willing to pay for this service.  yes  no
- I would be willing to pay up to: (check the highest amount)  .50c  \$1.00  \$1.50  \$2.00
- I would be willing to use a special bus for midnight yell practice if available.  yes  no
- I would prefer to pay for this service \_\_\_\_\_ at registration time \_\_\_\_\_ when I pick up my football ticket \_\_\_\_\_ only at game time

OCSA is considering several different methods of financing and routing the buses, and the survey is designed to measure student opinion on these methods. The surveys can be found and returned, or you can use the one in the Batt, to all the shuttlebus stops, first floor of the MSC, and Room 216 in the MSC.

