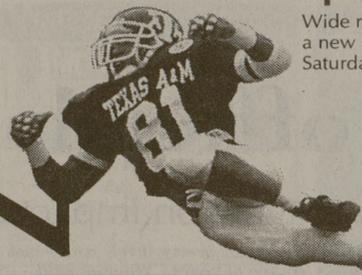


A&M waits for approval of journalism graduate program.

MELISSA MEGLIOLA: The national debt is not going to bankrupt us, but it is not going away.

Wide receiver Ryan Mathews leads a new air attack against SMU this Saturday in San Antonio.

THE BATTALION



FRIDAY

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"Serving Texas Aggies since 1893"

NEWS BRIEFS

Clinton turns down visit to shrines

JERUSALEM (AP) — President Clinton opted out of a visit to Jerusalem's holy places Thursday after a tentatively planned tour stirred up a political ruckus between Israelis and Palestinians.

Both Palestinians and Israelis claim the city as their capital, and both insisted on being Clinton's sole escort on a walking tour of Christian, Muslim and Jewish shrines in the walled Old City.

Jerusalem's Jewish mayor, Ehud Olmert, said he was sorry the tour was scrapped, and the Palestinians claimed a diplomatic victory.

Clinton's wife, Hillary, however, was not bound by the same rules of protocol, and she went to the Old City to see the Western Wall, Judaism's holiest shrine.

When the tour first turned up in official Israeli schedules of Clinton's overnight stay in Jerusalem, it caused surprise. No serving U.S. president has gone to the holy sites, to avoid being seen as recognizing Israeli sovereignty over Arab east Jerusalem.

No good news for Denver airport

DENVER (AP) — It's not funny anymore.

The soaring new Denver International Airport has worse problems than a baggage system that eats bags. Ten independent investigations are looking into allegations of shoddy construction, influence peddling, misled bond dealers and mishandled government funds.

Beleaguered city officials are responding to the cascade of bad news by hunkering down, trying to stifle information and turn criticism back on the critics.

Mayor Wellington Webb last month invoked executive privilege to deny a request for city records from U.S. Sen. Hank Brown, R-Colo., then had staffers deny he had done so.

One Denver radio station's legal analyst says city attorneys threatened to sue him after he reported on air this summer that the mayor's office was refusing to produce documents regarding delays at DIA.

Bolivia gears up for solar eclipse

LA PAZ, Bolivia (AP) — A solar eclipse will plunge an area from southern Peru to Brazil into darkness next week, and thousands of tourists and scientists are coming to Bolivia for a good view.

Bolivians boast that the clear skies often found on the altiplano highlands in the Andes make it the perfect place for viewing next Thursday's eclipse.

Chile feels otherwise and Bolivian scientists and politicians angrily accuse their western neighbor of trying to steal their show.

"Some Chilean officials in a abusive and malicious manner are making Bolivia disappear from the South American map across which the eclipse will pass," said the National Committee for the Solar Eclipse in a statement.

"They want people to believe that Chile will be the privileged area to watch the eclipse and that Bolivia does not exist."

Flooding caused \$700 million in damages

HOUSTON (AP) — The torrential rain and floods that gripped Southeast Texas has exacted a \$700 million toll so far, according to state estimates.

There have been 23,000 claims submitted to private and federal insurers for damage to homes, vehicles and property, but that number could climb to 35,000, J. Robert Hunter, commissioner of the Texas Department of Insurance, said Wednesday.

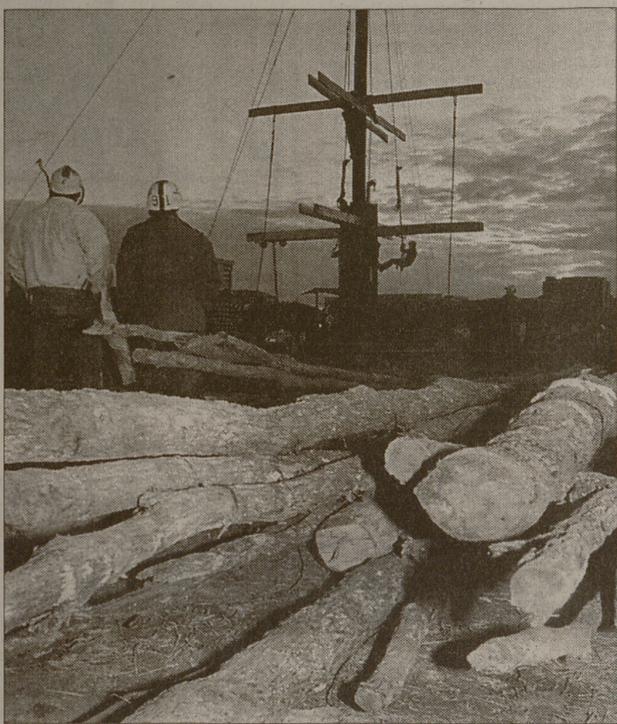
The total doesn't include still-undetermined uninsured losses, and Hunter cautioned that the tally was only an estimate based on an expected average of \$20,000 per claim.

Flooding spawned by three days of heavy rains last week killed 20 people, forced some 14,000 people from their homes.

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Community works to rebuild Bonfire



Stew Milne/The Battalion

Aggies look on as the rebuilding of Bonfire takes shape.

Students, residents of B-CS, merchants pitch in to complete stack in seven days

By Lisa Messer
THE BATTALION

Hundreds of members of the Texas A&M community are offering time, food, money and equipment in the dash to rebuild Aggie Bonfire in the next week.

Zack Coapland, chair of the Bonfire Advisory Committee, said people's reactions to the decision to completely rebuild Bonfire shows the true Aggie Spirit.

"The response from the community and Aggies everywhere since Wednesday's decision to dismantle the Bonfire and start over again has been tremendous," Coapland said.

Kathryn Noser, a junior pinkpot, said 500 to 600 people came out Wednesday night to start rebuilding Bonfire.

"That's in comparison to the 100 to 200 people that come out at most regularly," Noser said. "We're hoping that many people continue coming out."

"We want everyone to know that it doesn't matter if you've never helped build before, if this is your first year or if you're a seventh year senior, everyone is welcome. Without everyone's help we can't get it done."

Matt Segrest, commander of the Corps of Cadets, said the Corps is canceling night formations and shortening call to quarters by one hour through next Thursday so the cadets will be able to help rebuild.

"We want every cadet out there at least one to two hours each day," Segrest said. "Most people are out there five hours a day. The Corps will be out in mass. Until Bonfire is built, the Corps is in constant push."

Coapland said the students working to rebuild Bonfire are especially appreciative of the food and drink donations coming in.

"They'll be working 24 hours a day from now on, so everyone will be very grateful for food and drinks," Coapland said.

Noser said area businesses, such as Domino's Pizza, Albertson's and Wings N' More, are donating breakfast, lunch and dinner each day for the 30 to 35 Bonfire coordinators.

Stephen Williams, a manager at Domino's on Holleman Drive, said Domino's wants to support Bonfire the best it can.

"We're all a bunch of Aggies over here," Williams said. "Since we can't get out and

work, this is the next best thing we can do."

Noser said students and members of the community have brought trays of sandwiches to the Bonfire site.

She said people are calling with money donations, bringing money by the Bonfire office and dropping money off at the Bonfire site. She estimates hundreds of dollars have been donated so far.

Kathy Vonderhaar, with the Association of Former Students, said they have received work and money offers from Aggies across the state who want to be a part of the rebuilding of Bonfire.

Noser said H. P. Zachry Construction has donated cranes, the city of College Station drilled the new hole for centerpole and the city of Bryan donated the new centerpole.

Noser said the work that regularly takes 24 days will be finished in only seven because of the dedication and determination of everyone involved.

"Too many people have worked too long and too hard not to have a Bonfire," Noser said. "It'll burn on Thursday."

A&M football player faces assault charge in court

By Lisa Messer
THE BATTALION

Texas A&M linebacker Antonio Armstrong faces an assault charge Thursday in the College Station Municipal Court.

The assault charge stems from an early morning altercation on April 10 between Armstrong and A&M senior Jason Wirt at J.D. Wells on Harvey Road.

Armstrong is charged with a Class C misdemeanor, punishable by up to \$500. No jail time is included in a Class C misdemeanor.

According to a College Station Police Department report, Wirt received a cut on his lower lip and a bump on the lower left side of his head.

Wirt said his injuries, however, ended up being much more extensive.

"When I went to the doctor because of headaches, I found out I had a bruised skull," Wirt said. "I was bleeding from my eye, too."

Armstrong, who is a finalist for the Butkus Award, an award given to the nation's top linebacker, confirmed that he received a court summons Monday, but denied he was charged with an offense, saying he was being called as a witness.

Alan Cannon, sports information director, said he thought that Armstrong's summons to appear in court is the only information Armstrong received from the city.

A&M head football coach R. C. Slocum said he

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Operation Lone Star to inform state about Texas A&M system

By Michele Brinkmann
THE BATTALION

Texas A&M Chancellor Barry Thompson is ready to launch Operation Lone Star in a statewide effort to reconnect the Texas A&M System with the people of Texas.

Thompson said the Texas A&M System needs to "get back to its roots" and improve its service to the people of Texas.

Thompson said he designed Operation Lone Star to be a simple plan to execute.

"We need to concentrate on teaching, research and helping college graduates succeed," Thompson said. "This is a publicly supported system so we need the trust, confidence and affection of the people."

The purpose of Operation Lone Star is to tell people specific information about what the A&M System does.

"We need to let them know that their lives will be better because of us," he said.

Thompson said he will ask System universities to gather materials, including general information about the A&M System to send to citizens of Texas, but said his goal is to talk to people to make the communication more personal.

"I do not want a sterile approach," Thompson said. "I want a hands-on

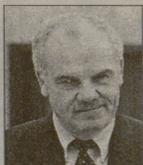
approach."

He plans to make statewide television and radio broadcasts explaining how what goes on within Texas A&M actually affects people outside of the System. For example, the broadcasts will inform people of the latest technology being developed and the latest research being done that could affect the lives of the people of Texas.

He plans to reach every county, senatorial district and school district explaining what A&M's complex system does.

Thompson, who said he is cautiously optimistic about the upcoming legislative session, plans to hold town hall meetings around the state so A&M officials can address concerns of legislators and citizens.

Thompson thinks these meetings will give A&M a chance to answer concerns and explain what A&M is doing to help solve these problems.



Thompson



Nick Rodnicki/The Battalion

Halloween Corps style

Juniors and seniors of Company C-2 march toward the Duncan Dining Hall while guarding the 'Great Pumpkin' so that he can break through a wall of freshmen in the Aggie Band late Thursday night.

Student groups debate political platforms of Richards, Bush

By Amy Lee
THE BATTALION

Aggies for Gov. Ann Richards and Aggies for George W. Bush touted the credentials of the candidates they will endorse during the upcoming governor's race at a debate Thursday.

The debate was part of an on going effort by both clubs to more fully inform students about the two gubernatorial candidates and their platforms.

Moderated by Dr. Kurt Ritter, a speech communications professor, the debate was attended by about 50 people.

Aggies for George W. Bush kicked off the debate by lauding Bush's plan to improve the economy of the state of Texas.

Travis Leonard, a freshman bio-engineering major, said Bush's plan will set Texas on the course it should be on.

"He has a 17-point plan," Leonard said. "First hold the line on taxes. Second, pass tort reforms. Third, stop explosive growth of government jobs by cutting back."

Richards' supporters said the best way to improve the economy is to boost job growth.

Kris Krueger, a junior political science

major, said Richards' current programs will be sufficient to accomplish the feat.

"Project Quest and the Smart Jobs Fund cost the public nothing," Krueger said. "The Smart Jobs Fund provides people who want a job a chance to get trained for a future job. It is paid for by private corporations."

Leonard said, however, the only way to boost job growth is through tort reforms.

"No more frivolous lawsuits will help keep jobs in Texas," he said. "It will also limit state government and encourage businesses to come to Texas."

Both Democrats and Republicans agreed that education will be a major factor in the upcoming election.

Woodrow Wagner, a junior speech communication and political science major, said that education is the most important issue to Richards because of her past as a school teacher.

He said Richards has already had a positive impact on education.

"Test scores are the highest they've been in 14 years," Wagner said. "The number of dropouts has gone down by 43,000."

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