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COLLEGE STATION • TX

WEDNESDAY • OCTOBER 15 • 1997

BRIEFS

Putt-putt tourney benefits charity

The Department of Student Life and the Department of Athletics will sponsor a miniature-golf game to benefit the State Employees' Charitable Campaign. The tournament begins at 11 a.m. today at Putt-putt games in College Station. Fifteen putters from each department will play a round of putt-putt golf. Commentary by Dave South, "The Voice of the Texas Aggies." Pledges can be made per stroke, per par, per ace or as a one-time pledge for a team.

Yell practice to be in Kansas City

Midnight yell practice will be Friday at the Overland Park Marriott in Kansas City, Kan. The football game between Texas A&M and Kansas State University will be at 2:30 p.m. Saturday in Manhattan, Kansas.

Historic cemetery vandalized Sunday

NACOGDOCHES (AP) — Police are investigating the vandalism of 15 tombstones, some nearly 100 years old, in the historic downtown Oak Grove Cemetery. Police Sgt. Steve Cooper said a groundskeeper discovered the damage Monday morning, but police believe it occurred Sunday night. The city-maintained cemetery is not the oldest in Nacogdoches County, but it contains the remains of several noted Texans, including our signers of the Texas Declaration of Independence: Thomas Jefferson Rusk, Charles S. Taylor, William S. Clark and John S. Roberts. Rusk also was one of Texas' first two U.S. senators.

McLaren trial to be moved to Alpine

FORT DAVIS (AP) — Republic of Texas leader Richard McLaren will be tried in Alpine on charges stemming from the separatist group's mountain standoff with authorities. Judge Kenneth DeHart said Tuesday he has entered a change of venue order for the trial of McLaren and fellow group member Robert Otto. The trial originally was scheduled to take place 20 miles north in Fort Davis. DeHart entered the motion requesting the move but was forced to delay his ruling because McLaren had asked to have the judge removed from the case. Judge Karl Prohl of Kerrville denied McLaren's motion following a hearing Monday in Fort Davis, 175 miles southeast of El Paso. DeHart said either McLaren and Otto, who also goes by "White Eagle," or two other group members, Gregg and Karen Paulson, will go on trial Oct. 27.

INSIDE lifestyles

Women and Bonfire: Female students prove they can do more than run the snack shack.
See Page 3

sports

Hunter Shane Lechler has gained recognition at a position often unnoticed.
See Page 7

opinion

Demons: Aggie phobia toward ticks prevents students from getting to know each other.
See Page 9

online

<http://bat-web.tamu.edu>
Look up with state and national news through The Wire, AP's 24-hour online news service.

Professor stresses roots of atheism

By MANDY CATER
Staff writer

A psychology professor from New York University said last night at a Veritas Forum lecture atheism is a result of personal psychological barriers. Dr. Paul Vitz, author of *Psychology is Religion: The Cult of Self-Worship*, said true atheism is a direct display of psychological conflict. Vitz, who calls himself a "reconvert to Christianity," was an atheist for about 20 years. Vitz said like that of most skeptical atheists, his atheism was a combination of general Western socialization, the need to fit into the secular academic community and simple

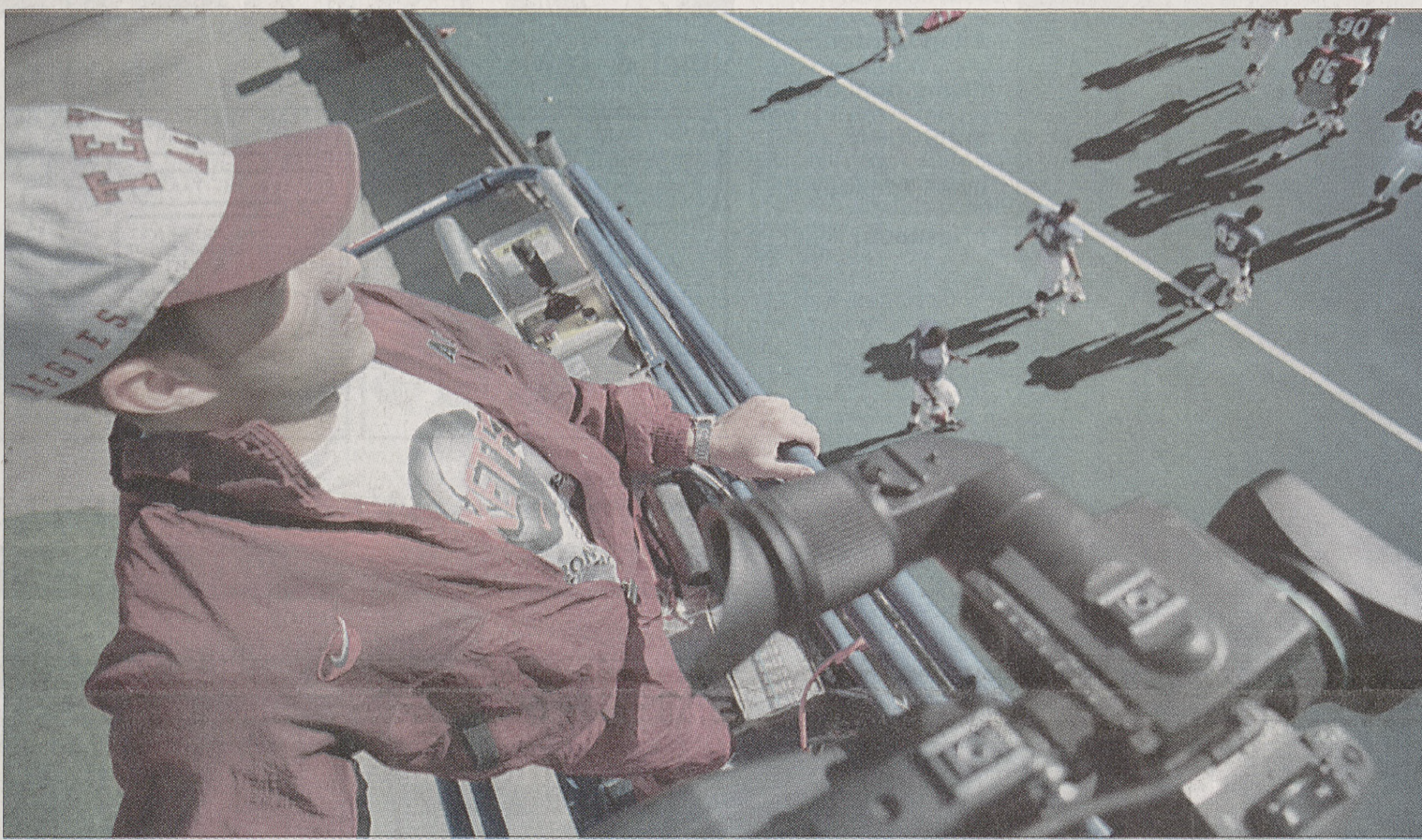
personal convenience. "It is quite inconvenient to be a believer in today's secular and neo-pagan world," he said. "Because of social needs to assimilate, atheism was the best policy." Vitz said academics, especially psychology, sees a belief in God based upon irrational needs and desires. Vitz said understanding people's belief in religion has been critical to psychology since its inception. But the same concepts apply to non-believers, he said. "Psychological concepts used to interpret religion are double-edged swords that can also be used to interpret atheism," Vitz said. Vitz's theory of atheism's psychological roots is a theory he calls the "defective fa-

ther" hypothesis. Sigmund Freud, father of psychoanalysis, wrote, "Youthful persons lose religious beliefs as soon as the authority of the father breaks down." Vitz expanded on Freud's theory, and said

having a weak, abusive or absent father can be a psychological explanation for intense atheism. He said when earthly fathers fail their children, this often influences a belief in a heavenly deity. Vitz said many people are "blessed with Christian upbringings and socioeconomic situations that lend easily to a belief in God." Others, however, have more serious psychological barriers to belief, Vitz said. "Despite these barriers, Vitz said, "Any person can choose to move toward God at any time in his or her life." The Veritas Forum was started at Harvard University in 1992 to search for truth. Tuesday night's lecture was the final installment of the 1997 Veritas Forum at Texas A&M.

"Because of social needs to assimilate, atheism was the best policy."
DR. PAUL VITZ
AUTHOR OF *PSYCHOLOGY IS RELIGION*

Bird's eye view



Todd Moore, a sports management graduate student, films the Texas A&M Football Team's practice Tuesday. Moore films practices and games every day for the Athletic Department Video Lab. The tapes are prepared for the coordinators to view immediately following practices.

FFA, 4-H prepare student leaders

By RACHEL DAWLEY
Staff writer

The National FFA Organization and 4-H, two agricultural youth organizations, have helped train Texas A&M student leaders before they arrive on campus. Twelve A&M student body presidents have held area, state or national leadership positions in these groups, including Brooke Leslie, Toby Boenig, Board of Regents member Fred McClure and Curtis Childers. Childers, the 1997-98 student body president and a senior agricultural development major, served as national FFA president in 1993-94. "The FFA has a rich tradition of developing leadership by putting students in real positions of leadership," Childers said. "You can't compare the benefit of putting people in these roles — that's what the FFA does so well." Corey Rosenbusch, the 1996-97 national FFA president, is a member of the Class of '00 and an agricultural development major. Rosenbusch will return to A&M in the spring after his term as president.

National agriculture groups give training in communication skills

Dr. Joe Townsend, associate dean for student development in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and Class of '67, said agriculture youth organizations also provide more than a million dollars each year for scholarships. He said scholarships give students time to pursue leadership positions at A&M because the students do not have to work during school. Townsend said the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences has benefited from the leaders the FFA and 4-H have produced. "The kids that come in to our program from the FFA and 4-H organizations already have a headstart over other students," Townsend said. "A lot of these students have traveled around the U.S. and spoken to groups of 30,000 people. We build upon progress and traits they have already developed through youth leadership training programs." Former members of the FFA and 4-H organi-

zations have leadership positions in the Corps of Cadets, the Student Government Association, MSC committees, Aggie Bonfire, Aggie athletic teams and other campus organizations. Jeremiah Williams, executive council vice president of student relations and a senior agricultural economics major, said the FFA helped him develop communication skills he uses as a campus leader. "The FFA organization made a remarkable difference in the way I interact with people by developing my interpersonal skills," Williams said. "The leadership positions I had in this organization created an environment conducive for building my communication skills."

PLEASE SEE LEADERS ON PAGE 6.

PLEASE SEE JOURNAL ON PAGE 6.

Bookstore opens with celebration of Texas authors

By JOEY JEANETTE SCHLUETER
Staff writer

A celebration honored the Texas A&M University Press, its authors and A&M faculty last night at a special opening of the Barnes & Noble bookstore. The event featured books from Texas A&M authors. Authors who read excerpts from their books included Leon Hale, author of *Home Spun* and a columnist for the Houston Chronicle; Sylvia Grider and Lou Rodenberger, editors of *Texas Women Writers*; Paul Ruffin, author of *The Man Who Would Be God*; and Fran Vick, director of the University of North Texas Press, who read from her father's book *Over There*. The featured books were sold at the event. A portion of the proceeds from sales during the event will be donated to First Book, a national nonprofit organization committed to giving children the opportunity to read. Noel Parsons, editor in chief of University Press, said the event focuses on the consortium of the Press. He said the

University Press will distribute books to Barnes & Noble. Gabe Briseno, operations manager for Barnes & Noble, said the bookstore will have a permanent section for University Press books from A&M. "When Barnes & Noble comes to a town, they tailor their store to the community," Briseno said. "That includes the students, A&M faculty and staff and community members." College Station Mayor Lynn McIlhane attended the event to welcome Melissa Baker, the store manager for Barnes & Nobles. Briseno said he wants the bookstore to be a place where students and faculty can enjoy the cafe, study and read. Blake Clark, trade book manager for the MSC bookstore, said Barnes & Noble owns the MSC bookstore. He said the two stores offer a balance of books. "The new Barnes & Noble store offers a wide range [of books] for the community," Clark said, "and we offer stuff that they cannot get such as specialty items."



Leon Hale, a Houston Chronicle columnist signs his book, *Home Spun*, published by the Texas A&M University Press.