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Legendary leaders of Texas A&M

By Katsy Pittman

Of The Battalion Staff

Harrington, Sbsa, Puryear, Ross — you glance at their bronzed plaques on campus every day, but do you ever wonder what these men were really like? Sure, they helped lead Texas A&M University to where it is today, but who were the real men behind the legends?

Dr. M.T. Harrington, Class of '22, was the first A&M graduate to become president of the University. The M.T. stood for Marion Thomas, although he rarely was called that. Instead, some friends called him Tom, but the rest just called him "Empty" (sounds like M.T. — get it?).

Though many of his reforms brought accolades to the University, not all of Harrington's visions were recognized. For instance, in 1953 many critics complained that enrollment had dropped to such low levels that women should be allowed to enter the University.

His reply? "This movement for co-education at A&M College would be sufficient grounds for serious alarm if it were true. Fortunately, it is not."

Harrington, who still visits the campus every day, admits that things are a lot different from the days when there were only 2,000 undergraduates.

Today, he says that he's glad to see A&M at its present size. However, at a 1974 banquet in his honor, Harrington related his fears that liberalism came with bigness.

"I'd hate to see us get up to the 40,000 student level," Harrington said. "But I think we are going to the twenties and maybe the thirties."

Dr. Charles Puryear, A&M's first football manager, might be surprised to see the campus today, too.

One year, a very perplexing issue to Puryear was whether pool tables should be allowed in the student Y building, for at the time, billiard playing was considered a slightly shady pastime.

After a lengthy debate, Puryear decided the pool tables would be allowed on one condition — poetry would be read every afternoon by English instructor Thomas F. Mayo in order to uplift the moral surroundings.

Puryear's secretary, Hettie Edge, was receiving some mixed up signals also.

It took a long time for her to build up the courage to ask Puryear why he sent memos to himself. When she finally asked, he was reported to have said, "I like to get mail myself!"

In a letter from a 1914 correspondence, E.B. Cushing chastised Puryear (who was acting president at the time), for requesting an electric fan for a professor. Cushing, the president of the board of directors, insisted that fans were "personal luxu-

ries" and that if one professor got a fan, they would all want one.

In another letter, Puryear also was condemned by Cushing for allowing a certain soup to be served to the students.

"The fact carries with it the irresistible conclusion that you are wasting the time of the men for preparing this unpalatable mess," Cushing wrote.

Bernard Sbsa, the man behind the legend of the most commonly mispronounced building on campus (should be Spee-za, not Suh-bee-suh), was a little more popular in the food department.

The official "Supervisor of Subsistence," Sbsa was credited for getting the meals out quickly. On Nov. 11, 1911, the old mess hall burned down.

For once, Sbsa got the meals out late. Breakfast wasn't served until 10 a.m. More than a few cadets thought they were probably going to be lucky for once and get a walk in their morning classes.

College classes were something Thomas Otto Walton missed out on.

Walton, who was president of the University in 1925, never received an academic degree. Although he did receive an honorary one from

Baylor, Walton's lack of education was said to haunt him for the rest of his days.

Lawrence Sullivan Ross — an A&M legend if there ever was one — was an Indian fighter, pioneer and two-time governor of Texas. He also was not a man you'd want to upset.

According to one story, on the night of the 1887 inaugural ball, Ross' father was stopped at the door because he didn't have an official invitation.

"The hell you say," retorted Ross. "If I don't get in there, I'll call my boy, Sul, out and we'll take this place apart!"

He got in.

Of course, Ross is more well known for establishing some of Aggie land's best traditions. Under his supervision came the first Aggie Band, the Association of Former Students and the first design of the Aggie ring.

But this revered A&M figure, who supposedly gave up running for U.S. Senator for the position of A&M President, drew some negative comments also.

His critics said Ross had developed an "imported Yankee Republican faculty" and that Ross had

turned A&M into a school of "tary peacockery."

One person who wasn't a fan of Ross was a close family member — his grandson.

Lawrence Sullivan Ross Clarke, freshman in 1917, was given a special job by several upperclassmen: seemed every time a storm rolled in, Fish Sul would have to stand with an umbrella over the statue of his revered grandfather.

1917 was a rainy year. "Before that year was over," said Clarke, "I got pretty damned tired of grandpa."



Illustration by Doug Lantz

Class helps Aggies drive responsibly

By James A. Johnson

Of The Battalion Staff

Defensive driving — it's not a phrase that appeals to the average college student. But the defensive driving class sponsored by University Plus combines humor, common sense and personal experience to publicize the realities associated with careless and drunken driving.

Whether class members attend a defensive driving course simply to dismiss a traffic citation or to receive a three-year 10 percent discount on car insurance, the information that is communicated between instructors and their students oftentimes is crucial.

Through his witty approach, Bryan Apperson, class instructor and graduate assistant for the Safety Education program at Texas A&M, tells students about false assumptions regarding traffic safety and advises them to maintain a responsible attitude when they get behind the wheel of a vehicle.

"My main goal is to make the class entertaining, informative and quick," Apperson said. "It stimulates thought. When people leave our program, they've learned something."

He discusses topics ranging from where to stop at a stop sign to how much alcohol it takes to intoxicate a driver. He also makes strong impressions on class participants by circulating handouts, presenting numerous visual materials and stating relevant information that students either do not know or learned in high school but forgot.

Katherine Barnett, a senior kinesiology major who received a parking ticket for riding her scooter on campus sidewalks, admits she dreaded the class before taking it, but was relieved to find it worthwhile.

"I don't think it would've been bearable without a teacher who was entertaining," Barnett said. "He (Apperson) has refreshed a whole lot from Driver's Ed and uses personal experience effectively."

Because Apperson is 29 years old, he reminds students that he can recall how college students tend to believe rumors, particularly when alcohol is the topic.

He said the first thing that alcohol does is affect a driver's judgment. Because alcohol circulates through a person's bloodstream continuously until it is eliminated by the liver, it can be

a constant threat to both drivers and innocent bystanders, he said.

Drivers are apprehended if their blood-alcohol level is .10 percent or higher. The percentage is equivalent to one drop of alcohol to 99 drops of blood. If, however, a patrolman feels a driver's judgment is adversely affected, the driver still may be arrested even if his blood-alcohol level is below .10 percent, Apperson added.

"Drivers can get picked up for drinking one beer if their judgment is considered impaired," he said.

Apperson said that although an intoxicated driver may avoid being pulled over one night, he

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— Bryan Apperson, Defensive driving instructor

may be jailed the next morning if he drives while his blood-alcohol level is still above the legal limit.

Apperson also said that once a driver is under the influence of alcohol there is often an increase in risk taking, such as running stop lights and passing other vehicles when there is heavy oncoming traffic. As a result, the probability of collisions increases.

Apperson has heard several different responses from class participants concerning how they know when they have had enough to drink. The responses included:

- Numbness of the face.
- Someone asks to drive for them.
- Someone cannot remember how many drinks they have consumed.

•An individual appears to be the only one drinking.

•The body's reflexes become slower.

•A person has a tendency to smile for long periods of time.

Current statistics are used to enhance the class, informing students about increasing trends concerning traffic data and ways to prevent future carelessness.

"Between 10 at night and 2 in the morning, one in three drivers are under the influence of alcohol," Apperson said. "Most people don't realize that, but it's something to think seriously about."

Jason McCreight, a junior accounting major from Deer Park, was pulled over while driving a friend's truck. The friend, who had asked him to help him move furniture, had reached over and adjusted the cruise control to 70 mph. Although McCreight tried to explain his situation to a patrol officer, he still was cited for speeding. For McCreight, it not only meant paying the cost of the ticket, but enrolling in his third defensive driving class as well.

After surviving two not-so-interesting driving classes, McCreight said the University Plus class was by far the most efficient class he had taken.

"The course was well focused on relevant material," McCreight said. "I enjoyed the part that dealt with alcohol-related matters. It's such an important issue, and I believe the University should make it a required class for graduation."

Apperson said he tries to make the course useful and enjoyable. Judging from comments made on course evaluation forms, he has been successful.

Comments ranged from "The instructor made the course, which I had expected to be dull and boring, worth really paying attention to," to "This class was a real eye-opener."

While Apperson's enthusiasm toward his occupation continues to lure otherwise indifferent students, his opportunity to inform the public gives him personal satisfaction.

"I enjoy my job because I can make a difference through my teaching," Apperson said. "Hopefully, those who attend my class can help make a difference for themselves and others."

University Plus will again offer the class this Friday and Saturday. Additional courses will continue through December.

Production only decent aspect of new Dylan LP

By John Righter

Of The Battalion Staff

Bob Dylan
Oh Mercy
CBS Records

Two things are apparent when listening to *Oh Mercy*: one, Daniel Lanois, who has worked with U2, Robbie Robertson and Brian Eno, can capture and sustain a feel on vinyl better than any other current producer; and two, Bob Dylan is a sad image of his former self.

In order to understand *Oh Mercy*, you need to divide it into two parts — Lanois' and Dylan's. With the possible exception of the David Stewart-produced *Empire Burlesque*, Dylan's records of the 1980s have had two major faults: one, they haven't been very well written; and two, they haven't sounded very good.

Obviously, with those two marks against him, Dylan has had a creatively dreadful decade. In fact, it is hard to find a good Dylan album since he released *Desire* in 1975, a reality that adds light to all the hoopla about *Oh Mercy* being his best work in 15 years. Big deal, the only other worthwhile release of the decade was *Biograph*, and that was a retrospective package.

This brings us to what makes *Oh Mercy* an enjoyable album, Lanois — at least Lanois and all the friends (Cyril Neville, Daryl Johnson and Mason Ruffner) he brought aboard to help Dylan out.

Lanois is a master in the studio, proven by his work on U2's *The Unforgettable Fire* and *The*

Joshua Tree and more recently with The Neville Brothers. It's not Dylan that sounds so good. Hear Lanois play the dobro, hear Lanois pick the lap steel guitar, hear Lanois on the omnichord, and most of all hear the results of Lanois' mixing and production.

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Dylan does, however, shine on two songs, especially on the beautifully haunting "Most of the Time," a song about a not quite forgotten love that seems to billow home all too painfully: "I can make it all match up/ I can hold my own/ I can deal with this situation/ right down to the bone/ I can survive and I can endure/ And I don't even think about her/ Most of the time."

The other is the witty "Was It You Wanted," in which Dylan taunts his audience. "Where were you when it started/

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