

**TEXAS A&M BONFIRE**

TIME  
**12<sup>TH</sup> MAN**

**ATM**

CLASS OF '87  
TIME OUTS  
LEFT  
0

CLASS OF '90  
TIME OUTS  
LEFT  
3

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# A&M intramural games owe start to Penberthy



Walter Penberthy, the "Father of Intramurals" at A&M, relaxes at his home in Bryan. Photo by Jay Janner

By Brad Marquardt  
Reporter

The next time you're out playing flag football, softball, ultimate Frisbee, water basketball or any intramural sport for that matter, you should stop and pay tribute to Walter Penberthy, the man who made it possible.

Penberthy has been called the "Father of Intramurals" for his work in developing the intramural program here at Texas A&M. While at A&M, he has held many titles, including Head of the Health and Physical Education Department, chairman of the MSC Council, chairman of the Athletic Council, Dean of Men and even PE instructor.

Penberthy came to Texas A&M after graduating from Ohio State University and was hired by legendary head football coach Dana X. Bible in 1926.

"At that time, Ohio State, Michigan and Illinois had the outstanding intramural programs in the country," he says. "The man who was in charge of the A&M intramural program left here and went to Washington State."

Penberthy took the job and has been in College Station ever since. But he says he was not always well-accepted.

"Dean E.J. Kyle (for whom Kyle Field was named) was very much sports-minded," he says. "He couldn't understand how anyone who wasn't an athlete himself could run a physical education or intramural program. Coach Bible had to cram me down Kyle's throat."

"But I'll say this to his (Kyle's) credit, he became one of my most staunch supporters. We became good friends."

When Penberthy started, the intramural program was run on a company basis, meaning the seniors could pick the sports they wanted and the underclassmen got what was left over, he says. To counter this, Penberthy divided the sports into divisions.

"It's the same way now as it was then," he says. "I guess it has never changed."

Penberthy says the students came up with ideas for the foundation of A&M's intramural program.

"We had a wonderful bunch of kids," he says. "They were just looking for someone to lead them."

All the other Southwest Conference schools were located in cities that provided more sports accidentally than A&M could on purpose, Pen-

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— Walter Penberthy, A&M's "Father of Intramurals"

berthy says. To help this situation, Penberthy became friends with the intramural director at the University of Texas.

"I'd try something out and if it went good I'd recommend it to him," he says, "and if he'd try something that didn't work he'd say, 'Don't try it, it's no good.' So we worked hand in hand."

The intramural program started with only the basic sports, but new sports were always in the making. Some didn't last very long, Penberthy says.

"But it was worth a try," he says. "I think the yardstick I put on it when I was in there was: if it's an activity and it's wholesome and practical, it can be worked in. I didn't get technical about whether it was a sport or not. As long as it was wholesome, I was for it."

Penberthy also tried his hand at teaching the required physical education classes.

At the beginning of each semester, he always told his students, "I'm not concerned at all with the amount of natural ability you bring into this activity. But the thing that will concern me is if I don't get 100 percent of what you've got."

Penberthy says his best sport was probably handball, but it didn't allow the contact with the students that he wanted, which is why he became interested in volleyball.

When he started coaching, he didn't know anything about volleyball, he says, but he learned about the sport through films and attending national tournaments on the West Coast.

"I couldn't execute any of the skills, but I knew enough to where I could teach them the fundamentals," he says. "I had a pretty good analytical mind and I knew how to teach them."

Penberthy says he hoped he had the "God-given ability" to inspire kids to be good in whatever they did and to teach the students as well as the subject.

"I figure that if the student didn't get something extra from contact with me, then they were missing the program," he says.

Another quality that "Mr. Penberthy" possessed was his ability to remember students names. After the two weeks, he called all his students by name. This way the student he was being spoken to, he says.

"A lot of time, I'd had them there," he says. "It wasn't unusual for kids to come in and give a wave and say, 'Mr. Penberthy, Dad said you hello.'"

In 1978, 12 years after his retirement, the Penberthy Intramural Center was named for him, and every spring, the Penberthy Softball Tournament is held there.

He says he still attends some of the games, handing out trophies and shirts to the participants. He does follow any particular team at tournament, but he does follow the team.

"I go out to watch the girls' women's softball team," he says. "Their homefield is in the intramural center, so I have a double interest in them. They (last year's national champions) were the best! They are the ones I like to watch because I like to see those gals performing. They do. As a kid growing up, I just didn't do that. I like that."

Among Penberthy's other duties were writing a weekly column in *Battalion* called "Penny's Serenade" which dealt with sports and was considered "good living, kindness and anecdotes."

Penberthy was a member of the Athletic Council when football coach Paul "Bear" Bryant was hired. Penberthy says he had a lot of respect for Bryant for three reasons.

"Number one, he would come close to getting 100 percent of what a boy had, and I admired him in anybody," he says. "The second reason was he knew what he was doing and he knew what he was going to do to get it. The final reason was of his most admirable qualities: he never heard him blame a player for a loss. He took all the blame on himself."

"The only objection I had to hiring Bryant was that he was a resented big-time football coach. The Athletic Council didn't feel A&M was ready for that image."

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## Lawyers file petition to question officials about Saragosa funds

PECOS (AP) — Texas Rural Legal Aid attorneys Tuesday filed a petition that would allow them to question some county officials under oath about the fate of Saragosa tornado relief donations.

The petition for bill of discovery filed in state district court asks officials to turn over any records relating to tornado relief that have not already been given, Legal Aid attorney Alpha Hernandez said Tuesday.

The action may be the first step to legal action, depending on what is found, she said.

Donations of cash, cars, building materials, clothing and other items poured in from all over the country following the May 22 tornado that killed 30 people and leveled more than 60 buildings in the small cotton-farming town near the Davis Mountains.

The Reeves County sheriff's office, the Pecos Jaycees and the county-appointed Saragosa Relief Fund Finance Committee collected and distributed most of the donations. Some items, including \$4,000 cash, have been stolen, and a community group named the Saragosa Foundation asked Legal Aid last month to investigate whether county officials were negligent or dishonest in handling the donations.

"We haven't come up with a definite list of donations we want to take," Hernandez said from her office in Del Rio. "Though I imagine they will start with county judge and whichever county officials were solely involved."

Earlier this month, the county released records, mostly deposit slips and canceled checks, to Legal Aid after the agency threatened to file suit. Hernandez said Legal Aid wants any records the county did not provide, such as automobile titles, warehouse receipts, shipping and receiving statements.

Interviews and additional records can help agency figure out exactly what happened with the donations, she said.

"You can go through a box of papers and try to reconstruct the story," she said. "The best way is to ask people about the papers."

She called the petition an intermediate investigation step.

"At some point," Hernandez said, "we'll come enough information to sit down with our clients and say, 'Look, this is what we've found out. What do you like us to do about it? If we see any misconduct, it will be presented to the proper authorities.'"