

100 weddings performed each year

# Chapel open for contemplation or ceremony

By JANE G. BRUST

**Battalion Staff**  
During hard and hectic times, when individuals may be looking for a quiet place to be alone, the All Faiths Chapel is open to them.

Located on the north side of the Texas A&M campus, on Houston Street, the chapel features a comfortable auditorium, reading room, meditation room and a landscaped courtyard. It's available to all University students, former students and employees of all denominations and creeds.

A chapel regulations brochure says the purpose of the chapel is to encourage the spiritual expression and development of the Texas A&M University community.

Donald Albrecht, the assistant director of student activities who handles the administrative operations of the chapel, said an average of 31 student group activities are held in the chapel each month, along with a variety of special events. Jewish bar mitzvahs, Spanish quince años celebrations and weddings are a few examples.

"There's a wedding almost every weekend," Albrecht said. There have been as many as 10 in a weekend. We allow two hours for the ceremony, to get 'em in and get 'em out.

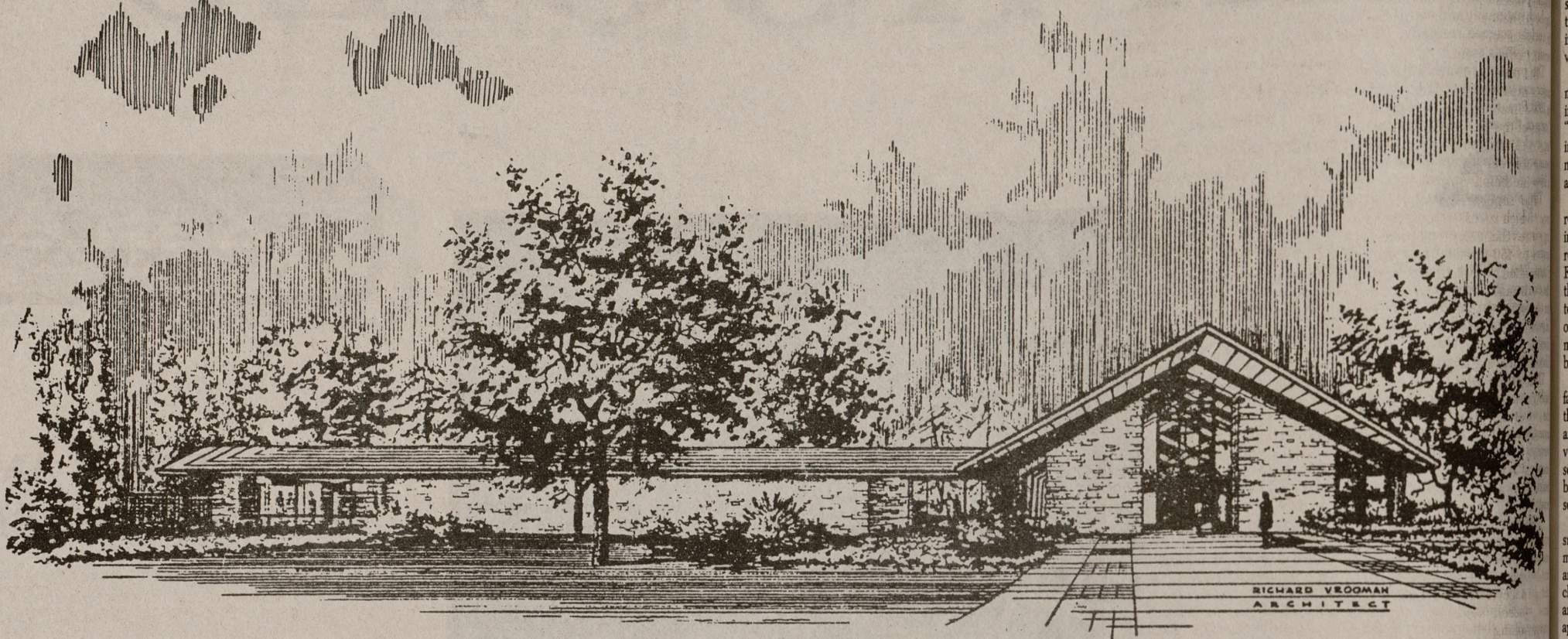
"There are a lot of weddings around Valentine's Day and graduation," Albrecht said the chapel holds at least 100 weddings each year.

Those interested in being married in the University chapel must reserve the chapel through the Student Activities Office and pick up an information sheet.

For example, the information sheet provides a list of up-to-the-minute wedding details and parking designation for guests. The sanctuary seats 179 guests and folding chairs may be added to increase the seating capacity to over 300. The fee for a chapel wedding is \$35.

The sheet also states that the university does not employ anyone to perform the wedding so couples must invite their own minister.

At one time, however, Texas A&M did provide a minister to perform marriage ceremonies. Logan Weston, an ordained minister, was coordinator of religious life for the University. During his tenure of 10 years, Logan offered religious counseling including marriage counseling for those whom he would marry. He



RICHARD VROOMAN  
ARCHITECT

performed more than 2,700 marriages and had a hand in the planning of at least 300 others. He retired in 1978.

Memorial and funeral services are also held in the All Faiths Chapel. A funeral service for Marine Capt. Steve White, Class of '76, was held in the chapel in

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June. White was killed in the jet crash aboard the aircraft carrier Nimitz.

"There are no organized church services in the chapel," Albrecht

said, "so the University won't be competing with local churches — that's the only restriction."

He said, however, that some special student services in the University chapel are given by local ministers, and Student Y, a University organization, periodically holds Christian non-denominational services.

Muslim students meet in the chapel at least once every week, Albrecht said, and they use their own special mats and rugs to kneel upon.

Other groups such as Campus Crusade for Christ hold meetings in the courtyard area, he said.

"The student groups aren't necessarily all recognized University groups — some groups of residents from particular dorms may decide to have a Bible study in the chapel," Albrecht said.

As with wedding ceremonies, all prayer meetings and Bible studies must be scheduled through the Student Activities Office.

In addition to providing area for group meetings, the All Faiths

Chapel provides area for reading and meditation.

Albrecht explained that many of the available books and magazines come from University subscriptions paid for by the wedding fee funds and donations from individuals and Texas A&M mothers' clubs.

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Other books and magazines are brought in by individuals and left for others to read. Chapel rules state that reading materials may not leave the chapel.

The chapel is open 24 hours a day, except for periods when the University is closed for holidays; then the chapel is locked.

Former students raised the money for the chapel, and they built and furnished it as well.

In 1955 the officers of the Association of Former Students appeared before the Board of Directors and presented them with a gift of \$200,000 for the chapel construction. In addition, the Association agreed to assume all architectural and engineering costs.

The building was dedicated in 1958 with the following persons participating in the ceremony: Dr. M.T. Harrington, president of Texas A&M College; J. Earl Rudder, vice president of Texas A&M;

Harold Dunn, chairman of the Board of Directors; Richard N. Conolly, president of the Former Students Association.

"They (the former students) paid every penny since the state didn't pay for it," Albrecht said.

An architectural competition, approved by the American Institute of Architects, was held to select the architect for the chapel. Participation was limited to former students of the Department of Architecture of the college.

Ernest Langford, Class of '13, then head of the architecture department, voluntarily served as an architectural adviser. Winner of the competition and designer of the chapel was Richard Vrooman, Class of '52.

The architectural explanation

written by Vrooman says the chapel building was designed to be "more like a shelter in a garden than an enclosed building. It was developed to fit among existing trees and to be visually open toward the interior courtyard garden."

The explanation also says that because the chapel is designed for people of all faiths, the fixed symbolism is handled in a subtle fashion.

"The colored glass window design emanates from an interlocking Cross and Star of David; all lines are vertical, horizontal and inclined parallel to the roof slope, beginning with the offset Cross and the stylized Star, these lines are developed into an abstract pattern."

## Professor says acceptance of death helps ease fears

Accepting our own mortality is the first step toward accepting the death of loved ones, says a professor of health and physical education at Texas A&M University who teaches a class on death and dying.

"The older the person, the more accepting we are of his death as we often say he lived a rich, full life," said Dr. Gayle Schmidt. "But when parents die at 45, or a brother or sister dies, it somehow hits harder and we begin to realize it could happen to us at any time."

Schmidt said these deaths bring about a deeper awareness of our own humanness and mortality.

"As long as we are in control of things we can deal with them. We feel comfortable with an agenda, with knowing what's going to happen," she said. "Many of us would like to think of death like a meeting's adjournment, as life's last piece of business."

"But it can slip upon us before we even get to new business," she said, "and when it does there's no way

we can call a point of order."

Schmidt teaches her students — many of whom will become counselors, educators and health professionals — how to cope with death, how to see it as a natural process and how to help others who fear dying.

She pointed out that older Americans today are changing the image of growing older as fewer of them spend their final years in nursing homes and many remain active throughout their 70s and 80s.

"Some older Americans are unsure of their goals and have a hard time finding a purpose for living," Schmidt said. "It is important that counselors are able to reach these people and show them and their relatives how to deal with death on a positive basis."

We should learn to live each day, one by one and enjoy each to the fullest, she said.

"People who are not afraid of living will not be afraid of dying," Schmidt said.



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