

THE BATTALION

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Caller poses as cop to lure women out of rooms

By Jennifer Smith

THE BATTALION

Three female Texas A&M students received prank calls late Wednesday night from a man claiming he was a police officer. The man told the women their cars had been stolen and stripped and were at the corner of FM 2818 and Wellborn Road. He then told each of the girls she would have to come to the scene and identify the vehicle.

Monica Harmon, a freshman general studies major, said she was asleep around 2:50 a.m. when the phone rang. "The first thing he said was 'Is this Monica Harmon?'" she said. "I told him yes, and then he said, 'I don't know how to tell you this, but your car's been stolen.'" Harmon then asked if it had been stolen out of the parking garage where she has a parking place, and the caller said yes. "By this time I was starting to get hysterical," Harmon said. "I started crying."

The caller then told Harmon he knew which dorm and room she lived in and her license plate number. "I asked what I needed to do, and he said I needed to come out there," Harmon said. Then Harmon began to get suspicious. "I thought about it, and I asked who is this," she said. Harmon said the caller identified himself as John Bryan or John Bryant of the College Station Police Department, and he said his badge number was 1302. He then told Harmon if she didn't come to the scene in 45 minutes her car would be towed. Harmon's suspicions began to rise even more when she heard music and voices in the background as she was getting off the phone. After she hung up, Harmon's first instinct was to go to the parking garage to see if her car was indeed missing or if this was just a prank call. But, she said she began to realize this

might be more dangerous than just a prank call. Instead of going to the parking garage, Harmon went to her resident adviser who telephoned the Bryan and College Station Police Departments. Neither had a report of a stolen car. The College Station Police Department also have no officer named John Bryan or John Bryant and no one with that badge number. See Prank/Page 2

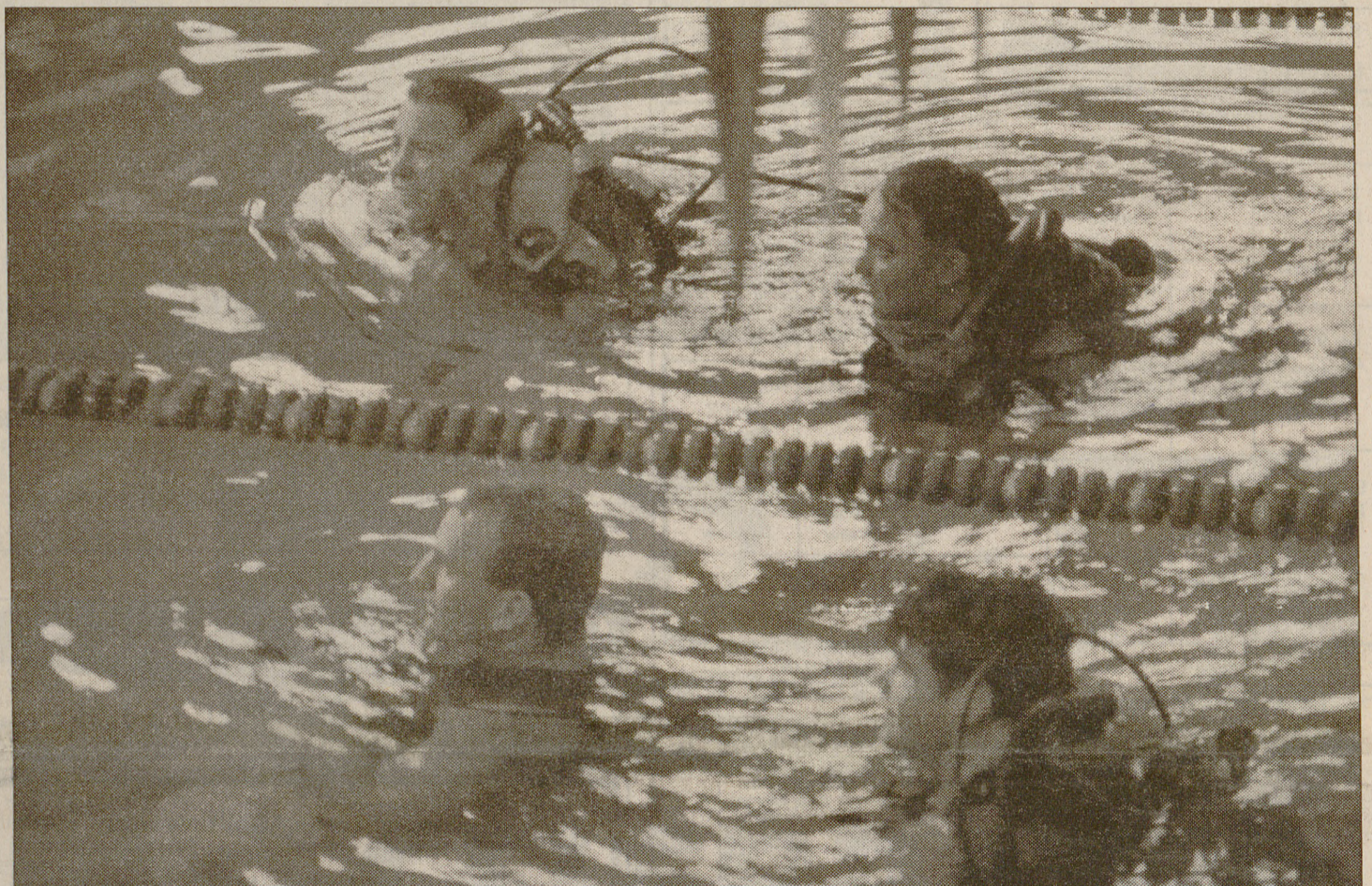
Former student charged with local arsons, thefts

By Angela Neaves

THE BATTALION

Former Texas A&M student Jeffrey Ryan Burris, who was charged with two counts of burglary and one count of arson Wednesday, had additional charges brought against him Thursday. Burris was charged Thursday with the Feb. 22 first degree arson and burglary of a home at the 2700 block of Redhill Drive in College Station, said Sgt. Dan Jones, of the College Station Police Department. "This arson charge is first degree because a firefighter was injured in the blaze," Jones said. "We recovered the property stolen from the home in a pawn shop in Hearne." Authorities have already charged Burris with the burglary and arson of two homes, one on Nantucket Lane Feb. 11 and the other on Linda Lane Feb. 16. Burris told investigators he burglarized the homes because he needed to pay debts and burned the houses to destroy any evidence, Jones said. Burris confessed to the crimes late Tuesday. Burris graduated from Richardson High School in Richardson, Texas in 1991, according to the A&M Office of the Registrar. Burris was enrolled in the general studies program at Texas A&M in the fall of 1992 and spring of 1993. He attended Blinn College in the fall of 1993. Burris was still being held in the Brazos County Jail Thursday pending \$300,000 bail, and authorities said he has not yet hired an attorney. After receiving an anonymous tip, local authorities discovered receipts from a pawn shop, which bear Burris's name, for two televisions and two video cassette recorders. Chris Kirk, an investigator for the Brazos County Sheriff's Department, said the receipts were dated Feb. 11 and were found at a Bryan pawnshop. "The receipts had the same date as the Nantucket Drive burglary," Kirk said. "The serial numbers matched those of the property stolen from the home." The fires seriously damaged or destroyed the homes, Kirk said. "Burris burglarized the homes and then intentionally set them on fire," Kirk said. "In one case, he attempted to burn the back door of the home. At this time we suspect he was involved in seven separate incidents." Galen Green, who lives across the street from the house on Redhill Drive, said the house is destroyed. "The home was totaled," she said. "It may need to be bulldozed. The family hasn't been back into the house since the fire happened. They haven't been able to, the damage was so bad."

Floating 101



Amanda Sonley/The BATTALION

While being taught about scuba diving and how to use flippers during a kinesiology class in the P.L. Downs Natatorium on Wednesday afternoon, these students listen attentively to their instructor as they float.

Mattox sweeps through town, pegs Hutchison for Texas' cuts

By James Bernsen

THE BATTALION

Jim Mattox, a Democratic candidate for the U.S. Senate, made a last-minute campaign stop in Bryan Thursday with only four days left until the primary election. Mattox said Texas voters will come out in large numbers for Tuesday's primary despite the apparent apathy in early elections. The former Texas attorney general and U.S. congressman is running for the U.S. Senate seat currently held by Republican Kay Bailey Hutchison. "We are struggling for the heart and soul of the Democratic Party here, trying to determine what kind of Democrat we're going to have representing us in the U.S. Senate," he said. Mattox said the Democrats have a good chance of winning the Senate seat because of Hutchison's performance. "We're seeing our grants to colleges and universities like Texas A&M being lost as a result of having this isolation with two Republicans in the U.S. Senate," he said. Mattox also pointed the blame at Hutchison for the loss of the supercollider and the cutbacks at the space station. "I tell Texans today that if they leave Kay Bailey Hutchison in the U.S. Senate, we are going to lose that space station," he said. Mattox predicted a victory for himself in the Democratic primary despite the recent gains in the polls by his chief opponent, Richard Fisher, an investment banker. "I am optimistic that, as we enter these last few days of the Democratic primary, we will see the voters come out and elect me to be the Democratic nominee," he said. He predicted a victory over Fisher despite the \$4 million Fisher is spending on the campaign. "I think there's not any doubt that, as Texans and Democrats see him more, they're going to not accept him," he said. "I think he's moving up (in the polls), but I think in the end, I'll prevail." Mattox said his experience as attorney general and his tough on crime attitude make him the obvious candidate for the party.

Houston jury awards women \$15 million in lawsuit over leaking breast implants

The Associated Press

HOUSTON — A Harris County jury Thursday awarded three women with leaking silicone breast implants \$15 million in punitive damages from 3M Corp. and two Las Vegas firms. The same jury earlier found Minnesota-based 3M and McGhan Medical Co. and Inamed, both of Las Vegas, liable for the leaking implants and awarded Darla Lawson, Judy McMurry and Susan Doss actual damages of \$12.9 million. Jurors returned with their punitive award after about five hours of deliberations. The three plaintiffs hugged each other after the verdict was read. "This is what we wanted," McMurry said. "The main thing is that we won. We needed a strong yes." The women were applauded by their supporters inside the courtroom following the verdict. The punitive verdict orders 3M to pay Lawson \$4 million and \$5 million each to McMurry and Doss. McGhan Medical has been ordered to pay Lawson an additional \$1 million. "I think I'm still in shock. There's just so many more behind us," Lawson said.

The women's attorney, John O'Quinn, said he expects the verdict to be appealed. However, O'Quinn, who had asked jurors for \$150 million from 3M, said: "I am confident this verdict will be affirmed and they will have to write a check." The two verdicts are believed to be the nation's first involving leaking — not ruptured — implants, O'Quinn said. All three women had the implants removed in 1992. "You have to send a message in a language they understand," O'Quinn told jurors Thursday before they began deliberations on punitive damages. "When you're talking corporate America, it's money. That's what they understand." "If you're sending a message, the fact of the matter is you've done that already," Richard Rawls, an attorney for the companies, said in his closing arguments. On Wednesday the jury found that the three companies were involved in a conspiracy to avoid responsibility. Following Thursday's verdict, Rawls expressed his disappointment. "We respect the jurors' decision in this case. We still want to consider that the scientific community hasn't really reached a consensus," Rawls said. "An appeal will be considered." Rawls would not say for certain if the

companies have given the green light for an appeal. "I think what happened here is unfortunate," Rawls said, referring to the women's implant problems. "This jury decided that the breast implants were the cause of that. Like I say, the scientific community hasn't reached a consensus on that issue." The three women had implants made by either 3M or the companies it sold its breast implant business to in 1984 — Inamed and McGhan Medical Co., owned by Don McGhan. Wednesday's ruling could prove significant in the face of a global settlement fund agreed to by other manufacturers of the silicone gel implants. 3M has refused to contribute to the multibillion dollar fund proposed. When 3M sold the business, it did so with a \$5.7 million note attached, O'Quinn said. So earnings made by the McGhan firms from the silicone implant business were being paid to 3M to pay off the loan note. Harris County has become a center in the debate over silicone gel breast implants. More than 3,000 lawsuits involving the implants have been filed in the Houston area. That is thought to be the most in the country.

A&M's state chemist lab put under microscope

By Juli Rhoden

THE BATTALION

The Office of the Texas State Chemist recently has come under scrutiny for disposing chemicals and transporting them in a heavily-populated building on the Texas A&M campus, according to a memo issued by Interim President E. Dean Gage this week. The State Chemist's office is on the third and fourth floors of the Reed McDonald Building, which houses the journalism department, agricultural communications and several classrooms. Dr. George Latimer Jr., the Texas State Chemist, said he wasn't aware of the memo, but there shouldn't be any concern about the chemicals used in the office. "Our office tests fertilizer and livestock feed for certain chemicals and elements," he said.

"We basically have a classical chemistry lab that tests for ordinary substances like nitrogen." The memo, which was sent to Robert Stiteler, director of safety and health, said there has been some concern expressed by employees over the presumed hazards of working near chemicals. Steve Hill, a communications specialist with agricultural communications, said he doesn't like working where there is a potential danger. "I try not to think about it, but I do," he said. "And, given the choice, I'd rather work someplace far from chemicals." Latimer said the chemicals used in the laboratory are mostly harmless. The Office of the Texas State Chemist is a regulatory agency that analyzes livestock feed and fertilizer for chemicals, nutrients and other elements. Because the handling of chemicals is involved, Latimer said, chemists wear protective

suits, masks and goggles for protection. "The masks are to prevent getting fertilizer or feed dust in the chemists' lungs, and they wear white coats to protect their clothes," he said. "As for the goggles, when you work in environments that deal with any type of chemicals, it's important to protect the eyes." Access to the fourth floor of the building is limited to employees who must scan an identification card through a machine for entry and exit. Latimer said this procedure is for safety. "It's not good to have accidental tourists in a chemistry lab," he said. "Also, we've had some burglaries, and there are women working here late at night." Latimer said health and safety inspectors evaluate the lab twice a year, and the office has never had a problem. Gage and Stiteler could not be reached Thursday for comment.

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