

John David Crow credits Bear Bryant as role model

'Louisiana Skyrocket' reflects on past



By Jeff Osborne
Of The Battalion Staff

John David Crow, called the "Louisiana Skyrocket" during the mid-1950s when he played halfback for the Texas A&M football team, is one of the legendary heroes of all time for Aggie athletics.

Crow's gridiron heroics earned him a Heisman Trophy during his senior year at A&M in 1957. This achievement put him in a unique status among all Aggie football players.

His athletic ability earned him a special place in the hearts of Aggies, and today he represents Texas A&M off the field as athletic director.

Athletics have played an important role in Crow's life. He was successful in football as a player at the college and professional levels. He played under Coach Paul "Bear" Bryant, one of the most successful and respected men ever to coach the game.

Following a pro football career, Crow served as an assistant coach at Alabama under Bryant. Nevertheless, he hasn't lost sight of his simple beginning: "I grew up as a country boy in a small town in northern Louisiana. I still want to be the same person. I want people to know my door is always open."

Born in 1935, in Marion, La., Crow developed into a highly recruited athlete. Early in his childhood, he and his family moved to Spring Hill, La.

It was there that Crow grew up and attracted the attention of athletic recruiters. Crow helped lead the Spring Hill High School football and basketball teams to state championships (which the school has not won since). He graduated from

Spring Hill in 1954 as a high school All-America halfback.

Crow never would have come to Texas A&M if not for Elmer Smith, who coached his brother at a small university in Arkansas.

"My brother Raymond played football at Southern State (now Southern Arkansas University) and I'd go up there and sit on the bench," Crow said. "Then, during my senior year, Elmer asked me to come up to Magnolia and when I got there, he said some people were pressuring him to recruit me."

"He said he'd be doing me an injustice, though, if he did. He said he felt I should go to a larger school."

Later that year, Coach Bryant became head coach at Texas A&M and hired Smith as an assistant coach. Smith recruited Crow for the Aggies. Crow said it was Smith's honesty and personality that attracted him to A&M: "Elmer Smith recruited me and Elmer Smith is the reason I came to Texas A&M."

Before he committed to A&M, Crow said he considered going to Louisiana State University or Oklahoma.

"Oklahoma had a winning tradition even back then with Bud Wilkinson as the coach," Crow said. "They had a running back who won the Heisman a couple years after I did."

"LSU was questionable because a couple of players from our area of the state weren't given much playing time by the coach. Without Elmer at A&M, I probably would have gone to Oklahoma, or maybe LSU."

He said everything worked out for the best because he was named athletic director of his alma mater at age 53.

"I also got to play for Coach Bry-

ant, and that's something that will live with me forever," Crow said.

Bryant had the greatest impact on Crow's life except for his own father.

"My Dad taught me a lot and I've been influenced the most by him and Coach Bryant."

"I hope I learned from Coach Bryant that it took an awful lot of hard work, sacrifices and dedication to achieve anything worth having," he said. "I learned from him because that's what he stressed."

One of the most prominent items displayed in Crow's office, on the ninth floor of Rudder Tower, is a framed poster featuring Bryant.

On July 2, 1954, before he enrolled at A&M, Crow married his high school sweetheart, Carolyn Gilliam. Crow describes his marriage to Carolyn as "the best thing that ever happened to me."

Crow said his family, including his wife, son John David Jr., and daughters Anna Lisa and Jeannie, rank far above his athletic achievements. His grandchildren also play an important role in his life.

One of the most notable qualities about Crow is his straightforwardness.

This quality was mentioned of Crow by Alan Cannon, director of Sports Information at A&M. Crow's honesty is another of his most endearing features. He was asked several questions involving sensitive areas of Aggie athletics, but never did he refuse to comment. Crow is the kind of man who will confide in you, and people hate to disappoint. His honesty inspires a trust in others.

Another quality of Crow is his dedication to winning. Crow's definition of winning includes following

Athletic Director John David Crow says that while winning is important, he also

wants to follow the rules and make a strong impact on the lives of student athletes.

Life on campus for scholarship athletes not all fun and games

By Robert Marraro
Special to The Battalion

More than 250 student athletes at Texas A&M receive partial or full athletic scholarships, and there is enormous pressure to perform in the classroom and on the field, but for athletes, campus life is not all fun and games.

Athletic scholarships provide a way for athletes to get an education while allowing them to perform to their own potentials as they represent the University.

Dr. Donald R. Hunt, academic counselor for men's sports, said athletes cannot be compared to regular students because they do not fit in with the mainstream of student life. He said most of them have been athletes before coming here, and have grown used to the lifestyle, not knowing anything different.

Life among athletes is very different. Athletes make a sacrifice by being on a scholarship, Hunt said. There is much pressure from the athlete's parents, their peers, the news media, the coaches and the athlete's own personal drive to win.

Sports are part of American culture and have become a tradition, Hunt said. Hunt added that for athletes, there is a rewarding experience in having accomplished something that few people can do. He said that often, athletes are elevated above the rest of the students as a type of hero, and regular students envy athletes because of their abilities.

Teddy Zalesky, women's academic counselor, said that athletes have little free time. When they travel to meets and tournaments, they work. They do not play around or act like a tourist.

She said people think athletes live better than everyone else, but they do not.

"It's not all glory," Zalesky said. "They do receive money, but they earn it — every bit of it."

The National Collegiate Athletic Association allocates the maximum number of scholarships for each sport, and requires that the scholarship pay the student's tuition, room and board and all fees.

The Athletic Business Office bases its average scholarship on a 14-hour semester. Regardless of what

sport the athlete plays, the in-state value is \$4,555 plus books. Out of state is \$7,467 plus books.

Wally Groff, associate athletic director, said 18 percent of the Athletic Department's budget is allocated to athletic scholarships.

"By state law, all athletic departments and programs must be sup-

ported by their own funds if it's a state agency," Groff said. "We're fortunate that we're able to provide most of our scholarships through the 12th Man Club."

Sports are either head count sports or equivalency sports. Head count sports provide full scholarships and include football, men's and women's basketball and women's volleyball. Equivalency sports

provide full and partial scholarships, and include the remaining sports.

Once scholarship amounts are allocated, the coaches decide who will receive the scholarships. Groff said that partial scholarships can be split in half or up to four ways.

Assistant track coach Ted Nelson said track is allowed a maximum of

14 scholarships. He said the Athletic Department is able to provide eight full and six partial.

Each athlete is evaluated to see how much of an asset each is to the team, Nelson said. He added that coaches base their decisions on NCAA level or Southwest Conference level tournaments where points are earned. Nelson said that the athletes who perform better and are

perceived by their coaches to be worth more to the team receive more money.

All coaches face this type of decision when deciding who receives a scholarship, regardless of the sport.

"Scholarships are given to the athlete who demonstrates the best talent based on how much they can help the team," Nelson said.

High school athletes are recruited based on their athletic abilities. An athlete must meet the entrance requirements set by the University, and the NCAA requirements of a minimum 700 SAT score or minimum 15 ACT score as well as a cumulative grade-point-ratio of 2.0 upon graduation from high school.

Once the athletes have been selected, the coaches meet with review councils and advisory committees. It is then up to the head coach to decide who will play and get the scholarships.

Choices are then recommended to the Athletic Department, and approvals are sent to the University Scholarship Committee. Scholarships are then awarded to those athletes.

"There are numerous checks and balances in the system to make sure

all bases are covered before anything is awarded," Groff said.

Scholarships are awarded on a semester or an academic year basis. As long as an athlete continues to perform well, they will continue to receive their scholarship.

All athletes are expected to practice and play to the best of their abilities, Nelson said. The degree of work is left to the students.

"Some students work as hard as they can, but cannot compete on a college level — they just do not possess what it takes," Groff said. He said that if athletes do poorly in school they will either be transferred or will have to leave the University. If they are able to keep good grades, but perform poorly in their sport, they will continue to receive a scholarship as long as they satisfy their coaches.

Groff said there is a four-year playship with a five-year eligibility for the scholarship, six-year maximum. The athletes who wait longer to attend college lose more money.

Graduate student-athletes are rare, and those who do stay lose their eligibility by that time. The last

"The only place you know you're going after you get out of class is to the field, so that you can beat up on somebody or somebody can beat up on you."

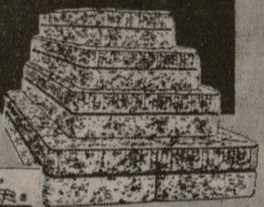
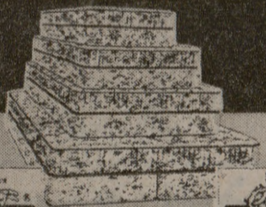
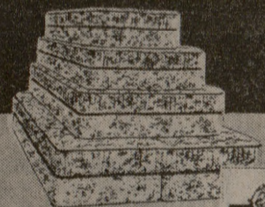
— Dennis Ransom, student athlete

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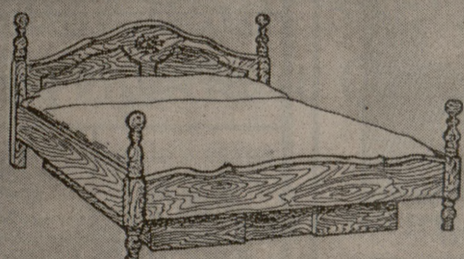
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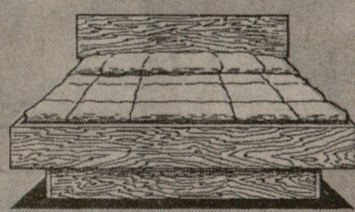
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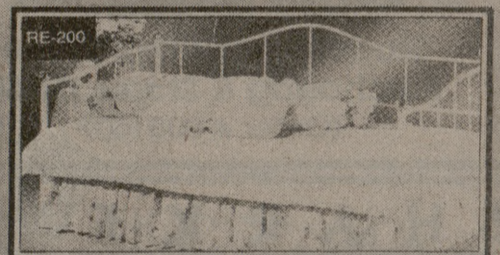
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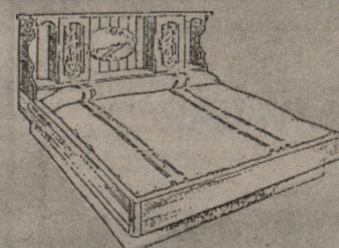
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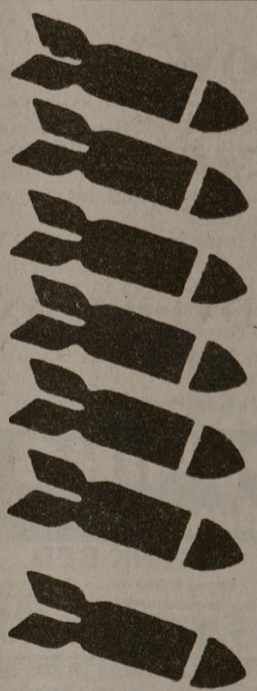
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