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The Battalion

LIFESTYLES

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Lifestyles Editor Dean Sueltenfuss 845-3310

Aggie shuttle bus drivers reveal hazards, pleasures of driving



Photo by Scott D. Weaver

Laura McNamara, a student bus driver, drives one of the off-campus shuttle buses on the "Elephant Walk" route.

By Don Kopf

Of The Battalion Staff

Every morning while I'm on my way to class, I hear the growls and roars of the maroon and white monsters that make up the Texas A&M bus system as they rush past.

And it seems no matter how early it is or how rotten the weather is, the drivers are always in a my-what-a-wonderful-morning mood.

It made me wonder. Who are these pre-dawn perky people who drive the bellowing bus beasts, and why do they do it?

I cornered a couple of drivers and found out everything I ever wanted to know about the A&M bus system. Every driver I talked to was more than willing to help.

"Ever since I was a freshman and started riding the shuttle bus, I wanted to be a bus driver," Laura McNamara, a junior industrial distribution major, said. "They always looked like they were having so much fun."

McNamara, now a bus driver, said the job is just as much fun as she thought it would be. Not only are the drivers friendly, but bus operations is understanding and helpful when drivers need a day off either to study or because they are ill. It's fun because of all the people there are to meet, she said. This is easy to understand when you know that the A&M buses give 24,782 rides a day.

McNamara, who has been driving since August, at first had trouble explaining to her mother her decision to become a bus driver. When she got the job as a driver, she called home and excitedly told her mother about it. "I'm gonna be a bus driver! I'm gonna be a bus driver!" she said.

Steven Carlson, a senior engineering technology major, said he likes the job because he gets to meet a lot of people and the pay is pretty good.

When people who obviously have had a really lousy day get on the bus, Carlson enjoys trying to cheer them up. He said people often start feeling better after he has talked to them.

Carlson also said he likes the feeling of being in control of a large vehicle such as a bus, which is why he likes to drive the larger off-campus buses.

But driving buses isn't all fun and games. Maneuvering such a large vehicle through crowded campus streets isn't an easy job. McNamara said the most dangerous place is the Ireland Street bus stop when classes are being let out. Pedestrians casually step in front of a bus assuming it will stop for them until they are out of the way, she said.

McNamara recalls one incident during which a cyclist tried to squeeze between her stopped bus and a parked truck. The rider smacked his head hard into the bus's side mirror, moving it quite a bit (a feat not easily done). She said he just kept riding, probably because he was too embarrassed to stop.

According to Daniel McRedmond, a junior finance major and bus driver, people on bikes

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Group offers alternative to television 'magination Station uses entertainment to teach

By James A. Johnson

Of The Battalion Staff

Although many forms of entertainment such as television and video games often do little to help children become more creative, there is an organization in Bryan-College Station that entertains youngsters while teaching them about the unlimited possibilities of the imagination.

'magination Station, a non-profit organization that utilizes an ensemble approach for casting its plays, is dedicated to producing plays for children of the Bryan-College Station area. Actors audition at the beginning of each annual season to become a part of the troupe. Each play is then cast from members of the troupe.

Performing such memorable plays as "Charlotte's Web" and "Hansel and Gretel," the group relies on participants from all areas of the community.

Diane Florshuetz, a business owner in Bryan-College Station, said she enjoys using her talents for the children's benefit.

"It allows everyone to use their creativity," Florshuetz explained. "The children are able to create and interpret what they see in the performances. Each child may interpret different situations in entirely different ways."

In "Charlotte's Web," Florshuetz said the children get to play the part of trees, helping them to understand the importance of participation and teamwork.

Although the subject of death is presented in the play, it is not done so in a tragic way. Instead, children see the subject from a sympathetic view as well.

In plays like "Charlotte's Web," Florshuetz said the actors also can suggest ways of dealing with death.

'magination Station is beginning its third season and was started by nine friends who saw the need for a children's theater workshop in the Bryan-College Station community. Because of the huge success of its first show three years ago, the Station has grown into an 18-member organization.

Cast members communicate a sense of family and familiarity which they develop from working with each other. The actors use a direct approach to communicate with their audience members, performing each play in close proximity by having the children sit on the floor near the stage area.

Pamela Wiley, the group's publicity chairman, said today's society doesn't expose children to the world of make-believe as often as it should.

"We're not like Mister Rogers or some cartoons," Wiley said, smiling. "That stuff is sick."

In its own way, 'magination Station teaches children about how even the simplest things can provide fun.

"Our productions let youngsters see what they can do in their own room and in their own backyard," Wiley said.

To stir the children's imagination, expensive props or costumes are rarely used. Instead, the group leaves such imagery to each child's mind.

"They see everything that's going on," Wiley said. "We don't use elaborate sets. We keep everything very simple." She said that this allows the children to understand that they can make objects and places whatever they want them to be.

Another purpose of the group's See Station/Page 15

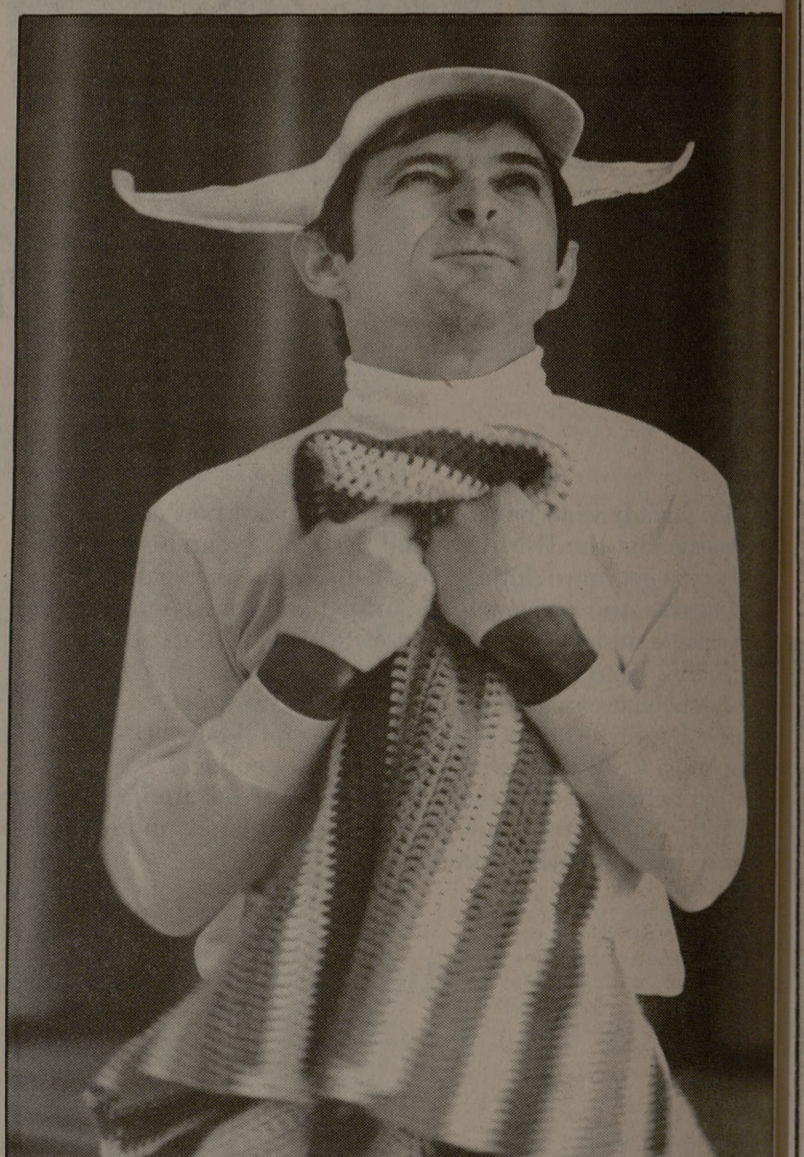


Photo by Kathy Hartman

'magination Station member Dennis Busch plays the part of Wilbur in a production of "Charlotte's Web." About 150 parents and children saw the production Saturday afternoon at Jane Long Jr. High School.