

The Final Steps

There are several things students need to complete before they can take that final walk on the stage

By MELISSA SOROLA-BILANO
THE BATTALION

Despite graduation being three-and-a-half months away, Alisa Bescherer, a senior speech communications major, is ahead of most December graduates.

With reservations for hotel rooms for her

family made last Christmas, Bescherer only needs to complete Fall 2000 classes to receive her diploma. She even has address labels made for her announcements, so she will not have to do them at the last minute.

All graduates would like to see their family and friends on their big day, but unless they made reservations months in advance, the chances of getting a hotel room on those days are slim to none.

Pattie Sears, interim director of the Convention and Visitor Bureau at the Bryan-College Station Chamber of Commerce, said families should make their reservations three to four months in advance.

The Convention and Visitor Bureau checks weekly with local hotels to see what rooms they have available. People can call them to see if there are any available rooms. This information also can be found at the Bryan-College Station Chamber of Commerce Website, and reservations can be made online.

They also have

a list of facilities that can be used for catered graduation parties. Sears recommends this option because restaurants will quickly fill up.

Sears said to make these plans early, so they will not have to worry about limited options closer to the graduation date.

"They've worked hard to get this degree, so they shouldn't wait to the last minute to decide how to celebrate," Sears said.

Even before all the party planning goes on, graduation announcements have to be ordered and sent out. The Memorial Student Center (MSC) offers the only official University-approved announcements, which use the crest of the Aggie Ring.

Aren Murray, assistant director of the MSC, said priority order for graduation announcements must be done by Oct. 1. Students are guaranteed to receive them in enough time to send them out.

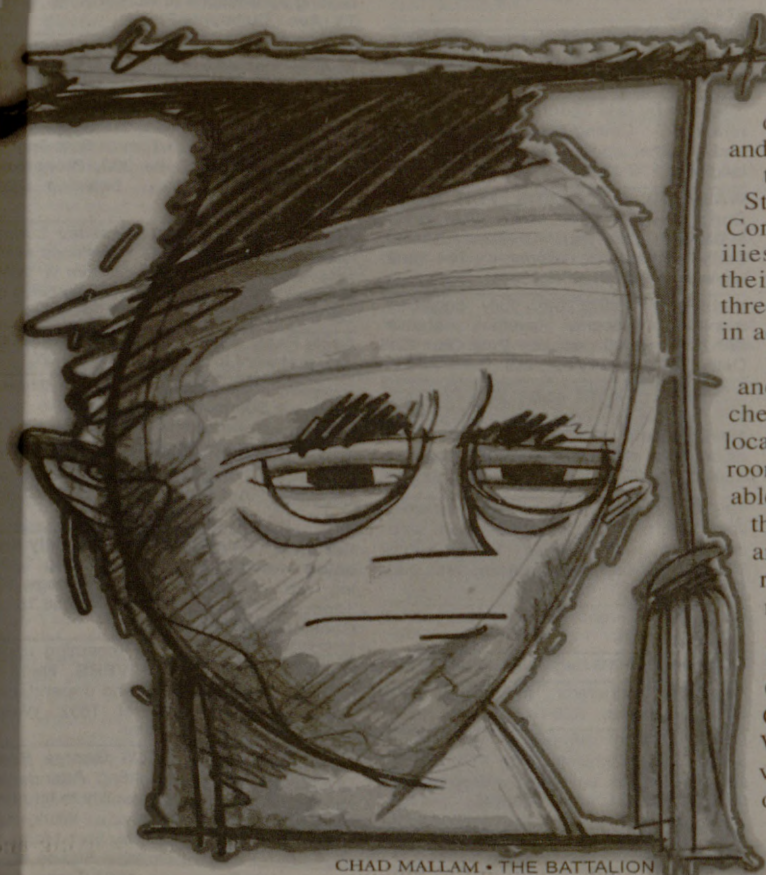
All ordering can be done online by choosing the graduation link at the A&M homepage, and samples can be viewed online and at a display at the MSC Box Office.

Timing is important, and Murray suggests ordering early, especially for students requesting a class year prior to 2001 to be put on the Aggie ring crest on the cover of their announcements.

Diploma framing can be ordered through University Plus, and students are encouraged to place their orders at the same time they order their announcements.

Jim Lukeman, craft facilities supervisor, said students who place their orders before the priority date of Nov. 27 can drop off their diploma as soon as the ceremony is finished. University Plus works nonstop

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CHAD MALLAM • THE BATTALION



CHAD MALLAM • THE BATTALION

Students find alternative ways to make money through entrepreneurship

By KEVIN BURNS
THE BATTALION

The number of available workers has increased dramatically with the coming of Fall 2001, and competition for jobs is fierce.

This means there will be new faces scooping up half-eaten pickles at the movie theater, new smiles serving burgers and many disheartened faces of the unemployed seeking jobs within a system of campus-job bureaucracy. Students can be seen filling out job applications and loan forms until their fingers bleed.

However, there are other options. Ryan Ewing, a senior marketing major, and Josh Dayberry, a freshman computer engineering major, have found another method of earning extra cash flow — entrepreneurship.

Ewing is the owner, operator, manager and janitor of Northgate Vintage, while Dayberry personally launched www.SKERBLIP.com this fall.

Ewing's business is tucked away above Campus Photo on Northgate and specializes in vintage T-shirts. Ewing started the business in a kiosk in the mall last year, but said eventually he started doing more online business and needed a bigger place to ship from. His customers range from college students looking to get away from today's khaki and tees fashion trends to Japanese teenagers looking for a little American chic in their wardrobes.

"They are all T-shirts ranging from old YMCA tees, track tees, to band tees, to specialized sports shirts," Ewing said. "I try to focus on everything from the '70s and '80s. It's very rare that anything will sell that was made in the '90s."

Ewing said his parents are very supportive of his business.

"My mom is involved — she is key to finding the shirts. She has a great eye and is definitely an integral part of the whole process," Ewing said.

While he admits students are purchasing clothes his mom picked out, the complete process of finding and selling T-shirts is more complex than a two-person operation.

"Clothes are brought from all over the U.S. and some from outside," Ewing said. "I have distributors that work with me from New York, France and elsewhere, who separate the shirts for me and after that, my mom sifts through those."

Ewing estimates that his mom goes through 100,000 shirts each month.

"I don't know what the story is behind the popularity, but there does seem a recent craze for them," Ewing said. "I can remember ever since I was little, people always hanging on to favorite, old shirts. I think there's something people like when they can hang onto something that's older — maybe it takes them to a place

in their past. Perhaps it's just something that's comfortable that allows them to feel more at ease to be themselves. Sometimes that is the case with these shirts. It's a mixture of a lot of things, but definitely, I think, nostalgia is a major part."

Ewing said he is not sure what the future holds for him or his business.

"That's up in the air," he said. "I hope maybe to keep pursuing retail or to become an entrepreneur in some form, to see how far this can take me — definitely venturing out on my own somehow. I have really enjoyed the idea of working for myself and setting my own hours ... I don't really know what's in store, but that's in God's hands."

Dayberry, who designs dynamic, or changeable, Website graphics, joins Ewing's rank as a new businessman. The graphics, which are customized to automatically update themselves on the Website, are the substance of his entrepreneurship venture, Skerblip.

"I'd say the dynamic aspect of our Web pages is definitely good for the person who is purchasing the Web page," Dayberry said. "The reason they bought it is because they don't know how to [design graphics]. So if they ever want to change it, they have to buy again. But ours, being dynamic, are easier to change ... so they can update it everyday — not knowing a thing about Web pages."

Questioned on his motives to start his own business, Dayberry said, "I've been working with Web pages for four or five years. I worked for another company designing Web pages similar to the ones we make."

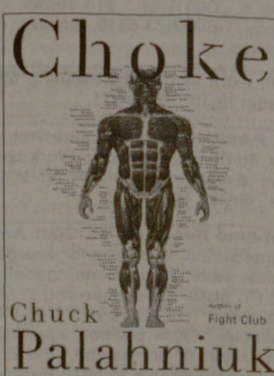
Dayberry said he had a particular reason for leaving his previous job and starting his new business.

"Well, my former boss tried to take advantage of my youth," he said. "I've read in the newspaper where people do exactly what I do, with maybe more experience, and get paid \$90,000 a year. I got paid \$6.50 an hour, which is a little different. You can look at that and say, 'that's an isolated incident,' but I've seen \$20 to \$40 to \$50 an hour for what I do."

Dayberry said that students interested in starting their own businesses should be aware that it does take time and money. Dayberry offered his advice for potential entrepreneurs:

"I can't think of anything that doesn't sound cliché, [but] I'll say this: I didn't have a problem with it because there is little investment, and there isn't investment until you actually have clients. And once you have clients, you have money. So it's been kind of easy for me since I didn't have to worry about losing anything, and I can take on as many jobs as I want."

Book Review



Chuck Palahniuk

Choke
By Chuck Palahniuk

Choke is a lamentable novel in which Chuck Palahniuk, author of *Fight Club* and a contributing writer for *Gear* magazine, takes readers on a tour of raw humanity. Palahniuk asks readers to think deeply about the reason people lumber zombie-like through life, hiding their problems and insecurities behind perceived personal incapability.

Choke is the slow-motion version of *Fight Club* that went over readers' heads as a moving picture of nihilism, or a rejection of customary beliefs. It was never about nihilism, it was about asking, "what are we doing with our lives?" This is nine-inch-nail commentary — a hard and graphic point on the surface of every page.

Self-styled sex addict and museum employee Victor Mancini discovers at a young age that, during a moment of choking, "the whole world cared what happened to him." While gagging and turning blue, Victor realizes he is on centerstage and in a position to make a hero of the one who saved him. Intentionally choking became Victor's strategy of manipulating the one who rescued him. The "hero" plays a parental role, virtually sponsoring his pathetic lifestyle and paying for his mother's medical treatments.

Palahniuk constructs a ludicrous storyline and asks readers to enjoy his humor and bizarre plot twists. Laughing outloud is simply inescapable, but the plot is merely a lure that gets us to bite.

Some have called *Choke's* Victor an antihero, but they are not seeing the big picture: heroes no longer take on the form of men in blue tights and red capes. The new hero, the Palahniuk hero, fights his battles within his mind.

In Palahniuk's world, there is no utopia. The reality is dystopia, a hypothetical world with a poor quality of life. Life is not clean. As in *Fight Club*, readers are not unique snowflakes, and the answers do not appear clear.

A defining moment of human lives was described by Palahniuk's description of mishandled chicken eggs that eventually hatched.

"There are chickens with no legs... Blind chickens without eyes. Without beaks. Born that way. Defective. Born with their little chicken brains already scrambled." Bizarre with no point in many ways *Choke* would have you believe, humans, too, are similarly mishandled. (Grade: A+)



Sam the Cat
By Matthew Klam

Sam the Cat is an original and feisty piece of American fiction. Klam takes a big torch and burns away pretense and facade. This collection of seven short stories disregards everybody's concerns and emotions but the teller's. In many ways, this novel is naked, but does not shy away from its nakedness — it runs into crowds.

The title story, "Sam the Cat," is about a guy who constantly attempts to find comfort in his life. He constantly dates women and enjoys sex in a vain attempt to settle into society.

At a bar, Sam's eyes follow a pair of legs from the ground up — along the calves, thighs, midsection, up the back, the neck, and finds himself convinced that this is what he is looking for. The head turns quickly and he is staring eye-to-eye with another man. This does not align with his world view, but he somehow finally feels comfortable.

This is the type of story Klam is going to tell. He deals with the emotions that people feel. He is bold and uncut and tells the whole truth. The truth is not that Sam is gay or straight, but that he is thinking, feeling and discovering.

In "There Should be a Name for It," Klam details a beautiful relationship of love and happiness that is interrupted by an unplanned pregnancy. Jack treats his wife Lynn disrespectfully and leaves her and her mother to deal with the pregnancy. The mother's only advice comes in a foreign language: *aborto*, that is, abortion. Jack's tragic abandonment, both emotionally and physically of Lynn is Klam's social commentary of the harsh reality women face.

Klam has a voice that is shamelessly honest. His article on romancing the drug ecstasy in the *New York Times Magazine* is a perfect example. He is relentless in his pursuit of accuracy. Although hard to accept, the quality is necessary to get attention.

Through his stories, Klam invents the reality of individualism — the notion that events happen differently to different people and that there are no standard rules for response or reaction. From the outside looking in, perhaps that is the notion readers have the most trouble dealing with. (Grade: A)

Reviews by Kevin Burns