

Local



Photo by Beth Gibson

Singing Cadets respond to Robert Boone's direction during a practice session in the MSC. The group, started in 1894, has both civilians and cadets. They recently completed a 10-day

tour of south Texas during Christmas break and have more tours scheduled for the spring semester.

Singing Cadets promote A&M in 40-stop tour

By CINDY GEE
Battalion Staff

Robert Boone has a unique job — unique because he's director of vocal music programs at a school that has no music department.

He directs a 60-man choir that practices an hour a day and performs 40 to 50 times a year to promote the image of Texas A&M University. When Mrs. Earl Rudder called Boone 21 years ago to tell him that the Singing Cadets needed a director, he quit his job in El Campo and became director of the then all-Corps group.

Boone, 54, a fatherly man who attributes his youthful appearance to his job, takes great pride in "his" Singing Cadets. He makes sure the men do little things like make their beds and clean up the bathroom when they're staying in homes on tour, all to help promote Texas A&M's image.

"I'm a counselor, I'm a father confessor, and I'm a stern father," he said. "I think it's part of my job to help them grow as people and individuals. I love my job; it's exciting, stimulating, never dull and hard work."

At 5 p.m. the Singing Cadets file into their practice room in the Memorial Student Center basement. Although the group got its name when Texas A&M was strictly Corps, most of its current members are not cadets. It's evident that these men enjoy their practice, it's more like a release, they said.

"I'm a performer myself," Boone said, "I think the biggest satisfaction I get is knowing we all work together towards giving a good performance."

They use guitar, piano and drums to accompany their spiritual, patriotic, and pop vocals. They don't practice for grades, money or recognition on campus, only because they enjoy singing and performing.

"Music is our vehicle to do what we do," Boone said. "We know that we're a public relations arm for this University, and we take great pride in doing it solidly."

Boone said the group is like a fraternity, caring and helping each other. He said he rarely has to discipline anyone in the group.

"If it's a case of morality like homosexuality, excessive drinking or dope, I step in," he said. "In the 20 years I've been here, I've only had to kick out three guys."

To become a Singing Cadet, men must first perform a vocal audition, then interview with members of the group, then the group must vote them in.

They operate on an \$85,000-a-year budget traveling throughout Texas performing at schools and churches, for banquets and conventions and beauty pageants. In past years they have performed in Romania as "ambassadors for friendship," in the White House by presidential invitation, on the Ed Sullivan and Mike Douglas television shows and for the Miss Teenage America Pageant.

"We represent this school to more places and more people than any other group," said Alan York, a Singing Cadet. "It's not just a stand-there group, and it's not just a concert. We're all hams; we like to be on stage. We open every show with the Spirit of Aggieland."

Boone said the \$85,000 from the University returns to the school in several forms. The Singing Cadets perform enough to get most of the money back. The group is paid \$500 a show or 40 percent of gross, whichever is larger. If the group is sponsored by an A&M Mother's Club, the 60 percent profit comes to Texas A&M in the form of scholarships, he said.

"Almost all of our hosts are Ags," said Rob Statler, another member of the choir. "Some are wilder than we are. Some are millionaires, and some are just out of college. A lot of people invite us back to their homes."

Grinning, Statler and York listed certain drawbacks of being on tour — too much food, run of the hosts' houses and free use of the hosts' cars.

Boone said the tours are not nearly as glamorous as people sometimes think they are.

"You do a lot of bus riding, you eat, then you do a show, then you do a lot more bus riding, eat and do another show," he said. "You've got to work very hard to make the tenth show as good as the first show."

The search is on for super parents

By FRANK L. CHRISTLIEB
Battalion Reporter

It's not every day parents of students are awarded for being parents. At Texas A&M University, parents can win such an award.

Parent's Day Chairman Mike Bonin said a contest will be held to pick the Aggie "Parents of the Year." He said the contest is one of several activities connected with Parent's Day, April 26.

The first step for any student interested in nominating his parents is to pick up an application at the Student Government Office in the Memorial Student Center, Bonin said. These should be filled out and returned by March 2.

After the deadline, the applications will be judged by the Parent's Day Committee, composed of 18 students. Bonin said applicants will be judged mostly on community participation and parental guidance.

On Parent's Day, a program will be held in Rudder Tower to announce and award the winning parents. The couple will receive plaques, tickets to an Aggie football game next fall and a reserved hotel room in the MSC while they are here for the game.

Bonin said the winners are sometimes notified before Parent's Day, but it is usually better to let the award be a surprise.

He added that, with more student participation in the nominating process, the contest will be a greater

success. Bonin said he and the other committee members hope to see an increase in the number of parents nominated this year, since there were only about 30 applicants last year.



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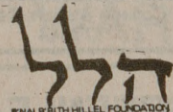
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JAN. 26	7:00 PM	137 MSC
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