

Texas A&M University — Celebrating 125 Years

THE BATTALION

SERVING THE TEXAS A&M COMMUNITY SINCE 1893

Volume 108 • Issue 50

College Station, Texas

www.thebatt.com

AGGIE 99 BONFIRE

"We're not going to compromise safety ... if that means 2003, that means 2003. If that means not at all, then not at all."

— Bryan Cole, Bonfire 2002 facilitator

BONFIRE IN THE BALANCE



FILE PHOTO • THE BATTALION

Nov. 24, 1998 — Texas A&M's 89th Bonfire burns on Tuesday before the University of Texas-Texas A&M football game.



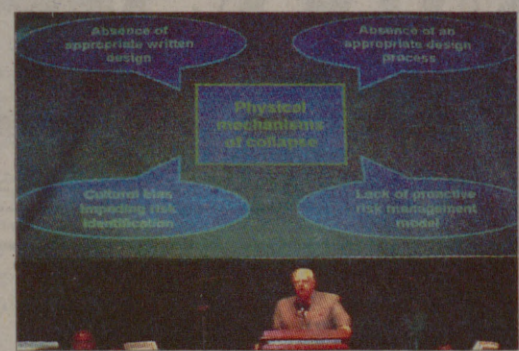
FILE PHOTO • THE BATTALION

Nov. 18, 1999 — Bonfire stack collapses at 2:42 a.m., killing 11 students and one former student and injuring 27 others.



FILE PHOTO • THE BATTALION

Spring 2000 — The logs from stack remained on the Polo Fields pending an investigation. The logs were not removed until Summer 2000.



FILE PHOTO • THE BATTALION

May 2, 2000 — The Special Commission on the 1999 Aggie Bonfire Collapse cites tunnel vision and structural faults as causes for the collapse.

By SOMMER BUNCE
THE BATTALION

Negotiations with the unnamed New York-based safety consultant with which Bonfire 2002 planners hope to contract are entering a third week of stalemate.

In a process that planning officials said is already pressed for time, the delay has resulted in a domino effect on the timeline of planning for Bonfire 2002. Design firm CBM Engineers of Houston was to have met with a safety firm over the past months to review the 14 possible designs and narrow the options down to three of the safest designs by today, Nov. 1.



COLE

Bryan Cole, the Bonfire 2002 Steering Committee facilitator, said he fears the implications of the revamped time schedule and its effect on the possibility of having a Bonfire in 2002.

"The longer this draws out, of course, the greater the potential for Bonfire not to happen in 2002," Cole said last week. "We're starting to push it if they sign on later than this week. We're not going to compromise safety — we're not going to push it to get it done. If that means 2003, that means 2003, and if that means not at all, then not at all."

A final design for Bonfire was to have been chosen Dec. 15 after the student body had time to review the three finalist designs. Now, Cole said, these plans are in jeopardy.

A&M President Dr. Ray M. Bowen was to consider the commit-

tee's recommended Bonfire design and decide in January if Bonfire 2002 would become a reality. If it takes longer to have a final design ready to present to Bowen, Cole said, then Bowen's decision — and all the steps to implement the planning for Bonfire that would come after it — would be delayed.

Aside from planning concerns for Bonfire 2002, Bowen said this month the estimated \$1.5 million price tag for Bonfire was too costly and might force the University to reconsider plans for future Bonfires.

The price tag includes the estimated \$500,000 cost of previous Bonfires and the cost of CBM Engineers' more than six months of work on Bonfire. The \$1.5-million estimate also includes projected payment for the services of a safety consultant.

Two safety firms have backed out of negotiations with Bonfire 2002 planners since June, citing money and time constraints and a lack of student involvement. Looking to a third, \$3-billion New York-based corporation that Cole said he cannot name, planners were hoping to have an agreement on pay and amount of work required as recently as two weeks ago, Cole said.

"We're just not getting a response from them [the safety contractor]," Cole said Wednesday. "The longer we go, the tougher it's going to be to get this done."

David Godbey, the A&M contact for the firms and A&M assistant director of physical plant for design and engineering services, said plans for Bonfire are much more complicated than normal contracts. Godbey said he does not know whether the

safety consultant, which has a main branch in Texas, will sign for the Bonfire project.

"We're trying to wrestle this guy to the ground," Godbey said. "But I don't know. I can't predict the future. It depends on if we can make a deal."

When Marak Safety Services dropped out of contract negotiations Oct. 1, planners immediately contacted the New York firm, Cole said. CBM Engineers and the Steering Committee, which includes several student leaders, held two meetings with the firm to explain the Bonfire project and what would be required of them.

On Oct. 14, Godbey said he expected to hear from the firm that week. In daily statements over the course of the past three weeks, Godbey and Cole have both expected

See BONFIRE on page 4A.

Ags rewarded for RWB Out

By ROLANDO GARCIA
THE BATTALION

Will present relief funds personally

Joining the throngs of Aggie fans Sept. 22 waiting in line to buy red, white and blue "Standing for America" T-shirts for the football game that afternoon, David Evans, Class of 1961, was taken aback by this outpouring of patriotic fervor in Aggieland.

But it was the breathtaking sight of Kyle Field decked in red, white and blue, Evans

said, that convinced him the students who organized the project had made a statement to the world about the uniqueness of the Aggie spirit.

"Nowhere but Texas A&M could such a project could have been pulled off in such a short amount of time," Evans said.

At the meeting of the Baytown A&M Club that week, Evans, president of the group, described what he saw at Kyle Field and the mem-

bers decided to send the Red, White and Blue Out organizers to New York City so they could personally present the money they raised to benefit the families of policemen and firefighters killed in the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

The five students, Eric Bethea, Nick Luton, Kourtney Rodgers, Cole Robertson and Josh Orsinsky, will leave for New York Nov. 7 and return Nov. 11. On Nov. 9, the stu-

dents will formally present checks to the relief funds of the Patrolman's Benevolent Association (PBA) and the Uniformed Firefighters Association at the PBA headquarters in downtown Manhattan, just five blocks from the site of the attacks, said Tim Sweeney, associate director of the Department of Student Activities and a planner of the trip.

RWB Out sold more than

See RWB on page 2A.

Aggie Review to resume printing

By MELISSA SULLIVAN
THE BATTALION

In the Kyle Field pressbox, coaches, NFL scouts and reporters from newspapers, radio and television stations clamor to record the play-by-play action. The reporters work on deadline with the knowledge they will have a story for the next day.

But one privately funded Texas A&M media organization has attended every home game in the pressbox this fall with no publication afterward.

The *Aggie Review*, a conservative journal established in Spring 2000, publishes sporadically. Diane Samuelson, publisher, said the *Review* is a monthly publication, though it was published six times in the last academic year and has yet to publish this year.

"We are just slow getting the ball rolling this semester," said Samuelson, a senior political science major. "Academics come first, and if it slows us down, it slows us down."

The *Review* was last published in April. Samuelson said the next edition is expected on campus stands today.

See REVIEW on page 4A.

B-CS post offices take precautions

By JONATHAN KOLMETZ
THE BATTALION

In light of recent anthrax attacks that have turned envelopes into deadly weapons, mail handlers in Bryan-College Station post offices are taking extra precautions.

"We feel that there is no immediate threat for our postal workers in the Bryan-College Station area," said Vanessa Kimbrough, a U.S. postal inspector in Houston. "But gloves and dust masks have been made available to all postal workers."

No B-CS post offices have had any items test positive for anthrax.

In the College Station Post Office, 10 percent of the 120 employees wear gloves

A&M grads facing fewer jobs in current economy

By CHRISTINA HOFFMAN
THE BATTALION

The economic downturn that began before Sept. 11 was worsened by the attacks and has left many graduating seniors wondering about the job market they are coming into after four years of college isolation.

The current unemployment rate stands at 4.9 percent, which is higher

than the standards set by the economic boom of the 1990s, said Professor Dennis Jansen, head of A&M's economics department. A job market that in 1999 allowed college graduates to pick and choose their offers is not quite so open to graduates now, Jansen said.

"The job market is tighter than in past years, caused by the economic slowdown," Jansen said. "The unemployment rate is almost at five percent, and that is certainly higher by the standards of the last decade, but not the highest, and historically, it's been much worse."

Many companies are cutting jobs and cutting back on capital expenditures, Jansen said. The computer industry has been affected by other industries cutting back technology costs and airlines have come to the verge of bankruptcy after the attacks and resulting decreased ridership. The economy could directly affect graduating seniors

See GRADUATES on page 7A.

Companies seeking A&M Grads		
	# of On-Campus Interviews	# of Companies interviewing
FALL 2000	9,100	600
FALL 2001	8,700	500

SOURCE: CAREER CENTER
ADRIAN CALCANEO • THE BATTALION

TODAY
AGGIELIFE
Page 1B

Permanent memories
• Students share reasons for getting tattoos and the stories behind them

SPORTS
Page 5A

No. 14 A&M sweeps Oklahoma
• Ags earn fifth straight win

OPINION
Page 5B

Scraping the bottom
• Minority enrollment a problem, but admitting top 25 percent not a solution

WEATHER

TODAY
HIGH 83° F
LOW 60° F

TOMORROW
HIGH 83° F
LOW 63° F

FORECASTS COURTESY OF www.weathermanted.com