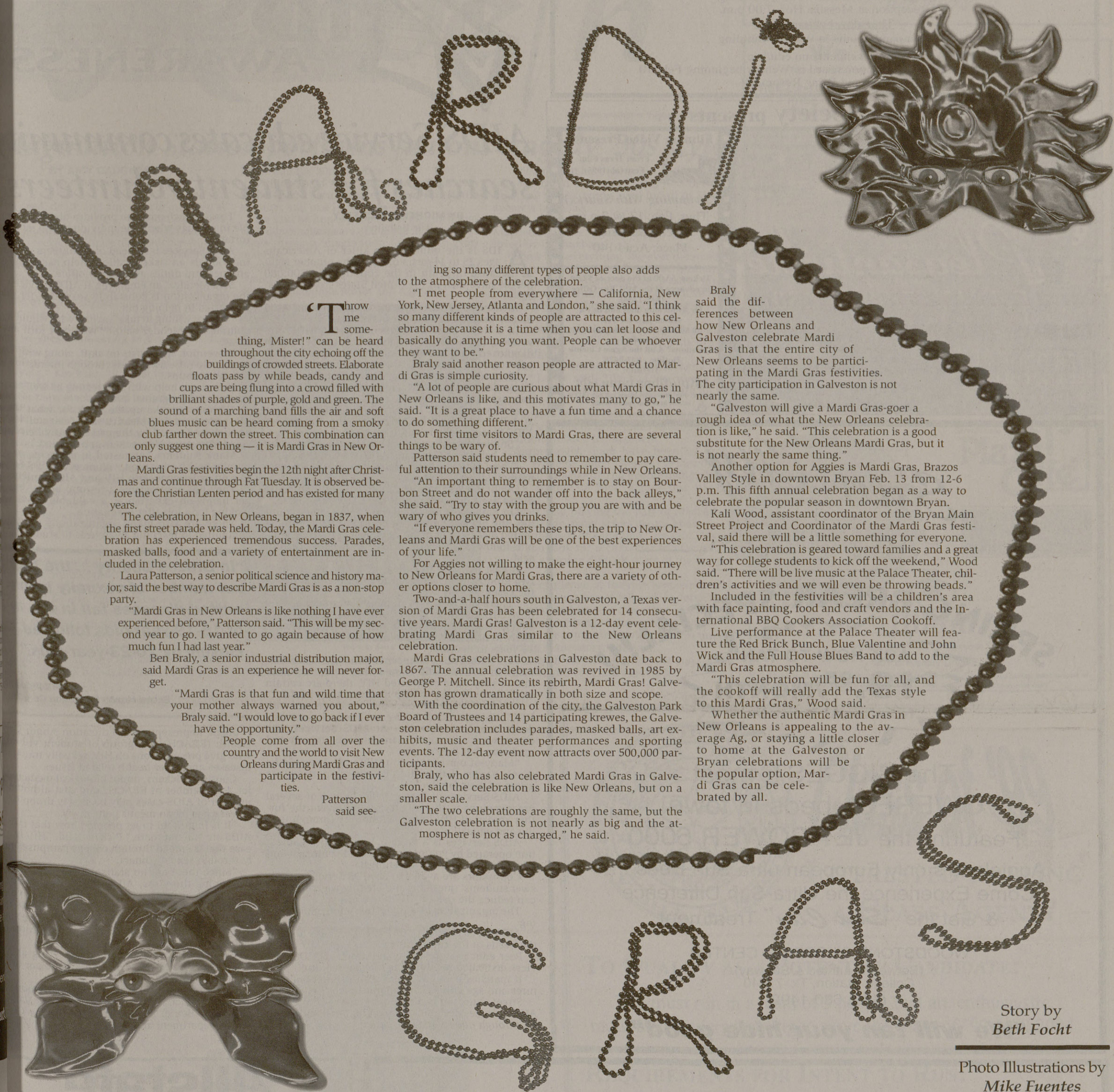


AGGIELIFE



ing so many different types of people also adds to the atmosphere of the celebration.

"I met people from everywhere — California, New York, New Jersey, Atlanta and London," she said. "I think so many different kinds of people are attracted to this celebration because it is a time when you can let loose and basically do anything you want. People can be whoever they want to be."

Braly said another reason people are attracted to Mardi Gras is simple curiosity.

"A lot of people are curious about what Mardi Gras in New Orleans is like, and this motivates many to go," he said. "It is a great place to have a fun time and a chance to do something different."

For first time visitors to Mardi Gras, there are several things to be wary of.

Patterson said students need to remember to pay careful attention to their surroundings while in New Orleans.

"An important thing to remember is to stay on Bourbon Street and do not wander off into the back alleys," she said. "Try to stay with the group you are with and be wary of who gives you drinks."

"If everyone remembers these tips, the trip to New Orleans and Mardi Gras will be one of the best experiences of your life."

For Aggies not willing to make the eight-hour journey to New Orleans for Mardi Gras, there are a variety of other options closer to home.

Two-and-a-half hours south in Galveston, a Texas version of Mardi Gras has been celebrated for 14 consecutive years. Mardi Gras! Galveston is a 12-day event celebrating Mardi Gras similar to the New Orleans celebration.

Mardi Gras celebrations in Galveston date back to 1867. The annual celebration was revived in 1985 by George P. Mitchell. Since its rebirth, Mardi Gras! Galveston has grown dramatically in both size and scope.

With the coordination of the city, the Galveston Park Board of Trustees and 14 participating krewes, the Galveston celebration includes parades, masked balls, art exhibits, music and theater performances and sporting events. The 12-day event now attracts over 500,000 participants.

Braly, who has also celebrated Mardi Gras in Galveston, said the celebration is like New Orleans, but on a smaller scale.

"The two celebrations are roughly the same, but the Galveston celebration is not nearly as big and the atmosphere is not as charged," he said.

Throw me some-

thing, Mister!" can be heard throughout the city echoing off the buildings of crowded streets. Elaborate floats pass by while beads, candy and cups are being flung into a crowd filled with brilliant shades of purple, gold and green. The sound of a marching band fills the air and soft blues music can be heard coming from a smoky club farther down the street. This combination can only suggest one thing — it is Mardi Gras in New Orleans.

Mardi Gras festivities begin the 12th night after Christmas and continue through Fat Tuesday. It is observed before the Christian Lenten period and has existed for many years.

The celebration, in New Orleans, began in 1837, when the first street parade was held. Today, the Mardi Gras celebration has experienced tremendous success. Parades, masked balls, food and a variety of entertainment are included in the celebration.

Laura Patterson, a senior political science and history major, said the best way to describe Mardi Gras is as a non-stop party.

"Mardi Gras in New Orleans is like nothing I have ever experienced before," Patterson said. "This will be my second year to go. I wanted to go again because of how much fun I had last year."

Ben Braly, a senior industrial distribution major, said Mardi Gras is an experience he will never forget.

"Mardi Gras is that fun and wild time that your mother always warned you about," Braly said. "I would love to go back if I ever have the opportunity."

People come from all over the country and the world to visit New Orleans during Mardi Gras and participate in the festivities.

Patterson said see-

Story by
Beth Focht

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- MSC Film Society (<http://films.tamu.edu/>) — **Pleasantville** Fri, Feb. 12, 7 p.m. and 9:30 p.m.
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