

Graveyard shift not so easy to get used to

By CHIP SOWDEN
Of The Battalion Staff

If you think pulling an all-nighter is tough, try doing it every night. Many people in Bryan and College Station work the graveyard shift — from late at night until the early morning — but that doesn't mean they get used to it.

"I've never been used to staying up all night," said Jim Bishop, overnight announcer for KORA-FM. "When I first started, I drank gallons of coffee and was shaking so bad I couldn't hit the buttons," he said.

The 38-year-old former welder got his job at the station by answering a newspaper ad. He has been at KORA for five years now, working the lonely midnight to 6 a.m. shift almost the whole time.

"It's kind of nice not to have all the people around," Bishop said. "I like it when nobody's here." But telephone calls on the request line break up the solitude.

"Overnights are when you get most of the calls from the lonely people," he said. "You're their best friend — I've got a lot of best friends."

But Celia Rios, who works the graveyard shift at Taco Cabana, meets a lot of people face to face at her job.

"Sometimes the people are really hard to deal with, especially those who have been drinking," she said. However, Rios said, "I really like the regulars."

Like Bishop, Rios is not a night person at all.

"For me to stay up, I need about four or five cigarettes and a couple of cups of coffee," she said. "But I'm getting used to it." She said she really didn't like the hours at first, but the schedule works for her.

Rios gets home just as her mother has sent her children off to school. She goes into her bedroom, draws the blinds, turns the television and the ceiling fan on for a little background noise, and falls asleep within 30 minutes. By the time she wakes up, her children are just getting

home.

She said that she is really beginning to like her job, and will be there "as long as I feel needed."

Adjusting to an overnight schedule was no problem for Joy Lindan, overnight checker at Kroger in College Station. Her problem, she said, is getting to sleep.

"I drink beer or wine or whatever," she said. "It's the only way I can get to sleep."

Lindan said the hardest people to deal with are those who want to buy beer after hours, or want to write checks for over the amount of purchase after the appointed time. She just keeps telling them no, she said, and keeps the cash drawer closed because she's afraid of getting robbed.

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— Jim Bishop,
KORA disk jockey

"You get a lot of strange people," Lindan said.

Michelle Klump, on the other hand, said she doesn't worry about people at the Kettle Restaurant on University Drive where she works the weekend overnight shift. She said the restaurant has many regular customers, even in the early morning hours.

"You get to know them and they get to know you, and if you ever need anything, they can help you and vice versa," Klump said. "It all depends on how well you can deal with people."

So what keeps a displaced day person in the mainstream of the nocturnal counterculture?

"I don't want to get a real job," Bishop said with a big smile.

Conservator restores San Jacinto battle flag

SHARPSBURG, Md. (AP) — The San Jacinto battle flag, one of Texas' most treasured artifacts and symbol of the day the fledgling Republic won its independence from Mexico, is nothing more now than shards of silk spread across a workroom table.

In a house in the foothills of the Appalachians, textile conservator Fonda G. Thomsen is taking apart and, with the help of a microscope, putting together again what's left of the 155-year-old banner.

"How do you tell them they really don't have a flag left?" Thomsen asks, examining the fragments of original silk that remain glued or shellacked to a piece of linen.

Thomsen was hired to do the sec-

"My treatment has to be reversible ... You can't be so arrogant to think your treatment will last forever. As a conservator, you always hope you leave no trace on a work of art."

— Fonda Thomsen,
textile conservator

ond restoration of the flag carried into battle by a group of Kentucky men who volunteered to help Texas fight against Mexico.

The flag is so precious to the state that Department of Public Safety officers escorted a van carrying the flag from the state Capitol in Austin to Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport.

Since bringing the flag to her home, Thomsen has been trying to undo the damage of the flag's first restoration in the early 1930s and years of deterioration from exposure to light.

Allen McCree, the architect restoring the Capitol, said the San Jacinto flag is a symbol of Texas' April 21, 1836 victory over Mexico.

"It was our resounding 20-minute victory at the Battle of San Jacinto, after that terrible defeat at the Alamo, that turned us around and gave us our independence," McCree said.

So when the state decided to restore the flag as part of the restoration of the 101-year-old Capitol, Campbell looked carefully for a textile conservator before choosing Thomsen, McCree said.

Thomsen has advised the Smithsonian Institution on preservation of the original Star-Spangled Banner, and her many textile restorations include the Treasury Guard flag that John Wilkes Booth ripped with the spur of his boot as he fled Ford Theater after shooting President Lincoln.

When conservator Katherine Fowler Richey received the flag in 1932, it was a mass of tattered silk stored since 1896 in a walnut box.

"When received by me, the figure (in the flag) was in little pieces that disintegrated upon being touched," Richey told state Librarian Fannie M. Wilcox in a Dec. 28, 1932, letter.

The flag was painted in 1835 by artist James H. Beard for a group of men from Newport, Ky., who had volunteered to fight for Texas.

Led by Sidney Sherman, the Newport Rifles carried the flag into the battle of San Jacinto.

The flag consists of a woman, one breast bared, brandishing a sword with the banner "Liberty or Death," painted on silk.

Richey used shellac and dozens of stitches to secure the flag to a piece of linen, but was never able to find record of the flag as it was originally.

Thomsen is undoing Richey's stitches and removing the shellac from the painted silk and the yellowed bits of background fabric.

Shellac becomes brittle with age, and the damage becomes less and less reversible, Thomsen said.

"My treatment has to be reversible," she said.

"Richey did a lot of damage with her stitching. You can't be so arrogant to think your treatment will last forever. As a conservator, you always hope you leave no trace on a work of art."

Because only about 70 percent of the painted portion of the flag remains, Thomsen will fill in the missing slivers with matching-colored cotton.

Far less, however, remains of the silk background — Thomsen estimates just 20 percent of the original fabric remains.

Once finished, the flag will return to its place behind the House speaker's podium, but will be displayed only when the House is in session.

Drapes will conceal the original rest of the time, and a reproduction will be displayed instead.

An unveiling of the restored flag is planned for San Jacinto Day in April.

X-it's live dance rock 'just crazy'



Photo by Kathy Haveman

Onstage at Waiver's is X-it, a local band that plays mostly cover songs and strives for energetic, intense performances.

By TODD STONE
Of The Battalion Staff

X-it has made it a priority to bring one thing into their live performances — excitement.

"People tell us we have a great live sound," guitarist David Loving said. "We're not just a live band that plays. We try to put on a complete show."

Loving said the band has someone working the lights and someone mixing their music during every show — part of the extra effort they put forth to be more than just another club band.

The members of X-it are David Swartzbach, lead vocals; Russ Friesz, bass guitar; Ken Scott, keyboards; Mark Seid, drums; and guitarist Loving.

The local band features a unique blend of songs by progressive artists such as New Order, the Cult and R.E.M., as well as songs by rock artists such as Boston, Rush and Led Zeppelin.

Loving and Seid describe their performances as a process of building momentum.

"It starts out slow because people have to get there," Seid said. "During the first set, people are usually still deciding where they're going that night, but towards the end of the first set, people start coming in and the show takes off."

Loving said, "We try to project a good, live, jamming party. We always have people dancing by the second set, and by the end of the show, it's just crazy."

One performance became a little too crazy when one of the monitors the band used caught

on fire because of a power overload.

"We were just rocking along playing Boston," Loving said, "when I turned around, and Mark (Seid) was pointing at some smoke, and I thought it was our smoke machine."

"Then, David (Swartzbach) picks up the monitor and throws it outside."

However, the audience thought it was a planned stunt and became more excited throughout the show.

Seid said, "People were coming up to us asking, 'Did you guys plan that or what?' I'd say, 'No, man, we're not KISS.'"

Seid and Loving said it is difficult to find time for rehearsing and composing because Swartzbach and Scott live out of town.

"We practice rarely," Loving said. "Last semester we were playing so much we only practiced once. The rest of the time we were just performing."

To incorporate new material into their repertoire, Loving said, each member learns the songs individually, and then the group rehearses the songs before a performance. They write original material sporadically, but when they do, it is a group effort.

"Usually David (Swartzbach) will put some lyrics together, and we'll look at it and try to get a feel for what sound he wants," Seid said.

"We'll all just play around, and each of us will add our own part to it."

Loving and Seid said the band members like playing cover songs, because club audiences want to hear popular music.

"I think it is really tough to be an original band," Loving said. "Unless you're someone like Rush, people's attention span toward your own music will be short."

Seid said a band has to mix its original material with covers to win the audience's interest. Loving believes a band must gain a reputation as a reliable band before it can play its own material.

"Right now, we are establishing ourselves as a band people want to come to see," Loving said. "We can play for most clubs in town now, and the fraternities know us."

"Now, if we want, we can slip in some of our own songs, but it's (being in a band) only a part-time thing, so we don't have time."

In addition to its local performances, X-it has played in Houston and is scheduling shows in Waco.

Loving said the X-it members are students first and not a "working band" that survives on its music.

"We would like to break into Austin, but it's too expensive," Loving said. "We're all serious, but it also has to be convenient and fun."

Describing X-it's music, Seid said, "X-it rocks your mom. Even your mother could come out to a show, and she's going to like us. So bring your mom."

X-it will perform at The Zephyr Club before spring break and will play Sneakers March 23.

If you and your mother need more information about an X-it performance, call 693-4197 and ask for Mark.

Players give 'Fantastick' show of classic musical

By ANDREW GARDNER
Special to The Battalion

The Aggie Players opened their spring theater season Thursday with a thoroughly entertaining musical comedy, "The Fantasticks," written by Tom Jones and Harvey Schmidt.

Performances will continue Wednesday through Saturday at 8 p.m. in Rudder Forum.

The most striking thing about the

production is its physical simplicity. A bench, a cardboard sun-moon and a magical prop box are the only items on stage. The rest is left up to the imagination.

As El Gallo, the narrator, Greg Carter presents the scene in wonderfully descriptive words and song, setting the stage better than any props could.

The Mute, played by Belia Gonzalez, uses mime and dance to aid El

Gallo in his storytelling.

The opening song, "Try to Remember," sung in a deep bass by El Gallo, calls us to relive young romance with the two main characters, Matt and Luisa.

Matt and Luisa are young neighbors in love. The catch, however, is that their fathers are entirely against the relationship.

Stephany Tramel plays Luisa, a starry-eyed sentimentalist who sees

love as poetry. In her beautiful

prano, Tramel expresses her expectations of love in "Much More."

Luisa is separated from Matt by a wall, both real and figurative. The wall was built by their fathers, who want to keep them apart.

Each has forbidden his child to associate with the neighbors. Nevertheless, Matt and Luisa meet at the wall and their love surmounts the barrier.

Matt, played by David Tyson, sings to Luisa of his enduring love in the next song, "Metaphor." His delightful, obviously well-trained singing voice is a pleasure to hear.

The play begins slowly, but really picks up with the fathers singing duet, "Never Say No." This hilarious scene marks the start of the comedy that continues throughout the play.

Jonathan Burke plays Huckleberry Matt's father, and Dennis Whitehead plays Bellomy, Luisa's father. They make a hilarious duo that, more than one occasion, had the audience roaring with laughter.

In this song, we discover that the fathers actually are trying to get their children together. They have discovered that to make their children do something, they need to forbid it.

It turns out that the wall and the bad neighbor relations are merely part of a complex machination scheme. This deception is the first of many surprising plot twists.

The fathers hire El Gallo to stage an attempted rape of Luisa so that Matt can save her, giving the father an excuse for reconciliation. El Gallo also hires two actors to help him.

Henry, played by John Maloney and Mortimer, played by Orlando Castillo, make an uproarious appearance as the two actors who only misquote Shakespeare and die with consummate skill.

The storyline will take a few unexpected turns before it reaches its finally happy ending.

Tickets for the remaining performances are on sale at Rudder Forum Office. Prices are \$7.50 for the general public and \$5.50 for students.



Photo by Jay Janner

Greg Carter, Stephany Tramel and David Tyson perform in "The Fantasticks."