

# TEXAS A&M

By Lawson Reilly

A&M baseball cap, he hailed his people from a red-velvet throne on a balloon-filled trailer. Queen Reveille V and a six-foot inflatable *Champs Elysees* champagne bottle shared his coach.

Loupot is modest about his title. He said he doesn't know why he, from among the other important people involved with A&M, was chosen to be king.

"It's quite an honor," he said. "It's been great living with you guys."

Unicyclists and a troupe of clowns made up Loupot's court. The clowns (OCA members in disguise) were



Photo by Mark Gee

handing balloons to children and promoting Security Awareness Week and the Community for a Rape Free Environment program (C.A.R.E.).

A group of cadets yelled, "We want pearls, Doug!" when Beall and Hudson passed in another BMW convertible. Mendell and Thomasson rode in a Volkswagen Cabriolet.

Braving the weather in leotards and scarves, "Winds of Magic," a belly-dancing group from a University Plus program, made all the right moves and took the prize for most colorful and best marching group.

The Student Y followed the belly-dancers in a decorated red pick-up truck. OCA was close behind with the best overall float, a horse trailer filled with members and decorated with streamers and signs. Both organizations flung loot to more than 200 people that had gathered in front of the MSC.

Giving a little western flavor to Mardi Gras, five couples from Aggie

Wranglers paused in several locations along the parade route to kick up their boots to the Cotton-eyed Joe.

Swaying to a distinctly different beat, "Hawaiian" dancers gave their belly-dancing counterparts a run for their money, while inviting the spectators to join in. But there weren't any takers.

Mr. Pill, alias Ann Coombes from the Center for Drug Prevention and Education, marched steadfastly behind Hart and Keathley Halls' valentine-decorated Trans Am, urging bystanders to "just say no to drugs."

Voices of Praise, a gospel singing group, led the tail end of the parade. A young member of the MSC Society for Creative Anachronisms chased Alpha Kappa Alpha's pink mouse-mobile with a plastic knife, until apprehended by his parents. The SCA is a group devoted to the study of medieval customs, clothing and combat. Despite the attempted stabbings, AKA's paper-covered car survived to win the prize for the float closest to the theme.

The SCA had a large turnout for their marching group. Looking very much in character, or persona, they created the atmosphere of a Middle Age fair as they passed, tossing coins and beads and having as much fun as the spectators.

KANM-FM instantly brought the crowd back to the present with their float, a gray station wagon covered with air-brushed T-shirts. A portable stereo on top of the float played what can only be called alternative music.

Another police car brought up the end of the parade, just behind the Resident Hall Association's red pick-up truck.

Suddenly, the parade was nothing but fading tail lights on Bizzell Street. A few people were running around the streets, chasing after rolling medallions, but the crowd was gone and it was dark. Less than 40 minutes after the parade had started, it was over, and all that remained was a crushed bead necklace lying beside a parked car.

Graduate student Corrie Bergeron, a.k.a. His Lordship Brendan O'Corraidhe of the SCA, stood on the corner of Bizzell and Lubbock, watching the rest of the parade turn onto Jersey Street.

"It's cold," he said, drawing his cloak around him. "Yep, definitely cold."

Powell said the Mardi Gras parade

didn't draw as large a crowd as he had hoped for. But the dance, he said, was better than expected.

Powell says the turnout at Graham Central Station was much larger than last year. At the dance OCA gave away 36 door prizes donated by local merchants.

OCA took donations for the Brazos Valley Animal Shelter at the dance. Although he won't know the exact amount of money raised until all the Mardi Gras bills come in, Powell said OCA managed to raise several hundred dollars for the shelter.

Powell says OCA will celebrate Mardi Gras again next year, under the guidance of a new director.

"I won't be there," he chuckled. "I'm graduating."

Although he was a little disappointed at the small turnout, in the spirit of optimism, Powell calls the parade a success.

Bergeron says the crowds were the best part of the parade.

"The crowd was wonderful," he says, "both of them."

The spectators were certainly enthusiastic, jumping, waving, screaming and running in front of cars for a necklace or coin. But as the last police car passed and sounded its siren, silence fell quickly.

Disappointed expressions crossed people's faces too fast for facades of mature disinterest to hide them.

A few people gave hopeful sideways glances down the street, looking for one more float, one more band.

Some parades just don't last long enough.



Photo by Mark Gee

Judson Loupot, owner of Loupot's Bookstores, reigned as the king in the A&M Mardi Gras parade Friday.

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