

Clearing the way for bonfire

First cut signals the beginning of bonfire season

By Kasey Elliott
THE BATTALION

Since the beginning of the semester, there have been signs — a distant rumble of the voices of a determined army early in the evening or mud-clad men and women roaming the campus donning the colors of their residences.

It is the beginning of a new season — Bonfire season.

For the next seven weeks, students will be putting on their grodes and cutting down about 9,000 trees used to build Bonfire, which is, according to the Guinness Book of World Records, the largest of its kind.

Jeff Koffman, Moses Hall head crew chief, said Bonfire is not just an event that happens before a game but a physical example of Aggie spirit.

"Bonfire is more than just going out there and cutting down trees," Koffman said. "I think it has a lot to do with just being an Aggie and keeping up traditions and building long friendships."

The first cut of the year is tomorrow, and organizers said the first cut usually has the largest turnout.

Most of the residence halls get up between 5 a.m. and 6:30 a.m., but some halls wake up at 4:30 am for the first cut.

A tradition called wake-up makes sure that everyone in the hall is awake. Crew chiefs run around the hall making noise to get the residents motivated to go to cut.

Bart Taylor, an Aston Hall crew chief and a sophomore agricultural engineering major, said wake-up is fun for the crew chiefs.

"We run around the hall banging on doors with carpet rolls and play loud music," Taylor said. "We've even got an electrical siren and blast it in the Aston quad."

Almost immediately, the hall's residents are out to their cars and ready to begin the day.

Most groups meet at Albertson's on South College to eat breakfast. Numerous insults are traded among the groups, and someone in-

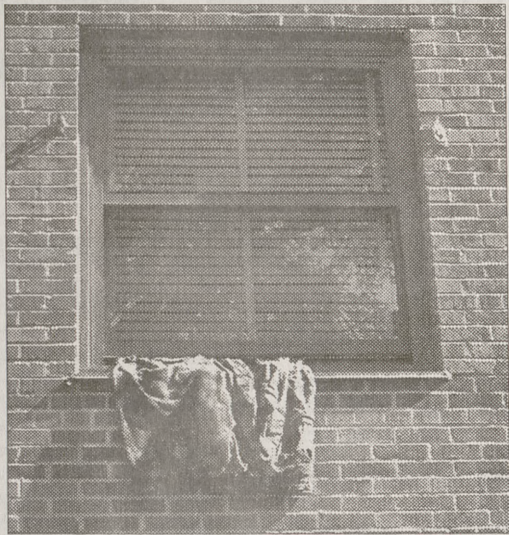
evitably ends up throwing food across the parking lot.

People who do not live in residence halls have their own routine. The Off Campus Aggies meet at the Zachry Building at 8 a.m. to go to cut.

Upon arrival, the crew chiefs send their freshmen to chase after the junior red pots, who are in charge of deciding when and where a group gets placed in the woods.

Then the work begins.

Each hall or group has its own section of land that it has to clear.



Louis Craig, THE BATTALION

Grodes hang out of a window in Crocker Hall.

logs onto trucks that transport the logs to the polo fields on campus.

In past years there have been accusations of discrimination at cut, including demeaning of women and minorities.

Bryan Hightight, yellow pot for Off Campus Aggies and a junior mechanical engineering major, said when people hear some of the remarks at the site, they get offended because they do not understand that the insults are used on everyone and meant only in fun.

"You can get mad about it, or you can yell right back," Hightight said.

Deryk Walsh, a Fowler Hall crew chief and a sophomore computer science major, said students at site usually do not take off-color remarks offensively.

"Where else can you insult someone, and they'll still be your friend?" Walsh said.

In the past, women have not taken part in cut as much as men.

Carlos Garza, a Moore Hall crew chief and a sophomore accounting major, said he likes the idea of female students working side-by-side with their male counterparts.

"Obviously, having the opposite sex in the woods motivates some people to go out," Garza said. "I wish we had more."

Amy Magness, crew chief for Off Campus Aggies, is only the third female crew chief in Bonfire history.

She said more women should go to cut.

"There are a few more women than there are men at this university, and I think the same need to be represented at Bonfire," Magness said.

Alex Cabanas, Moses Hall yellow pot and a sophomore business administration major, said people should not be swayed by negative opinions about Bonfire they hear from others. He said everyone, especially freshmen, should go to cut and judge it for themselves.

"Bonfire is just as much a tradition as anything else at this school," Cabanas said. "Just try it once. That's all you have to do. If you don't like it, then at least you've tried it."



Louis Craig, THE BATTALION

Brian Spencer, a computer engineering major, paints his pot outside of Crocker Hall on Wednesday.

Redpots focus on safety for 3,000 expected students

Thousands of people are expected to wake up early and head out to the woods this weekend to begin chopping down trees for the first cut of Bonfire '95.

Rob Tortorice, a junior redpot and finance major, said the redpots are expecting more than 3,000 people to come to the first cut on Jerry Kacal's Highway 30 property. Tortorice said those who want to participate but have not attended a cut class are welcome.

"We will be holding impromptu cut classes all day for whoever needs them," he said. "All they need to do is show up and tell the people at the entrance to the site that they need one."

Zach Huyge, a junior redpot and construction science major, said that along with attending a cut class, students at cut must be wearing protective headgear and proper clothes.

"That means jeans and leather boots,"

Huyge said. "No tennis shoes."

Emergency Medical Technicians will be stationed at cut site to handle any emergencies.

"Each redpot, yellowpot and crew chief will know where the EMTs are stationed for those who need medical attention," Huyge said. "At the cut site, safety is our first priority."

Carl Baggett, a head senior redpot and accounting major, said that with all of the organizations participating, it looks like the first cut will be a success.

"KAMU radio station is going to be out at the cut site," Baggett said, "and Cain Hall is participating for the first time."

"The MSC has really helped get people involved and the OCA (Off-Campus Aggies) are coming out in droves."

"I'm really looking forward to seeing everybody out there this weekend."

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