

EDITORIAL

Texas A&M University — Celebrating 125 Years

THE BATTALION

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AGGIE BONFIRE

Renegade campfire

On Nov. 18, 1999, 12 Aggies died while trying to build a Bonfire that was available to all. Next week, a small group of misguided Aggies will make a mockery of that legacy.

A renegade campfire is being constructed at an undisclosed location. Although the participants may be students and former students of A&M, what they are doing is a disgraceful repudiation of everything it means to be an Aggie. These renegades have

non-existent 2001 Bonfire, but participants are doing a disservice to all Aggies and will show the world that Aggie unity is fleeting and superficial.

Two years have passed since the 1999 collapse, and the Aggie family is healing and moving forward. Steps have been taken and progress has been made toward Bonfire 2002. But with the organization of this renegade bonfire, progress is compromised, and the delicate status of Bonfire 2002 is

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segregated themselves from the A&M family and disrespected all those who cherish the real Aggie Bonfire. If this project was intended to serve as a remembrance of the 1999 Aggie Bonfire collapse, it is inappropriate entirely. The actions of these students do not include all Aggies, instead it consists of a select few who feel they must undermine administrative authority. Not only have these actions endangered the long-term prospects of Aggie Bonfire, they also have sacrificed the memory of the Bonfire victims for their own selfishness. Apparently, this structure is meant to replace the

threatened once again. It will come as no surprise when the administration takes a step back and offers another reason why not to continue 2002 construction.

These plans of burning a separate bonfire are everything that administration, students, and alumni have tried to avoid. The deceit and secrecy that have characterized this undertaking will only undermine Aggie unity.

The participants can burn their log stack and have their fun, but they should not delude themselves into thinking that their campfire bears any resemblance to an Aggie Bonfire.

A grief observed

On Nov. 18, 2001, nothing could be more appropriate than the meteor shower that will be decorating the early morning sky above the Polo Fields at 2:42 a.m.

The shooting stars may give onlookers the inspiration to reflect on how Aggies and Texas A&M have changed in the two years since the 1999 Aggie Bonfire collapse. And that is what Nov. 18 should be about — reflection.

Marking the second anniversary of a tragedy is an awkward event. The time for mourning has passed, and we as a community must focus on moving on. Yet it is

lawsuits, safety-firm concerns and the possibility that it may not burn again. The debate on these topics has been fierce and fiery — Will it cost too much? Is the administration deceiving the students? Will it be safe?

But sentiment this Sunday should not focus on these questions, but on observing the tragedy that took 12 lives. The debates about lawsuits, money and future Bonfires are trivial this weekend compared to the small things that truly made Bonfire special. The ties many upperclassmen shared with the 12 Aggies who lost their

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difficult not to recall the emotions that changed so many people's lives. Similarly, each person must cope with his or her feelings as they search for closure to the tragedy and mature as a connected family.

The fact that the University did not plan a ceremony should not be a cause for criticism and bitterness. Because there is no official ceremony planned for Sunday, the opportunity to personalize the anniversary of the tragedy should be embraced. Despite all of the criticisms that exist towards Bonfire 2002 and its planning process, the importance of Nov. 18 must remain on the 1999 Bonfire and on the lives of its 12 victims.

Aggies cannot forget what Nov. 18 signifies to them. Only through communication can the tradition truly live on.

This semester, news surrounding Bonfire has been dominated by

lives should be shared openly.

The A&M community is between Bonfires, and the transition is not getting any easier.

As seniors, the Class of 2002 has an unspoken responsibility to pass down to the classes below them the pride and passion that went into Bonfire from start to finish. At the two-year mark, now is the time to share good-bull stories and recall the little things that made it special. Wake-ups, heaving logs, painting pots and 24-hour push at stack may not return, but Sunday provides a great opportunity for those who experienced Bonfire first-hand to reach out, particularly to the freshman and sophomore classes.

The Bonfire experience is what students make of it. This year, we urge students to participate in the experience of camaraderie through the perpetuation of tradition.

Indecent Exposure

Party pictures should not be available on Internet



RUBEN DELUNA • THE BATTALION

A picture can be worth a thousand words. Apparently, to Aggies, the value of a photograph can be priceless. At A&M, it is common for social organizations to hire the ever-so popular Party Pic photography service to snap pictures at functions as the night unfolds. In the past, these storytelling, memorable photos were viewable by visiting the photographer's place of business. Now, however, many companies have begun selling the



J.J. TREVINO

pictures via the Internet to increase the accessibility of the pictures they have taken. Pictures available for purchase on the Internet — without limits — to potentially hundreds of people, can lead to dangerous situations that those who hire these services should be aware of.

The thought of having a picture available to anyone in a matter of a few clicks of the mouse is frightening. That is, unless one believes that, at all times, they are on their best behavior. Indeed, should that be the case, there is nothing to worry about, the service will be of no harm.

On the other hand, as many would agree, these on-the-spot photographers have been known to capture some less-than-perfect, late-night behavior.

In two different instances, photos that were published on the Internet eventually led to the expulsion of several groups at two different Universities. The Alpha Tau Omega fraternity at the University of

Mississippi was expelled for one year after they became the subject of a vigorous investigation when several pictures, depicting inappropriate behavior taken at their Halloween party, were posted on the photographer's Website. At Auburn University in Alabama, the Beta Theta Pi and Delta Sigma Phi fraternities were temporarily suspended after they were seen on Internet pictures violating university regulations.

Without question, while the particular names of the groups have no rele-

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vance, the action that was taken against the fraternities is justifiable. The photos depicted extremely derogatory and intolerable behavior.

However, what about the more common, everyday scenarios that these pictures capture every weekend? For instance, like when one's parents believe their college student was not attending a party because of a big exam, but later find out otherwise after viewing pictures from the comfort of their computer. Or what if an embarrassing pose no one wanted to see later is ordered by a person across the world, entirely without the subject ever knowing.

Should the access of these pictures be

limited to being seen only inside a store, the likelihood they can be seen by distant outsiders is slim to none. In fact, in both of the Auburn cases, the pictures in question were discovered by someone who did not attend the party. Clearly, it was the Internet that provided such widespread, any-time access that allowed this person to browse the online photo albums with ease.

In a case involving a Texas Tech student, an attorney used pictures obtained from one of these photography companies that were taken the night of an alcohol-related accident as the foundation of his argument. Although the pictures were obtained by visiting the company's store, now that the service has been "upgraded" to the Internet, access is much more widespread. In a court of law, pictures are the best evidence. They depict the person or persons in question, whether they consumed alcohol that night, who they were with and the day the picture was taken. At all times, pictures can be extremely incriminating, whether online or in a photo album.

The solution to the problem is simple — steer clear from the camera, or never act inappropriately in front of the lens. Should one be the type who frequently chooses to let loose and strike a pose, never forget — once the flash clicks, all pictures are fair game and potentially at the hands of millions of computer users.

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The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 300 words or less and include the author's name, class and phone number.

The opinion editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, style and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 014 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters also may be mailed to:

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CARTOON OF THE DAY

