

Ben stops traveling, starts school

by CATHY SAATHOFF
Battalion Staff

For most students, the road to Texas A&M University includes 12 years of sitting in a classroom. For freshman Ben Robertson, however, the road held only 12 weeks of classroom sitting and 17 years of traveling across the United States and Canada. "I've had to grow up a little quicker," Robertson said of his nomadic life.

When he was eight, his father told him he was on his own, although he traveled with one or both of his parents until he was 13 years old, when both were killed. Robertson is reluctant to talk about the incident, but is willing to talk about what happened afterwards to bring him to Texas A&M.

His life was lonely, he said, and he never stayed anywhere long enough to form any permanent relationships. He also got to see things other people never see, but Robertson said he missed having a home life.

In December, 1978, a radio report of Austin's 74-degree weather brought him there from Irving. After a day and a half, he decided he'd had enough of Austin.

Robertson said he picked Burnet, in the Texas Hill Country, off of a map and headed in that direction. He made a wise choice.

The bus he boarded took him to Lampasas; while waiting for the bus to Burnet he was picked up by Johnny Curroo of the Buckner Boys Ranch.

Curro took him to Burnet and left him in the care of Leroy Elliot and his wife. After that, he stayed with Wanda and Jim Legg.

The town just sort of adopted him, Robertson said. "It hit kind of quick," he said. "I kind of like it." While in Burnet, he worked for veterinarian Dr. Dan McBride.

He seemed interested in getting his high school diploma, and went to Burnet high school to see a counselor. He started attending classes as a sophomore, but had a lot of freedom in the level of classes he could attend.

After 12 weeks, he decided he'd had enough, and took his Graduate Equivalency Diploma test. "Some people suggested that I should go to college," Robertson said.

But as with most college-bound students, money was a problem. Not to mention being accepted at Texas A&M with no school records.

Actually, with no records at all, since Robertson's father delivered him and he had no birth certificate. Robertson was basically a non-person as far as the government was concerned.

It was about this time that Kyle Crews of the Texas

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A&M school relations office found out about Robertson.

"It is a very unusual circumstance to find someone in this day and age who is this articulate and has never had any formal education," Crews said.

"My mother taught me how to read when I was 10," Robertson said. After that, he kept up by reading on his own.

"Ben is not someone we have been set up to work with, but I ran across him while I was recruiting in

the Hill Country and felt he was worth the special effort," Crews said.

Although Robertson has had basically no formal education, Crews said, he was admitted to Texas A&M on the basis of his GED and his Scholastic Aptitude Test score of 1100.

Robertson said he has "no earthly idea" how he scored 200 points above the national average for that test, but said his English and math teacher helped him cram the week before the test.

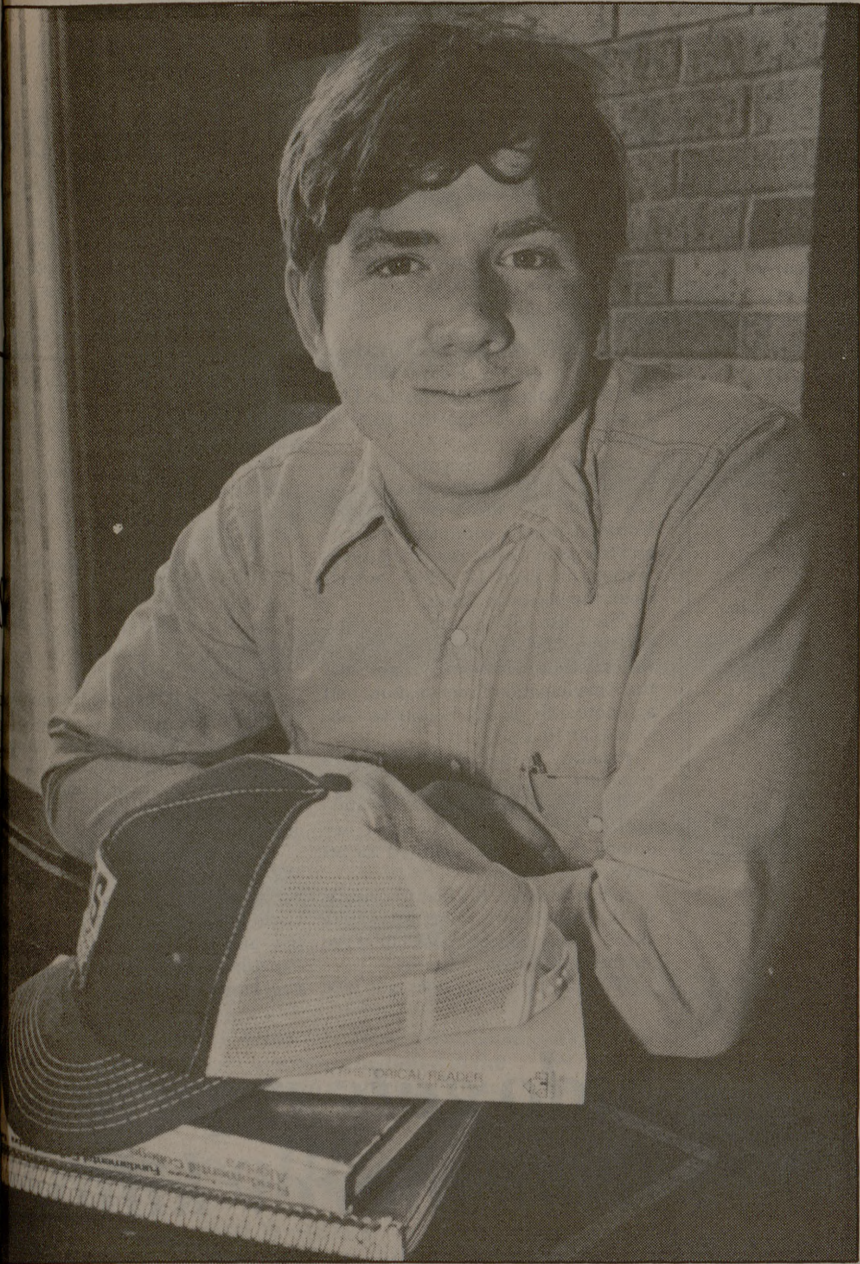
Robertson hopes to one day return to Burnet and work not for McBride but with him.

He has a standing job offer from McBride, he said.

He is taking English 103 and Mathematics 102 right now.

"I had to take a tutor for math," Robertson said. "I am having to play catch-up."

For now, two scholarships, one from the Texas A&M College of Agriculture and one from the Highland Lakes A&M club, are helping him meet college costs.



Ben Robertson is attending Texas A&M University on two scholarships despite having virtually no formal education.

Staff photo by Lee Roy Leschper Jr.

Technically brilliant 'B-grade movie

'Empire' great, but unsatisfying

by DILLARD STONE
Battalion Editor

Even before you go brave the lines of *The Empire Strikes Back* you've got mixed anticipations about the film.

You know it's got a lot to live up to the reputation of its parent film, *Star Wars*, so you expect lots of action, great effects and a good two-hour trip into fantasyland.

But you've also heard that *Empire* is only Episode V (*Star Wars* has been retitled Episode IV) in what creator-producer George Lucas plans as a nine-part series stretching into the next century.

So you anticipate a great film, but you also know that plot resolution will be weak — after all, how can Lucas resolve the conflicts or kill off any characters when he's got seven more flicks to make?

Does the film's merit nonetheless override this drawback?

You bet it does. *The Empire Strikes Back* is just what you (and George Lucas) want it to be — a technically brilliant, break-neck-speed film that leaves you waiting for the sequel-to-the-sequel just as breathlessly as you awaited *Empire*.

It's a classic example of that all-time Hollywood genre — a sequel which is as good as, and in some cases better than, the original. And, like *Star Wars*, it's nothing more than a lavishly made B-grade film which depends more on action and effects to carry it than on acting ability and crafty dialogue.

But who cares? After all you're not going to see *Empire* to see an Academy Award-type performance from Mark Hamill.

You're going so you can see the good guys, in the face of tremendous adversity, whup up on the bad guys; or see if Princess Leia finally admits

she likes Han Solo more than a little; to hear the beeps from R2-D2 and the whines of C3-PO and to boo and hiss Darth Vader, the galaxy's Public Enemy No. 1.

And you're going to see if the effects are as you hope, the best you've ever seen.

You're not going to be disappointed if that's all you want.

But I'm a real pain. I expected more. I should've been content to merely be seized by the action from the outset, to be held captive for two hours, to be dazzled by the effects.

I should have put the acting and dialogue out of my mind and used them only as mental threads connecting visual sequences. That's what Lucas wanted me to do, and who am I to quarrel with him?

Lucas has given more depth to the storyline by adding new characters.

Movie Review

satisfaction fades as you begin realizing that the story uncovered more holes than it filled in.

What happens to Han Solo? Who is the Rebellion's other hope? What does the front of Darth Vader's head look like?

The most unsatisfying thought of all is that we've got to wait three years for the sequel-to-the-sequel, the answers ... and even more questions.

At the insistence of Obi-Wan Kenobi's ghost, Hamill as Luke Skywalker sets off to find Yoda, the Jedi master who instructed Ben Kenobi in the ways of the Force.

Although the training sequences tend to drag (the only time in the show), Yoda's presence makes it worthwhile, for Yoda is an ingenious little green muppet-like robot operated by Frank Oz. Speak he although in dialect warped most of the time, Yoda is an excellent creation, a cautious character that plays well off Luke's impulsiveness.

Frustratingly, he also drops to Luke and the audience a million little hints about Luke's past and future.

In the end, your initial apprehensions become a fulfilled prophecy. After *Empire* is over, you're satisfied at having seen a good flick. But the

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