

Texas A&M University — Celebrating 125 Years

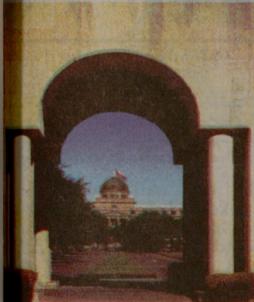
THE BATTALION

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Commuter lots opened to all permit holders

Parking, Traffic and Transportation Services will extend parking privileges in blue lots on the Texas A&M campus beginning Nov. 19. Any valid TAMU permit holder will be able to park in blue lots, excluding the Golf Course Parking Lot, from 5:30 p.m. through 6:00 a.m. Exceptions will be made for special events hosted at Reed Arena and athletic events hosted at Olsen Field and the Student Recreation Center, where blue lots may be reserved. For information, contact PTTS by phone at 862-PARK or in person in 108 Koldus.

Park dedicated in name of Bonfire victim

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — City and state officials dedicated a new park in northeast San Antonio in the name of a Texas A&M bonfire victim. Bryan McClain, a 19-year-old freshman from San Antonio, was one of 12 people who died in the bonfire collapse. The park, which cost \$250,000 to develop, officially opens today.

PUBLIC EYE

Average number of daily bus riders on off-campus routes

14,694

TODAY

AGGIELIFE

Page 3

Here's to you, Mr. Robison

• Charlie Robison to visit Aggieland Tuesday

SPORTS

Page 5

Aggies advance to sweet sixteen

• Women's soccer team defeats SMU 2-1

OPINION

Page 11

... And they call it Aggie Bonfire

• The future of Bonfire rests in the hands of A&M's current students

WEATHER

TODAY

50% HIGH 71° F
LOW 55° F

TOMORROW

HIGH 58° F
LOW 41° F

FORECASTS COURTESY OF www.weathermanted.com

Memorial finalists chosen

By JUSTIN SMITH
THE BATTALION

After a private luncheon held for the families of the victims of the 1999 Aggie Bonfire collapse, the four final designs for the Bonfire Memorial Competition were unveiled to the public, three of which were designed by Aggies. In total, almost 200 designs were submitted to the competition from across the country. A nine-member jury consisting of architects, student representatives and Richard West, father of Nathan West, a student who was killed in the collapse, determined the finalists. The winning designers were given \$10,000 each in prize money and another \$10,000 to fund their design project.

Two of the jurors, Professor Jaan Holt, from the Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University, and Professor Hans Butzer, from the University of Oklahoma, have previously worked on memorials. Holt, the Bonfire memorial jury chair,

See MEMORIAL on page 10.

Three new Bonfire suits filed

HOUSTON (AP) — Three more lawsuits have been filed against Texas A&M University because of the 1999 bonfire collapse in which 12 people died and 27 were injured.

The lawsuits filed Friday in federal court in Galveston are on behalf of the families of five people who died and for three people who were injured. The federal court in Galveston covers College Station.

Texas A&M, University President Dr. Ray M. Bowen and four administrators are named in all the lawsuits. One of the lawsuits also names student bonfire leaders, construction companies and crane operators.

The lawsuits allege a "state-created danger" caused by A&M officials who knew of the perils involved in the traditional event but

See LAWSUITS on page 10.

In remembrance



STUART VILLANEUVA • THE BATTALION

Thomas Yantis, a junior management major and member of Corps of Cadets Squadron 17, lights a candle in remembrance of the 12 Aggies killed when Bonfire collapsed in 1999. Students and family members held a candlelight vigil on the Polo fields early Sunday morning to commemorate the anniversary of the collapse and honor the victims.

By CHRISTINA HOFFMAN
THE BATTALION

Two years after the 1999 Aggie Bonfire collapse, students joined together Sunday in a spontaneous ceremony in memory of the 12 Aggies killed Nov. 18, 1999.

More than 500 students, family members and friends of those killed and injured gathered near the 1999 Bonfire site in the Polo Fields around 2 a.m. to pay their respects.

Candles and a wreath were laid on the site where the three-tiered, 55-foot structure fell at 2:42 a.m., sending those on the ground running and pinning the

27 Aggies injured and 12 killed beneath a pile of logs that was not cleared until July 2000. The last body was pulled from the Bonfire stack, which was near completion when it fell, after the University held an emotional, candlelit memorial service on Nov. 18, 1999.

Students surrounded the center arrangement, holding candles, hugging and linking arms in silence.

At 2:42 a.m., Bonfire victim Timothy Kerlee Jr.'s mother, Janice, called out the names of those who were killed. Families and friends responded with "Here," after each name in a ceremony similar to Aggie

See VIGIL on page 2.

A&M students burn off-campus bonfire

By BRANDIE LIFFICK
THE BATTALION

Just before 9 p.m. Saturday, an off-campus bonfire located on property at the intersection of County Road 1720 and FM 2022 north of Crockett, Texas, was set ablaze, according to Brett Lagrane, a cameraman with KBTX News.

Lagrane, who was denied entry to the area where the fire was burning, said he heard "whoops" echo across the property as the structure fell, approximately two hours after it was lit.

Kevin Jackson, an organizer of the event and a junior engineering major, said about 60 people watched the bonfire burn.

"This wasn't done to go against the University," Jackson said. "It was done to show our Aggie pride, and the pride we have in our school. It was for us."

Jackson said 20 to 30 current and former Texas A&M students spent the last four weekends constructing the stack. It measured 40 feet in height and approximately 30 feet wide. The centerpole was about 48 feet tall, and each log in the "lean-to" design touched the ground.

"The centerpole was buried approximately eight feet into the ground," Jackson said. "And three other poles were in the ground three to four feet each to give it added stability."

Jackson said drinking and horseplay were strictly prohibited, and participants were required to attend classes to teach them how to properly cut and wire logs.

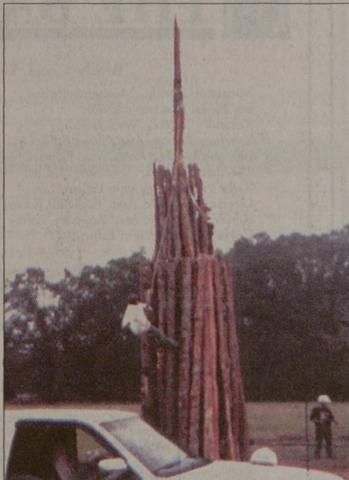
"There was no drinking," Jackson said. "Not while it was burning or during construction. We didn't want anybody getting hurt. The thought of safety is always there — it's always at the front of your mind."

Observers were required to stand behind an 80-foot perimeter around the burning structure to avoid falling debris. Jackson said everyone was required to stay the night on the property.

"We had everyone hand over their keys so that no one would leave after it was done burning and fall asleep while driving home," Jackson said.

After the private unveiling of the final Aggie Bonfire memorial designs Sunday, A&M President Dr. Ray M. Bowen said an off-campus bonfire was beyond the control

See BONFIRE on page 10.



SPECIAL TO THE BATTALION

Off-campus bonfire participants work on the stack (left.) The stack burned Saturday night (right) shortly before 9 p.m. on private property north of Crockett. More than 20 current and former students spent four weekends constructing the bonfire.