



Lovett & Keen

Bonfire Benefit Concert raises thousands for victims

CHRIS CARTER
The Battalion

Over 9,000 people gathered last night in Reed Arena to celebrate the lives of the 12 Aggies who died in the collapse of the 1999 Aggie Bonfire over two months ago with a benefit concert featuring Lyle Lovett and Robert Earl Keen Jr.

In a combined effort by the Association of Former Students and MSC Town Hall, the proceeds from this concert directly benefit the Bonfire Relief Fund to help the families of the victims of the Bonfire collapse on Nov. 18.

Amy Polk, the Vice Chair of Concerts for Town Hall, is optimistic towards the success of the show.

"We hope to raise about \$100,000 through ticket and T-shirt sales," Polk said.

"The show blew my mind — I thought it would be a success, but this support is overwhelming."

The show started with a panel of several Texas A&M former students and songwriters in-

cluding Roger Creager, Kyle Hutchins and Max Stallings each playing two songs and trading off singing duties during an acoustical set.

Hutchins paid tribute to those affected by the collapse.

"I don't know what words I could say to express the extreme condolences my family and I feel for these people," Hutchins said.

Before Lovett and Keen's appearance, a video presentation was shown to the audience featuring John Comstock, the last victim from the Bonfire collapse who remains in hospital care.

Comstock was able to watch the Bonfire Benefit Concert in its entirety over an internet connection that had been set up for the occasion.

Lovett and Keen began the concert singing a duet of Keen's song "Rolling By." Each singer sang two songs at a time for the rest of the show.

After nearly two hours of playing, Lovett

See **BENEFIT** on Page 2.

GUY ROGERS/THE BATTALION
Lyle Lovett (R) and Robert Earl Keen (L) perform together at the Bonfire Benefit Concert Sunday Feb. 6, 2000 at Reed Arena. The concert is expected to raise over \$100,000 for the Bonfire Relief Fund which directly benefits the victims of the 1999 Aggie Bonfire Collapse.

SGA launches new Website

Association hopes site will provide useful information about A&M

BY KENNETH MACDONALD
The Battalion

Aggies may soon find it easier to access timely information about campus events, find books and even get their parking tickets waived — online.

The Student Government Association (SGA) will unveil an improved Web page designed to provide students with services and information about

THE Student Government Association WEBSITE CAN BE FOUND AT:

<http://sga.tamu.edu>

RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

life at Texas A&M.

Will Hurd, student body president and senior computer science major, said student government's goal is to provide faster access to information and services.

"There is already a book swap on the Web page," Hurd said.

"The new page will offer other services like AggieEbay, an online auction, and, hopefully, a PTTs lottery where students put their ticket ID numbers in the computer, and every week one gets waived."

Hurd said there will also be online advice for students on topics such as social issues and finance.

"I am a senior and have been through the ringer," Hurd said.

"There are some things going on the page that I wish I would have known when I was a fish."

Caton Brown, vice president for student services and senior civil engineering major, said information about many professors, grade distributions and student and faculty legislation will be online.

"You can see the instructors' awards and their syllabi, [and] all the legislation in the Student Senate can be seen online," Brown said.

"We are working on having weekly polls and a place for feedback. We will use it as a way to gauge student opinion."

Doug Keegan, vice president of technology for SGA and senior applied math major, said extra money in student government funds paid for the new services.

"We had a little left over from last year's budget," he said.

"We used that to purchase the server and upgrade the system."

Aggie band director sues Airlines

STAFF AND WIRE

Ray Toler, director of the Aggie Band, sued American Airlines in Arkansas state court Friday because of injuries he sustained during the June 1, 1999, crash of Flight 1420.

Toler suffered a broken arm when the plane lost control while landing in Little Rock during a thunderstorm. The plane ran off the runway killing 11 people and injuring 110 of the 145 passengers on board.

Toler's suit seeks compensatory and puni-



TOLER

tive damages on allegations that fatigued pilots violated procedures by attempting to land in unsafe conditions.

Randal Craft Jr., an American Airlines attorney, said Friday that he had not reviewed the lawsuit.

Most of the other suits brought against the airline have been transferred and consolidated to federal court in Little Rock because most of the cases deal with interstate disputes between residents of one state suing a company from another.

Toler's attorney, Michael Slack, said Toler stands a good chance of having his case heard in an Arkansas state court because he is a resident of Texas and is suing the airline which is based in Fort Worth. Slack said the hearing in state court may allow the case to be heard

sooner. Also, Toler has a greater chance of receiving compensation for his injuries via a state court which requires a 9-3 decision from the jury while federal court requires a unanimous jury decision.

If the suit is transferred to federal court, the civil trial against American Airlines will begin in May of 2001.

Toler said he was seated across from an exit that was damaged in the crash. Fires started at row 18 and near the back exit, trapping the passengers in the section in between.

Toler along with two others managed to open the door and jump head first 15 feet to the ground.

He said it took him five minutes to exit the plane from the time it came to a stop.

Bonfire commission finalizes budget, deadline

STAFF AND WIRE

Texas A&M Bonfire investigators have accepted a \$1 million budget and a March 31 deadline after overcoming a legal stumbling block involving indemnification of consultants.

But Leo Linbeck, Jr., chairperson of the Special Commission on the 1999 Aggie Bonfire, said the investigation's parameters could change. "It's very, very tight, but we think we can get it done by March 31 and for \$1 million," he told the *Dallas Morning News* Friday. "But I want to emphasize that there is a reasonably high proba-

AGGIE BONFIRE

bility that the investigators will learn something within the next six weeks that will require them to probe more deeply, and which will extend [the investigation] and cost more money."

Details of the budget were not immediately available, but Linbeck said the largest expenditure will probably be pay-

ing consultants to conduct extensive interviews with A&M officials, students who built Bonfire and other witnesses.

The A&M Board of Regents voted last month to allow the University to spend up to \$1 million investigating the incident. Further expenditures will require regents' approval.

Four consulting firms hired by the commission to conduct the inquiry have demanded that they be compensated if they are called to testify or give depositions in accident related lawsuits.

See **BONFIRE** on Page 2.

Students turn to loans for monetary support

BY APRIL YOUNG
The Battalion

Academics may be the foremost concern of many Texas A&M students, but for students like Angela Janeway, a junior elementary education major, the main concern is paying for a college education.

"We didn't have any money saved up for me to go to school, and my parents can't afford to help me," Janeway said. "Without loans, I wouldn't be able to go to school."

Janeway's story is typical of many students attending A&M. More than 23,000 student loans were administered during the 1998 fiscal year, with the average graduate owing \$12,348 according to the Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corp.

To be considered for a federal or state loan, a student must first complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) based on information from the previous tax year.

There are two main types of long-term loans available for students who need financial assistance to attend school.

The Federal Subsidized Stafford Loan is available to undergraduate, professional and graduate students with financial need.

The federal government pays the interest on the Subsidized Stafford Loan until the student graduates or drops below half-time study.

The Federal Unsubsidized Stafford Loan is available to undergraduate, professional and

graduate students with or without financial need; however, the student is responsible for the accruing interest while they are in school.

Generally, loans become payable six months after the student graduates or is enrolled on a less than half-time basis.

James Lane, assistant director of Student Financial Aid, said the Federal Parents Loan for

"Borrow only what you need so that when it comes time to pay-back, you're not totally indebted for your education."

— Kaye McGill
Guaranty Federal Bank area sales and student loan representative

Undergraduate Students (PLUS) is an alternative loan program that has increased in awareness since 1997.

"If the parent doesn't want the student to be obligated with a loan, the PLUS loan is an alternative loan which can be borrowed by parents," Lane said. "The only restriction is that it has a

credit check, so if the parents have any blemishes on their credit history, they may not be able to borrow through the PLUS loan program."

These long-term loans are provided by lending institutions such as banks and credit unions.

Kaye McGill, Guaranty Federal Bank area sales and student loan representative, said there are few differences in the services lenders offer.

"Since every lender follows the same federal rules and guidelines, the only differences [in lenders] are the level of service you will receive throughout your loan and how they can help you repay the loan," McGill said.

"Make sure you are working with someone that will be able to answer your questions and concerns and make you feel comfortable with the process."

McGill said the most important thing for students to remember when applying for a loan is to only borrow what is necessary.

"Borrow only what you need so that when it comes time to pay back, you're not totally indebted for your education," McGill said.

"You should fully understand your responsibility to pay the money back six months after you graduate or become less than a half-time student."

Janeway said she wants to pay off her student loans as soon as possible.

"Hopefully I will get a job teaching soon after I graduate so I can start paying my loans back," Janeway said. "It's not something I am looking forward to having over my head forever."

INSIDE

Aggielife

- **Conversations with The Batt**
Interview with Upright Citizens Brigade. Page 3
- **Women's Tennis starts off season with victories against SFA, SHSU**
Page 7
- **Opinion**
• **Choose or Lose**
Sensationalism: MTV special series avoids solid issues. Page 11
- **Batt Radio**
• Listen to KAMU-FM 90.9 at 1:57 p.m. for details on a speech by a Holocaust survivor.
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