

At Ease

Brayton Fireman's Training School

Where the heat is on

story and photos
by Carolyn Garcia

The black smoke rises in the sky and the students moan, "The firemen are back."

And back they come every summer in droves and invade the favorite bars and party spots of Texas A&M students.

But what many students don't realize is that the visiting firefighters descend upon the twin cities all year long — 20,000 of them.

The Texas Engineering Extension Service, (TEEX) which proudly boasts of operating the largest firefighter training school on the continent, is keeping with the Texas tradition of being biggest and best.

More than 20,000 firefighting students pass through the facility each year, approximately 5,000 of which hit the town during three weeks in July.

The pride and joy of TEEX, the Brayton Firemen Training Field, trains more men and women than any other fire service facility in the world.

Fire Protection Training, the division of TEEX which operates the school, is enjoying something of a break this week. After three weeks of constant training, questions and problem solving, the staff is enjoying a week of shoveling burnt, wet hay (which makes for great, inexpensive smoke), cleaning up, making repairs and counting tools.

And next week it starts all over again when a new class takes to the field.

The school has managed to be such a success for so long because it thrives on a secret formula — devotion.

In its 58 years, only three men have stood at the helm. The late Col. H.R. Brayton, whom the field is named for, was the first.

Brayton, a chemistry professor at A&M, served as not only the school's first director, but also as one of the first instructors. In 1931, the State Legislature officially mandated the school, and the growth and success of the fire school spread like wildfire.

Brayton stepped down for a

Right: Firefighting brigades battle the blazes at one of the larger projects at the Brayton Firemen's Training Field.

