

"Serving Texas A&M Since 1893"

THE BATTALION

Volume 103 • Issue 63 • 6 Pages

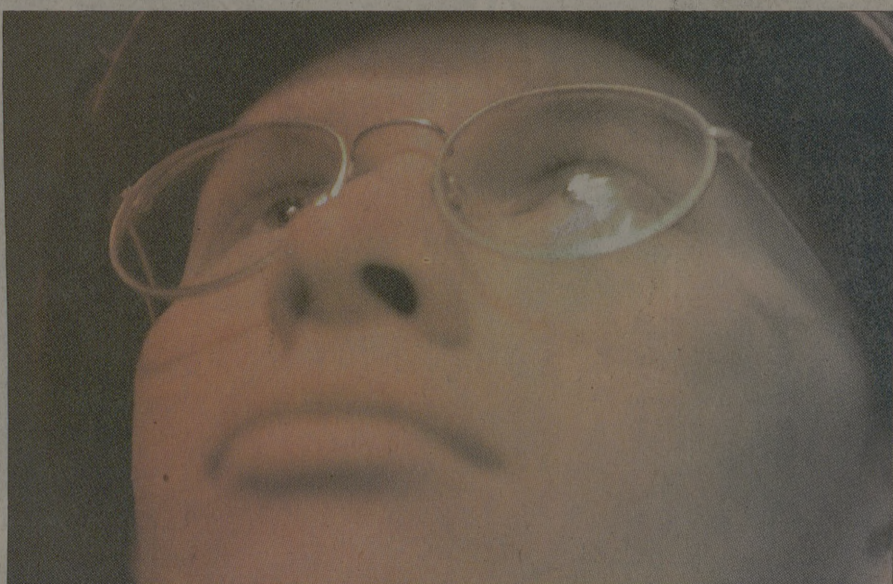
Wednesday, November 27, 1996

The Batt Online: <http://bat-web.tamu.edu>

The Burning Desire

Troy Smith, a new senior redpot for next year, watches as Bonfire blazes Tuesday night.

Photo by Stew Milne, THE BATTALION



It is the fire within the hearts of its creators that ignites a passion so deep one must live it to understand.

BY KENDRA S. RASMUSSEN
THE BATTALION

Chuck Shaw, a brownpot and a senior construction science major, said the lure of the flame is what keeps the spirit of the Fightin' Texas Aggie Bonfire alive from year to year.

"It's a love for the fire," he said. "If it weren't for just a few people putting their hearts into it, it wouldn't happen."

For the students who volunteer their time, Bonfire becomes a way of life. And for those who have lived it for the past four years, the lifestyle has drawn to a close.

R. E. Hopkins, head stack and a senior agricultural development major, said he greets the end with mixed emotions.

"My role now is over," Hopkins said. "It is time for me to step aside and let some other people take over."

"It has been just a tremendous experience, and I wouldn't trade it for anything," he said.

"I am ready to pass it on, but at the same time I am going to miss everything I have been a part of here."

Hopkins said he was first hit with the realization that his time with Bonfire was limited as he watched it burn last year.

"I had just finished one of the most demanding and harder times of my life," he said, "[and] I knew I had only one more to build."

Most students who help build Bonfire experience similar feelings of sadness when their time draws to a close.

Carl Baggett, student body president and former head stack, said he handed his duties over to Hopkins last year with mixed emotions.

"I was ready to try new experiences on this campus," Baggett said, "But at the same time I was going to miss it."

Shaw said realizing his end has come has left a void that he will have to fill with new life experiences.

"The things that I started with are over," he said.

"It [is] a closing," he said, "and all I have ever done up to this point is openings. It's hard to let go ... [but] I know that I have to go on."

Thousands of people attended Bonfire Tuesday night, and most would agree it was an unforgettable night. But only those who create it truly know what it means to experience it.

Joel Foshea, a junior redpot and an agricultural systems management major, said those who help build Bonfire watch with more emotion as it goes up in flames.

"I don't think anyone can say they have experienced Bonfire until ... they have actually been a part of building the fire," he said.

Foshea said helping create Bonfire has left him with a fulfillment that cannot be found elsewhere.

"Bonfire is everything that being an Aggie is all about," Foshea said. "It wouldn't be possible if it weren't for the coming together of all Aggies for one common goal."

Shaw said the fact that Bonfire becomes a reality every year is a reflection on the greatness of the University.

"[When you have] people being brought up in opposite mentalities — having different thoughts about different things all doing something like this — that says that we don't necessarily need to have the best professors or the best football team," he said. "We have got a student body and an alumni that are unparalleled anywhere."

Foshea said he looks forward each year to passing his duties along and assuming a new role.

"The most memorable and rewarding feeling is being able to, each year, have a different responsibility," Foshea said. "[And] being able to pass that responsibility down to someone in the next class and being able to accept responsibility from someone in the Class of '97."

Hopkins said he wishes he could prolong the experience, but he is ready to hand over his duties to the Class of '98.

"Part of me wishes I could make this feeling last forever," he said. "But it is time to go on, and I have to start something new."

Shaw said the leaders for next year's Bonfire should take advantage of the time they have.

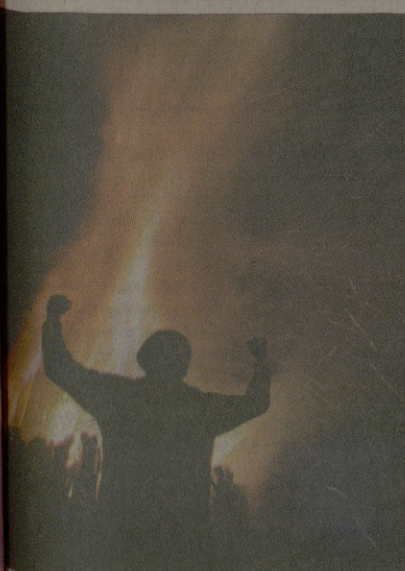
"Whatever you do, take advantage of it," he said. "Have fun and shake people's hands. Give them a hug. Whatever it takes — enjoy it while it's here because it does end."

"Part of me will always be out here," he said. "I will leave myself."

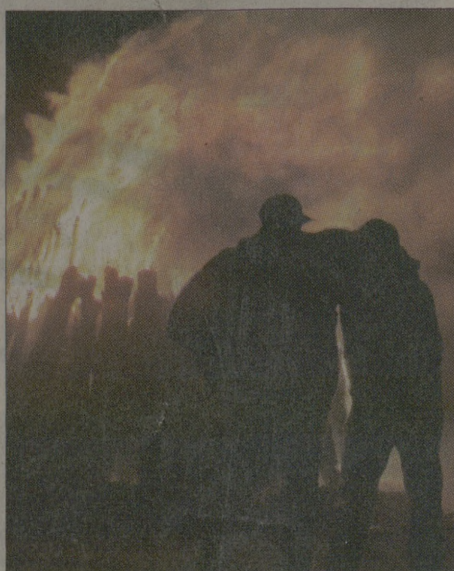


Tim Moog, THE BATTALION

Mike Nance and Chris Alkov (right), and Troy Smith (left), bask in the glow of Bonfire '96.



Dave House, THE BATTALION



Ryan Rogers, THE BATTALION

Outhouse Blues

Parsons Mounted Cavalry supplied the outhouse atop Bonfire last night, changing the 42-year-old tradition of burning an outhouse from the Fightin' Texas Aggie Band.

See related story, Page 4.



Rony Angkriwan, THE BATTALION