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Beware bid for Texas Olympics

You know something's big when it's on two different cereal boxes.

Two cereal boxes co-habitate in my cupboard. One is a box of Honey Nut Cheerios, which

claims to be a proud sponsor of the 1996 U.S. Olympic Team. The other, a box of Lucky Charms, contains special red, white and blue marshmallows to commemorate the Atlanta Olympics.

No doubt about it, the Olympics are big. And they bring a global spotlight to the city hosting them.

So how about College Station?

There are daily updates on the progress in Atlanta on practically every newscast and in practically every major newspaper. And as a sidebar to the stories of hype and heartbreak, of profits and pratfalls, the Houston Chronicle has run more than one article hinting that Houston is planning a strong bid for the 2008 Summer Games.

Already — perhaps prematurely, but perhaps not — Houston furniture magnate Jim "Mattress Mac" McIngvale has set himself up in Atlanta, handing out "Texas 2008" paraphernalia. Also in on the effort is Lee Brown, former Houston police chief and federal drug czar, who is now a professor at Rice University.

In a Chronicle story Wednesday, Brown mentioned that maybe the Olympics could be a statewide event, led by Houston, but also including Dallas, Fort Worth, Austin and College Station.

2008 is a long way away. I'm still not sure whether I'll graduate in two, two-and-a-half or three more years, but hopefully it won't take 12. The inclusion of my temporary hometown, however, did catch my eye.

At first it sounded like a good idea, but now I'm not so sure. The pros — the tourism, attention, and economic boost — and the cons — zillions more cars and even worse traffic on Texas Avenue — are pretty obvious. But these would be temporary.

More threatening is the image of Texas and Texas A&M that visitors would be left with.

The last feet to march all over Atlanta belonged to Sherman's army — and they left it in smoldering ruins. But the city has come a long way since then. In fact, Atlanta is undergoing a minor economic and tourism renaissance. Businesses are heading there in droves, and former slums are being cleaned up and renovated.

But Atlanta's Olympic tourists aren't focusing on the booming reconstruction of Atlanta. They want to see the Old South. They want to see shady plantations and gently-rolling cotton fields. An enterprising 25-year-old Scarlett O'Hara impersonator is booked solid every day and night of the Olympic hype-fest.

Similarly, a worldwide eye on Texas might bring out the worst self-stereotyping the state has to offer. And Texas is one of the most easily stereotyped places in the world.

If the Olympics actually did come here, the state would be inundated with red-white-and-blue cowboy hats and stuffed armadillos by the millions. We would see Texas-shaped Olympic rings and giant torches with Texas-shaped flames. Steve Stockman would let comments slip about how we should get some of those illegal Mexican immigrants on the U.S. swimming team. Instead

See Halbrook, Page 6



SHANNON HALBROOK
COLUMNIST

TWA AIRLINER EXPLODES

NEW YORK (AP) — Rescuers pulled burned bodies from the waters off Long Island early today as an FBI terrorism team investigated what caused a TWA jumbo jet to explode over the Atlantic shortly after takeoff, apparently killing all 229 people aboard.

"It's too early to tell if it's a bomb," FBI spokesman Jim Margolin said. Flight 800, a Boeing 747 bound for Charles de Gaulle Airport from Kennedy Airport, exploded about 8:45 p.m. Wednesday and plunged into the ocean off Fire Island, a narrow strip of land 40 miles east of New York City that runs parallel to Long Island.

Wreckage and fuel on the water burned for hours as helicopters hovered and rescue vessels pulled at least 50 bodies from the water. A C-130 transport plane circled, dropping parachute flares to illuminate the scene.

Crews also used infrared night vision goggles to help spot bodies. With a water temperature of 65 degrees and an air temperature of 73, officials estimated that survival would not be possible much beyond noon today.

Among those booked on the flight was a group of students from a Pennsylvania high school French club.

One of the first private boats at the crash site came upon a macabre sight that suggests the passengers knew they were going to crash: a yellow TWA life jacket floating on the water.

"It was inflated and it was buckled," said Jimmy Vaccaro, who hooked the empty jacket into the boat. "These things don't light and inflate by themselves — you have to pull on it or blow through the tube."

The boom and fireball shattered a calm summer night.

Vic Fehner, who was fishing, said "it started off like a little ball, like a flare."

"It came down for a few seconds and all of a sudden burst into flames, a big ball of flame," Fehner said.

Standing at John Scott's Raw Bar in Westhampton Beach, cook Jason Fontana saw "a big fireball with pieces coming off of it. You heard two big explosions, like two big firecrackers going off."

There were 212 passengers and 17 crew members on the flight, said Mike Kelly, a TWA vice president. The plane had arrived from Athens, Greece, and had been on the ground about three hours before its scheduled 8 p.m. takeoff for Paris. Some of the passengers were from an earlier canceled flight to Rome.

In Paris, the large black arrival board at de Gaulle Airport listed Flight 800 as "canceled."

Kelly noted that the FAA had been placed on an increased level of security because of the Olympics, which begin Friday in Atlanta, but said there had been no specific threats against TWA.

The National Transportation Safety Board was investigating along with the terrorism task force, which includes officials from the New York Police Department.

Asked about the possibility of a bomb, Federal Aviation Administration spokesman Eliot Brenner said "we can't discuss security issues." He said the FAA had no information on whether there was a distress call.

Oliver Revell, a former FBI official, noted that such a jet had never been destroyed in air by an explosion that was not sabotage.

If there was a bomb, said former CIA counterterrorism agent Vincent Cannistraro, "this is another notch up the ladder of terrorism. ... In the past year domestic aviation security has been tightened considerably."

Cannistraro said terrorists had never blown up an airliner with a bomb planted

in the United States; the Pan Am flight blown out of the air in 1988 over Lockerbie, Scotland, originated in what was then West Germany.

To an international TV audience, the crash site was a jagged, bright red splotch on the screen. But to rescue workers out in the water, said Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, "the reality of what occurred is settling in. ... They are carrying bodies back to shore."

Ralph Lettieri, a firefighter, was out on the water for several hours in his boat. He saw three bodies taken aboard a Coast Guard vessel.

"It's the darkest night," he said. "It's something that's going to bother you for a long time."

Of the wreckage, he said, "you couldn't tell it was a plane."

A temporary morgue was set up on shore. "We are not finding any survivors," said Steve Sapp of the U.S. Coast Guard. "We are locating lots of bodies."

Sixteen high school students and five adults from a rural town in northeastern Pennsylvania were believed to have been on the flight. The students were members of the French Club of Montoursville High School, which has only a few hundred students.

Seeking out the stench

Birds drop in at A&M

By Erica Roy
THE BATTALION

The state of Texas spends millions of dollars on its "Don't Mess With Texas" ad campaign. Unfortunately, birds don't watch TV.

Although grackles have roosted at various places on the Texas A&M campus over the past 30 or more years, they have chosen the trees along Ross Street as one of their main resting places this summer.

The birds have created messy sidewalks and a stench along the area in front of the Chemistry Building.

Grackles constitute the majority of the birds roosting in this area, but cowbirds are also using these trees as their home.

"The grackles are the biggest mess-makers," Mike Goldwater, assistant director for Facilities, Maintenance and Renovations, said.

The filth and odor of the birds have been a persistent problem on the A&M campus.

Goldwater said during the past few years the problem has been relatively light.

Dr. Keith Arnold, a professor of wildlife science, said the winter is usually the worst time of the year



Stew Milne, THE BATTALION

Bird droppings have caused messy sidewalks around campus.

because more birds migrate to this area to escape the cold spells in other parts of the country. The problem normally does not occur during the spring because the birds spread to their breeding areas.

Goldwater said the Physical Plant has ongoing programs to disperse the birds.

One example is the bird-scare cannons that make a loud bang and scare the birds away. The cannons are brought in at sundown when the birds come to roost, and are fired.

Arnold said tape record-

ings of distress calls are also used to disperse the birds.

Trimming the trees is also a successful way to cause the birds to relocate.

The bird-scare devices will be used during the semester break between the second summer session and the fall semester. Goldwater said hopefully the birds will relocate off campus.

The cleanup of the mess is "very labor intensive," Goldwater said. Hosing off the sidewalks with water is the main cleanup device used by

See Birds, Page 6



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KYLE'S HAIRCUT

Patrick Tate, a groundskeeper for the the Athletic Department, mows the grass at Kyle Field on Wednesday afternoon.

Culture Communication

Architecture course helps to increase cultural awareness

By Tauma Wiggins
THE BATTALION

This fall, Texas A&M architectural students enrolled in a Texas-Mexico Student Exchange Program will communicate face-to-face with students in Mexico without ever leaving the classroom.

Guillermo Vásquez de Velasco, an assistant professor in the Department of Architecture, will be teaching the class. He said the primary goal of the class is not to test communication, but to complete an architecture project.

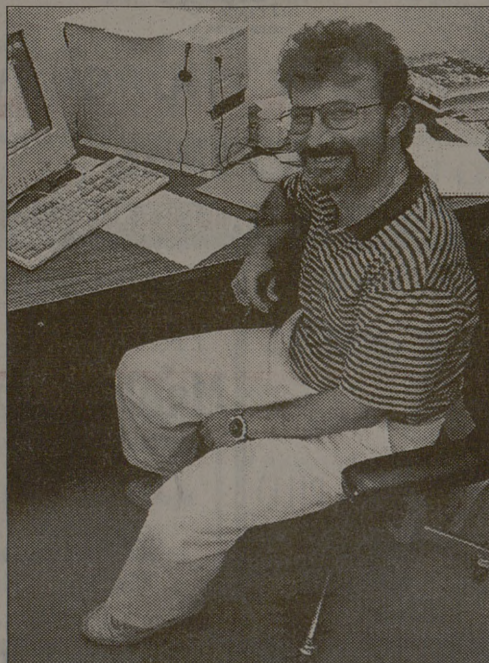
Velasco said one motive for the creation of the class was to increase Mexican cultural awareness. "I thought, 'How could I get my students immersed in the culture?'" Velasco said. "I had very few students who could speak Mexican (Spanish) and knew the culture, so I decided to kill two birds with one stone by creating a design studio."

Velasco said in the design studio, A&M and Mexican students will communicate ideas about architectural design through e-mail, a web page and interactive video.

A&M students will be able to talk into a video camera directly to students in Mexico. Mexican students can then immediately respond and provide feedback as if they were in the same classroom.

"While talking into the camera, they can see

See Class, Page 6



Pat James, THE BATTALION

Guillermo Vasquez de Velasco, an assistant professor in the Department of Architecture, will teach the telecommunication class.

Program allows educators to research teaching methods

By Melissa Nunnery
THE BATTALION

A joint program between Texas A&M and South Knoll Elementary Professional Development School in College Station has spawned an interest in research on the part of South Knoll teachers.

Teachers as Researchers is a program allowing teachers to research ways to improve learning.

Dr. Donna Cooner, project coordinator of Teachers as Researchers and former South Knoll assistant principal, said research was inherent in the program from the beginning.

"We've had the partnership program for three years," Cooner said. "When we said we were going to call ourselves a professional development school, we knew research would be part of it."

The program allows student interns from the College of Education to work in a classroom setting and take classes taught by a team of South Knoll teachers and A&M professors.

Teachers at South Knoll became interested in doing research because of their work with A&M students and professors.

Cooner said teachers find new teaching methods through research they may not use but want to teach

the A&M students.

"They try it (the new teaching method) out in their classroom first and end up making permanent changes," Cooner said.

Nell Schrader, a South Knoll teacher, said she thought research was "a lot of quantitative data, something a doctoral student would do."

"I realized that just asking a question about a teaching method, collecting information from the children when using this method, and changing my teaching because of what I have learned is research," Schrader said in a press release.

Teresa Fluth, a South Knoll teacher, researched successful reading programs to find one to better meet her students' needs. She adopted a reading program called Literature Circles.

"I started Literature Circles with my third-grade class during the 1993-1994 school year," Fluth said in a press release. "Students got to choose their own books to read. Their interest in reading increased substantially."

Although the student interns at South Knoll are not part of the research team, Cooner said they contribute to the collection of data.

"Everything they do is useful,"

See Teaching, Page 6