

THE BATTALION

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A&M cancels scuba classes after investigation

The two instructors were fired after an audit investigated an alleged conflict of interest.

by Michael Simmons
THE BATTALION

Scuba classes offered by the Texas A&M Health and Kinesiology Department have been indefinitely suspended in response to an investigation by the A&M System.

The Texas A&M University System Internal Audit Department investigated an alleged conflict of interest between two A&M scuba instructors, the University and its students.

Investigators found that

James Woosley and Tom Meineke, A&M scuba instructors, might give the appearance that their personal scuba certification businesses are connected with the University's classes.

Among the allegations investigated were the use of A&M equipment off-campus, the selling of course materials directly to the students in the classroom and the unfair use of the instructors' positions to promote area dive shops.

Robert Armstrong, head of the Department of Health and Kinesiology, said the department took two actions on receipt of the audit department's report.

Armstrong said summer scuba classes at A&M were canceled and future classes postponed. The two faculty members involved

were dismissed from the University on May 31, he said.

The audit department found that Woosley, by selling books directly to the students, violated the System policies prohibiting the University from competing with private businesses.

The report said Meineke, who owns one-third of a local dive shop, made efforts to promote sales and rental of scuba equipment from the store he co-owns.

Meineke, former activity coordinator for the Department of Health and Kinesiology, was in a position to make purchase requests for the department's scuba equipment, according to the audit department report.

Meineke, who has been instructing scuba for 24 years, questioned the accuracy of the report.

"I resent the fact that the report tries to make it look like I pushed the bids to my store," he said. "The purchasing agents said they would distribute the

dent referrals.

"That was a big issue with A&M," he said, "but I did not feel comfortable with giving out referrals, because if something

lab fees, then you walk into class and find out you have to buy basic equipment and a certification fee," Sipe said. "By the time you pay all the fees, you end up paying two or three times more than local stores charge."

Wayne Cotter, owner of Paradise Scuba, said he will be affected by the cancellation of scuba classes at A&M.

"Because A&M completely shut down the program, the local dive stores will suffer," Cotter said. "It would be like A&M canceling classes, the bookstores would suffer."

Armstrong said the Department of Health and Kinesiology is interested in offering the scuba classes in the future. He said he hopes the scuba classes will be offered again in the fall of 1996.

"I resent the fact that the report tries to make it look like I pushed the bids to my store."

- Tom Meineke
A&M scuba instructor

Gramm's office will not dispute A&M's possession of records

Letters written from the office of the presidential candidate were found in Texas A&M's archives.

by Tara Wilkinson
THE BATTALION

Sen. Phil Gramm's office decided Tuesday not to dispute Texas A&M's ownership of 29 boxes of office records and correspondence from Gramm's 1979 to 1982 congressional district office in Fort Worth.

Gramm spokesman Larry Neal said he was unaware that the files existed until an upcoming article in Mother Jones magazine referred to them.

Neal said the files might have been released to A&M in the '80s by someone on Gramm's staff.

Neal said records usually are sent directly to the federal archives.

"I don't think anyone knows how they got into A&M's possession," Neal said. "But it has been Gramm's intention for years to donate his papers to A&M, so we decided it is fine that they already have them."

through all the material we have," Powell said. "It would take 70 years at current staffing to do it. It's not just that we don't know what's in Gramm's records, we have only a general idea of what's in all the other boxes."

Powell said anyone can sort through archive material, but A&M officials do not conduct these searches.

William Sultan, reporter for Mother Jones, searched the archives and found letters written from Gramm's office seeking release for several convicts. One of these men, Bill Doyle, was convicted of dealing drugs and burglary.

Mary Fae Kamm, director of constituent services for Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchinson and caseworker for Gramm from 1979 to 1985, admitted to writing the letters.

"At the family's request, but without authorization or knowledge of Sen. Gramm, I wrote in Sen. Gramm's name to federal parole authorities expressing the family's concerns and advocating consideration of early release," Kamm said in a statement.

Gramm also released a statement confirming that he knew nothing of Kamm's letters.

"Since coming to Congress, I have made it a strict policy not to intervene in matters involving pardons or paroles," Gramm said. "The former staff person cited by Mother Jones magazine is reported to be a neighbor of Mr. Doyle's brother. I have never written or authorized any letter on his [Bill Doyle's] behalf, and I certainly did not conduct any 'investigation' of charges against him."

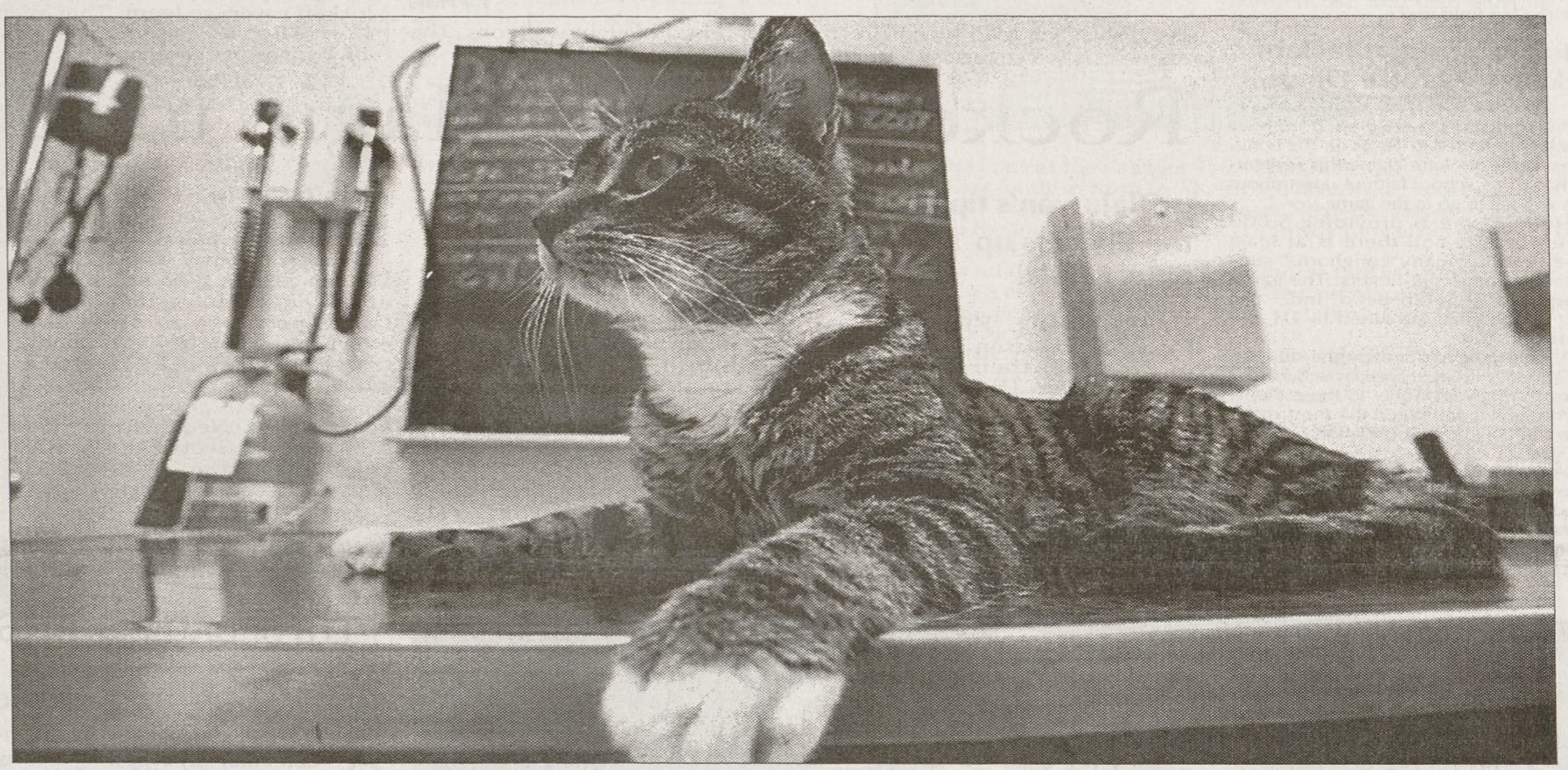
Gramm will not pursue legal action against Kamm, according to the Associated Press.

According to the Associated Press, Neal said the incident was not intended to do harm.

"It was a clear and obvious abrogation of a policy that we have held tight to these many years, but when you get right down to the bottom line, it was simply a lapse in judgment," Neal said.



Gramm



Stew Milne, THE BATTALION

Chewy is one of many cats in the FIV study. He has not been infected with the virus yet.

Cat research may help AIDS fight

A&M researchers are studying the effects of a virus that attacks the immune system of cats in hopes of finding a vaccine that will fight HIV in humans.

By Michael Simmons
THE BATTALION

Researchers at the Texas A&M College of Veterinary Medicine said medical research on cats could offer valuable insight into finding a cure for HIV.

A research team is examining the feline immunodeficiency virus, FIV, which attacks the immune system of cats in the same way HIV affects the human immune system.

Dr. Ellen Collisson, a virologist and head of the research team, said the team sees proteins in the cells as the key to FIV research.

"Our hope is to induce immunity

through individual proteins," she said.

Dr. Alice Wolf, associate professor of veterinary medicine, said FIV is in the same family as HIV.

"FIV is species specific," Wolf said. "It attacks cats in much the same way HIV attacks humans."

Wolf said the research team isolates individual proteins within the cats' systems and examines their effects on the virus.

"When you think of traditional vaccines, they literally contain millions of proteins," Wolf said. "We alter the virus to carry the specific proteins we want the cats to respond to."

Regina Hokanson, a research assistant and graduate student, said the research tests how parts of the genetic sequence react to altered forms of the feline virus. The research team hopes to find a specific genetic sequence that will react to all forms of FIV, she added.

"By exposing the cats' cells to dead versions of the feline virus, we hope the cats'

cells will later recognize a live version of the same virus," Hokanson said.

Hokanson said that if the cats' systems recognize the live versions of the virus, their systems will respond against the FIV, much like a vaccine would.

The research team, funded by the National Institutes of Health, hopes to find a combatant to the feline disease that could also be used to fight the human disease, Collisson said.

The team examines the immune responses of infected animals to find an effective vaccine, she said. Cats have difficulty fighting off secondary diseases when they are infected with FIV, and humans have a similar reaction to HIV, she said.

Collisson stressed the importance of FIV research across the nation in the fight against HIV.

"FIV research is conducted at several locations across the United States, including North Carolina, Colorado and Florida," she said.

Locomotive to visit College Station this weekend

Members of the Corps of Cadets will escort 700 passengers of the Gulf Coast Eagle through campus.

By Tara Wilkinson
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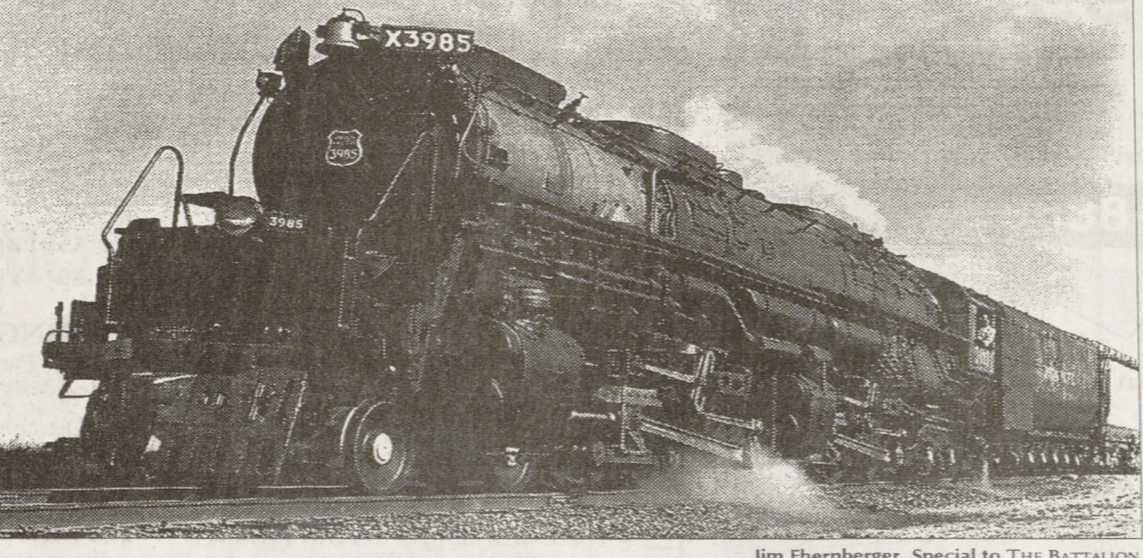
Seven hundred train enthusiasts will ride the world's largest operating steam locomotive into College Station Saturday.

The excursion is sponsored by the Gulf Coast Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society and Dr. Frank E. Vandiver, Texas A&M president emeritus and distinguished professor.

Tura King, Texas A&M information representative, said Union Pacific Railroad's Challenger No. 3985, known as the Gulf Coast Eagle, is 122 feet long and weighs 1 million pounds.

The locomotive will be accompanied by several refurbished 1950s passenger cars and seven glass-topped Vista Dome cars, King said.

Leslie Knight, secretary to Vandiver, said the National Railway Historical Society asked



Jim Ehemberger, Special to THE BATTALION

Union Pacific "3985" Challenger, the world's largest operating steam locomotive, will ride into College Station Saturday.

Environmental program aims to increase diversity

Chancellor Thompson and Land Commissioner Gary Mauro encouraged minority student enrollment in the engineering program.

By Wes Swift
THE BATTALION

The Texas A&M System is trying to solve the problems of oil spills and poor education of minorities through the Environmental Ph.D. Pipeline Program.

Texas A&M University, Texas A&M-Kingsville, Texas A&M-Corpus Christi and Prairie View A&M now offer

graduate classes and research opportunities about oil spill clean-up methods. The schools are linked through environmental research, distance learning and technology transfer.

Gary Mauro, commissioner of the Texas General Land Office, and Dr. Barry B. Thompson, Texas A&M chancellor, announced the program in a Wednesday press conference.



Thompson

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