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THURSDAY

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"Serving Texas A&M since 1893"

THE BATTALION

A&M seeks approval for special events center

By Jan Higginbotham
THE BATTALION

Texas A&M officials will travel to Austin today to obtain final approval for the construction of a special events center on campus.

The group is awaiting a decision by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's Campus Planning today on the building proposal. A final decision will be made by the board on Friday.

Gen. Wesley Peel, vice chancellor for facilities planning and construction, said the board will make the second of two decisions on A&M's proposal. In April, university representatives presented their proposal to the board in the first stage of the approval process.

"The board must approve the project before we can go on with it," he said. "We

had a similar proposal in 1991 that was turned down. We put it on the shelf at that time. We were recently advised (by the board) to go on with the plan."

Peel said A&M was advised in 1991 that if the price of the project was scaled below \$35 million, the project would have a good chance of being approved.

The current proposal has a \$33.4 million budget.

Dr. Jerry Gaston, interim vice president for finance and administration, said he hopes the price will be appealing to the board.

"I hope they will be more sympathetic to a less expensive center," he said.

The funds for the project will come from general use fees, he said.

It is also possible that bonds will be sold to raise money.

Peel said the center will serve a wide range of activities.

"This is not just a sports arena, it is an events arena," he said. "There will be many more cultural events that we can't have here now that we will be able to bring here."

The 230,000-square-foot center will be able to seat 12,500 fans for basketball games, 10,500 commencement guests and 1,500 graduates, as well as 11,500 concert guests.

Tim Donathen, assistant vice chancellor for facilities planning and construction, said the center will provide A&M with many new opportunities.

"The University has a very strong need for a facility like this," he said. "G. Rollie White will not satisfy the needs of

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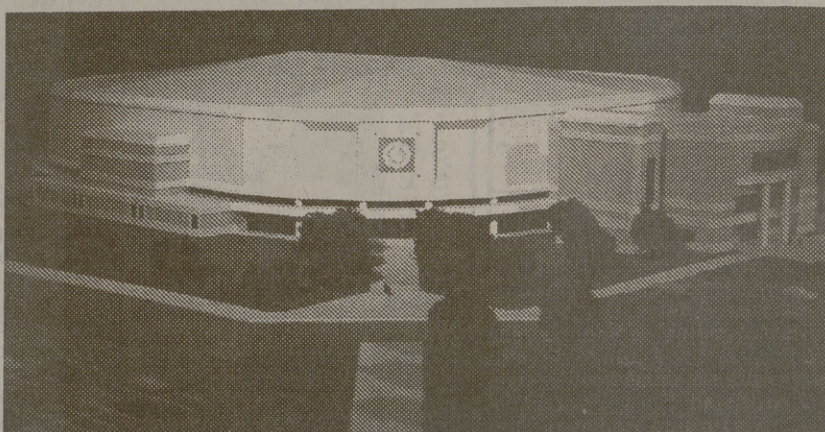


Photo courtesy of University Relations

If approved, the special events center will be located on west campus.

Comet to collide with Jupiter

By Sara Israwi
THE BATTALION

A comet will crash into Jupiter next week, giving scientists their first look at such a collision.

The comet, Shoemaker-Levy 9, was discovered last year heading towards Jupiter. Since then, it has broken into 21 pieces, and each fragment is now headed for the planet.

The fragments will collide with the planet at an average of one every six hours.

Dan Bruton, a graduate physics student, said events such as this are rare, happening only once in 1,000 years.

The event will not be visible from the Earth, he said.

"Unfortunately it will hit on the far side of Jupiter, away from Earth," he said.

"Fortunately Jupiter rotates very fast, about one rotation every 10 hours."

Bruton said the event will be visible from the earth within 40 minutes.

The impact will be small but the affected area on Jupiter will be 1,500 miles across.

"It will be difficult to see the effects of the collision," he said. "We can't even see the impact, only the effects."

He said the comets will not damage Jupiter, but will disturb the clouds in its atmosphere for a short time.

Larry Luther, a graduate student at Stephen F. Austin University working on his thesis in astronomy, said people will not be able to observe most of what will be happening.

"There will be some reflection from impact if comet fragments are well-bound together," he said. "I don't think we are going to see much."

Luther said the collision can be likened to an apple 550 yards away shot with a pellet gun, because Jupiter is much more massive than the comet is.

Bruton said the comet is from within our solar system.

"There are about 20 to 30 of them discovered every year, but none of them come near a planet and this one will actually hit," he said.

Experts say the impact will be similar to a nuclear explosion, and will create a mushroom cloud.

Bruton said these are only predictions, as no one has ever seen such an event before.

Richard Schmude Jr., a graduate chemistry student, said the comet's 21 pieces are between 1,000 and 10,000 feet in diameter.

"When each of the 21 pieces hits it will create a giant explosion much more powerful than the hydrogen bomb," he said. "All of these fragments will hit Jupiter traveling about 37 miles per second. A giant cloud will form and we might be able to see the clouds on Jupiter's limbs with a telescope."

Schmude and his colleagues have been observing Jupiter for three months to get



Dave Seal/ Jet Propulsion Lab

This artist's conception shows what the Shoemaker-Levy 9 comet will probably look like when it collides with Jupiter next week. From Earth, the impact will be on Jupiter's far side, but since Jupiter rotates every 10 hours the affected area will become visible.

familiar with it. Any long-term effects of the impact can be documented and identified.

He said it is important that these kinds of things are examined for future reasons.

In case something like this ever happened to Earth, it would have to be destroyed before it hit, he said.

"If a comet were to hit the Earth like it

is hitting Jupiter, it would be really bad," he said. "A lot of species would be extinct. The impact would kick up dirt and block out sunlight and there goes the plant life and we'd have no food."

Schmude said it is difficult to determine what is going to happen and what the

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Aggies may be sent to fight in Korea

By Angela St. John Parker
THE BATTALION

Texas A&M students in the military reserves may be activated if North Korean troops move into South Korea.

Cpl. Donald Thomas of the 1st Battalion, 23rd Marines, and a senior political science major at A&M, said military reserve units are being told by their officers to pay closer attention to their drills in the event they are sent to Korea.

"Korea is a hot topic right now," he said. "I just got back this week from a drill in the Mojave Desert and our officers were telling us that we need to train extra hard in case we end up in Korea."

"We have been told that our unit, which has a lot of Aggies in it, is one of the top-rated reserve units in the nation," he said. "They called us the 'Force of Choice.' So if and when they start activating reserve units, we know for sure we'll be one of them."

Cpl. John Miles, a senior anthropology major who will be commissioned in August as an active duty officer, said that before the sudden death of North Korean President Kim Il-Sung on Saturday, people were watching the buildup of tension in the region as North Korea refused to allow the inspection of their nuclear facilities.

Miles, whose reserve unit was activated for Desert Storm, said he would be surprised if the tension didn't lead to a war.

"Because of the tension and because the former leader's son (Kim Jong Il) is such a hot-head, North Korea might try to attack South Korea like they did in 1950," he said. "North Korea has its back against a wall."

"It is one of the few communist countries that remains," he said. "If they could take over South Korea—an industrial nation—North Korea would be in a lot better shape economically."

Maj. David Sahn, a U.S. Marine Corps reservist and staff member in the Office of the Commandant, said the reserve units have been briefed in order to stay abreast of the situation.

"Keep in mind that it takes a few days for the reserves to get the news," he said. "I don't

think anybody really knows what the chances are of a war breaking out in Korea. The main thing is that we're prepared for any contingency."

Thomas said that whether or not the United States goes to war with North Korea depends on whether or not the governments of both countries can handle matters diplomatically.

"We certainly would not just invade," he said. "If North Korea invades South Korea, we're going to respond to it. The United States has 37,000 men on the border right now. The Koreans have one million men on the border. If they decide to attack,

"Our unit is one of the top-rated reserve units in the nation. So if and when they start activating reserve units, we know for sure we'll be one of them."

— Cpl. Donald Thomas, senior political science major

that would mean 100 percent casualties for the Americans. We'd have to go in."

Thomas, who was in boot camp during Desert Shield and Desert Storm, said that because of the reduction of active forces, the reserve forces are more important than ever.

Many people think that because a reservist is in school they cannot be pulled to active duty, he said, but if a student signs a contract as a military reservist, they can be called for duty anywhere at any time.

The only exemptions might be reservists who are going to be commissioned as officers or who are in medical school.

Thomas said that unless a full-scale war broke out, he would rather stay in school.

"I would be a lot happier if things could be solved on a diplomatic level," he said. "But if it got to a point where my unit called and said the talking is over, I would be the first one on a plane. Just like any other man or woman in the military, I'd hide the fear and pick up my rifle and go. That's what we're trained to do."

"I have a tremendous amount of pride in the military. But I have the same amount of pride because I'm an Aggie. When you put those two together it's a real special combination."

Asleep at the wheel: fatigue raises state accident rate

Conveniences make cars more relaxing — and more dangerous — for drivers

By Amanda Fowle
THE BATTALION

Fatigued drivers are the largest driver-related cause of traffic accidents besides careless or reckless driving, according to the Department of Public Safety.

Alesia Gamboa, of the Texas DPS Records Bureau Analysis section, said fatigue caused 7,307 accidents statewide in 1993, resulting in 233 deaths and 4,216 injuries.

Sgt. Curtis Walker, of the Department of Public Safety office for Brazos, Robertson and Milam Counties, said

conveniences inside a car make drivers so comfortable that it is easy for them to become relaxed and fall asleep.

"In this day and age, people have many conveniences in the car to give them a relaxed atmosphere and put them at ease," he said.

Walker said the monotony of driving can put motorists in a trance-like state.

"On long trips, the lines on the highways can cause highway hypnosis," he said.

Dr. Rodger Koppa, researcher for the Texas Transportation Institute and

associate professor of industrial engineering at Texas A&M, said there are certain times of the day when an individual's performance is lower.

Sleep deprivation makes performance worse, he said.

"We are a sleep-deprived culture," he said. "Lack of sleep is a point of pride, especially among college students."

He said such factors contribute to slower reaction time in driving situations that require quick reactions.

"When arousal is low, people are not alert enough to react to emergency sit-

uations," he said.

People need to be aware of their low times and take steps to keep themselves awake, he said.

"Nothing helps more than a break," he said. "Military convoys are required to stop every hour for a break. Drivers should find a safe place to stop, get out and walk around the car a few times."

Bob Sherrill, a defensive driving instructor at Sears Driving School, agrees that breaks increase alertness.

"The main way to increase alertness is exercise," he said. "When people stop a car and walk in the store for a

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