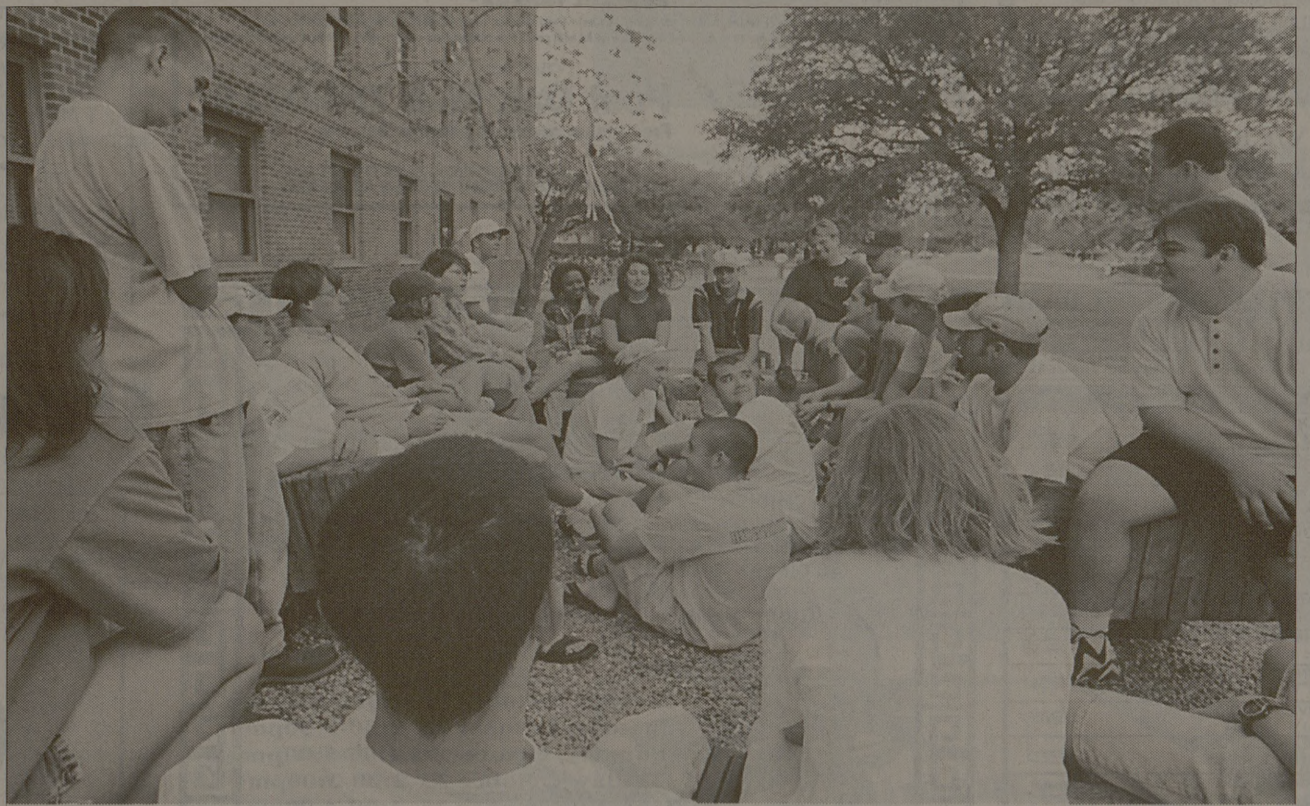


# LIFE'S A BENCH



Dave House, THE BATTALION

The benches of Moore Hall serve as a place for on-campus residents to win friends and influence people.

BY SHEA WIGGINS  
 THE BATTALION

The sun comes down over Moore Hall. One by one, the students emerge and gather on the benches in front of the dorm. Cigarettes are lit, Slurpees are drunk, discussions are started, and time ticks on till dawn.

These "bench bums" have congregated to contemplate. Moore Hall, a Northside dorm, has four wooden benches that face Moses Hall. The bench bums are about 10 students from Moore Hall and Davis Gary residence halls, who sit on the benches all night to talk and smoke.

The students who live in Moore said they can go out any hour of the night and find the bench bums doing their thing.

Ryan Reeh, a Moore resident and sophomore construction science major, said the bench bums are an understood tradition.

"They congregate to smoke," Reeh said. "There are more cigarette butts out there than rocks."

Reeh said he sees them every night.

"They let me into the dorm when I don't have my ID, usually at two o'clock in the morn-

ing," Reeh said. "One night they serenaded me with the hidden song from Alanis Morissette."

Greg Howard, a Moore resident and sophomore business major, said the students stay on the benches until eight in the morning.

"They range from freshmen to fifth-year seniors," Howard said. "They were here when my older brother was a freshman. I guess it is like a legacy."

Howard said many of the bench bums have nicknames. "There is Jiffy, Wild Bill, Corkie, Sober, Luckie, Stretch and Rat Boy," Howard said.

He said there is no rush, hazing or initiations involved in becoming a bench bum.

The bench bums said they do more than just smoke on the benches.

Brent Taylor, a bench bum and sophomore zoology major, said they have deep conversations.

"I stay out just until two or three in the morning," Taylor said. "We sometimes get into long talks about politics, religion, racism and social stuff. We like to analyze and criticize people."

Taylor said it is a good place to relax after studying.

"They trap you," Taylor said. "Once you come down here you can't leave."

Taylor said the meetings at the benches die down in the spring, after the bench bums have received their fall grades.

"I think we have the lowest GPRs on campus," Taylor said.

Jennifer "Jiffy" Patterson, a bench bum from Davis Gary and sophomore elementary education major, said she stays on the benches all night at least three or four nights a week.

Patterson said pastimes of the bench bums include throwing rocks at light bulbs, writing phone numbers down on the benches, and yelling at the other dorms.

Badi Klem, a Moore resident and sophomore psychology major, said the bench bums are interesting to watch.

"They decorated the outside of the doors with scarecrows and

deer," Klem said. "We don't know what the purpose is, but I think it is some kind of Halloween thing."

Clayton Kindell, a bench bum and sophomore civil engineering major, said 40 people congregated on the benches one night.

"You think you would run out of things to talk about, but we never do," Kindell said.

Kindell said sometimes old bench bums come back to Moore.

"Guys from the '80s come by here, and we sit and talk," Kindell said. "They tell stories about when they were here."

Kindell said it is a different way to get to know students.

"We meet people on the benches instead of at parties," Kindell said.



Dave House, THE BATTALION

"Bench Bums" gather at the Moore Hall benches for companionship. Up to 40 students have gathered there at one time.



Dave House, THE BATTALION

Casey Goodner, a senior English major, smokes on the benches.

## Artistic Encounters

Former professor's still-life sculptures defy reality

BY JOHN LEBAS  
 THE BATTALION

Paul Suttman: *Encounters in Bronze*, a collection of a former Texas A&M artist-in-residence's bronze sculptures, is on display through Dec. 14 at the J. Wayne Stark Galleries in the Memorial Student Center.

Catherine A. Hastedt, curator of the Stark Galleries, said Suttman, who died in 1993 and taught sculpture at A&M in the College of Architecture in the early 80s, was one of the most prominent American sculptors of his time. From the rough looking figures of his early career to the still-life and surrealist creations he made later in life, Suttman's work is abstract and emotional, she said.

"Suttman's figurative sculptures of the 60s combine impressionistic surfaces with deep emotional content," she said. His subjects, ranging from the "Javalina" to a woman "Combing her Hair," gave way in the 70s to still-life settings of fruit and wine.

"He places fruit, bottles and other familiar still-life forms in precariously balanced or unbalanced arrangements, full of implicit movement," Hastedt said. "Objects take on qualities antithetical to their essential natures: strappy stands by itself, bronze paper bags pile up like boulders, apples and pears grow to monumental sizes."

Suttman's work changed as he mastered the art of bronze casting, Hastedt said.

"Pieces like 'Javalina' are his very early works," she said. "They were like his student projects, and they have a heavy feel to them. Later, he mastered his technique."

Hastedt said the artist learned to sculpt using the lost-wax technique: Clay is placed over

a wax sculpture of a subject, the wax is melted out of the hardened clay, and molten bronze is poured inside.

Much of Suttman's early work is characterized by rough surfaces, Hastedt said, which were intentional.

"He always liked rough, quick texture," she said. "In 'Combing Her Hair' you can see his thumbprints. It was all intentional."

As Suttman honed his skills, Hastedt said, his work became more abstract and contained more elements of architecture. He used abstract elements to get the viewer to look more deeply into the meaning of a piece, she said.

"How Time Passes on a Cloudy Afternoon" incorporates such elements and actually shows time passing, Hastedt said. For example, a cloud appears in the frame of the relief sculpture and then again outside of the frame.

"You can imagine how difficult it is to show time passing in a sculpture," Hastedt said.

Suttman also brought his knowledge of architecture into his work. According to an exhibit brochure by Suttman's wife, Virginia Bush Suttman, the artist's "Arc-I-Tek-Tur" is a celebration of architectural design.

"The statics and dynamics of architecture are emphasized by the pyramid — the most stable of shapes — resting on spheres — the least stable," she said. "The pedestal shows a range of architectural vocabulary: the capital and entablature with engraved letter; the open colonnade; the rusticated and quoined enclosure below."



Artist depicts vibrant landscapes in watercolor

BY JOHN LEBAS  
 THE BATTALION

Max E. Mayer (1887-1947), a collection of watercolor paintings by one of the first Texas A&M graduates in architectural engineering, is on display at the J. Wayne Stark University Galleries in the Memorial Student Center through Dec. 19. Thirty-eight of the late San Antonio-born artist's colorful depictions of mesas, mountains, buildings and the sea are in the exhibit.

Arthur J. Mayer, Ph.D., the late artist's nephew, said his uncle was born into a culturally-oriented family that put great emphasis on art and music. The artist loved to play the violin and paint in addition to his architectural work.

But Mayer's fondness for architecture came out in his painting, Arthur Mayer said. "The architectural background dominates [much of his work]," Arthur Mayer said. "But there are still quite a bit of artistic characteristics."

A 1906 graduate of A&M, the elder Mayer began working as an independent architect in Little Rock a few years after leaving school, and quickly gained prominence as a residential designer. His love for art also spilled over into his career: Mayer would sometimes give watercolor paintings of the completed houses he built to the owners.

But the Great Depression put his architecture career on hold and Mayer returned to San Antonio. He began to focus more on his painting and violin playing.

In this period, Mayer produced watercolor images of his city in paintings such as "San Antonio Cityscape." A preservationist and a researcher, Arthur Mayer said, the elder Mayer worked to capture the deterioration of the missions and surrounding jacales, small hut villages, before the structures were restored.

"San Antonio was the ideal location for an artist who was also an architect," Arthur Mayer said.

The artist also loved to paint the southwestern landscape, Arthur Mayer said, and turned out

many images of nature such as "Power of the Mesa" and "Mountain Majesty."

"He took his nieces and nephews to the Gulf Coast where he fished and painted while they fished and swam," Arthur Mayer said.

Catherine A. Hastedt, curator of the Stark Galleries, said he used colors that do not usually appear in nature, like purples and pinks, and the nature of watercolor paint gave his paintings a fuzzy, impressionist quality.

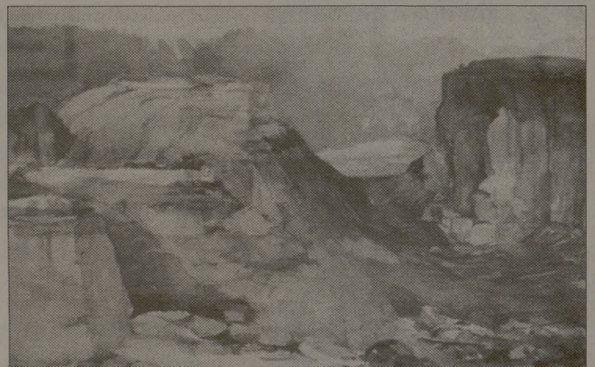
"But he wasn't a true impressionist," Hastedt said. "He was more muted and more documentary."

By the end of the Depression, Arthur Mayer said the artist had a large collection of paintings of missions, seascapes, landscapes and industrial areas. He started to get architectural work again in the late 30s and returned to Little Rock.

There Mayer was commissioned to design and oversee the restoration of the original capitol block in the city. Mayer transformed it from a block of "bars and flophouses" to what now is "much like what they did with Williamsburg," Arthur Mayer said.

"The Arkansas Territorial Restoration became Max Mayer's grandest achievement," he said.

Mayer remained in Little Rock to practice architecture and died there in 1947.



Landscapes are characteristic of Mayer's artwork.

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