

Taking a stand



STEPHANIE CORLEY/THE BATTALION

Geraldo Olivo, a senior journalism major, talks about racial and educational injustices he said he feels are prevalent at Texas A&M University. Olivo and the rest of the student body and staff were given a chance to voice opinions Tuesday at Open Mic held by MSC Great Issues and the Political Forum.

The Greys

By Gab



Andy in Aggieland

By Step



Land exploration leads Texas man to life of hidden treasure

HEMPSTEAD (AP) — Every place needs an explorer, and Waller County has found one in Clarence Miller. He has been prowling fields and fence lines around here since 1986, finding forgotten spots where history once unfolded and combing treasure from the trash left behind over the years. He has discovered everything from Stone Age flint points to Civil War bayonets, and in the process turned himself from a novice arrowhead hound into a formidable amateur archaeologist and historian. "Oh, the archaeologists wouldn't call me that," Miller said as he scouts a by-now-familiar private pasture just outside Hempstead on a recent afternoon. Head down and straw-hat brim shading his face from the midday sun, he explains that, as experts go, he can't be considered an official member of the club. The problem? "Credentials," he said. "The archaeologists and the paleontologists — they'd look for credentials that I haven't got." Miller's own credentials lie far afield from archae-

ology or paleontology or anthropology or even history. Now 62 and retired since 1994, he is an electrical engineer by training and worked most of his life as an instrumentation/control engineer. He lives in Houston but in most weeks he spends at least a few hours in Waller County, talking with landowners, walking their fields or doing record searches on their property. Miller came by his avocation accidentally. It began in 1986 with a flower. "A lady I knew found a flower in her pasture and wanted me to tell her what it was. In the process of doing that, I found an old home site and then another, and that got me started." Through his dozen years of field research, Miller has found more than 20 home sites in Waller County that date anywhere from the start of Stephen F. Austin's colony to the end of the Civil War. Few buildings or even remnants remain. Roofs, walls, fireplaces, fences — they're all pretty much gone now.

He's lucky to find scattered bricks from fallen chimneys. But to Miller's eyes, what looks like bare ground seldom is. "This is where the old Donoho plantation house stood from the 1820s to 1849," he said. "The perimeter of the house ran from there to there and there to there." He outlines the footprint of a rambling wooden house that he, at least, can see clearly in his mind. "Here's the cistern," he announces. Indeed, here almost underfoot, disguised by weeds, is the brick-and-mortar rim of an old ground-level cistern. Chipped and worn, the circular rim surrounds a void filled with dirt. He walks across what once was the farmyard of the early Texas plantation. Here was the shed, he said, and over there the smokehouse and three slave cabins that backed up to a shallow draw. Miller figures the draw and the cistern are ripe for excavation. There's no telling what they hide. To demonstrate, he kneels down, pokes around in

a mound of loose earth piled up by a gopher and in seconds turns up a quarter-size piece of white porcelain. "This is from (the Donohos') dishes," he said. "This kind of stuff is just a bit underground. They bring it up to the surface." Everything that Miller finds he offers to the owners of the property where it was discovered. Presumably that will include "Santa Anna's" cache of gold coins reputedly buried along the Mexican army's route to San Jacinto. The legend sure has teased local prospectors for generations. "I have doubts Santa Anna came this far north," said, "and anyway, you hear stories all the time about buried treasure." But skeptical doesn't mean disinterested. "Lately, I've heard about some farmer who's dug up his front yard five or six times looking for gold, but I sure want to talk to him."

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