

Friday, September 15, 1989

Lights, camera, action! Taping mock lectures helps T.A.s prepare for students

By Todd Connelley

Of The Battalion Staff

Teaching assistants in Texas A&M's biology department sharpened their communication skills with a summer workshop that employed the cold, hard eye of the video camera.

The 31 teaching assistants prepared for the onslaught of about 2,000 freshmen by delivering mock lectures to a video camera and then watching themselves perform.

Utilizing a new technique called "microteaching," teaching assistants presented a lecture before a camera, played the tape back, and with the help of their peers, critiqued their individual performances.

"After the video tape was shown, the TA who just performed would go around and ask the other TAs present how they did," said Dr. Nina Caris, director of the freshman biology program.

Caris said the workshop was designed to improve the quality of undergraduate courses. "Since lecture sizes are running right at 300 people, the only chance the students have to interact with an authority figure is in the laboratory," Caris said.

"The success of freshman biology depends not so much on the lectures, but the TAs," she said.

The five-day workshop also featured seminars on delivering clear instructions and presenting stimulating questions to students.

"One of our goals is to get students to think

"Since lecture sizes are running right at 300 people, the only chance the students have to interact with an authority figure is in the laboratory."

— Dr. Nina Caris, Freshman biology director

inductively, deductively and to come to some conclusions on their own," she said.

A highlight of the workshop was a seminar devoted to putting TAs in real-life laboratory settings.

"They were taught how to properly prepare microscope slides, the correct use of the metric balance — basically all the things they

would really need in a classroom laboratory," Caris explained.

The workshop has received positive feedback from participating TAs.

"It wasn't a matter of improving what we already knew about biology, but in preparation and going through the motions of teaching," said Andrew Nunberg, a teaching assistant from Kingspark, N.Y., with a bachelor's degree in biology.

"All of a sudden, being thrust into a teaching situation was something we were not used to," he said.

The results of the summer workshop will become evident this week as TAs brace themselves for performance evaluations by their professors.

"We will step in and give them a prescription for improvement now and then," Caris said. "At the end of the semester, we will re-evaluate them to see if they have improved."

So far, it appears the workshop has been successful, she said.

"The TAs have developed a strong camaraderie," she said. "They are helping each other out and are very enthusiastic."

"Remember they were trained to be scientists, not teachers, so I think the workshop has been well worth the effort," Caris said.

Bullock reveals proposal for new state ethics rules

AUSTIN (AP) — State Comptroller Bob Bullock on Thursday unveiled a detailed proposal for new state government ethics rules, saying those who break the public trust should be subjected to "swift and severe judgment."

The proposal came in a letter to legislative leaders, Gov. Bill Clements and lawmakers.

It followed by a day an ethics bill proposed by Sen. Chet Edwards of Duncanville, Bullock's opponent in the 1990 Democratic primary for lieutenant governor.

"More than 15 years ago, 'Deep Throat' advised reporters investigating the Watergate scandal to 'follow the money.' The advice is still good today," Bullock wrote.

"And it should be the basis for state ethics laws to lay bare the truth about those who make public policy and those who try to influence public policy," he said.

Bullock said the State Ethics Commission — which currently exists on paper but receives no funding from the Legislature — should be utilized to enforce stringent rules for lobbyists who give money to public officials

and for the officials who accept lobby largesse.

The comptroller said a resuscitated Ethics Commission should be given "a full set of sharp teeth and steel jaws."

Highlighting Bullock's proposals are:

- Cross-auditing elected officials' political bank accounts with their federal income tax returns and their business tax returns.

- Auditing spending and contribution reports of lobbyists and political donors with their actual financial records.

- Power to levy "substantial fines and other penalties" against violators, including expelling them from office or stripping lobbyists of all contact with public officials.

- The power to file criminal charges against those who violate ethics regulations.

The proposals, Bullock said, "Have been gleaned from the best, the toughest approaches taken in other states and augmented by our experience in the comptroller's office in aggressive auditing, tax law fraud and consumer tax protection."

Reveille V, mascot corporal travel to football games in style

By Holly Becka

Of The Battalion Staff

Although most who travel across country have to wave goodbye to their beloved pet as its cage heads into the baggage compartment, Reveille V sits in the cabin with mascot corporal Jimmy Laurito.

Laurito, a sophomore pre-med major from Farmer's Branch, said one of the questions he is most asked is how the University's mascot gets to out-of-town games.

"We usually travel by car to conference games and fly to special games like the Washington game and the Kick-Off Classic in New Jersey," he said.

He said arrangements for special games are made by him through personnel in the athletic department who charter a plane. Because the plane is chartered, the collie is allowed to sit in the cabin with Laurito, the football players and the coaching staff.

"Nothing has ever happened to any Aggie mascot," Laurito said. "We're really protective of her and we care for her so much that we don't want to put her with the cargo. There're chances of something happening to her (if she travels in the cargo section), and we don't want to take any chances. That's why we don't ever leave her alone."

Dan Debenport, a junior political science major from Nacogdoches who was the mascot corporal last year, said traveling on the chartered plane lets the mascot corporals feel at ease.

"We see if we can get on the team plane because that's the only way we can fly someplace," Debenport said.

"We can't put her in a travel cage on a commercial flight because we're scared she'll get lost or she might get sick on the trip, and we don't like to trust that. We like

to have her with us."

Laurito and Debenport are members of Navy-Marine Company E-2. Laurito said he and two sophomore buddies from his unit accompany Reveille to all the football games.

Problems arose before the Washington game when he and Rev almost didn't make the trip.

He said a smaller plane was chartered for the athletes and coaches going to Seattle than was chartered for New Jersey, and last spring he had assumed there was room for the collie and three cadets.

"When we got to school we found out we were having some problems with (the trip), and Dr. Mobley came through for us and persuaded the athletic department to make room for her."

Laurito said he got a seat on the plane because of cancellations. The athletic depart-

ment pays for Reveille and the mascot corporal to travel on the chartered plane. Donations allowed Laurito's buddies to ac-

"We're really protective of (Reveille) and we care for her so much that we don't want to put her with the cargo."

— Jimmy Laurito, Mascot corporal.

company him and Rev to the game in Seattle.

Debenport said the University's Reveille Fund allots money to pay for gas and accommodations for the mascot, mascot corporal and two friends when traveling to out-of-town games. The donated fund is

comprised of \$800 that is used for various purposes throughout the year, he said.

"They get money for that the same way the yell leaders, Parsons Mounted Cavalry or bonfire do," Debenport said. "It's a fund that different mothers' clubs donate to."

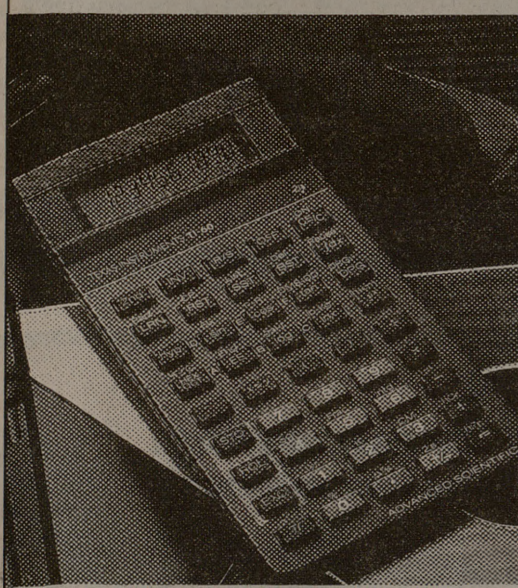
Laurito said when Reveille flies she is given a "symbolic" boarding pass, but he is the only one who actually sits on a seat.

"The seat is really reserved for me, and she sits at my feet," he said. "I keep the boarding pass for a scrapbook."

Debenport said the three sophomores usually stay in the Holiday Inn because the hotel allows pets. Reveille is never tranquilized or caged while traveling because she is so calm, he said.

Reveille will not attend Saturday's A&M game against Texas Christian University because animals are not allowed on the university's football field.

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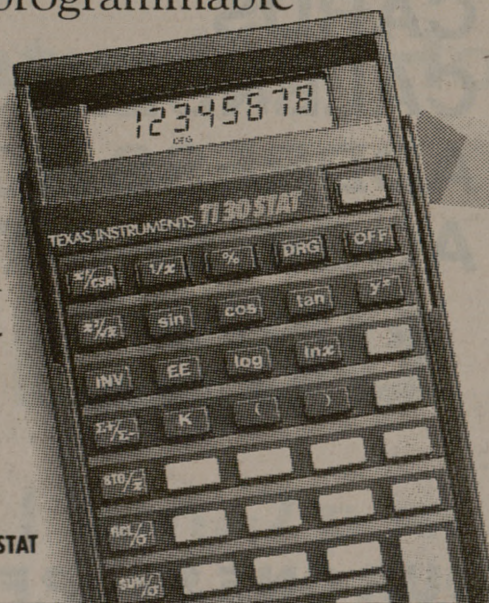
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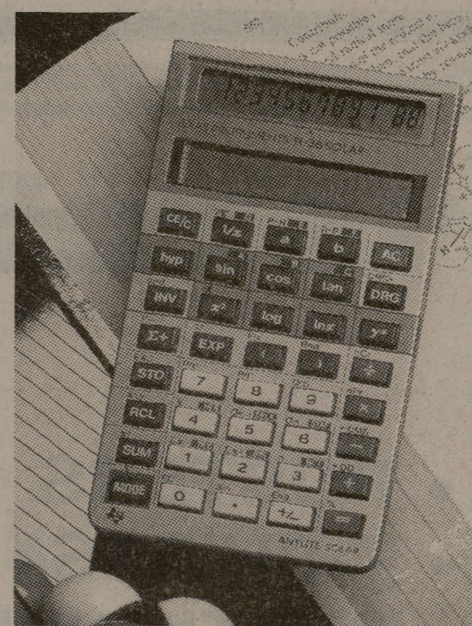
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