



THE BATTALION

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Board of Regents secretaries face tampering charges

By Kim McGuire

THE BATTALION

Two secretaries for the Texas A&M Board of Regents were indicted Thursday on felony record tampering charges, and the Texas Rangers and FBI continue to investigate allegations of administrative misconduct.

A grand jury returned indictments against Vickie Running, Board of Regents secretary, and Sasha Waln, Board of Regents administrative assistant, for allegedly altering state vouchers given to a reporter for a defunct alternative newspaper, Brazos County District Attorney Bill Turner said.

Running was charged with eight counts of falsifying government documents by misrepresenting alcohol purchased on state vouchers as purchases of food and soft drinks, Turner said. Walters is charged with

the same conduct in a seven-count indictment, he said.

The Battalion also obtained copies of purchase vouchers in January from the Board of Regents' office reflecting multiple sales of "food, soft drinks, ice and cups" for the Board from Ruffino Catering.

Similarly, the office provided corresponding receipts from J.J.'s Package Stores that itemize alcohol purchases billed to the Board of Regents office.

Ruffino Catering is listed at the same address of J.J.'s Package Stores and is owned by J.J. Ruffino.

The use of state funds to purchase alcohol is illegal.

Bob Wiatt, director of University Police Department, said warrants will be issued for the two women's arrest this morning at the Brazos County Sheriff's Office.

"They've agreed to turn themselves in tomorrow," Wiatt said. "They'll probably go through the booking process and make arrangements with their attorneys to

post bond."

Wiatt said Running and Walters could face up to 10 years in prison and a \$10,000 fine if convicted on the charges.

The University released a statement saying the Texas A&M System was "shocked and disappointed" that the action occurred and will cooperate with the Brazos County grand jury and the Texas Rangers in the continuing investigation.

Ross Margraves, chairman of the Board of Regents, said he was saddened by the matter.

"I've known these two women since I became a regent five years ago and have known them to exhibit nothing but high moral character," Margraves said. "Every board member loves them, supports them and will continue to do so even if they're convicted."

He said the women were indicted for a practice that has been going on for years.

"They were only handling things the way they had been handled prior to them," he said. "This is a matter that has been around for years. Not that it makes it right, but it was not a conspiracy to evade the law."

Margraves said he had talked to Running Thursday afternoon and said she was devastated.

"I'm 100 percent confident they'll be cleared, though," he said.

However, the indictments have left some students less optimistic.

Student Body President Brian Walker said A&M should not tolerate such behavior.

"It's a very positive thing that Bryan-College Station are pursuing the purchases," Walker said. "If something wrong has been done, the law broken, then I hope the University Board can find appropriate mea-

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A&M to go 'Big' time

By Mark Smith

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The Texas A&M Board of Regents voted unanimously during the Board's conference call Thursday to accept the invitation to join the Big Eight Conference.

Monday the Big Eight offered A&M, the University of Texas, Baylor and Texas Tech the chance to join the conference.

The acceptance makes A&M the second of the four schools to accept the Big Eight's invitation. The Baylor Board of Regents voted Wednesday to accept the invitation.

In order for the merger to take place, the UT and Texas Tech University boards will have to accept the invitation. The UT and Tech boards will meet today to discuss the offer.

"We are proud to have been asked and enthusiastic about joining a conference with these eight great universities," A&M Interim-President E. Dean Gage said. "This new alignment not only offers new opportunities for all 12 universities in men's and women's intercollegiate athletics, it further establishes an even closer relationship in the areas of teaching, research and public service."

The acceptance by the board is only the first part in the process for A&M to enter the Big Eight, Gage said.

"This is really just a first initial step," Gage said. "We've just given them an answer to their invitation."

Despite leaving, A&M Athletic Director Wally Groff

feels empathy for the remaining schools of the Southwest Conference.

"Aggies are traditional," Groff said. "I'm an Aggie and I believe in tradition. But change is inevitable."

"Change is always difficult, especially when you're talking about a relationship such as the Southwest Conference. I feel this is in the best interest of Texas A&M University."

Ross Margraves, A&M board of regents chairman, wished the invitation could have been extended to all eight members of the SWC.

"Everyone at Texas A&M was disappointed that it (the invitations) did not include all of the current members of the Southwest Conference," Margraves said. "It was a difficult decision (to accept the invitation), because of our long standing relationships with the schools not invited."

Even without the other four schools of the SWC, the merger would create a conference where every sport would be one of the strongest in the nation, Groff said.

"If you look at football, men's and women's basketball, baseball, I think it will be strong viable conference," Groff said.

A&M's coaches think the move to the Big Eight will improve Aggie sports.

"This option holds a lot of promise," head football coach R.C. Slocum said. "It seems to have a natural alignment and it will give us more exposure playing in different states."

If the merger takes place, the new 12-team conference would begin competition in the 1996-97 football season.

Backyard barbecue



Amy Browning/The Battalion

Erich Peterson, a freshman mechanical engineering major from Humble, takes advantage of Thursday afternoon's sunny sky and mild temperatures with a barbecue outside Puryear Hall with friends. Temperatures are expected to remain in the 60s Friday.

Victim continues testimony

Jury expected to decide today who attacked former student

By Angela Neaves

THE BATTALION

The victim of an assault continued to testify Thursday in a civil court case involving five Texas A&M students and former students.

On April 9, 1992, John Morris Walker, a former student who is currently attending Sam Houston State University, and two women left a college station night club and were followed by four men to Redstone Apartments, where Walker was assaulted.

A jury will decide if Walker was assaulted by only 23-year-old Kevin

Neil Ormston, of College Station, or if three of Ormston's friends, Stephen Swan, a senior finance major, Gregory Pappas, a graduate agricultural economics student and Earl Dyke, a former A&M student, also participated in the fight. Walker is suing to recover his medical bills, clothing costs and punitive damages.

Walker testified that although he did not see the faces of the men who beat him, he is positive more than one person participated in the assault.

"After I got out of the car I saw a group of men approaching me," Walker said. "I took one punch and went down. From then on I protect-

ed my head until they finished hitting and kicking me."

Walker suffered a broken nose, a gash under his left eye, bruised ribs and a large bump on his head, he said. The left side of his face remained swollen for several days, Walker said.

"My nose was swollen and I couldn't breathe," Walker said. "I saw a specialist twice to correct the problem."

Chris Kling, the prosecuting attorney, said Walker is suing for a multi-million dollar figure.

The jury will announce its decision at 9 a.m. Friday.

Elders attempts to snuff out tobacco industry

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders rebuffed smoking an adolescent addiction Thursday and accused the tobacco industry of trying to convince teenagers that cigarettes will make them sexy and successful.

Elders also urged the Federal Trade Commission to draw the curtain on RJR Tobacco's Joe Camel cartoon ads, which have just added a Josephine Camel to the cast of characters.

"Smoking is not just an adult habit. It is an adolescent addiction," said Elders.

The report also chronicled the marketing practices of the tobacco industry, from the chocolate cigarettes of

yore, to the Marlboro man, to sponsoring race cars and peddling lighters, T-shirts, beach blankets and camping gear emblazoned with tobacco brands.

Elders said teen-agers who smoke, run higher risks of experimenting with alcohol and drugs, doing poorly in school, fighting, engaging in unsafe sex and even attempting suicide.

Her report said the average age when smokers tried their first cigarette is 14.5 years, and more than 70 percent of those who become daily smokers acquired that habit by age 18.

Elders said the \$4 billion the tobacco industry spends

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Inside

Retreat targets cultural awareness among leaders

By Melissa Jacobs

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Many Texas A&M student leaders will attend a retreat in Snook, Texas this weekend to prepare them for dealing with some of the diversity issues they are likely to face.

University Awareness for Cultural Togetherness (U-ACT) brings together current or future leaders from student organizations.

The Interfraternity Council, MSC Hospitality Council, Excellence Uniting Culture, Education and Leadership (Excel) and the Aggie Orientation Leader Pro-

gram, are a few of the organizations that will be represented.

Trey Lary, MSC Council president-elect, said the retreat is the best way to promote diversity, and he hopes to gain an understanding of all the groups on campus.

"We need to know how to better address different groups and get a general awareness of different cultures," he said.

Sheri Schmidt, student development specialist with the Department of Multicultural Services, said the group will discuss what student leaders can do to help their organizations, and each participant will be asked to set concrete goals for their group.

"We ask them to give an assessment of their own culture and cultural values," she said. "It is really a very intense experience, and it can get very emotional."

Schmidt said they like to have a wide cross section of students represented at the conference.

"We usually have representatives from student government, and we're hoping to have some Corps members, if their schedule permits," Schmidt said.

Richard Stadelmann, associate professor of philosophy and humanities, said programs such as the U-ACT retreat are an alternative to the required multicultural classes.

"Only certain cultures are rep-

resented in the required courses at universities across the country," he said. "Several of the required courses have created great hostility. A number of voluntary programs would be better than a required course as these programs allow for more political correctness."

Schmidt said A&M's proposed multicultural class requirement will not be discussed at the retreat.

"There are many parts to multiculturalism," she said. "Only one part is curriculum and that is not what we are focusing on."

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