



1878 BATTALION 1978



A hundred years — and still going strong

The Battalion celebrates hundredth year of service to Texas A&M University



The rivalry between Texas A&M University and the University of Texas has been a "tradition" for a number of years. This cartoon appeared in The Battalion Feb. 16, 1938. Battalion photo by Steve Lee, courtesy University Archives

By DIANE BLAKE
Battalion Staff

What's black and white and has been read for 100 years?

The Battalion, which celebrates its centennial birthday this month, has been published under various names and formats since December 1878.

It started out as The Texas Collegian, became The College Journal in 1889 and then The Battalion in 1893.

The Texas Collegian was a monthly newspaper published by the Austin and Calliopean literary societies. One of its editors was Temple Houston, son of Sam Houston.

In its eight pages, the first Collegian had articles concerning eloquence, the antiquity of man, the necessity of a college library and an editorial exhorting "Youth of Texas, do not Sow Wild Oats."

The Collegian also informed the 19th century Aggies of upcoming events. It advertised "Dances by the boys every Friday night."

However, the dances were "Strictly Private. No young ladies are expected or allowed to attend them. This is to prevent duels."

The editors of The Collegian noted, "Not more than two boys will be allowed to visit Bryan henceforth on Saturdays. This is to prevent nervous prostration."

From 1889 to January 1893 the publication was called The College Journal. It was a pocket-size newspaper with a fancy gee-gaw cover which was popular for magazines in

that Victorian era. In the fall of 1893, the paper was officially named The Battalion.

Although there have been many changes in the style and format of The Battalion, some things remain the same.

A letter to the editor in one of the early editions complained about too much English homework. Another student shot back that if he didn't like it at Texas A&M, he "should resign and go elsewhere."

In almost every year since its beginning, The Battalion has printed

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The first pictures ever printed in the paper were in the June, 1893 commencement issue. By 1904, The Batt was putting out weekly editions.

In 1908, seven juniors of The Batt staff were suspended from school because of an editorial which criticized then-President Harrington. The head of the English



department was then ordered to censor all future issues of The Battalion.

By 1916, The Battalion proclaimed it had "the largest college circulation in the South!"

When World War I broke out, the weekly editions did not get the news out fast enough. Then a faculty sponsored Daily Bulletin was published by the publicity department of Texas A&M.

A Publications Board was formed

in 1931, with goals of putting an end to "slipshod, haphazard" ways of publication.

After being published weekly for 36 years, in 1939, The Batt began publishing three times a week.

That year also was the beginning of publishing during the summer.

However, during World War II, paper, printer and student shortages forced The Batt to return to once-a-week publication.

The Battalion resumed publication three times a week in 1946.

In the school year 1947-48, The Batt got its first news wire, the Associated Press, and its first automatic press.

In February 1954, the entire staff resigned their positions at the paper to protest a Student Life committee action which they charged would censor the college newspaper.

The committee adopted a resolution to create a student publications committee which would "advise with and assist the editors in" the forming of policies.

The then co-editors, Ed Holifind Jerry Bennett, said censorship could result from the committee because if an editor didn't follow a committee member's suggestion concerning newspaper content, he could be fired.

In 1958 several hundred copies of The Battalion were burned in protest of the newspaper's stand on coeducation. Editor Joe Tindel also found about a hundred copies in his office — torn neatly in half.

The previous issue contained an editorial which said the move toward coeducation at Texas A&M could be accomplished if it were implemented gradually.

"After an ample period in which both the Corps and Civilians are deeply cognizant of their responsibilities to A&M's future and its traditions in relations to the students, co-education on a full-time basis can be instituted," the editorial said.

The result would be "Strong Corps and Civilian groups embracing the young women of Texas to make to Spirit of Aggieland even stronger," it continued.

In 1966, the censorship again was a problem. Editor Thomas DeFrank was fired in a dispute over whether the Student Publications Commit-

tee head should review copy before the paper went to press.

Many changes have occurred at The Batt in the 12 years since DeFrank was fired. Now the paper's content is solely the responsibility of the student editor, with no censorship by the faculty or administration.

The office has moved from the YMCA building to Reed McDonald and in 1975 journalism students began submitting stories to The Battalion as part of some course requirements.

For the first time, student publications and the journalism department would be coordinated. The new program was designed to provide student with more professional working experience and The Battalion with an increase in manpower.

In July 1976, The Battalion obtained its own computer system which eliminates the need for specially trained typesetters for news production.

At the beginning of the 1977-78 school year The Battalion became a daily for the first time, and the following summer it began three-times-a-week publication for the first time.

The first elected woman editor, Kim Tyson, was elected to head The Battalion starting this semester. One other woman, Roxie Hearne, took over the editor's position for a spring semester, when David Breedlove resigned in the fall of 1975. And Debbie Krenek was elected summer editor this last summer. Since the early 1970s, when women were admitted to Texas A&M, they have held various editorial positions on The Battalion staff.

The paper has seen other changes in 1978. The Batt now averages 12 pages an issue. The advertising volume is also up about 27 percent from 1977-78.

Other additions have been "Focus," an entertainment section published every Thursday, and The Agriculturist, which was published for the first time Dec. 3 as a tabloid insert by agricultural communications majors, and is scheduled to become a once-a-semester publication.

Batt changes 'for better'

Past editors speak out on Batt

By Diane Blake
Battalion Staff

In its 100-year history, the Battalion has had a wide variety of formats, policies and problems. Editors of the Batt in different eras can relate just how much the newspaper has changed over the years.

Four former editors, Carl Brannin, E.M. Rosenthal, James K.B. Nelson and Thomas DeFrank talked about their experiences as editor of the school newspaper.

Carl Brannin, '09, edited the Battalion when he was a student in 1909. He graduated with a degree in textile engineering, but says he's not an Aggie.

"We were called Long Horns back then," he said.

During World War II, E.M. Rosenthal, '42, was editor of the Batt. "It was the highest-paying job for students in the Southwest Conference," Rosenthal said.

At the time editors were elected by the student body. The publication, a 4-page weekly, had about three or four students working on it.

Brannin participated in the student uprising of 1908 in which he did not attend classes for six weeks in a non-violent protest. The students refused to attend because they disagreed with some of President Harrington's policies. However, they did attend drill and eat at the mess hall. They were not suspended from school for their participation in the protest.

During World War II, E.M. Rosenthal, '42, was editor of the Batt. "It was the highest-paying job for students in the Southwest Conference," Rosenthal said. "I got \$55 a month and the editor of the Longhorn in Austin got \$50."

His paper was published three times a week and was a morning paper. "We worked during the day and had it printed at night," he said.

Rosenthal became interested in working on the Battalion after his freshman year at Texas A&M University when he received a letter from the editor inviting him to work

on the newspaper. "I was really pleased. I felt really special and singled out," Rosenthal said.

"Then I found out that anybody that had made an A in freshman English had been asked to work," he said.

The former editor said the Batt staff wasn't "as independent as they would like to have been" in regards to administrative pressures over newspaper content.

One interesting article they did publish was on Dec. 9, 1941. The Battalion read, "Jap planes reported over San Francisco."

"We were the only state newspaper that carried it because we printed at night." After the war, James K.B. Nelson, '49, edited the Batt. In addition to the newspaper, the students published a monthly tabloid.

The paper averaged 8-12 pages, with 16-page special editions. Many of the students on the staff were veterans returned from World War II.

Nelson said that while he worked on the paper, the first Associated Press wire service to the Batt office began, the first automatic press was purchased, and a radio sports program was begun.

He said the newspaper was not reviewed before publication by the faculty, and the administration was "very interested in having a strong, active, quality newspaper."

However, Thomas DeFrank, '67, found in 1966 when he became editor that the administration's attitude toward censorship had changed.

He was fired from his job as Batt editor in October 1966 in a dispute over censorship. "The president of the University, Earl Rudder, and the student publications director, Jim Lindsey, felt that the Battalion should be a puff sheet for the administration," DeFrank said.

"They felt that nothing in the paper should be critical of the University and they had sole authority over what was critical," he said. "They had the right to see everything before publication. We left all

copy in the copy basket at night and if Lindsey didn't like something - a cartoon, editorial, or news story - he threw it out," DeFrank said.

DeFrank said he thought this type of censorship "stifles student creativity."

DeFrank is now Newsweek magazine's White House correspondent. "If my life had gone to hell I might have been bitter," he said of his dismissal.

"I feel I had the last laugh," he said. DeFrank said the Battalion "has come a long way from the basement of the YMCA building" where the Batt office was located in the early 1960s.

"It has really grown up. The people who run it have become more enlightened. Texas A&M has really changed for the better," he said.

"To work for the paper you have to be crazy or love it," the White House correspondent said.

Today there is no censorship exercised by the administration on the content of the Battalion, said Bob G. Rogers, head of the Department of Communications.

DeFrank said there were about 12 student staff members when he was editor, and the newspaper looked much as it does today. However, then the newspaper had no affiliation with the journalism department.

Battalion staffers got no course credits for their work on the paper. "It was a labor of love," DeFrank said.

"To work for the paper you have to be crazy or love it," the White House correspondent said. "I love it and I'm probably crazy, too."

"Then the paper was the center of your universe or you didn't last long. We really had to hump it to put the thing out," he said. "We worked all night and neglected our studies and killed ourselves to get the paper out," DeFrank said.



"Well, we have Infantry, Cavalry, Field Artillery, and Navy, but no Waves . . . yet!"
Courtesy of University Archives

