

Tuesday, November 14, 1989

Campus Ministry Association labels bonfire as 'out of hand'

By Cindy McMillian

Of The Battalion Staff

The president of the Campus Ministry Association said he has received support from area churches and community members for a statement the group issued last week suggesting that Texas A&M end bonfire as it now exists.

Rev. Steven Sellars, president of the campus-recognized organization and chaplain for the Episcopal Student Center, said he has received several phone calls from area residents who agree with him that bonfire, as it now exists, has "gotten out of hand."

Sellars said he read the statement at a Sunday meeting of the Bryan-College Station Ministerial Association and was applauded by its members. "The churches in town are starting to take notice," he said.

"Bonfire is no longer justifiable from a moral standpoint. We think it's gotten way out of hand, and enough is enough."

The statement was unanimously approved by the 17 members of the CMA, and cited environmental concerns and wasted human and natural resources as reasons for ending bonfire.

Sellars said he also objects to bonfire because of the effect it has on the students' academics. Many students cut back on class hours and make lower grades because of the time they spend working on bonfire, he said.

His opponents argue that bonfire represents the "burning desire to beat the hell outta t.u." They say it can't be ended because of tradition, but the way bonfire's done now is *not* tradition, he said.

Sixty or seventy years ago, he said, students began preparing for bonfire just a week before the annual football game against the University of Texas. They helped people clear their yards, gathered the debris into a pile and the trash pile was burned as bonfire, he said.

"It was a public service," he said. "They built a pile, not an engineering edifice."

The statement suggested that the energy and human resources now spent on bonfire could be

tion projects leave lasting benefits, he said. Bonfire consumes hundreds of hours of time and hundreds of acres of trees for one night.

The injuries sustained at cut and stack sites also concern Sellars. One student was killed in 1981 when a tractor overturned, he said, and another broke his hip at cut site four years ago.

This year, a student lost two fingers while loading logs onto a truck, Sellars said. Sellars heard about the incident from another student and said it was not publicized until he told a reporter at the Bryan-College Station Eagle week.

"There is a terrible conspiracy of silence about anything negative that happens during bonfire," he said. "Though deaths and serious injuries have occurred, he said, they cause 'hardly a ripple' of disturbance."

"That student will have to go through the rest of his life with eight fingers," Sellars said. "Many more young bodies are we going to sacrifice on that altar?"

"It's too late for anything to be done this year," he said, "but at least we're now to the point where it's being discussed."

The statement said, and Sellars reiterated, that the ministers are making their views known of love and concern for the University. They are not against students coming together before the Texas game, but think bonfire has grown out of hand.

"As ordained clergy people, we are preservers of religious tradition, so we know about tradition," he said. "Appealing to tradition is longer going to cut it with people who know tradition."

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— Rev. Steven Sellars, President, Campus Ministry Assoc.

put to a more positive use to benefit the community. Though the statement did not suggest a specific alternative to bonfire, Sellars suggested a service project such as Habitat for Humanity, which builds houses for low-income families.

"There's also a tradition for that kind of service," he said. "In the 1960s, the Corps of Cadets went to Mexico and built an entire water system for a poor community." Such positive construc-

Turner announces bid for senate seat

By Michael Kelley

Of The Battalion Staff

Crockett County Mayor Jim Turner will seek election to the Texas 5th Senatorial District he announced in a press conference Wednesday.

In a telephone interview Thursday, Turner, who served as a mem-



ber of the Texas House of Representatives from 1981-84, said he can be an effective representative for Texas A&M as a Democratic state senator.

He said would work to keep sufficient funding for higher education and listen to the concerns of A&M students, faculty and administrators on pertinent issues.

"The central issue in this campaign is a simple one," Turner said. "Who can most effectively represent the needs and the values of the people of this district in the Texas Senate? As a Texas Democrat in the Texas Senate, I can provide the kind

of leadership that our public schools and institutions of higher education need in these times of challenge and change."

Turner said a key to improving Texas' higher education is secondary education reform, but he opposes the acquisition of funding from higher education to pay for secondary schools. Instead, Turner said he wants to see an equalization of school finance among all school districts in the state.

Having served as chairman of the first House Subcommittee on Ethics in 1983, Turner said he has the ex-

perience needed to introduce support legislation to make public office a position of public service whereby elected officials are voters, not masters, of the people.

"The call of public service is not only calls for competent leadership but it calls for strong leadership," he said. "I intend to push for strong ethics legislation as a member of the Texas Senate and join arms with those of you who are on the front lines of battle against drug abuse, child abuse and crime."

"The challenges are great, working together we can make a difference for all Texans and build a brighter future for all our children and grandchildren."

To fight crime in Texas, Turner said the state needs to aid local police departments so they can adequately address the drug problem from a local level. He said local law enforcement is the only way to sufficiently stop drug dealers from inhabiting sparsely populated areas, where they now hide from the law enforcement of urban areas.

"As a father of two teenagers, I know state government must do to the aid of local government in war on drugs," Turner said. "As a local officeholder, I know that state government must stop making new programs for our communities and counties while providing the funds to implement those mandates."

On the deficiencies in the Texas Department of Corrections facilities, Turner said he sees no choice than to build more prisons. He said he wants to see more "camps," whereby inmates are given military-style treatment to them in a short amount of time to obey the law. He said this would alleviate the overcrowding problems.

Responding to the question of the possibility of a student on the Board of Regents, Turner said

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By Bob Krenek
Of The Battalion Staff

The trees that will be affected by the University Center expansion are symbolic of the environment, said Dr. Mark Sicilio.

Sicilio spoke at a rally sponsored by the Medicine Tribe and the Texas Environmental Action Coalition Friday featuring three speakers who oppose the destruction of four live Oak trees that apparently will be the victims of the MSC expansion slated to begin in December.

Sicilio, an assistant professor in the College of Medicine, said the students and faculty should have some input into decisions that will affect them.

Todd Honeycutt, a Medicine Tribe member, agreed, saying, "We need to have some representation. At this point, we really do not know what is going on with the administration and Regents."

Honeycutt said he would like some form of student participation on the Board of Regents at Texas A&M, either in a voting or non-voting capacity.

"We need to know what is going on," Honeycutt said.

Professors, students speak out against removal of MSC trees

"They tell us that they told our student leaders about the expansion and that it is our leaders fault that we did not know, but something needs to be done. The first we heard about it was last spring."

Dr. Benton Storey, a horticultural sciences professor, also spoke against the destruction of the trees. He has written a resolution preventing one tree from being killed and others moved for the Texas A&M Faculty Senate that was approved Monday.

Medicine Tribe invited University Center Manager Steven Hodge to present the administration's side of the issue.

He also distributed a packet outlining how each of the trees will be affected and addressed some of the arguments opponents of the project and presented an article discussing techniques for transplanting trees.

The *Austin American-Statesman* article explains how two trees older than those at the University Center were successfully transplanted by Instant Shade Trees, Inc., the same company that will attempt to transplant the trees around the MSC.

The project's opponents charge the trees may not survive the transplanting because of their advanced age and because they have not been properly prepared by root pruning.

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