

Local

'Fish Lady' has no rank, but freshmen rank her high

By MARCY BOYCE

Battalion Staff
She's the fish lady to all who know her, a mom away from home to many a homesick cadet. But don't believe her when she says she's "just a plain ole Ruth."

Ruth Hunt doesn't wear a uniform nor is she as young as any of the cadets who surround her, yet she has been a familiar face among the ranks of the Texas A&M University Corps of Cadets for at least 13 years. And every year she boasts a record for keeping freshmen from dropping out of the Corps, said Roy Brantley, Corps public relations officer.

She is the fish lady.
Following a pass-by for her on the Corps Quad Tuesday night, Ruth was Corps Staff's guest of honor for dinner in Duncan Dining Hall.

"She really loves to talk to folks in the Corps and help them in any way she can," Brantley said of the fish lady. "Some commanding officers even require their freshmen to go talk to her before seriously thinking about getting out (of the Corps)," he said.

Beyond the pin ball machines in the MSC basement and in front of the snack bar, Ruth sits at the same table Monday through Thursday mornings — never alone. She is always surrounded by cadets and sometimes a few other students.

Why such affinity for the Corps? "It would be as hard to tell you that as what the spirit of Aggieland is," she said, "but mainly just because I love them."

"I can hardly wait every morning to get out here. I tell people I live in College Station and sleep in Bryan." Ruth said she works at night instead of day as a cashier/hostess at Ramada Inn so she can visit in the mornings.

It was while working as a waitress at the Ramada Inn on Texas and University in 1967 that Ruth said her friendship with the Corps first began.

Before many fast-food restaurants came to Bryan-College Station, students frequented the hotel restaurant, she said.

"Some kids who were working on bonfire started coming in there. I really got involved with the jock outfit. There were eight or 10 of them, and they started calling it the Ruth Club," she said.

The Ruth Club escorted her to bonfire that year, and after Texas A&M received an invitation to play in the Cotton Bowl, the club sent her a Christmas card containing a ticket to the football game.

Since 1967 Ruth has missed few home football games or Corps functions. She has attended some away games as a guest of the Aggie Band and her mail box is seldom empty.

"I live alone and living alone is lonely," she said. "Sometimes I'll go home and feel kind of depressed, but then there will be a card in the box with a baby announcement or a wedding invitation."

Such correspondence from her former fish always perks her up, Ruth said.



Staff photo by Greg Gammon

Ruth Hunt, more commonly known as "Mom" to cadets, reviews the Corps before dinner at Duncan Dining Hall Wednesday night. Assisting her are (left) Roy Brantley, Commander of the Ross Volunteers, and (center) Col. Robert Gibson, Naval Science professor and Deputy Commandant of the Corps.

"Just because they're not fish anymore doesn't mean I quit loving them," she said.

But Ruth admitted that freshmen are most dear to her because she feels the first year in the Corps is especially rough. She said she tries to give them encouragement and advice for any problems they have.

And if she doesn't know the answer she pulls a senior aside to get his advice.

"Nothing warms my heart more than to see one (of those fish) go across the stage at graduation in his boots and get his degree," Ruth said, her class of '84 pin dangling from her shirt collar.

Last year she wore a class of '83 pin. And over the years she said she has received so much Corps and band brass that she can't wear it all at

the same time. The brass is pinned on a vest she intends to wear only on special occasions, she said.

In 1972 Corps Staff nominated her for Mother of the Year. And after she won, Alpha Phi Omega, a campus service organization, paid her way to Nebraska for a football game.

"They (the Corps) makes me feel like a queen instead of just a plain ole Ruth," she said. "They're just my whole world."

And the fish lady doesn't hesitate to share her enthusiasm for the Corps with prospective Aggies — a self-appointed recruiter who says she can't remember the last time she missed a freshman orientation.

"I made my mind up at that bonfire (in 1967) that I was never going to leave these kids. And I'm going to keep coming around until some senior has to tell a fish to get a wheel chair and go get Ruth."

Backpacking skills offered

Outdoors seminar tonight

By JANE G. BRUST

Battalion Staff
Anyone interested in escaping to the great outdoors may take advantage of several programs being offered by the MSC Outdoor Recreation Committee this month.

Two backpacking seminars, tonight and next Thursday, as well as a Saturday workshop will precede a trip to Huntsville State Park on Nov. 15.

Signups for four-day camping trips over the Thanksgiving holidays are also available through Outdoor Recreation.

Tonight's seminar concerns backpacking equipment, and the one next week concerns skills in using that equipment. Each seminar will begin at 7:30 p.m. in Rudder Tower. Equipment for backpacking trips is provided by Outdoor Recreation.

Saturday's workshop is set for 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in front of the Academic Building. The 9-mile Lone Star Trail in Huntsville State Park will test the backpackers the following weekend.

Committee Chairman Bryan Hall estimates the cost of the weekend trip will be \$10 for food and gas.

Interested persons may sign up in the Student Programs Office in the MSC. Hall said 10 to 40 people make such weekend trips and the committee will offer additional backpacking trips if more than 40 people are interested.

Eager backpackers may venture beyond Huntsville to celebrate Thanksgiving. Signups for backpacking trips to New Mexico and Arkansas are available in the SPO. A signup for a canoeing and kayaking trip to Big Bend National Park is also available.

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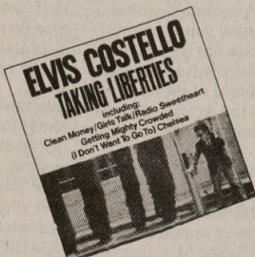
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