

GONNA' GO DOWNTOWN

Bryan area merchants want to attract more students by promoting downtown's novelty

By Christi Erwin
THE BATTALION

The historic appearance of Main Street in downtown Bryan has not changed much since the early 1900s, but it has shifted from the only place for A&M students to shop to one of the many in Bryan-College Station.

In response to the competition, merchants formed the Downtown Merchant and Business Association last year to encourage growth by promoting the uniqueness of the downtown area.

Buck Buchanan, owner of Corner of Time antique store and founder of the Downtown Merchant and Business Association, said Texas A&M students, faculty and visitors can help make downtown Bryan the prosperous business area it once was.

He said he heard a story that before the shops in College Station were built, the downtown area became so congested with students that the Bryan merchants fired a cannon to scare the students away.

But now Bryan merchants want the students back, he said. Buchanan said he realized many students did not know that downtown Bryan existed two years ago when he put an advertisement in *The Battalion* and students called asking where downtown Bryan was located.

"The entertainment, shopping and food are enough to attract students," he said. "They just need to know we're out here."

He said the uniqueness of the downtown area will also attract people.

"Malls are nice," he said. "But no indoor place will be able to capture the downtown atmosphere."

Mary Bryant, the current head of the Downtown Merchant and Business Association and owner of Bry-Mac antiques, said she agrees that students and faculty are important to the growth of the downtown area.

"A large part of my clientele are students," she said. "Students are also attracted to our variety of restaurants and music clubs, Stafford Opera House and 3rd Floor Cantina."

Bryant said the Downtown Business and Merchant Association tries to attract businesses to the downtown area, and there



Stew Milne/THE BATTALION

The corner of Main and William Joel Bryan stands in the middle of the Bryan downtown area.

will be several new businesses opening soon in downtown Bryan to attract students.

These include a music store which will sell instruments, a Subway sandwich store, several decorating stores and a micro-brewery, she said.

Also, the city is revitalizing the downtown area by renovating the Palace Theater as an outside amphitheater, renovating the Carnegie library and building a garden next door to the library.

Bryant said people are attracted to the downtown area because the shops are unique.

Carolyn Catalena, owner of Catalena Hatters, said specialty stores are successful in downtown Bryan because they are an alternative place to shop and offer

gifts that consumers cannot find on every corner.

She said men especially enjoy the downtown area because they do not have to enter a mall to do their shopping.

"I think men prefer the downtown environment," Catalena said. "Most men are not keyed up for the mall."

Bryant said in addition to attracting unique businesses, the Downtown Merchant and Business Association is planning activities to increase public awareness of the downtown area.

"We want people to know that we are alive and going strong," she said.

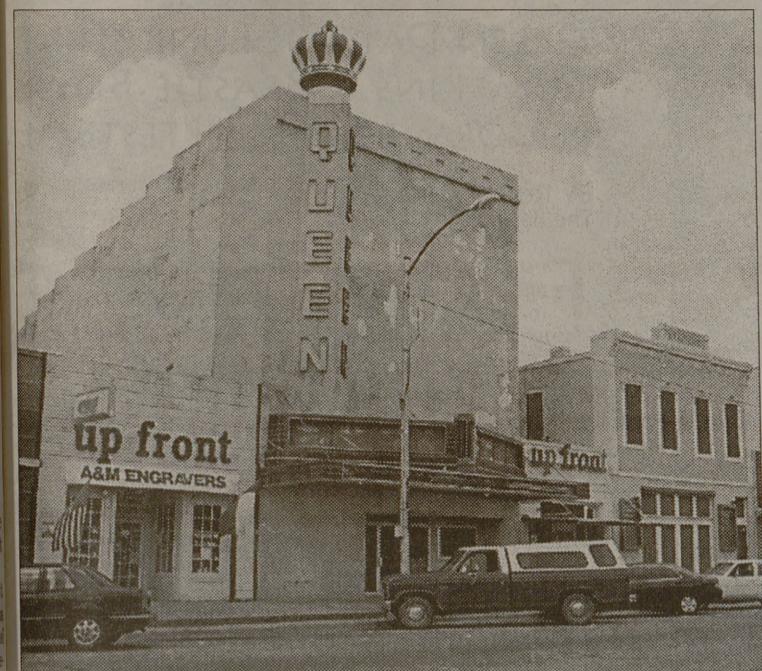
Future public awareness activities include Festifall in October and Christmas festivities, she

said. Festifall is a promotion by the Arts Council of Brazos Valley that offers arts and crafts booths, music and food. The Christmas activities include store decorations and a parade, she said.

"In the future, people will be more aware of the downtown area," Bryant said.

Shannon Lee, the assistant manager of the Main Street Project, said they also are planning promotions to promote public awareness.

These activities include Boot Scootin' Boogie on Main Street in September, outdoor concerts every Thursday in October at the Bryan library, Mardi Gras Brazos style and a Cinco de Mayo celebration, she said.



Stew Milne/THE BATTALION

One of the many businesses in Bryan's downtown district.

Freshmen can suffer culture shock

College life can leave new students with more freedoms, responsibilities

By Margaret Claughton
THE BATTALION

Weed out classes, campus food, minute dorm rooms and monstrous class loads. Every fall at Texas A&M, thousands of unsuspecting freshmen plummet into the alien realm of college life.

Depending on their individual backgrounds, some students may adjust quicker than others. But according to Murray Milford, the associate head of Agronomy and veteran of the A&M Mentors Program, freshman "culture shock" is a part of every student's college career.

A&M Mentors are volunteer faculty members who offer their time to any student in need of guidance. Milford has been with the program since it began in the '70s and said most of the freshmen he's dealt with have been affected by the change in one way or another.

"Basically, for any freshman, coming from being the biggest thing on campus in high school to the bottom of the ladder in college is a big transition," Milford said. "They face all kinds of uncertainties."

Milford said these uncertainties vary with each freshman's background and degree of maturity.

"It (culture shock) expresses itself in

different ways," he said. "How the freshmen adjust is a function of how secure they are in themselves."

Betty Milburn, associate director of the A&M Mentors program, said several elements play on a freshman's insecurities causing them to have increased difficulty adjusting to college.

"There are several subtle traps freshmen can get into," she said. "The fact that homework is optional in college unlike high school starts a lot of them putting things off. I would advise them not to get too far behind. It's almost impossible to catch up after a certain point."

Milburn said homesickness is another trap.

"We see a lot of homesickness, particularly if that freshman has left a girlfriend or boyfriend behind," she said. "They think they can solve it by going home every weekend, which I advise against."

By leaving every weekend, Milburn said freshmen prevent themselves from meeting new people and finding their niche.

Milford stressed the importance of living on campus for incoming freshmen.

"Dorm living almost forces a person to associate. Therefore, they become more acquainted and learn how to interact," he said. "They're kind of

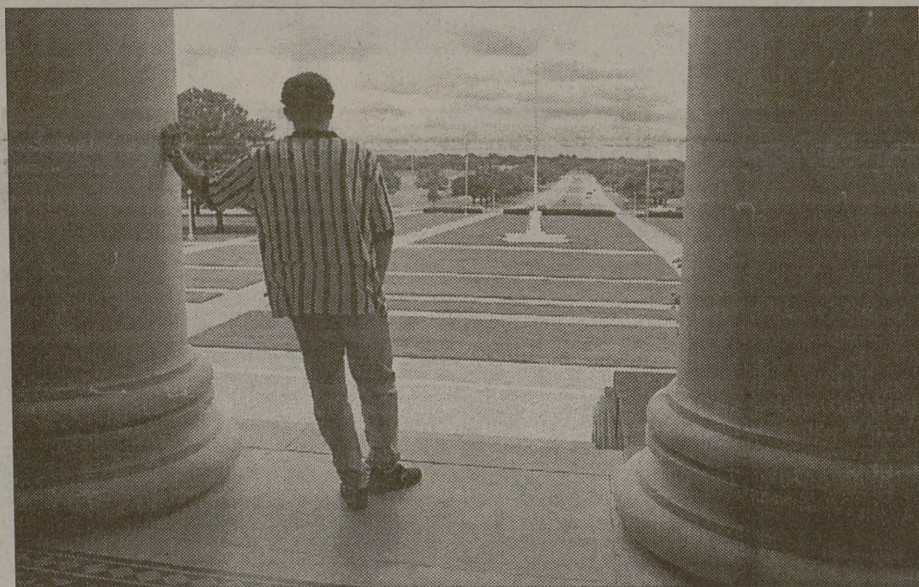


Photo illustration by Stew Milne/THE BATTALION

Homesickness is one of the problems that freshmen face when they leave home.

thrown into association by proximity."

Milford said freshmen should join clubs and become involved in campus activities in order to ease the adjustment process.

"It is very important to become a part of a small group of peers early on," he said. "Fish camp is a great start. But there are hundreds of different clubs on campus for the student to get involved in."

Involvement, Milford said, is even more important now than it was in the past. He said students are less mature now and don't adjust as well.

"We see this reflected in lack of attendance, withdrawals and non-participation in the classroom," he said. "The student's ability is as great as it has ever been. But the level of performance is not as great as it was 25 years ago."

Students, Milburn said, will adjust better if they know about all the resources A&M offers.

"It's really important to be aware of the resources available," she said. "The size of A&M can be a difficult thing to adjust to. But there are lots of places that provide support."

One of the goals of the mentors program is to help direct students in finding the help they need.

"They (mentors) are familiar with the services on campus and can either help the student themselves or get the student to the right place," she said.

Milford said mentors are willing to talk to any student about anything.

"By coming to a mentor," he said, "students will know that this person will give them some time and not shove them out of their office because they're too busy. If we can't help, we can refer students to other services in the community or on campus."

The FACT program, Milburn said, is another group designed to help students adjust to college life.

Members of this program call and check on freshmen after the beginning of the fall semester. Milburn said the program tries to contact every freshman and help them with any problems they have developed.

The Student Counseling Center and the Center for Academic Enhancement are two more services any student can turn to for guidance.

"A&M is a big place and a lot of people feel like a number when they first come," she said. "But there are a number of services and people that are concerned and willing to provide support."

Center offering pointers on good study methods

By Margaret Claughton
THE BATTALION

Though most students have few difficulties attending football games or mastering the art of beer drinking, making decent grades can sometimes present a problem.

A student's low academic scores can be caused by anything from test anxiety to less than favorable study skills according to Avonda Fessler, a lecturer for Texas A&M University's Center for Academic Enhancement (CAE). Fessler said for many students, particularly freshmen, academic problems lay in their study skills or lack thereof.

"I think the initial anxiety for freshmen is not knowing how to study," she said. "A lot of freshmen never had to study in high school so they don't have the skills for college."

Fessler said if a student is having difficulty with a specific class there are several steps he or she can take to remedy the situation.

First, the student must make a list of all he or she does to study for that particular course. If the list is blank, she said, then that's the problem.

"You must be completely honest with yourself when making the list," she said. "Don't write that you read the chapter unless you really read it."

If the student has been reading the chapters and studying but is still having trouble, Fessler said he or she should talk to their professor.

"It's wise to talk to your prof even before the trouble begins," she said. "Ask them what their strategy would be for studying for that course. After all, they're the ones that make the tests."

If the student continues to have trouble, Fessler advised them to visit the Center for Academic Enhancement. Fessler said the center's lecturers can provide tips in note taking, test taking and reading methods.

Texas A&M offers a number of services that help students figure out what their academic problems are and learn the necessary skills to overcome them.

The Center for Academic Enhancement (CAE) is one such service which offers several resources to help students improve their academic standing. "Making the Grade" workshops, sponsored by the CAE, address problems college students commonly encounter. Lecture topics include college reading, note taking, test anxiety, stress management, time management and overcoming math anxiety.

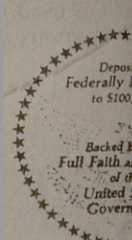
Organizations can schedule these workshops by calling the CAE at 845-2724. The CAE also offers a learning assistance center in 244 Blocker. Free tutoring is provided for reading, writing, math and study skills. Students can receive assistance with current assignments as well as overall study tips.



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Some freshmen have trouble handling all of the freedom they are given in college.