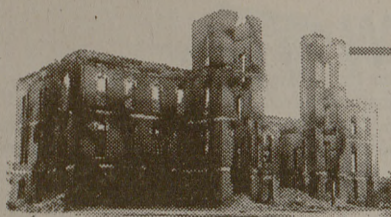


May 27, 1912 —

All official files of Texas A&M publications are lost in the Old Main fire.



1916 —

The Battalion boasts "the largest college circulation in the South."



1918 —

The Battalion suspends publication due to World War I, but soon resumes printing.

1909 — Fightin' Texas Aggie Bonfire

Bonfire stands tall as one of A&M's most time-honored traditions



The 1943 Bonfire consisted of heaps of trash and collected rubbish.

By Kim McGuire

THE BATTALION

What began in 1909 as a small burning pile of trash has evolved into one of Texas A&M's most sacred and beloved traditions.

Bonfire, traditionally held on the night before the A&M-University of Texas football game, symbolizes every Aggie's burning desire to "beat the hell outta t.u."

The 55-foot-high stack of logs is symbolic of the love Aggies have for their school and coincides with the biggest yell practice of the year. The Bonfire of today is a semester-long project with over 3,500 students working on the epic production.

The first Bonfire in 1909 stood only 12 feet tall and had no center-pole, but was remembered by most for the stolen outhouse on top of the structure.

In a 1964 edition of The Battalion, former University archivist Frank Langford recalled the 1909 Bonfire.

"We made the rounds of all the buildings and anything loose was deposited in a pile on the parade ground," Langford said. "We burned it the night before we went to Austin."

The tradition began in 1936 after a local farmer complained his barn was stolen for the previous year's Bonfire.

cut more than 10 logs."

In 1981, when civilian women were allowed on the cut site, head redpot Art Free told The Battalion, "Bonfire is mostly a man's game — kind of a macho deal where the guys can get away and have a good time."

One factor not disputed, however, is most Aggies' devotion to protect Bonfire. It has burned every year except 1963, when it was canceled after President John F. Kennedy was assassinated. Through the years, many attempts have been made to ignite Bonfire prematurely, but all have been thwarted.

A headline appearing in a 1933 issue of The Battalion read "College Radicals Start Bonfire Three Weeks Early; Fire Quenched After Student Body Aroused."

The Battalion reports, "The almost tragic incident was not without its humor; put 500 thinly-clad, yelling maniacs on a drill field at two o'clock in the morning trying all conceivable methods of putting out a fire, and humor is the only possible result."

One year students from the University of Texas attempted to drop an incendiary bomb on Bonfire from

a plane. The bomb missed, but Aggie guards got the plane's serial number and notified university officials in Austin, and the unsuccessful saboteurs were apprehended. Also, two other students tried to demolish Bonfire with a bomb attached to a detonator in their car. However, the bomb missed its mark, and the students were apprehended.

"Bonfire has brought Aggies together for 83 years. May it continue to do so for 83 more. Build the hell outta Bonfire!"

—Stacy Feducia, former Battalion columnist

Bonfire has seen its share of tragedy as well as horseplay. Two students have been killed while working on Bonfire.

In 1955, James E. Sarran, an A&M sophomore working as a coffee truck attendant for Bonfire guards, was killed when he was struck by an automobile after pushing two of his fellow cadets out of the way. The Battalion reported that the 1955 Thanksgiving Day football game was dedicated to Sar-

ran for his act of heroism.

Also, sophomore Wiley Keith Jopling was killed in 1981 after falling under the wheels of a tractor.

Efforts to improve Bonfire safety conditions have since been implemented. All students working at cut sites are now required to take safety classes.

Concerns over the ecological im-

most productive.

Still, with the emergence of Aggies Against Bonfire in 1990 and other protesters, the controversy surrounding Bonfire burns as hot in Aggieland as the flames leaping from Bonfire itself.

In a 1992 column, Shawn Ralston called Bonfire a "ridiculous waste of time, resources, manpower and money."

"All of those macho lumberjacks and their Bonfire buddies can get together and burn whatever they want on private land as long as they don't break any laws," Ralston said. "However, on public property, at a state university, Bonfire is a travesty."

Columnist Stacy Feducia countered Ralston with, "Every autumn legions of bunny-kissing, tree-hugging paranoids converge upon Bonfire chanting mantras of environmental apocalypse. Bonfire has brought Aggies together for 83 years. May it continue to do so for 83 more. Build the hell outta Bonfire!"

Love it or hate it, Bonfire will burn for the 84th time at dusk on the night before Thanksgiving Day this year.

Kennedy assassination prompts A&M to cancel 1963 bonfire

By Kim McGuire

THE BATTALION

The campus was numb.

So was John Gabbert, a senior at Texas A&M on Nov. 22, 1963, when President John F. Kennedy was assassinated. The tragic event had a chilling effect on his life and the life around campus.

"Our commander in chief was dead," Gabbert said. "We were all stunned. I think everyone can remember exactly where they were when they first heard the news."

The assassination had such a profound effect on A&M that President J. Earl Rudder and student body leaders decided to cancel Bonfire in memory of the slain president.

"Nobody had the stomach to go through with it," Gabbert said. "We were all so drained of emotion that the general consensus was Bonfire shouldn't happen."

Gabbert said the redpots had already erected centerpole and the stack was almost complete.

A 1963 issue of The Battalion reported Rudder as saying, "In a unanimous agreement, it was decided to cancel the bonfire in light of national mourning following Kennedy's death. We should do what is in good taste for Texas A&M since we

are a military school, in a sense our commander in chief was slain."

After the announcement, Rudder met in Guion Hall with all the juniors and seniors to explain the decision.

Mike Marlow, yell leader in 1964, said in a Battalion article the cancellation had not hindered student body spirit.

"We realize that this Bonfire would probably have been one of the largest in A&M's history but, that is all the more tribute and sacrifice we are making for the death of our president," Marlow said. "If the students show as much spirit as they have shown in the past week, we are sure to beat the t-sips Thursday."

A yell practice was held around the centerpole of the bonfire that never burned, and the band played the fight song and school song.

The Battalion commended the cancellation in an editorial that ran Nov. 23, 1963.

"The cancellation of the traditional Aggie Bonfire in memory of the late President John F. Kennedy was no small sacrifice for Aggies, in fact, it was a monumental sacrifice."

Probably no group of A&M students have made such a great sacrifice as this; other than members of the Class of '17, which volunteered to go and defend their country in war

and the Class of '41, which walked off the A&M campus directly into military service and a war.

"The cancellation of the Aggie Bonfire should not be thought of only as a way to pay respect to a former president of the United States or to the office which he held, though either would be deserving of that sacrifice. It should be remembered as a sacrifice for the wound that has been inflicted on our way of life."

Marlow said, however, that the cancellation wasn't really a sacrifice.

"It was the most we had," Marlow said. "It was the least we could give."

This year, however, the Class of '64 might have its Bonfire after all.

The Class of '94 is planning to dedicate this year's Bonfire to the Class of '64 and invite them back for the event.

After 30 years without having a senior Bonfire, Gabbert said the Class of '64 would welcome the Class of '94's invitation.

"I can't think of a more unbelievable, unselfish, considerate gift someone could give," Gabbert said. "I have to give credit to the Class of '94 for a fantastic idea. I can't think of anything better than finally having our Bonfire after all these years."

Congratulations to the Battalion on your 100th Anniversary

Wholesale Loose Diamonds

Prices are based on the New York "Rapaport Sheet", a wholesale price guide.

Pear Shape

Table with 4 columns: Weight, Color, Clarity, Price. Rows for G/Si2/I1 and H/Si2.

Emerald/Princess

Table with 5 columns: Weight, Emerald Cut, Color, Clarity, Price. Rows for H/VVS2, I/Si2, and H/VVS2.

Oval

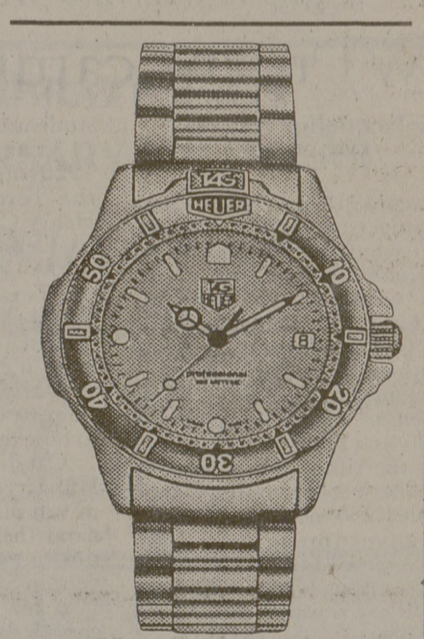
Table with 4 columns: Weight, Color, Clarity, Price. Rows for I/J/Si2, H/Si1, I/J/Si1/VS2, E/Si, and H/VS2.

Round Diamond

Table with 4 columns: Weight, Color, Clarity, Price. Rows for K/I1/I2, J/Si1, K/VS1, D/Si2, G/VS1/VVS2, I/VS1/VVS2, E/Si1, D/Si1/Si2, G/Si2/I1, H/Si2, Natural Purple/Si2, J/VS2, and H/Si2/VVS2.

Marquise Cut

Table with 4 columns: Weight, Color, Clarity, Price. Rows for J/Si2/I1, H/Si2, D/Si2, G/VS1/VVS2, F/Si2, F/Si1/VS2, F/Si1/Si2, H/Si2, H/Si1/Si2, H/Si2, G/Si1, G/Si2, and G/VVS2.



TAG-Heuer SWISS MADE SINCE 1860.

Diamond For Aggie Rings

Table with 2 columns: Weight, Price. Rows for .20 (\$195.00), .15 (125.00), and .05 (45.00).

Mounting \$20 additional

Sorry, No Financing 30 Day money back guarantee on loose diamonds. Some restrictions apply.

Ask about our FREE HONEYMOON OFFER!

With a purchase of an engagement ring. Offer ends 10/15/93.

John D. Huntley Inc. Class of '79

"Very Personal Investments"

Rare Coins, Loose Diamonds, Precious Metal, Fine Jewelry & Watches

313B South College Ave. (Albertson's Center) • 846-8916

