

Students discuss fate of bonfire at forum

BY BRADY CREEL
The Battalion

Bonfire must go on no matter what it takes, said students who attended an open forum held by Vice President of Student Affairs Dr. J. Malon Southerland.

Through tear-choked emotion and a collective plea for understanding, Aggies came together Thursday to express support for the tradition to continue.

"We would be willing to do whatever it takes ... as long as we can build it and as long

as we can burn it in November," one student said. "Tell us what to do and we will do it because we want to see it burn."

A large part of the discussion was sparring by the mention of alcohol and hazing as related to bonfire, yet some students felt the spotlight exclusively on bonfire hazing and use of alcohol was unfair. They cited the alleged hazing that takes place in the Corps of Cadets, Greek life and other organizations on campus.

"I don't know many people who have been kicked out of bonfire for hazing," one student rebutted. "I know a whole lot of people who have been kicked out of the Corps, kicked out of their outfits ... I am a member of an organization that [was] put on three years probation for what we thought was good fun."

"If bonfire can stop the hazing, other traditions can follow," one student said. Another student questioned the students on their willingness to do anything to continue bonfire. He asked if the students were willing to give up alcohol and hazing and act like adults.

During the press conference following the Special Commission on the 1999 Aggie Bonfire Final Report, Texas A&M President Dr. Ray M. Bowen said that in his experience "students are quite sensible" in regard to bonfire.

"Students do, in fact, want to do the right thing," Bowen said. Bowen was questioned about the "sensi-

bility" of alcohol and hazing as students prepare for a possible Bonfire 2000.

"There's insane drinking and physical abuse," a source said, on terms of anonymity in a May 2 article in *The Battalion*. "The universal method of receiving physical hazing in bonfire is getting licked [struck] by an ax handle. Sometimes it's once. Sometimes it's twice. Sometimes it's hundreds of times in a night or semester."

The commission's report confirmed that hazing does, in fact, take place in the bonfire culture.

"We found considerable evidence of irresponsible behavior in bonfire," said commission member Veronica Callaghan during the report.

"Alcohol use was substantial, although student leaders reportedly prohibit alcohol or obviously impaired workers from working on stack. There was also evidence that hazing and harassment by student workers and student leaders, as well as unnecessary horseplay and fighting, are significant despite University efforts to control it," she said.

During the report, Callaghan described a "cultural bias" that limits A&M from initiating necessary changes and thinking outside of the box.

"This tunnel vision in decision-making is due, in the commission's view, to a cultural bias in which legitimate courses of action outside past experience or contrary to the University's predisposition are often not considered," Callaghan said Tuesday.

In Wednesday's forum, students addressed the need for students to take responsibility in making the changes for the betterment of A&M and the Aggie Bonfire culture.

"The only way we can truly be proactive and make a change is we make a change and



JP BEATO/THE BATTALION

Outside Reed Arena Tuesday, many students signed a petition to keep the bonfire tradition alive. The petition has been signed by hundreds of students.

as students, say no and look at someone hazing and say 'No, what you are doing is not right,'" said Catherine Green, a sophomore accounting major. "The University can come out with policies, rules and procedures all they want, but the only way there can be a change is if we are proactive and make the change ourselves."

Students commented on how difficult it was to change tradition and why some aspects of the Aggie Bonfire culture should be preserved in the name of tradition. Yet, others talked about the way the hazing and alcohol continued simply because no one had the temerity to stand up and say it was wrong.

"We, as students, have to prove to the administration that we can regulate ourselves," one student said. "We need to regain their confidence in us that we can do it, but we have to ask ourselves 'Are we ready to regulate ourselves?'"

Rusty Adams, class of '96, said although he is pro-bonfire, he was frustrated with some of the students' inability to accept the criticism of the bonfire organizational failures in the commission's report.

"I have had visitors in town that I was embarrassed to take to bonfire site because of some of the things I knew were going on out there," Adams said. "If we're going to blow our horns — as many of us do — about how much class we have, then we need to have it."

Adams told an account of working on the second stack one night in 1994 with one of his buddies.

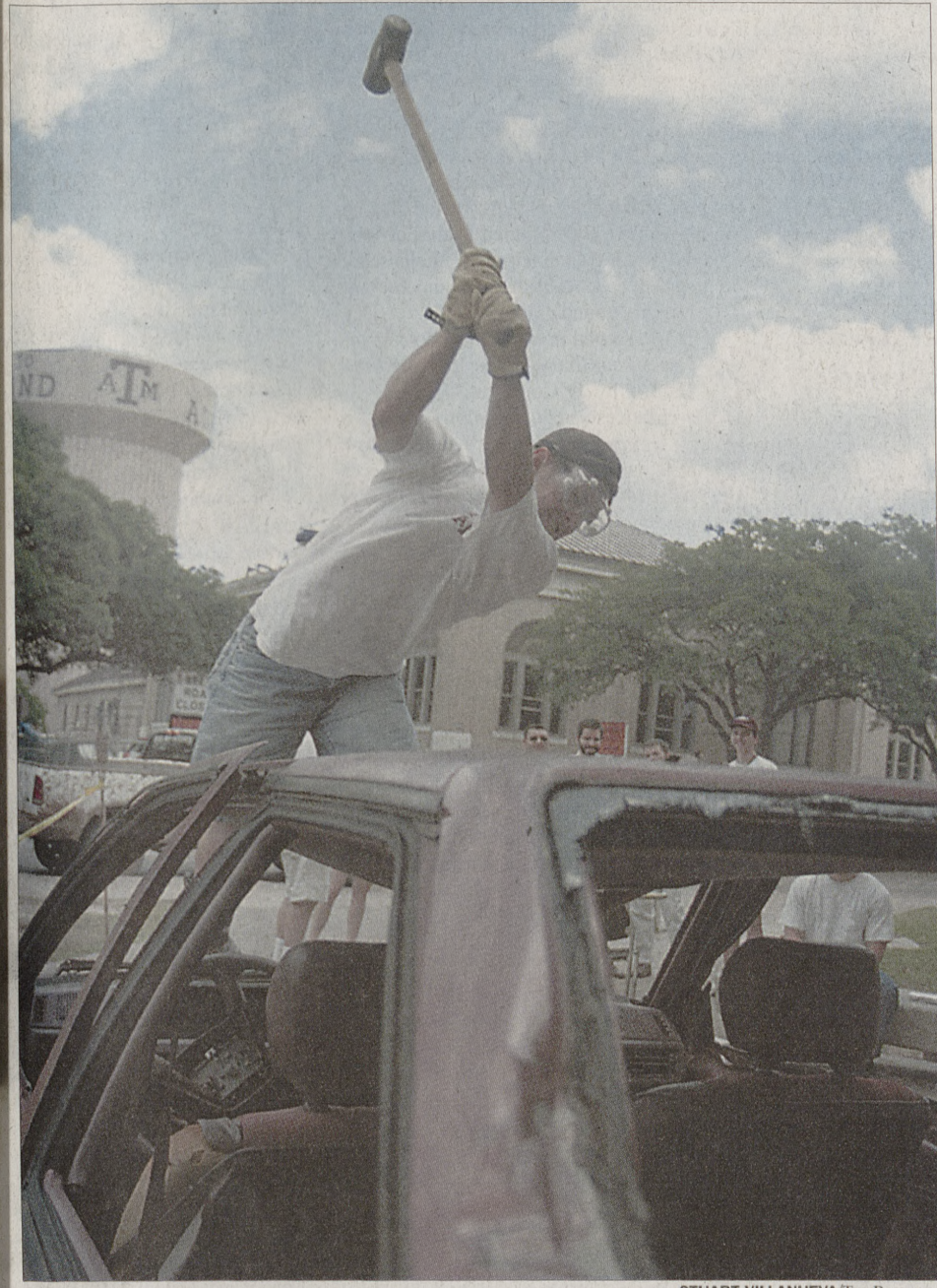
"We got in a yelling match over whether we needed more logs," Adams said. "We said we weren't going to take them any faster than we can wire them in and wire them in well."

Adams said they were working a shift from 12 a.m. until almost 6 a.m.; they had to leave because they had band drill at 6 a.m. to prepare for their halftime show that week.

"When we were leaving, we looked back at the stack and said 'Does that look like it's leaning to you?' and we decided it was probably just an illusion," Adams said. "On the way back to the dorm, we said 'What do you think would have happened if we had gone back and said that bonfire looks like it's leaning to us?'"

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Stress relief



STUART VILLANUEVA/THE BATTALION

Matt Kemper, a freshman business major, works off some pre-exam stress by bashing a car outside Walton Hall Wednesday. The event, "Up in Here 2000" is designed to help students relax during finals week and was sponsored by Walton Hall. It featured the carbash, a slip and slide and Jell-O wrestling.

'I LOVE YOU' virus hits, causes computer panic

(AP) — A new software virus spread quickly around the world today, swamping U.S. computer networks with e-mails entitled "I LOVE YOU" after crippling government and business computers in Asia and Europe. The FBI opened a criminal investigation.

Experts said they were stunned by the speed and wide reach of the virus — which struck members of U.S. Congress and British parliament — and warned computer users not to open the "LOVELETTER" attachment that comes with the contaminated e-mail.

"It appears to be the same sort of class of virus as Melissa," the e-mail virus that overwhelmed computer systems around the world about a year ago, said Bill Pollack, spokesman for the CERT Coordination Center in Pittsburgh, a government-chartered computer security team.

But the new virus, which uses the Outlook e-mail program from Microsoft to spread, also may infect other types of files stored on

desktop computers and network servers, CERT reported on its telephone hotline. According to other reports, the virus may rename or damage those files.

In Washington, FBI spokesperson Debbie Weierman said that the bureau has opened a criminal in-

"It seems to be the same sort of class of virus as Melissa."

— Bill Pollack
CERT Coordination Center
spokesperson

vestigation of the virus attack and is assessing its impact domestically and internationally. She would not say which field office is leading the investigation.

By midafternoon Eastern time, a virus scanning system provided

on the Internet by the Trend Micro computer security company had already detected almost 1.2 million infected computer files around the world, including more than 900,000 in the United States.

In Britain, about 30 percent of company e-mail systems were brought down by the virus, according to Network Associates, another computer security company. In Sweden, the tally was 80 percent.

Much like Melissa, the "love bug" spreads by infiltrating a computer user's address book and sending copies of itself to that person's contacts. However, the new virus also seemed to be using instant messaging or "Internet chat" systems such as ICQ to spread, Computer Associates reported.

The virus appeared in Hong Kong late in the afternoon, spreading throughout email systems once a user opened one of the contaminated messages. It later moved into European parliamentary houses and

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Memorial funds created for victims

BY BROOKE HODGES
The Battalion

Hours after the 1999 Aggie Bonfire collapse, former students, individual donors and corporations flooded the University with donations.

Two funds were established to aid with immediate needs, preserve the memory of the victims and celebrate the lives of those that were lost.

The Bonfire Relief Fund is still providing families of the deceased and injured with funds.

"We told the families to use the money as they needed it. [There was] no set rule," said Barbara Kasper, fundraising director for the Association of Former Students.

She said the money was used for everything from covering minor injuries to paying for long hospital stays for bonfire victims.

Kasper said the Association of Former Students advanced money to the Bonfire Relief Fund so that families would not have to wait for money to accumulate in the account.

The Bonfire Relief Fund has received

\$355,000 from individual donors, A&M Clubs and A&M Mother's Clubs across the country; the Bonfire Benefit Concert and the High Meadow Ranch Golf Tournament.

The University is still in contact with the families and a need-based decision is made on the amount each family receives, Kasper said.

The Bonfire Memorial Fund was set up to fund the structure that will be erected in memory of the bonfire victims. The Texas A&M Foundation serves as the collection agency for the funds donated toward the memorial.

Dr. J. Malon Southerland, vice president for student affairs, said the plans for a bonfire memorial are not finalized and the Office of Student Affairs would wait until the commission's report was released to make a decision.

In a February interview with *The Battalion*, Southerland told reporters that a committee would be formed to decide the form a permanent monument to the victims would take.

"We're going to develop the criteria for

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Students prepare for summer-time packing, moving

BY ANNA BISHOP
The Battalion

For many Texas A&M students, their college years will encompass more moves than the rest of their adult lives, so it may come as no surprise that students have a few suggestions about making a move as easy as possible.

"Simplicity is the key to making things go smoothly when moving," said Andrew Nicholas, a sophomore economics major. "Throw out the things you will not use again, or won't need ... because they'll just get in the way later."

While most tips could be considered simply common sense,

college students are capable of providing both creative and versatile ideas when it comes to packing up.

Chris Horan, a mechanical engineering graduate student, said he relied on company perks to help pay the cost of renting a moving truck.

"I recommend students who work to ask their companies — particularly larger companies — if they offer a corporate discount to cut down moving expenses. I was able to rent a 16-foot truck at a very reasonable rate," Horan said. "If you are going to use a moving truck, I strongly recommend using moving blankets to protect your furniture."

While some students try to find ways to cut down on moving expense, others look for ways to simplify the process.

"I've learned to leave belong-

ings in the desk drawers and to fill small boxes instead of larger ones, which makes it easier to handle," said Kara Dooley, a structural engineering graduate student.

Enrique Barcenas, a senior civil engineering major, said he routinely makes a list before starting the physical move.

"Making a list lets you know in advance what you need to move in first or last, and ensures an ease of moving. Small things typically will go in last," Barcenas said.

In addition to student ideas, Websites like offer services such as low-cost truck rentals to help students during the moving process.



TIPS FOR MOVING OUT

- Use small boxes instead of large
- Throw things away you won't use again
- Use empty boxes from grocery stores or superstores

RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

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• Listen to KAMU-FM 90.9 at 1:57 p.m. for details on the arrest of a local credit card thief.

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