

# Aggielife

The Battalion

## Chancellor's home finds use in entertaining University guests

In 1982, before anyone had thought of The Zone, a parking garage on West Campus or the new Library Annex, the University was expanding in other ways. The chancellor's home, which was approved for construction that year, is an example of A&M adapting to fit the needs of its staff.

The chancellor at the time, Arthur Hansen, was the first to live in the only new staff home constructed on campus since early this century, when the University stopped providing staff housing.

On July 31, 1984, the one-story ranch house located at Number One Reed Drive was given a name, and plans were made for the Hansens to move into the Chester J. & Billie Jean Reed House a matter of days.

The home was named after the Reeds following a \$1 million donation providing for the construction costs of the home. Construction had begun in August 1983, and less than a year later and ahead of schedule, the new residence was ready to be inhabited. The official announcement came on July 31 when the Hansens had made plans "to move in on Monday," according to an article in *The Battalion* from that year.

The home, which some may know only as "that building off George Bush" is very large and features numerous rooms for entertaining, as well as a catering kitchen to provide food for large events. Most of the space, however, is not considered a home but part of the administrative realm of the University.

In 1996, Nancy Hansen, wife of the former chancellor, said two-thirds of the house was not their personal space. She also said she had things to say about the furnishings of the new home.

"My feeling is that both presidents' and chancellors' homes should be bare-boned. The people after us may not like the furniture that's here now, and after all, people our age generally have their own furniture," she said in a *Battalion* article.

From the outside, the home is different from other buildings on campus constructed during that time.

The ranch-style home is built around a scenic courtyard and comes with a mountain that were donated by August and Lottie Bering. Bering was a member of the Class of '35 and wanted to contribute to the new home in some way.

Sitting on a drive off Jersey Street between Wellborn and FM 818, the building sports other unique features. The copper roof, the wooden shutters, gypsum board walls and wooden floors help the home stand out in little ways that some may not notice.

When the house was being constructed it was suggested that a pond be built to provide easy access for angling because Chancellor Hansen was a great fan of bass fishing.

Pat Olsen, Class of '23, provided \$200,000 for the fishing pond, and oversaw the construction himself. It was stocked by the Wildlife & Fisheries Department with the understanding that testing would be performed occasionally by the students. Olsen is Clinton and had worked on the pond himself with his own bulldozer in order to avoid the red tape involved in an "official" project.

SEE CHANCELLOR ON PAGE 4.

Story by  
Gray Whitten

Story by  
Stephen Wells

## Presidential residence houses pieces of A&M's past

From the outside, it is an ordinary looking home. It could be the residence of any successful professional. However, for a house with pieces of furniture dating from over a century ago, it is easy to overlook the history of the understated University president's home.

There have, in fact, been two president's homes on the Texas A&M campus. The first, built by Lawrence Sullivan Ross in 1893, was described as "an ordinary house for the well-to-do Texan to build for his family." This first presidential home stood until 1963. At 70 years old, it was the oldest building on campus and home to 14 University presidents.

In January 1963, a fire started in the vicinity of a fireplace and soon consumed the entire building. The Rudder family, who lived in the house at the time, enlisted the help of hundreds of students staying on campus over the Christmas break to save their belongings and help contain the blaze. By morning, the fire had been extinguished.

The next day, Margaret Rudder, wife of Earl Rudder, thanked those involved.

"I would like to give my sincere gratitude to the students, neighbors and firemen who braved the fire and the smoke to save our belongings," she said. "If it had not been for the kind help of so many persons, we would have lost everything."

The results of those volunteers can still be seen today. Visitors can see almost all of the furniture saved from the fire on the first floor of the president's current home, Sally Bowen, wife of University President Ray Bowen, said.

"Actually, I would say almost 90 percent of the furniture in the downstairs area of the house is from the old home that burned down," Bowen said. "The students who carried out the furniture saved the tables, the chairs and even the piano in the living room."

Shortly after the fire, the remains of the old home were demolished and the Rudders were forced to move into the Board of Directors' quarters, with five children and no kitchen to cook in.

The Rudders were forced to live under these conditions for some time because a property dispute kept R.L. Hunter, assistant state 4-H club leader, from buying the home he was going to rent to the Rudder family for temporary housing.

The dispute was settled when the Board of Directors stepped in to purchase the house until a replacement could be built on the Texas A&M campus. The site they picked for the building was a 2.3-acre spread just behind Kyle Field where the president's current home is.

In the tradition of Aggies helping Aggies, the new 7,000-square-foot, five-bedroom and four-bathroom home would be built for only \$60,000. A great deal of the building materials were donated by friends and former students.

SEE PRESIDENT ON PAGE 4.

# A 'Traditional' Home



The living area of the Texas A&M President's home features much of the same furniture featured in the first president's home. The first home was destroyed in a fire in 1963.



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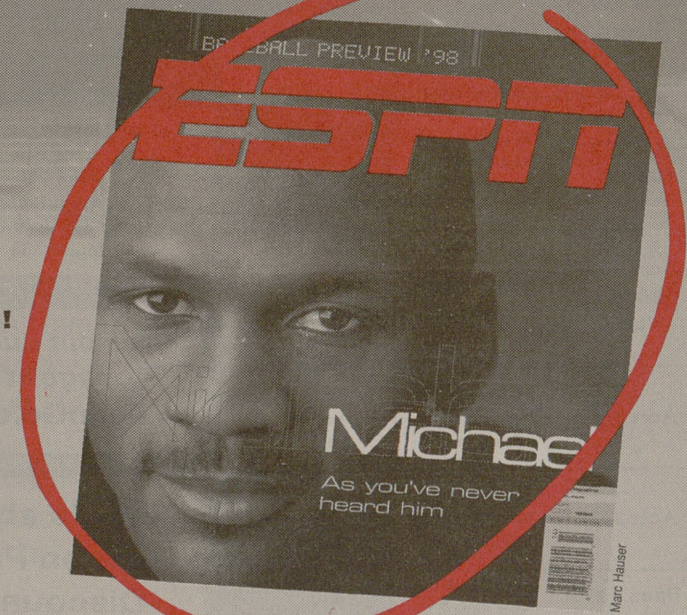
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