

## Prisoner of war speaks of captivity

BY MARIANO CASTILLO

**The Battalion**  
Veteran's Day holds a special meaning for Texas A&M student Steven Gonzales. In March 1999, as a U.S. Army Specialist, Gonzales was one of three American soldiers captured by Yugoslav forces outside of Skopje, the Macedonian capital.

Gonzales, along with Sergeants James Stone and Andrew Ramirez, subsequently spent 32 days in a Belgrade prison as a prisoner of war (POW).

"After this [POW] experience, [Veteran's Day] is very special to me in the sense that maybe I have a little bit of feeling of some of the older veterans that I've seen and admired as I've grown up," Gonzales said.

Gonzales, a junior mechanical engineering major, shared his experience with a group of students from Oakwood Intermediate School at Corps Plaza Friday afternoon.

He told the students how terrified he felt immediately after being captured and how he was treated by the Yugoslav soldiers. The three were treated harshly at first, he recalled, and meals were skimpy at best.

Curious students pried deeper into Gonzales' month in the prison: "What was the best food they gave you?" a student asked.

"Beans, I remember, was one of the best meals I had," Gonzales said.

His presentation was the conclusion to a day-long program for the students put on by Silver Wings and Arnold Air Society.

Members of these A&M organizations taught the children about flag etiquette, traditions and gave them a tour

**"Once we got to the prison and realized that we may have to endure for a long time in solitude, we all fell back on certain things to keep our hopes up."**

— Steven Gonzales  
U.S. Army specialist and a junior mechanical engineering major

## Push



STUART VILLANUEVA/THE BATTALION

Brad Snead, a junior international studies major does push-ups in the south endzone of Kyle Field before on Saturday. Fans showed up early to participate in ESPN's "College Gameday" broadcast at Kyle Field.

## OU, 'College Gameday' bring record crowd and 35-31 loss

BY JASON LINCOLN  
**The Battalion**

The stage was similar to last year. The last game of the season in Kyle Field, the largest crowd ever to witness a football game in Texas. The jets that roared over Kyle Field just before kickoff and the return of an Aggie ring lost by a fallen Aggie echoed the last game in 1999, when the memory of the Bonfire collapse occupied as much of the Aggies' minds as the game against rival Texas.

Even the result was nearly the same. But instead of the Aggies coming up with a four-point upset over No. 5 Texas, it was No. 1 Oklahoma edging out the Aggies for the first time in Kyle Field since 1903 by a four-point margin, 35-31.

Everything about Saturday's match up against the Sooners was oversized, and it was not just limited to the nation's top-ranked team that took the field.

For the first time ever, ESPN's "College Gameday" broadcast live from College Station in preparation for the biggest game of the year.

The event drew thousands of A&M and OU fans to the stadium more than two hours prior to kickoff to watch the trio of college football analysts make predictions about the week's games.

But the scene had just begun as the A&M campus warmed up for the game to come to Kyle Field in two decades.

Prior to the game, an Aggie Ring found at the Battle of the Bulge in World War II was returned to the family of Medal of Honor Recipient 1st Lt. Turney W. Leonard. A group of fighter jets streaked over the stadium in honor of Veterans Day.

By the time the game was in full swing, Kyle Field had filled to a record crowd of 87,188, exceeding last year's record set against Texas for the largest crowd ever to see a football game in the state.

The Aggie crowd was Marooned Out for the second time this season, as it attempted to help the football team pull off yet another upset against a Top 10 opponent. During the last Ma-

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## Gore, Bush clash on votes

### Florida counties struggle with count

DELAND, Fla. (AP) — In Volusia County, several dozen election workers began counting 184,019 ballots by hand Sunday in a bleary-eyed task that will require 14-hour shifts over at least two days.

"We don't need to remind you of the importance of what's going on here," organizer Roy Schliecher told the election workers before they began. "The eyes of the country are on Volusia County today."

They also are fixed firmly on Palm Beach and Broward counties, two Democratic strongholds that plan hand counts this week, unless a federal judge on Monday grants a Republican request to block the manual recounts.

The two counties, along with Miami-Dade, account for about 1.5 million votes cast in the presidential election.

With the presidential election hanging on Florida's 25 electoral votes, Republicans and Democrats battled county by county over where there should be further recounts and how they should be conducted. Among developments:

- Democrats added Osceola County to their list of hand recount requests. The Osceola canvassing board, comprised of two Republicans and one Democrat, meets Monday to weigh it. Al Gore had a small lead over George W. Bush in the 54,000-plus votes cast. Hispanic voters alleged they were required to produce two forms of identification when only one was required. The central Florida county has a large Puerto Rican community.

- Palm Beach County early Sunday awarded 36 more votes to Gore and took three away from Bush following a machine count of all 531 precincts. The county, on a 2-1 vote, ordered a manual recount of all 425,000 ballots cast. Election officials meet Monday to decide how to proceed.

- Polk County election officials today plan to certify new vote totals that would give Bush an additional 104 votes and seven to Gore. The votes turned up in a machine rescanning of ballots in dozens of precincts.

- Broward County plans to begin a hand recount of about 6,000 ballots in three precincts today. If major problems are found, authorities will consider a full hand count of all precincts.

### Republicans move to impound votes

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — With George W. Bush clinging to a 17-vote lead over Al Gore in New Mexico, state Republican Party attorneys are requesting that state police impound early-voting and absentee ballots from Tuesday's election in case of a challenge or recount.

Police seized ballots in six counties during the weekend under orders from two state District Court judges. The counties comprise two judicial districts. GOP officials say impoundment petitions will be filed in all 13 New Mexico judicial districts.

Under state law, either party may request impoundment. It is up to a judge to decide whether to grant the request. Once an impoundment order is issued, state police take possession of ballots from the county clerk.

"We want to preserve all the ballots to see if anybody on either side wants to ask for a recount," GOP attorney Mickey Barnett said Sunday.

"There's no allegation whatsoever in this impoundment issue that there's any fraud or anything. I think it's much more pro-forma than suspicion. I'd just like to know two weeks from now, if something does happen, that they (the ballots) are all there."

The state Democratic Party planned a news conference Sunday to ask that the state GOP withdraw it is impoundment requests.

Unofficial results show Bush with a 17-vote lead out of more than 571,000 ballots cast, but state election officials said 370 "in-lieu-of" ballots remained uncounted Sunday. Those ballots, which are to be counted by Friday, go to people who requested absentee ballots but did not receive them. In-lieu-of ballots are checked against absentee ballots and are counted only if there is not already an absentee ballot for that voter.

The impoundment requests could slow official election results because the in-lieu-of ballots are among those that would be seized by police, delaying when they can be counted, Secretary of State Denise Lamb said.

If the Gore or Bush campaign wants a recount, it must be requested within six days of the Nov. 28 official review of the votes by the state canvassing board.

## Lost Aggie Ring returned to family of WWII soldier

BY NOEL FREEMAN

**The Battalion**

A piece of Aggie history has returned to Texas A&M after being forgotten in Germany for 56 years.

Medal of Honor recipient 1st Lt. Turney W. Leonard's Aggie Ring came home in a private ceremony held at the Sam Houston Sanders Corps of Cadets Center on Saturday. The ring was presented to Turney W. Leonard's only surviving sibling, Mr. Douglas Leonard of Dallas, by German Lt. Obit Volker

Lossner, who obtained the ring from his father-in-law, Alfred Hutmacher. The ceremony was attended by 30 members of Turney W. Leonard's family, A&M officials and representatives from the Corps of Cadets.

Lossner said Hutmacher found the ring after helping American forces locate the graves of Americans killed during the Battle of the Bulge and had virtually forgotten about the ring's existence until Lossner expressed an interest in

the historical battle.

"You have to be interested in historical things if you're living on the battlefield," said Lossner, whose home is located about 300 meters from the site where the ring was found.

Lossner said he did not immediately understand the significance of the Aggie Ring, but he knew it might be important to someone, so he contacted U.S. Army Col. Thomas Fosnacht to

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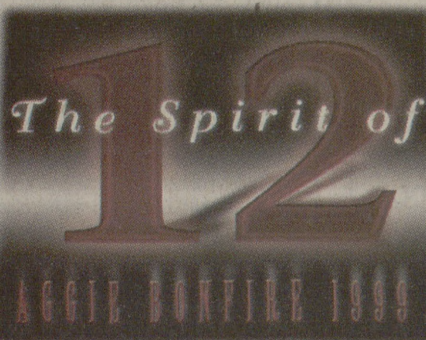


STUART VILLANUEVA/THE BATTALION

German officer, Lt. Obit Lossner, presents a member of the Leonard family with the Aggie Ring of First Lt. Turner W. Leonard, who was killed in WWII.

## B-CS community reflects on meaning, spirit of Bonfire

This is the first in a week-long series in memory of the 1999 Aggie Bonfire collapse. The series will conclude Friday with a special memorial section.



BY RICHARD BRAY

**The Battalion**

In a community of about 100,000, the effects of the 1999 Aggie Bonfire Collapse reached farther than the edges of the Texas A&M campus.

Bryan-College Station community leaders have shared in the adversity of the past year.

"As time has passed, the severity of the grief has lessened for many outside of our community, but it remains very much a part of this community's identity," said Bob Richers, associate pastor at First United Methodist Church.

To some community members, Bonfire means as much as it does to Aggies. College Station City Council member Ron Silvia said the unity between the community and the University was stronger after the Bonfire collapse.

"Bonfire is about as traditional to College Station as it is to the University," Silvia said. "We've always been very, very close, and af-

ter the tragedy last year, I think it brought us even closer. We have the same type of commitment and passion for the Bonfire as a lot of the ex-students."

Students come to College Station for four to five years and then usually leave the town. However, B-CS residents remain despite the coming and going of students. Some have seen more than four or five Bonfires. Bonfire had become a staple of this community, College Station Mayor Lynn McIlhane said the Bonfire collapse was a difficult time for the entire community, including non-Aggies.

"That was a very tragic time for the community, for the families, for the University," she said. "It is always difficult when you deal with a situation such as what we had a year ago, and the community came together and supported each other, supported the families, supported the University. What I hope the community remembers from that tragedy is

the outpouring of love and support and concern for everyone involved."

As some Aggies awoke to the news that Bonfire had fallen, local merchants assembled on the polo fields — offering drinks, food and shouldered to cry on.

"I can't emphasize enough how much this community was effected by this tragedy, as witnessed by all of the things that happened during the rescue effort: restaurants bringing free food, hotels opening up their rooms free of charge to the families, people sending clothes over — anything they could do," he said. "This community is very close, not only to the Aggie spirit, but especially to the Bonfire."

McIlhane said Bonfire and the Aggie spirit still live on in the community.

"The meaning of Bonfire is still the same," she said. "I still believe the Aggie spirit is alive

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