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VOMIT COMET

The shadow world of A&M sciences

By JASON BENNYHOFF
The Battalion

Texas A&M is a school grounded in tradition and secrecy. Nowhere is that secrecy more evident than in the little-known offshoots of the various science departments. Tucked away in small corners, off dusty roads that seem to lead nowhere, are buildings with ominous names such as the Center for Space Power and the infamous Soil, Water and Forage Testing Laboratory. One can only imagine what devious and horrible experiments take place behind the doors of these buildings.

Frederick Best, director of the Center for Space Power, is one of the stealthy heads of these shadowy departments. According to him, nothing terrible goes on there. Until he mentions the "vomit comet."

Best explained, the horrific purpose of this machine is to study fluid motion.

"We fly up into a zero-G aircraft to study the way fluids work in zero gravity," he said. "They say that the class that vomits together sticks together, but this really helps us understand how fluids work in space."

Best said this experiment will help develop systems

that can be used on the space station. He said it is necessary to study how fluids move and react to shifts in gravity if fluid-dependent systems are to be used on a space station.

"We go up into a KC-135 (airplane) to study this," Best said. "A lot of students have done it — more students than faculty."

Take his word for what you will. Unfortunately, these deeds are not confined to the sky above Aggieland, they nest here on earth as well.

Michael Tomaszewski, a professor of dairy management, said that he works to develop new ways for dairy farmers to monitor their herds. Tomaszewski said that the studies he conducts can help dairy farmers be more productive and make their farms more lucrative.

"We work with software development for dairy cows," Tomaszewski said. "It shows production data on cows and the producer uses it to make the best decisions with his cows."

Strangely, Tomaszewski has discovered a similarity between cows and college students.

"Running is bad in relation to dairy cows," Tomaszewski said. "The producer is trying to convert as much energy into the milk the cows pro-

duce. The more fat and protein a cow produces, the more butter and cheese the producer can make."

Institutionalized cow lethargy, Jorge Martinez, director of the wind tunnel at A&M, said that the tunnel is used for aerodynamic research.

"Wind tunnels were originally designed for airplanes, but their use has been expanded to oil rigs, buildings, cars and everything that is exposed to wind," Martinez said. "Our wind tunnel has even been used for bikers. We actually put them in the tunnel with a big balance attached to the bike to make sure the pressure remains level."

Martinez said that even the great Lance Armstrong has used the A&M wind tunnel. Armstrong used the tunnel and came back to win the Tour de France after debilitating testicular cancer.

Martinez said that the wind tunnel is actually a low-speed tunnel, capable of blowing winds up to 200 miles per hour.

"Ours is often used for trucks," Martinez said. "The high-speed wind tunnels can go as fast as Mach 0.9 and the biggest wind tunnel in the world measures 80 feet by 120 feet, big enough to hold an actual fighter plane inside it."



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