

THE BATTALION

106 YEARS AT TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

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Bonfire investigation tactics to be discussed

Commission researching collapse to host open meeting on methodology, course of action to be taken

BY STUART HUTSON
The Battalion

The commission to investigate the Bonfire collapse will hold an open meeting in the Board of Regents Annex in the MSC at 1 p.m. today to discuss methodology and gather their thoughts before beginning the investigation which is scheduled to finalize reports by March 31.

John Weese, chair of a team of University faculty members assigned to aid the committee and a professor of mechanical engineering, said the meeting will allow the members of the committee an opportunity to become oriented to their task in the Aggie environment.

"The members of the committee were selected because of their reputation for honesty and because they are completely

impartial in the investigation having not attended or taught at A&M," he said. "As a result, this is certainly going to be an organizational meeting — part to transmit some basic information and part for them to ask some questions so they can get some footing."

Weese said the committee will have full access to any information or help that can be made available by the University to facilitate the investigative process.

"This is just one of the very first steps toward the goal of figuring out what we can do to prevent another tragedy like this from happening again," he said. "The University is operating in a mode in which every bit of information the Bonfire committee wants or needs will be made available."

Leo Linbeck Jr., chair of the investigative commission, announced Tuesday the selec-

Bonfire Collapse Investigation Committee Meeting

Students may watch the meeting via closed-circuit television in Rudder 701 beginning at 1 p.m.

tion of four new commission members: Veronica Kastrin Callaghan, vice president of El Paso-based industrial real estate company, KASKO Ventures; Hugh G. Robinson, chair and CEO of Dallas-based construction

management company, The Tetra Group Inc.; Allan Shivers Jr., chair of Austin-based Waste Recovery Inc.; and William E. Tucker, chancellor emeritus of Texas Christian University.

"These four appointees bring a wealth of experience and varying perspectives as we delve into all aspects of the inquiry, and I thank them for agreeing to take on this awesome responsibility," Linbeck said in a statement Tuesday. "We have a big job ahead of us, but I have every confidence that with the talent and resources we have assembled, we will succeed in our fact finding inquiry."

This meeting comes after questions were raised last week by former professors about the safety procedures practiced at Bonfire site.

Larry Grosse, a former professor of construction science at A&M and a professor of construction science at Colorado State Uni-

versity - Fort Collins, said in an interview with *The Bryan-College Station Eagle* Tuesday that he questioned if proper stack building procedures, as printed in the Bonfire safety handbook including interlocking stacks, sinking first stack logs and wrapping the bottom two stacks with steel wire were being followed.

Rusty Thompson, faculty Bonfire adviser, said the guidelines as printed in the student-made document were usually followed as an act of habit.

"Students wrote these to insure the safety of everybody out there working hard on the stack," he said. "They are just guidelines and are in no way University sanctioned, which means that they may be followed at the red pots' discretion, but they are usually followed because they are the best way to do the work."

No soup for you



Steve Straznicky, a sophomore landscape architecture major, Rodney Hicks, a junior civil engineering major, Jacob Jochech, a junior biology major, and Lindsey Guthman, a junior psychology major, have stew at a pre-finals bash.

PATRIC SCHNEIDER/THE BATTALION

Rings to be distributed early for Class of 2000

BY DIANE XAVIER AND EMILY SNOOKS
The Battalion

The Aggie Ring Office has moved the distribution of Aggie Rings forward a week to insure students will receive their rings in time for the Class of 2000 Ring Dance, scheduled for April 8.

Kim Bailey, 2000 Ring Dance committee director and a junior sociology major, said the date of this year's Ring Dance was moved two weeks earlier to avoid scheduling conflicts with Parents Weekend and Easter. She said the committee realized the rescheduling would create a conflict with the delivery date of the rings.

"The [Ring Dance] committee, the class council and our adviser, Peggy Holzweiss, have all been working with the Ring Office since earlier this year, when we discovered there was going to be a problem," she said. "Carolyn [Swanzy] in the [Ring] Office has been working really hard to ensure students will have their rings in time."

Swanzy, Aggie Ring Program di-

rector, said the rings are tentatively scheduled to be passed out the morning of the dance at the Clayton Williams Alumni Center.

"The rings are usually delivered around mid-April, but due to the changes in the dance, we had to reschedule the delivery date," she said. "We have to have a certain amount of time for [the] manufacturer's to design them and time for us to distribute them. Hopefully, we will be able to work with it because of the changes."

Bailey said the main concern now is to make sure students get their degree audits in on time.

On Dec. 9 and 10 students can pick up audit forms at the table for Elephant Walk pictures in the MSC hallway.

Students need to complete an audit request from Dec. 13 to Dec. 17 between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. and may order their rings beginning Jan. 18 for April delivery.

Students who will not be in the College Station area between Jan. 18 and Feb. 11 can pick up a mail-order

HOW TO
get your RING
BEFORE the
ring DANCE

BEFORE DEC. 17
Get a degree audit

JAN 18 - FEB 11
Order your ring

APRIL 6 - 8
Receive your ring

The Ring Office is located at Clayton Williams Alumni Building
BRANDON HENDERSON/THE BATTALION

form and be measured for their rings Dec. 13-Dec. 21.

SEE RINGS ON PAGE 2.

Students prepare for Y2K

BY JULIE ZUCKER
The Battalion

While threats of Y2K computer glitches and banking errors weigh on the minds of the public, many students at Texas A&M feel the Y2K scare is overrated.

Richard Kattmann, a sophomore industrial distribution major, said the Y2K scare is blown out of proportion. "The whole thing is causing unnecessary mass hysteria," he said. "We should treat it like any other new year."

Jo Moss, spokesperson for Readiness2000, a coalition of Texas agen-

cies promoting Y2K readiness, said students who take safety precautions are on the right track, but should not get carried away making preparations.

"Companies have been preparing for Y2K for over two years now," she said. "Odds are problems [on Dec. 31] will be human errors."

Moss said if people all decide to pick up their phones to see if they work, or all flush their toilets to see if they still have running water, there will be complications.

Moss said students need to be aware of pranks others might play that night.

"Use common sense," Moss said. "Don't panic because your power flickers or your phones die. It may be a tree that fell, or someone playing games."

Moss said there are three guidelines Readiness2000 stands by and tries to tell the public that the best thing anyone can do is to be informed, be prepared and be positive.

Moss said students should prepare for Y2K just as they would for bad weather conditions.

She said students should fill their gas tanks up before Dec. 30, make

SEE Y2K ON PAGE 2.



Be Y2K Ready

- batteries
- radio
- nonperishable foods
- no more than 3 quarts drinking water
- flashlight
- prescription drugs

Tip: Fill up your gas tank before Dec. 30

BRANDON HENDERSON/THE BATTALION

Physics prof designs new, more durable superconducting cable

BY STUART HUTSON
The Battalion

Imagine traveling in a fuel-efficient hybrid car or receiving an MRI at almost a quarter of the cost. These things may someday be possible thanks to a new superconducting cable designed by a Texas A&M professor.

The superconducting cable, designed by physics professor Peter McIntyre shapes a high-temperature ceramic material into a more durable coil shape.

"Anyone who has dropped a ceramic plate knows the troubles scientists have with this material," McIntyre said. "The shape of a coil gives the material substantially increased durability, which might let it be used in something as rough as a car."

McIntyre said high-temperature ceramic superconductors, which function at minus 196 degrees Centigrade, were discovered 12 years ago and quickly replaced low-temperature metal superconductors, which function at minus 269 Centigrade, as the main area of study because of their potential for industrial applications.

"In a normal conductor, electrons travel through a conducting material, such as copper, in such a way as they smash into atoms and lose energy," he said. "This is what is called electrical resistance."

McIntyre said the electrons in superconductors hit the atoms but bounce off with no real energy loss, so no resistance is encountered.

He said the material's ability to convey electricity with no energy loss could make the coil invaluable for many industrial and scientific uses.

SUPERCONDUCTORS
Carry electricity with almost NO electrical resistance

- High temperature superconductors operate at -196°C
- Superconducting coils may lead to cheaper MRI scans and to more fuel-efficient hybrid cars

RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

"This coil may not only increase the accuracy of MRI hospital imaging of things like breast cancer but may also make it less expensive, because these coils can be made cheaper than what is usually used in these machines," McIntyre said. "In the brave new world of HMOs this may help out a lot."

McIntyre said the coils may be beneficial in the production of more fuel-efficient hybrid cars, which use both normal internal-combustion engines and batteries, and in power-regulating transformers used by power plants.

McIntyre said at a few hundred dollars a yard, however, the potential of superconducting coils may be momentarily hindered.

"Some people would take this to a very grand scale and envision these coils carrying energy to every house in the country," he said. "While they may do that someday, right now the applications are going to be limited to small industrial uses and even then after much more testing."

MSC Black Awareness Committee, others hold Pre-Kwanzaa celebration

BY KENNETH MACDONALD
The Battalion

More than 50 Texas A&M University students, faculty and staff joined together in song and dance last night at the MSC during the Pre-Kwanzaa celebration.

Members of the MSC Black Awareness Committee (BAC), Phi Beta Sigma fraternity, the student singing group — Voices of Praise and Fade to Black Dance Ensemble performed during the hour-long preview to the African-American holiday.

Kwanzaa, from Dec. 26 through Jan. 1, was started in 1969 by Dr. Mialana Karenga. It is a time for African-American families to come together to celebrate and reaffirm their cultural identity.

There are seven principles celebrated in the seven-day festival: unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity and faith. Each principle was discussed by a different speaker, and seven traditional symbolic candles were lit.

Joel Garrett, former BAC chair and a senior business management major, said the principles of unity and purpose are present at Texas A&M.

"The best display of unity at A&M was two weeks ago after the tragedy at the Bonfire fields," he said. "I went out to the Bonfire site and saw all these people going to work for a common purpose. Aggie Spirit calls for unity."

Shantavia Fields, BAC vice president for student



CODY WAGES/THE BATTALION

Shantavia Fields, a member of the MSC Black Awareness Committee and a sophomore interdisciplinary studies major, delivers a speech on Nia, which is one of the Nguzo Saba or principles of Kwanzaa. Nia means "purpose."

activities and a sophomore elementary education major, said purpose is a principle well-defined in the committee's actions.

"The Black Awareness Committee provides students to gain leadership by planning, coordinating and implementing a variety of multicultural events," she said.

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