

# Aggies address debate over death penalty

By COLLEEN KAVANAGH  
Staff writer

Although few people have a say in the decision of Karla Tucker's execution, members of the Texas A&M community have voiced their opinions about the death penalty in Texas.

The Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles used Monday to recommend clemency for Karla Faye Tucker. Tucker is scheduled to be executed by lethal injection at 6 p.m. Monday and will be the first woman executed in Texas since 1863.

Tucker and her boyfriend, Daniel Garret, were convicted of the 1983 slayings of Lynn Dean and Deborah Thornton. They were hacked to death with a hammer and a three-foot pickaxe. Both were high on drugs and alcohol at the time of the murders. Garret, also sentenced to death, died in prison of liver disease.

The Board's rejection means Gov. George Bush only can issue a 30-day delay. Linda Edwards, a spokeswoman for Gov.

Bush, said Texas law does not permit the governor to grant clemency without first getting approval from Texas Pardons and Paroles.

"He's still reviewing the case," she said. Dr. Tim Cavell, an A&M psychology professor, said he is opposed to the death penalty as a psychologist because he is not sure how effective it is in reducing incidents of crime.

"I feel strongly that we do what we need to do to protect others," he said. "But, I don't think we need to kill others to do it."

Cavell, who teaches a juvenile delinquency and substance abuse class, said it is difficult to tell whether a criminal is rehabilitated.

"Predicting dangerousness is a tricky business," he said. "People look more at the event for which she was charged than factors that make her able to be rehabilitated."

Cavell said the best way is to find out if someone has a history of violence or if it is an isolated incident.

Nikki Van Hightower, an A&M political science professor of state government, said she does not see how the governor can

grant Tucker clemency, and letting her off because she is a woman would be a dan-

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Nikki Van Hightower  
Professor of state government  
Texas A&M University

gerous political move.

"I don't know what the rationale would be," she said. "There is no question of guilt. She may be a born-again Christian, but so

are others who have to die. I would be very surprised if he lets her off."

Kelly Smith, vice president of the A&M branch of NOW and a junior psychology major, said gender should not be a factor when determining punishment.

"Acquiring equal rights for women means equal rights in every aspect, including punishment," she said. "I don't think sex should be an issue."

Smith said she is uncertain on whether she supports the death penalty.

"On the one hand, you really can't teach people not to kill if you kill people," she said, "but if someone took my mom's life I don't know if they should go on living."

Van Hightower said she has mixed feelings about the death penalty because it is not administered fairly.

"In this country, if you can afford a good lawyer, you're most likely not going to get the death penalty," she said. "As a result, those who are poor or minorities are more subject to it. It also depends on what county you're in. I know Harris county gives out

more death penalty sentences than any other county in Texas."

Van Hightower said she thinks it is wrong not to give juries the choice of giving life sentences without parole.

"Juries can give life sentences, but at some point, criminals become eligible for parole," she said. "What that means for juries is that there is always the possibility that someone will be back on the street. I think they'd be less inclined to give the death penalty if they knew someone would be locked up for life."

In Texas, 144 people have been executed since the death penalty was reinstated, and last year, a record of 37 convicted killers were put to death in the state.

"My inclination is that she is probably rehabilitated," Van Hightower said. "I don't know if she should be on the street, but I also don't know if society is better off with her death. It seems so terribly cruel and final. The death penalty doesn't allow for mistakes or rehabilitation."

PLEASE SEE **PENALTY** ON PAGE 6.

## Crowds, long lines problem areas for Student Rec Center

By LYNDSEY NANTZ  
Staff writer

For the past two weeks, students wishing to keep their New Year's resolutions to improve their health at the Student Rec Center have had the same luck as commuter students looking for a parking space on campus.

Overcrowding at the Rec Center peaked Jan. 26 when a record 97 students participated in the various exercise programs the Rec Center offers.

Michael Waldron, the Assistant Facility Director for the Rec Center, said the first few weeks of classes the busiest.

"We have the greatest participation right at the beginning of the semester, before students get bogged down with reading assignments," Waldron said.

Waldron said January is a busy month at the center because of a combination of student's New Year's resolutions, dieting after the holidays and bad weather.

"People eat too many sweets during the holidays, put on seven pounds I want to get it off," he said. "January is known for bad weather—chilly, dry and cold, so people come inside to jog and exercise."

Fami Gearhart, a junior general

health major and a Rec Center patron, said she even waited in line for the water fountain.

"Everything was full at 10:00 p.m. I waited in line for everything—the stair stepper, the treadmill, even to get a drink of water," Gearhart said. "The place was packed."

DeAun Woosley, Fitness Programs Coordinator for the Rec Center, said the best time to go is anytime before 4 p.m.

"Aerobic classes between 4 and 6 p.m. are really full, but we have 30 aerobic instructors teaching 88 different classes throughout the week," she said.

Woosley said the center is overcrowded now because students feel overweight after the holidays.

"Students are thinking about spring break and all the holiday eating they did," Woosley said. "Then they think that they need to go swimsuit shopping and they feel guilty so they start working out."

Woosley said that A&M is very lucky to have the Rec Center because they are the most varied health club in the area.

"Even if it is crowded at the prime times, there is a mecca of opportunities to participate in exercise programs," she said. "The Rec Center has more equipment than any health club in the area."

## Got milk?



Brian Spittler, foreman at the Dairy Science Center, milks a group of Holstein cows Monday morning.

MIKE FUENTES/THE BATTALION

## Proposed budget offers first surplus in 30 years

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Clinton, declaring an end to an era of exploding deficits, today sent Congress a \$1.73 trillion budget proposal that promises a story-making achievement — the first surplus in three decades.

But Republicans, who control Congress, were not impressed by Clinton's anticipated \$9.5 billion surplus, accusing the president of turning to old-fashioned Democratic tax-and-spend policies.

"This is a budget only a liberal could love," said House Speaker Newt Gingrich, R-Ga. "This is far cry from the leaner, more flexible government that the president promised."

And on the other side of the Capitol, Sen. Phil Gramm, R-Texas, said, "This budget comes as close to a tax-and-spend budget as any budget we've seen since 1979, since Jimmy Carter was president."

Clinton unveiled his budget at a White House ceremony, saying, "This budget marks the end of an era, an end to decades of deficits that have shackled our economy, paralyzed our politics and held our people back," Clinton said in a budget ceremony in the East Room of the White House.

To underscore his achievement, Clinton drew a gigantic zero on a giant labeled 1999 budget deficit, drawing applause from the crowd and administration officials and

congressional Democrats.

However, Republicans accused Clinton of breaking faith with last summer's balanced budget agreement with Congress by putting forward dozens of new spending programs.

"It looks like the president wants to eliminate state and local government. He wants to run everything out of Washington," complained House Budget Committee Chair John Kasich, R-Ohio.

Rep. John Boehner, R-Ohio, another House leadership member, said: "The American people don't want bigger government, they want better government."

In addition to holding out the prospect of the first federal budget surplus since 1969, Clinton's ambitious plan calls for expanding the federal government's role in providing child care, increasing medical research, lowering the age limits for Medicare and helping to hire 100,000 new teachers to reduce class sizes in the nation's schools. Overall, Clinton's 1999 budget for the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1 proposes a 3.9 percent increase from this year's spending levels. Republicans want to use the revenue windfall from the strong economy to provide billions of dollars in tax relief, including eliminating the "marriage penalty" on two-earner couples.

## Today marks last opportunity for students to get book refunds

By AMANDA SMITH  
Staff writer

Today is the deadline for students to receive a full refund for returned textbooks at the MSC Bookstore and most bookstores in the Bryan-College Station area.

Micah Hovda, a senior employee of Loupot's Northgate and a senior construction science major, said students must remember to bring their receipt and to leave the stickers on the books for a full refund.

"We can't take the textbooks back without the stickers (on the books) and the receipt," Hovda said. "If students put books on credit cards or use Aggie Bucks, then we have to put the books back on the card because we can't give students cash back."

Austin Black, an employee in his third semester at the MSC Bookstore and a sophomore general studies major, said the number of returns is decreasing as the semester progresses.

"Our big returns have passed," Black said. "We have had quite a few returns, but it is slowing down. Most cases of refunds are usually where professors change

sections, change books or cancel books."

After the return deadline, students may only receive the price of a returned used book, which usually means half of the amount paid for the book.

David Holbert, textbook manager at Rother's Bookstore on George Bush Dr., said the bookstores consider the condition of the book and the demand for the book next semester when determining prices. Holbert said the store considers whether the book will be used during the following semester and whether updated editions are available.

Erik Lorimer, textbook manager at the Texas Aggie Bookstore, said his store stopped giving full returns on textbooks purchased for the spring semester last Friday.

"We decided that since last Monday was the last day to add or drop classes, most students already have an idea of what books they need," Lorimer said. "Generally, most of the returns that we have are

from courses where professors change their minds about the books or students do not need the books for classes."

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