

Comstock released

Final bonfire victim returns to home in Dallas

DALLAS (AP) — John Comstock, who spent more time in hospitals than did as a student at Texas A&M University, went home Friday, five months after being injured in the bonfire collapse that killed 12 young people and injured 27.

Comstock was the last Aggie remaining hospitalized after the 1999 Aggie Bonfire collapse. He left Zale Lipshy University Hospital at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center after extensive surgery, recovery and therapy.

Despite the loss of part of his left arm, partial paralysis in his right arm, and the prospect of a year or more in therapy, Comstock said he looks forward to returning to the University and traditions.

"We are not an Aggie family. John went down there, and he is very much for Aggieland and the whole bit,

and I support him in that," said Dixie Edwards, Comstock's mother.

Comstock, who lives in the Dallas suburb of Richardson, has begun taking college classes via the Internet from A&M's biomedical-science program. Comstock said he plans to return to school in College Station by next spring.

But he would like to make it back to the University next Friday for the Aggie tradition of muster, when the names of absent Aggies are read and Silver Taps is played for those who have died.

"I'd like to go to see what happens," Comstock said.

The 19-year-old freshman was wiring logs together on the fourth tier of the 59-foot-high pyramid of logs when it fell, killing 11 students and one former student and injuring 27 others.

When the wedding-cake pile of logs began tipping, Comstock grabbed the logs in front of him and

rode them to the ground. After being trapped for seven hours under the logs, Comstock was the last person pulled from the pile alive.

Dr. Karen Kowalske said Comstock's exit from the hospital in a wheelchair was a big improvement from his arrival.

"When John got here, he came on a stretcher. He was not able to sit ... he had a feeding tube, and he was not able to use his right arm or either of his legs," Kowalske said.

Comstock is able to get himself out of bed and into his wheelchair and has strength in his right elbow and shoulder, she said.

Comstock will undergo outpatient therapy at the hospital five times a week. "I am expecting full recovery with use of prosthetics," Comstock said. "I think as long as I believe it hard enough, it will happen."

Neither son nor mother said they



JP BEATO/THE BATTALION

John Comstock, the last student rescued from the bonfire collapse answers questions at a news conference Friday when he was released from Zale Lipshy University Hospital. Standing next to him are his mother, Dixie Edwards and Dr. Karen Kowalske of UT Southwestern Medical.

thought the bonfire was unsafe. Comstock said he did not think the University could have prevented the accident.

"I firmly believe the tradition should continue. We can learn from it," Comstock said. But, he added, the structure would be safer if it were built during day-

light hours and with more supervision.

In three weeks, the Special Commission on the 1999 Aggie Bonfire collapse will issue a formal report on its \$2 million inquiry. Some theories to explain the collapse include a flawed structural design and a weakened centerpole.

Marines honor Heard

BY RICHARD BRAY
The Battalion

"Simply being an officer was not enough for Christopher Heard. He wanted to be the best possible officer he could possibly be. The three values of the United States Marine Corps are honor, courage and commitment. Chris Heard had all three of these values."



HEARD

Col. Jim Sachtleben, Marine Corps officer and member of the Class of '69, spoke these words in honor of Christopher Heard, a freshman in Company K-2 of the Corps of Cadets, during a special Honorary Marine ceremony Saturday afternoon.

Heard was among the twelve killed in the 1999 Aggie Bonfire collapse.

Sachtleben, a naval science professor at A&M who submitted the request to have Heard be named "Honorary Marine," said it is difficult to obtain the title of Marine.

"The title of Marine is not bestowed frivolously, nor is it taken lightly," he said. "An individual can only earn the title 'Marine' by finishing training in either San Diego or Virginia."

Sachtleben said the presentation of the title of Marine is one of the most important moments in a Marine's career.

"It is nothing we take lightly. We feel so strongly about it that it is included in one of the verses of our hymn: 'First to fight for right and freedom, and to keep our honor clean, we're proud to claim the title, United States Marine.'"

During the ceremony, Sachtleben described several of the qualities that made Heard worthy of the title "Honorary Marine."

"By any measure, Christopher Heard was a United States Marine. He had aspired from a young age to be an officer of the Marines. He attended the Marine Military Academy and graduated there in 1999," he said.

"At the time of his death he was beginning the process of enlisting in the United States Marine Reserve where he could serve as an enlisted Marine, go to school at Texas A&M and pursue a commission through the [Platoon Leaders Class]."

In the history of the U. S. Marine Corps, the title "Honorary Marine" has been bestowed less than 20 times.

The commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. James L. Jones, designated Chris Heard an honorary Marine.

In his letter to Heard's parents accepting Heard as an honorary Marine, Gen. Jones wrote of Heard's devotion to his country.

"Since 1775, Marines have lived by the motto 'Always Faithful,'" wrote Jones. "Christopher's patriotism was well known, and his aspirations to serve his country are an inspiration to us all."

Heard's parents, Les and Andrea, were presented with a plaque honoring their son and his commitment to the Corps of Cadets and the military.

Blinn College takes registration online

BY MAUREEN KANE
The Battalion

Students attending Blinn College in Bryan can now register for classes online.

Online registration became available on April 10 for students registering for Summer Session I.

According to Gena Parsons, public information officer for the Bryan Campus of Blinn College, the introduction of online registration should shorten the long lines previously experienced by students attempting to register. Parsons said the lines are especially long during late registration in the fall, because 20 percent of the 8,184 Blinn students register late.

Vivian Jefferson, director of admissions and records for Blinn, said that the long lines are only a problem during late registration.

"When a student walks in with late registration papers, we still need 48 hours to process those. Late-registering students standing in line with students trying to fix their class schedules create lines and have caused problems in the past," Jefferson said.

The new online registration program, called Blinn Online Registration and Information System (BORIS), can be accessed through Blinn College's Website, www.blinn-col.edu. Once logged on, a student can add or drop courses, check their current class schedule, print unofficial transcripts and change personal information.

According to Parsons, BORIS allows students to register when their application is complete, instead of limiting early registration to continuing students with good academic standing. BORIS prohibits students from registering for courses for which they have not completed the prerequisite classes.

Jefferson said that Blinn is working on for two years. The board of Blinn College decided to try Web-based registration before telephone registration, but will offer telephone registration for the first time in the fall.

"We knew we'd have to go to automated registration soon because our enrollment has increased so dramatically. We needed more than arena registration, which is when everyone comes in and goes from station to station.

All of the staff on the entire campus works registration, and we receive complaints from staff and students who have had to stand in line. Arena registration isn't the most effective way to register," Jefferson said.

Jefferson added that Blinn is trying to give students the most effective options for registration, so they will continue on-campus registration for those who prefer it, as well as Web-based and phone registration in the fall.

Don't feed the animals



JP BEATO/THE BATTALION

College Station residents Alexa, 6, and Marco, 2, give the Easter Bunny a blade of grass to eat at the 2nd Annual George Bush Presidential Library Easter Egg Roll. There were several games and events for the children to enjoy, including an egg hunt.

BLINN COLLEGE

BRYAN CAMPUS

Blinn Online Registration & Information System (BORIS)

www.blinn-col.edu

RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

See BORIS on Page 12.

Dow Jones, Nasdaq plummet

Markets see largest day, week point drops in history

NEW YORK (AP) — If there was a glimmer of good news in Friday's catastrophic stock market sell-off, it came in the final hour of trading.

The Dow Jones industrial average, down more than 100 points in late afternoon, clawed about 100 points higher by 4 p.m. when the closing bell rang at the New York Stock Exchange.

"The close was vitally important," said Gary Kaltman, chief technical analyst at J.W. Genesis Securities in Boca Raton, Fla. "For several days, we saw selling peak in the last hour as major institutional investors just got out of the way."

On Friday, the institutional investors appeared to be responsible for the late-hour upturn.

That very modest move higher could have been a sign that after the worst week in Wall Street history, investors are ready to return in search of bargains, some market analysts said. But others aren't as certain investors will be ready to jump back in.

The Dow industrials lost a record 805.71 points, or 7.3 percent, last week, while the Nasdaq composite index shed a record 1,125.16 points, or 25.3 percent.

Past market dips have given a nation mad for stock investing the chance to buy highly regarded stocks at more-affordable prices. Bargain-hunting investors were largely responsible for lifting the market out of steep corrections in 1997 and 1998.

But last week, buyers were hard to find. The utter lack of enthusiasm left some analysts pessimistic about the market's chances come Monday.

"It's not a funeral. But it is a crisis," said

Jim Griffin, chief investment strategist at Aeltus Investment Management in Hartford, Conn.

The market faces several potential roadblocks to a Monday morning advance. For one thing, margin calls, which contributed to the steep declines of the past two weeks, could draw more money from the market.

In recent sessions, brokerages have been calling clients to demand cash to cover accounts that were pumped up with borrowed money. In many cases, the stocks bought on margin are the ones that have been tanking, and traders can't find buyers for those shares to raise the needed cash.

Some traders said margin calls may have peaked last week, as brokerages targeted clients that had relatively

See MARKET on Page 10.

The market's worst days

The Dow and the Nasdaq plunged Friday, suffering their worst point drops ever. Here are the worst days, in terms of point losses, with the percentage change for each.

Dow		Nasdaq	
Date	Point drop	Date	Point drop
April 14, 2000	617.78	April 14, 2000	355.49
■ -5.66%		■ -9.7%	
Oct. 27, 1997	554.26	April 3, 2000	349.15
■ -7.18%		■ -7.6%	
Aug. 31, 1998	512.61	April 12, 2000	286.27
■ -6.37%		■ -7.1%	
Oct. 19, 1987	508.00	April 10, 2000	258.25
■ -22.60%		■ -5.8%	
March 7, 2000	374.47	Jan. 4, 2000	229.46
■ -3.68%		■ -5.6%	

Source: Compiled from AP wire reports

Website showcases professor, class info

BY BRANDIE LIFFICK
The Battalion

A new Website featuring Texas A&M professors' grade distributions, drop rate percentages and student reviews of professors has been officially launched.

Pickaprof.com was formed by two A&M seniors, Chris Chilek and John Cunningham. Visitors to the Website can look up professors by name or access a class by name and course number.

"I think it's very important for students to make educated decisions about what profs to take. I've had experiences where I've signed up for classes and had problems with them. But I was signed up before I found out that things weren't going to work out," said Chilek, a computer science major. "Pickaprof offers students a way of being more informed

when choosing classes."

"Some students want to take a class with a professor who will make them learn the material. Others want a prof who will give an 'A,'" said Cunningham, a marketing major. "Either way, by getting a little background information, they can hopefully find what they are looking for."

Cunningham said the online evaluations of professors can be beneficial to both students and professors.

"This will help professors as much as they want it to help them," Cunningham said. "Professors generally don't like being cut down to simply numbers. That's why the reviews are great. Students can express constructive criticism for others to see, instead of just the numbers."

An anonymous donor from Austin sponsors the site. Pickaprof.com current-

ly features information from A&M and the University of Texas.

"If the prototypes — A&M and UT — work out, then we hope to feature universities from all across the nation by next fall," Cunningham said.

Cunningham said that all reviews are kept anonymous and that either he or Chilek screen each professor review in an attempt to keep students from displaying non-constructive criticism on the site.

"We don't allow in stuff that is obviously just students venting personal vendettas against their professors. We edit cuss words and things like that out."

Since pickaprof.com first appeared, over 450 reviews have been submitted.

"We are so excited about all of the feedback we are receiving already," Chilek said.

INSIDE

Sports

- Aggies shine at A&M Invitational

Page 7

Aggielife

- Behind the music

Local bands face many obstacles on the way to becoming famous

Page 3

Opinion

- Looking the other way

Purdue students willing to criticize university but not themselves

Page 11

Batt Radio

- Listen to KAMU-FM 90.9 at 1:57 p.m. for details on the B-CS unemployment rate.

Batt Online

- Check out The Battalion online at battalion.tamu.edu