

Statue of Liberty in the hands of an Aggie super

By **HOLLY HELT**
Reporter

There's an Aggie in love with a 99-year-old lady. The object of his love is not only old but she's big — standing 151 feet, 1 inch tall and weighing 400 tons.

The Aggie is David L. Moffit, class of '61, and the lady is the Statue of Liberty. Moffit doesn't just love this lady, he's also in charge of her face-lift. As the superintendent in charge of Liberty Island and Ellis Island National Monument he organizes the complete restoration of the Statue, as well as the reconditioning of 27-acre Ellis Island. He also supervises 95 national park employees, hosts 1.8 million visitors each year, and manages a \$1.7 mil-

lion budget.

Keeping this lady happy takes a lot of work. And love does have its risks.

Moffit has been the superintendent for eight years and a lot has come between him and Liberty. Three raids by Iranian disidents, a dispute with Puerto Ricans' intent on occupying the Statue's crown. Two Californian climbers scaled the outside of the Statue and threatened to break through the Lady's fragile copper skin. He and Liberty even survived a 1980 explosion in the base of the statue.

Moffit said the decision to solicit donations to restore the statue from citizens instead of requesting an appropriation from the government is based on Liberty's

history. The statue was built in the early 1880s with funds donated by the people of France, and the statue's pedestal was built with funds donated by the people of America.

The iron skeleton was designed by French engineer Gustave Eiffel. Three hundred sheets of copper surrounded the skeleton. But over the years, the iron frame has pulled away from the copper and needs to be reinforced or replaced and the copper has turned green with verdigris.

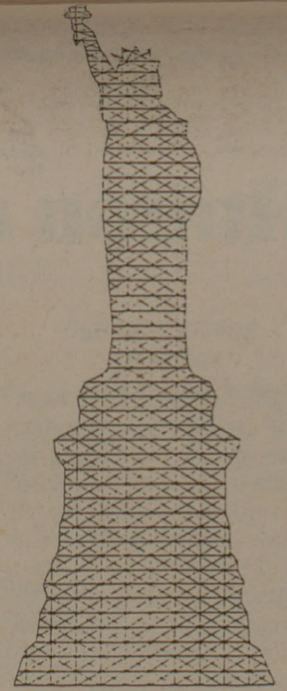
The right arm holding the torch of freedom has been removed for rebuilding. The arm, formally accessible to the public, was closed after being damaged by a New Jersey munitions plant explosion

in 1916. The face-lift is supposed to be completed in time to celebrate her centennial in 1986.

Funding for the Statue of Liberty and for Liberty Island is estimated at \$39 million and \$128 million for Ellis Island. Another \$63 million will provide funds for permanent maintenance, educational programs and celebrations, and pay for administration and fund raising activities. This money has been raised by organizations, foundations, and corporations.

Texas A&M Clubs are encouraged to raise funds and donate them in the name of Texas A&M University.

Moffit lives with his family in a cabin behind the Statue of Liberty. ♣



OPAS sponsors spontaneous programs

MSC Opera and Performing Arts Society is making a sneak attack.

OPAS is sponsoring a new program that will bring the performers to swooping down on unsuspecting culture-deprived students.

The Spontaneous Exposure Experience (SPEX) was designed to expose students to the performing arts in an informal atmosphere without the expense of a regular performance ticket. The plan is to have weekly unannounced concerts staged in some of the most unlikely places. The first concert was a violinist in Zachry Engineering Center.

The performers are talented

students and faculty members who want experience before a live audience. Linda Hartman, student coordinator of SPEX says there is no audition per se but anyone interested needs to contact her in the Student Programs Office.

"We're looking for artists more in the classical style but jazz is good too," Hartman says. "I wouldn't say we were interested in rock or pop music, really." SPEX also has a special interest in cultural or ethnic groups that perform.

A two-week lead time should be sufficient for the committee to set up a time and place for the performance. Hartman says they will work

with artists and their schedules for a convenient time.

OPAS will provide and set up any sound equipment necessary for the entertainer. And although there is no advance publicity for the performance, OPAS members will be present to hand out flyers with information about the performer(s) and OPAS.

"We really want to use this program to give exposure to these students and faculty members," Hartman says. The campus is the first resource of performers for SPEX but the committee is considering using high school students who are preparing for UIL competition.

Beyond the exposure, small

groups and individual performers will receive complimentary tickets to a regularly scheduled OPAS performance of their choice. Groups of 10 or more will receive a cash donation of about \$30, Hartman says.

But this is more than an opportunity for the performers — this is a chance for the general student to have access to culture with no reason to escape. There is no cost to the student and no inconvenience in location.

Tad Pruitt, MSC OPAS chairman says, "A&M has a lot of students who haven't been exposed to the performing arts." Schools with performing arts

programs and larger liberal arts programs have this type of entertainment provided free, he said.

"We feel there is a definite need for this type of programming on campus," Pruitt said. "Our students have been missing out."

The SPEX program was not outlined in this year's MSC budget but the money is available, Hartman says. It has been officially included in the fund allotment for next year.

"When the budget committee reviewed the program they said it was one of the most dynamic and innovative ideas to come out of budget planning," Hartman says. ♣

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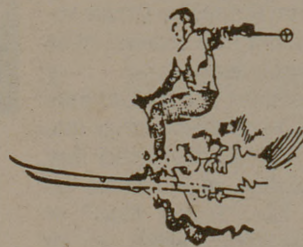
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