

## Life is Messy



Custodians at Texas A&M University finish an entire day's worth of work before lunch.

"Each custodian normally works a 40-hour shift, and this usually is from 4 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. or 6 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.," said William H. Hutto, manager of A&M custodial services.

"I'm from Hearne, so I have to wake up at 4:30 to be here for my 6 a.m. shift," said Netra Hammond, a custodian on the fourth floor of Evans Library. "I also have another job working as the front desk clerk at a hotel from 4 p.m. to 11 p.m.," she said. This schedule allows Hammond only five hours of sleep per night.

Another custodian, Evelia Palos, said she gets up at 5 a.m. to be at work on time. Palos and Hammond clean the entire fourth floor of Evans with the help of only one other custodian, who is assigned to a back section of the floor.

"Our main duties are to clean restrooms, book stacks, tables and water fountains," Hammond said. She and Palos finish this work, empty the trash and vacuum.

"I have to mop the landing, too," Palos said. The landing is the hard floor in front of the elevators. Except for a few

specially assigned duties, the women split their work evenly.

Hammond and Palos have been with the A&M staff for five and 10 years, respectively.

"I worked in food service before custodial, and I like this better," Palos said.

"Evans is tough because it is a high-use facility," said Janet Druen, associate director for administration to the Physical Plant. "We have a really great group who works really hard." With so many large buildings to keep up, it is never easy work, she said.

Druen said the task of keeping the campus clean is daunting not only because of the size of the buildings, but because of the number of buildings each cleaning crew must service.

"One crew may have to handle up to 20 buildings," Druen said. "The sheer number of buildings requires a tremendous amount of work."

Training is also an integral part of the custodians' routine. Custodial training is necessary for the workers to handle the various chemicals they use, and Texas A&M has an excellent training program.

"Our cleaning staff must go through rigorous training; we have our own in-house training program," Druen said. "Many other institutions like Prairie View Texas A&M and also private industries have sought counsel here because our training program is so good."

Safety is one of the most important parts of training, Druen said. "Custodians have to deal with a lot of chemicals, especially in the bathroom, so they learn how to mix them," she said. They also are trained in buffer usage, customer service, and more specialized duties for their specific job requirements.

"The custodians do all normal cleaning of classrooms, labs, offices, restrooms, hallways, stairs, conference rooms, entrances and any specialty areas such as operating rooms," Hutto said. They also strip and refinish hardwood floors, shampoo and extract carpet, and clean furniture, he said.

"The Physical Plant has 23 crews with 20 to 25 in each crew. Every crew has a supervisor," Druen said. The three custodial levels allow workers to be promoted.

"Custodial I is entry level, and to get to level II or III takes hard work and a willingness to supervise others. The higher-level workers in the crews are still hands-on hard workers," she said.

Hutto said the custodial staff at A&M is working harder than normal because it is understaffed.

"We currently have about 391 filled positions (Custodial Workers I, II, and III); if we had all positions filled, we would have 466 people," Hutto said. These numbers represent the Physical Plant custodial staff, which does not include Student Housing, Reed Arena and Food Services.

While fulfilling their duties, custodians must dress properly. Hutto said, "The dress code is that they wear a clean uniform each day (these are furnished by the Physical Plant) and wear closed-toe shoes. Head gear is only permitted

while working outside.

"Their 40-hour week shifts include two daily 15-minute breaks and a half hour for lunch," he said. Hutto said the only variation from the early morning shifts is in the library, Student Recreation Center, Veterinary School and George Bush Library, where custodians have to cover late-night and weekend shifts. The Memorial Student Center is covered on a 24-hour schedule. To encourage these odd hours and hard work, the minimum wage will soon increase.

"The beginning hourly rate for custodians will change from \$5.56 to \$6.15 in September," Hutto said. After several years with the University, an employee could earn from \$8 to \$12 an hour depending upon merit increases and mandatory raises.

Custodians' only break from hard work comes in the fall with the Custodial Olympics. Custodians race in the Commons in sweeping and dusting contests. "I saw it as a freshman and loved it," said Casey Wilson, a senior agricultural development major.

However, in a typical workday, no time is devoted to fun and games. With such a large campus, even a staff of 391 has an enormous amount of cleaning to do.

**"I have to wake up at 4:30 to be here for my 6 a.m. shift. I also have another job working as the front desk clerk at a hotel from 4 p.m. to 11 p.m."**

**— Netra Hammond  
Evans Library custodian**

## Aggie custodians struggle to make ends meet

STORY BY AMY ROSELLINI  
PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY ANDY HANCOCK AND JP BEATO

Y. J. GOLDFLUT  
by kyle  
I'm not saying it!  
Oh come on, you know you want!  
I am not lowering to that level of humor  
like that. That won't be funny  
TERRORIOUS L.I.B.  
What he gets.  
to go to school  
SCORE!  
The guys have humored in the meeting.  
murdered  
she reportedly suffered  
Amador allegedly struck her  
ane, police said.  
as a bloody mess," Hillman  
zie was covered in so much  
at you couldn't tell if he was  
back or Hispanic."  
he entered Room 231. Hill-  
she saw Amador's bed and  
walls splattered with blood.  
not recognize the body on  
r. Amador then started to  
r in his wheelchair and hit  
the head with a cane, accord-  
the Dallas Morning News.

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