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Texas A&M expanding telecommunications system

Upgrade of services, decrease in costs

By Geneen Pipher

THE BATTALION

Texas A&M University is expanding its telecommunications capabilities in order to remain on the cutting edge in the next century.

Walt Magnussen, manager of University Telecommunications, said all state agencies, including Texas A&M, will switch their long distance service from the TEX-AN II Network to the TEX-AN III Network, resulting in an upgrade of service capabilities and a decrease in rates.

"All state agencies are connected to this network, providing more services and less administrative costs," Magnussen said. "As of late January or early February, most departments on campus will see a reduction in their rates. We anticipate it will be three cents per minute cheaper."

In addition to the change in networks, Pierre Catala, a senior lecturer in engineering technology,

said GTE will replace the eight-year-old switch that routes all of Texas A&M's phone calls.

He said the new switch will be fully digital and will allow the University's telecommunications system to keep up with technology.

"The new switch will provide Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN) which will allow you to do three types of communications on one line," Catala said. "You can send voice communications, high speed and low speed data simultaneously. All of it is fully digital with no need for modems."

With the ISDN capabilities and the right equipment, students and faculty will be able to access the University computers from home, he said.

"Just one example of the possibilities we will have with this technology is access from home," he said. "On-line editing is possible. If you were editing a proposal or any kind of document, you

could send it to someone else over the computer, make a phone call, and send a fax to three different people over the same phone line."

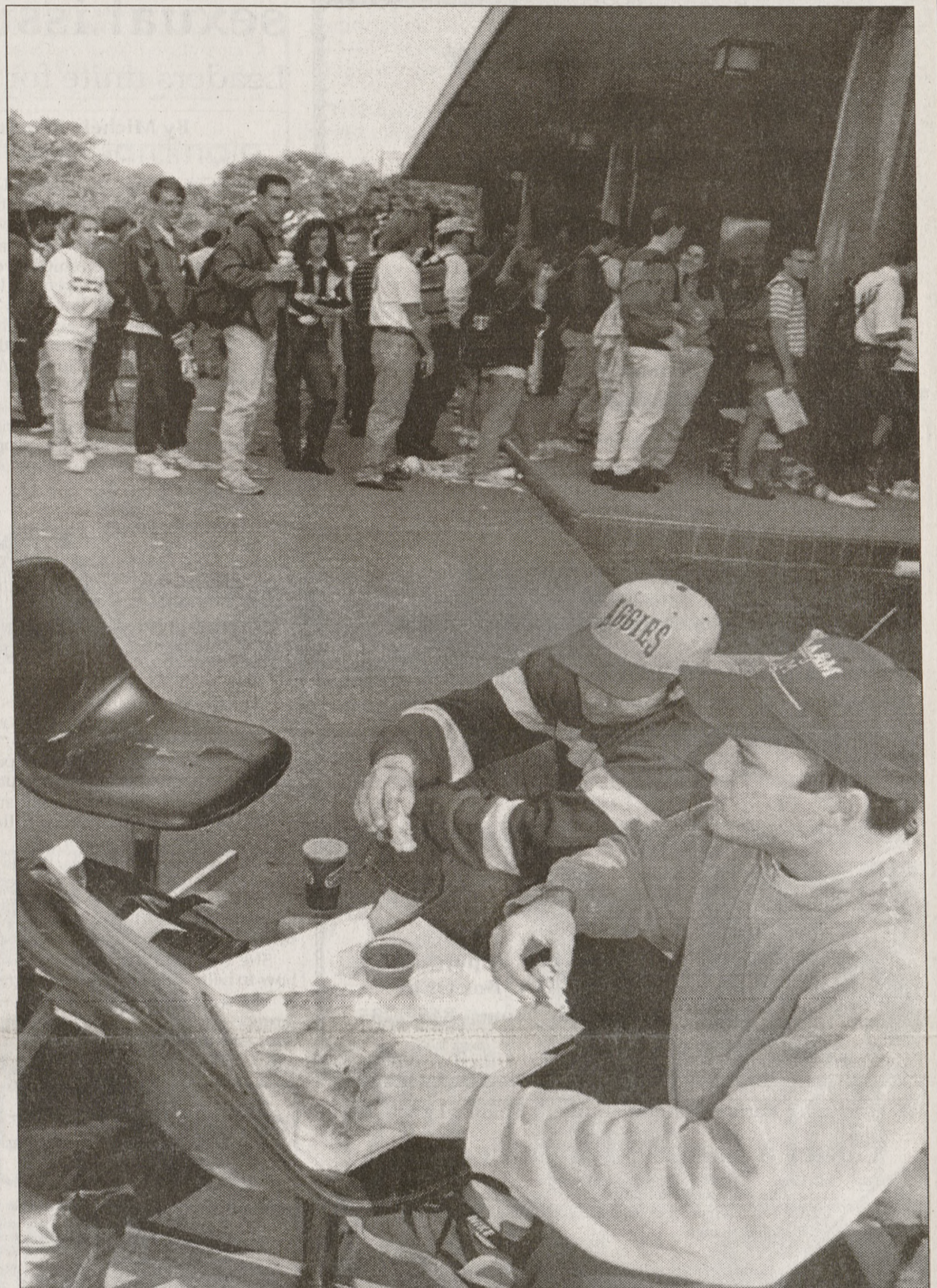
Caller Identification is one of the new capabilities that ISDN will provide, Magnussen said.

"Caller identification is like peepholes on doors," he said. "When your phone rings, you can look at the number, and if you don't recognize it, you don't have to pick up."

John Fike, associate professor of educational technology and director of the Center for Telecommunications Management, said A&M students will benefit using technology that will someday be used everyday in the work place.

"Because the new technology is spreading and is increasingly being used in corporate America, students will benefit from getting first hand experience now," he said. "In the next century, information highways are going to be as important as interstate highways, and we will be ready."

Breakfast of champions...



Tommy Huynh/The Battalion

David Newberry, a junior petroleum engineering major from Gladewater, and Jason Jones, a junior industrial distribution major from Longview, eat pizza rolls Thursday morning while waiting for tickets to the Texas game. Students braved cold weather and little sleep for a shot at good seats.

CHARITY CHALLENGE

Aerobic competition to raise funds for boy in need of liver transplant

By Michele Brinkmann

THE BATTALION

In another effort to raise money for an 8-year-old boy in critical need of a liver transplant, University Tower, The Forum, and Texas A&M University students and faculty are planning a Charity Challenge benefit for Saturday.

Jason Hensen, a boy from Somerville, and his parents are trying to raise \$150,000 so he can be put on a liver transplant waiting list at Hermann Hospital in Houston. Since last year, many community organizations have been helping Jason raise money for the transplant.



Jason

"This is a last pitch effort to raise funds for Jason," said Dahna Hull, organizer of the event and head of leasing at University Tower.

Two weeks ago, Jason's liver failed, and he almost didn't pull through.

The Charity Challenge is an aerobics competition led by Beth Dresser, a Texas A&M kinesiology instructor.

She will lead the activity until she either falls out, or is the only one remaining on the floor. There is a

\$15 entry fee, and the winner of the event will receive a \$500 cash prize. All participants will receive a free T-shirt. There will also be a silent auction and door prizes.

Hull said the Charity Challenge committee began contacting local businesses, organizations and several top 500 corporations to raise money for the event several weeks ago.

"We moved our efforts to a national level because of the amount of money Jason needs," she said.

Corporations such as Ray-Ban, Umbro, Miller Lite, SunGear and Walden Books have offered their services and products to the event. Hull said that so far they have 17 major sponsors.

"They all have backed us and have donated things like banners and water bottles," she said. "They have been more than helpful. This has turned into a physical and business challenge."

Hull said she hopes the event will raise up to \$80,000.

Besides the aerobic challenge, there is a non-competitive category for people who just want to work out.

"We don't want people to be intimidated. They are welcome to come and work out at their own pace," she said.

University Tower employees are expecting 275-300 participants, but Hull said, the ballrooms can hold up to 400 people.

Flight attendant strike causes delays

The Associated Press

DALLAS — American Airlines flight attendants began the biggest airline strike in nearly five years on Thursday, delaying some flights, grounding others and sending some planes into the air minus any passengers.

Observers at airports nationwide found some cities were hit hard by the walkout, while others were affected less.

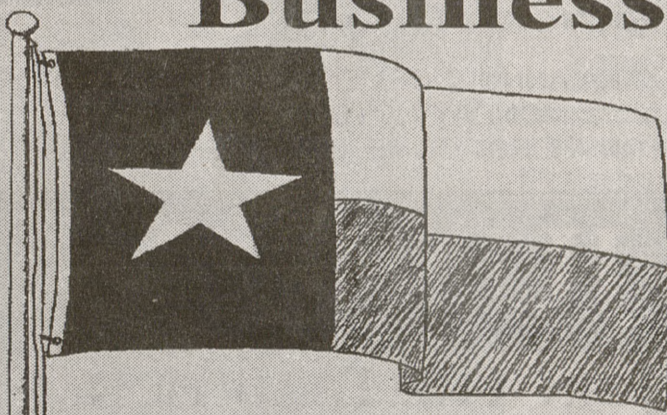
American would not divulge how many flights it was able to operate, but said some carried only cargo and mail. More flight attendants showed up as the day progressed, with more than half working at some hubs but likely not systemwide, spokesman Don Bedward said.

The company said more than 60 percent of the flights at its home base and largest hub, Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport, had full crews by early afternoon.

Sources at another airline familiar with American's operation estimated 30 to 50 percent of American flights were disrupted by the walkout. The union, which struck at 7 a.m. Eastern time over wage and other contract issues, said 90 percent of the flight attendants honored picket lines.

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Texas Business



NAFTA supporters celebrate victory

The Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — A free-trade fiesta was under way Thursday in this South Texas city that prides itself on its close ties with Mexico and its growing international business community.

Mayor Nelson Wolff and about 50 civic and business leaders broke into cheers and popped open champagne Wednesday night as they watched on television the U.S. House approve the North American Free Trade Agreement.

"I think we've positioned ourselves very well," Wolff said. "I think a lot of exciting things are going to happen."

The treaty would link Canada, Mexico and the United States and create the world's largest trading zone by removing tariffs and investment barriers over the next 15 years.

San Antonio NAFTA supporters celebrated again Thursday with Mexican mariachi music and colorful cascarones — confetti-filled egg shells.

"Our message is very clear. It's going to benefit immediately the Southwest, Texas and particularly San Antonio," said Arthur Emerson, chairman-elect of the San Antonio Hispanic Chamber of Commerce,

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Committee urges students to attend Bonfire sober

By Carrie Miura

THE BATTALION

Members of the Texas A&M University Bonfire Alcohol Awareness Committee are asking students to be smart and safe by not bringing alcohol on campus this year during Bonfire.

Lynn Ann Moses, chair of the Bonfire Alcohol Awareness Committee, said it is an individual's choice to drink the night of Bonfire, but students should try to keep alcohol away from campus.

"We are not telling people not to drink, just to be safe and to be moderate in consumption, and to not bring it on campus to the Bonfire site," Moses said.

The committee is concerned about alcohol consumption at Bonfire, not necessarily from current students, but also from recent A&M graduates, high school students and University of Texas fans.

Barret Fromme, a member of the Bonfire Alcohol Awareness Committee, said people should come to Bonfire sober.

"This is something a lot of people need to know about," Fromme said. "The whole event fosters fun to beat the ever livin' hell outta t.u., but a big part of it is the unity and spirit of Aggieland,

which is lost when you bring alcohol to Bonfire.

"This is a tradition people would want to see sober. You wouldn't put a match around kerosene, so why put alcohol around a Bonfire?"

Todd Singleton, a senior redpot, said people need to be aware of what will happen if they do not come to Bonfire sober.

"Just being there at Bonfire should be more than enough gratification," he said. "You shouldn't need to include alcohol at the event. If the students continue to

contribute to the alcohol problem, University officials might take Bonfire away."

Mike Marlowe, Class of '64 head yell leader, said during one of the 1963 yell practices the campus had similar alcohol problems.

"Freshmen units went out and got drunk if they didn't have dates, and Yell Practice turned into a big brawl," he said.

The band members were shoved around, causing some of the band instruments to be broken, he said.

"People should not get drunk before Bonfire because you really will miss out on the spirit of the event if you are not coherent enough," he said. "Go for a natural high of the moment."

