

The Battalion

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"Serving Texas A&M Since 1893"

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1492 — Columbus Day — 1992

Experts discuss journey, character of explorer

By ANAS BEN-MUSA

Reporter of THE BATTALION

The events that occurred in the time of Columbus are equal in magnitude to the incredible changes the world has seen this year, a Texas A&M history professor said.

"1492 was a year of many events: the conquest of the last Muslim kingdom of Grenada and the Jews in Spain were expelled or forced to convert," Dr. Daniel Bornstein said.

Yet, the most incredible event was yet to come. On Oct. 12, 1492 Christopher Columbus discovered the New World.

But, Dr. Vaughn Bryant, an anthropologist at A&M, said hundreds of years before the Italian explorer's venture, many Vikings and Basque fisherman had visited North America. Bryant says they were the "real" discoverers.

However, Bryant and Bornstein said Columbus did something his European predecessors never attempted to do.

"The big difference is continuous contact," Bornstein said. "When Columbus made his first contact he immediately began publicizing it."

"It became common knowledge throughout Europe and the contact with the New World was never broken, whereas whatever contact the Vikings had was limited and discontinuous."

Bornstein said the explorer had an element of the entrepreneur in him. He said Columbus may have deliberately told the Spanish crown the distance involved traveling to the Far East was shorter than scholars believed it to be at that time.

"Columbus sincerely thought that it was possible to make an advantageous commercial connection by voyaging in the other direction," Bornstein said. "But you have to make the distinction between why Columbus is doing this and why somebody would finance him doing it."

Cesare Monti, an undergraduate student in aerospace engineering, is from the same city as Columbus: Genoa, Italy. Monti said Columbus is an example of determination and the human need to discover.

Italy was unable to help Columbus' endeavors because of its disunity, Monti said.

"Italy was divided and had been divided for centuries into several small but powerful republics," Monti said. "It was a period of great instability because the republics were at war with each other."

On the other hand, Spain had a powerful unified government and was stable — in a position to grant Columbus his venture.

In addition to commercial interest, Columbus had very serious religious motivations. Bornstein said Columbus took the meaning of his name — Christopher means the bearer of Christ — literally.

"Columbus certainly saw himself and presented himself in his publicity as the bearer of Christ," Bornstein said. "He was bringing Christ to the New World. I think he was utterly serious about that."

Christianity played a major part in his legitimization of the entire enterprise, Bornstein said.

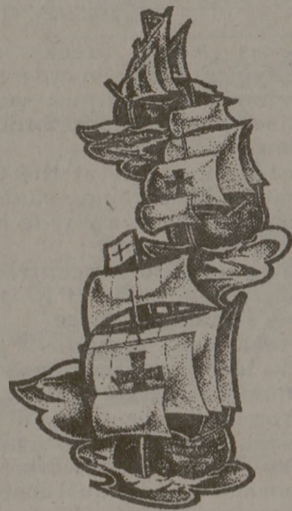
"He was dealing with extremely practical sovereigns (King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella)," Bornstein said. "They were very good and astute rulers, but also people who took seriously religious commitment."

Although Columbus was a deeply religious man, many people today consider him a greedy man who exploited and killed natives of the New World. Bornstein denounced that accusation.

"He was acting in his own time and on the assumptions of his own time, without being aware of the consequences," Bornstein said. "It could not be foreseen."

When Columbus proved to be an authoritarian ruler after founding a colony in the New World, the Europeans at the colony found it unbearable and rebelled, Bornstein said.

"They accused him of mismanagement and he was arrested and returned to Spain," he said. "The vast destruction that happened among the native population was not a result of a deliberate act of violence, but the totally uncontrollable and unexpected spread of microorganisms."



6th-grade students help build 'Niña' replica

By WILL HEALY

Reporter of THE BATTALION

In celebration of the 500th year since Columbus discovered the "new world," Texas A&M's Nautical Archaeology Department and sixth grade students at Oakwood Middle School joined forces to build a replica of a Columbus-era caravel, a small sailing ship.

Dr. Robert Vincent, president of A&M's Institute of Nautical Archaeology said it was a "reciprocal project all the way" with the department of nautical archaeology providing the blueprints and the students building the model of the caravel "Niña."

Teachers in all subjects are working together on a theme of exploration, and the Columbus voyage is the first part of the lesson, said Lisa Burns, a sixth

grade language arts teacher at Oakwood.

Science classes focus on the spread of disease at that time while math classes work with the dimensions and blueprints of the ship. Social studies classes cover the history of the voyage, and language arts classes talk about Columbus' journal, said Burns.

Local businesses also participated in the project, donating materials such as wood, chicken wire, and pipe, she said. Parents and students also donated materials, since the project had a "zero budget."

The nautical archaeology department has been "invaluable" in designing the ship and finding materials to build the 72-foot long replica, Burns said.

Oakwood intends to have the ship finished in time for the annual Parent-Teacher Organization

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Four year old Karen Wedholm of Bryan plays miniature golf at the 10th annual Brazos Folk Festival on Sunday at Central Park. The four day festival was sponsored by the city of College Station and celebrated the various cultures of the Brazos Valley. Over 2,800 people attended.

Debate focuses on issues, B-CS supporters say

By MACK HARRISON

Reporter of THE BATTALION

Bryan-College Station backers said they are pleased with their candidates' performance in Sunday night's presidential debate.

Lou Zaeske, leader of the Ross Perot petition drive in Texas, said Perot forced President Bush and Bill Clinton to focus on the issues instead of mudslinging.

"Had Perot not been there there, would have been a lot more cheap shots," Zaeske said. "Perot forced them to address the issues."

Rodger Lewis, chairman of the Republican Party of Brazos Valley, said the debate covered the issues as much as any previous contest.

"As far as I can tell, it was about the same (as past debates)," Lewis said. "I think the president did a good job concentrating on the differences between him and Clinton."

Jim James, chairman of the Democratic Party of Brazos Valley, said Clinton and Perot performed better than Bush did in the debate. He said that for the most part, the candidates stayed away from personal attacks on each other.

"I would rate Clinton as number one, Perot a close second and Bush trailing badly," James said. "I thought (the debate) was pretty focused on the issues. If it hadn't been for Perot, Bush would have tried more personal attacks."

Clinton's actions as a college student do have a bearing on his candidacy, and therefore the issue is politically relevant, Lewis said.

"Personal judgment and character are issues people care

about," he said. "It's fair game."

Lewis said Bush was not questioning Clinton's patriotism, but instead he was questioning Clinton's judgement in protesting against his own country while he was travelling through Europe.

"It's going to be impossible to get to ask questions on every issue," Lewis said. "That's why it's important to get a grip on a person's character."

James said Bush's comments on Clinton's anti-war stance as a student in Europe were an act of desperation.

"They were the desperate remarks of a man who told a group of Republicans he would do anything to remain president," James said.

Zaeske, chairman of the Independent Texan Network, said the citizens were the ones who came out ahead in the debate.

He said, however, the voters would have benefited more if Libertarian Party candidate Andre Marrou — who is also on the ballot in all 50 states — was allowed to join the debate.

"The true winner is the American people," Zaeske said. "The only way they could have won better is if the election commission had allowed Andre Marrou to be there."

Lewis, however, said Perot did not belong in the debate because he, like Marrou, does not have a chance of winning the election.

"I would have preferred that (Perot) not be there," Lewis said. "If we include Perot, why not include the Libertarian candidate, who is also on the ballot in all 50 states. They didn't because essentially, it's a waste of time."

Candidates outline 'visions' in debate

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ST. LOUIS — Bill Clinton and President Bush clashed over character and the economy Sunday night in a bristling three-way debate with Ross Perot. "I opposed the war but I love my country," Clinton said in reply to Bush's attack on his anti-war activities in the Vietnam era.

From taxes to crime to AIDS to foreign policy, the three men grappling for the White House outlined differing visions in a 90-minute debate. In his first major campaign appearance, Perot was a flamboyant participant, providing a series of one liners and offering himself as an outsider who can shake up the system.

Clinton said he represents hope for "real change," and turned to Bush to add: "For 12 years you've had it your way, you've had your chance and it didn't work."

Bush answered, "Change for change

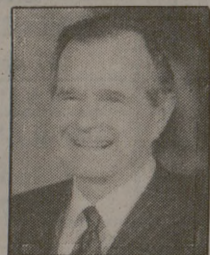
sake isn't enough," and recalled the economic woes the last time the Democrats held the White House.

Perot said, "We do have to have change," saying that the first priority should be to rebuild the nation's job base and pointing out his experience as a hard-charging business leader.

The debate kicked off a climactic nine-

"I hope I've earned your trust because a lot about being president is about trust and character."

— George Bush



"I offer a new direction, invest in American jobs, American education, control health care costs, bring this country together again."

— Bill Clinton



"The government has lost touch with the people. We've got to change the system."

— Ross Perot



day period in the campaign for the White House and the stakes were high, especially for Bush who trailed Clinton in the national polls, and for Perot, who had not yet carved a significant place for himself in the race.

There were no knockout punches in the debate, leaving the campaigns free to put their best face forward afterwards. Clinton's running mate, Sen. Al Gore,

during the Vietnam war. Bush held out his service during World War II in contrast.

Clinton responded directly to Bush, who seemed not to return his gaze. "When Joe McCarthy went around this country attacking people's patriotism he was wrong," said Clinton. "Your father (Prescott Bush) was right to stand up to Joe McCarthy."

own life. He noted that he comes from a broken home, and his brother is a recovering drug abuser — that, in arguing against decriminalizing drug use. Answering a question about family values, Clinton noted with a smile that debate night fell on his 17th anniversary. He thanked his wife, Hillary, and their daughter, Chelsea, for attending.

Each man had two minutes for a clos-

I've earned your trust because a lot about being president is about trust and character."

With that, the three men stepped out from behind their podiums, exchanged handshakes, then moved across stage to greet the questioners and members of the audience that was comprised mostly of

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