

Texas A&M University — Celebrating 125 Years

THE BATTALION

SERVING THE TEXAS A&M COMMUNITY SINCE 1893

Volume 108 • Issue 63

College Station, Texas

www.thebatt.com

NEWS IN BRIEF

Another bonfire burned Tuesday

A second renegade bonfire built by Aggies burned Tuesday night in Magnolia, despite University officials' repeated admonitions of unsanctioned bonfires.

According to KTRK-TV Houston, about 100 people were present as the 35-foot, two-tier stack was set ablaze at approximately 6 p.m. The bonfire was built at the High Meadow Ranch golf course in Magnolia, off FM 1774. The four owners of the golf course, all former A&M students, allowed the bonfire to be built, mostly with trees that were set to be cleared, KTRK reported.

Cynthia Lawson, executive director of University Relations, said she heard rumors of another renegade bonfire Tuesday afternoon.

"When it is something off-campus, the University's hands are pretty much tied if the students aren't breaking any rules," Lawson said.

Cody Spivey, Class of 1997, led a small group of former students to build the bonfire. He had experience working on Aggie Bonfire during for four years, he said. The logs were stacked around a live tree that was used as a centerpole, and an outhouse was placed atop the bonfire, painted with the words, "L.U. Frat House."

David Goff, Class of 1980, helped organize the event, although he did not help build the bonfire.

"The bonfire wasn't a pep rally," Goff said. "It was about former students getting together to share experiences and memories. It's like Muster."

Bonfire 2002 designs down to 3

By SOMMER BUNCE THE BATTALION

Bonfire 2002 planners narrowed the design pool for the proposed stack to three in a closed meeting Tuesday. Safety consultant Turner Construction and design firm CBM Engineers are now tasked with perfecting the designs for public viewing on the Bonfire 2002 website, expected sometime next week.

Turner representatives left the meeting with cell phones in hand, telling workers

in their Houston branch to start on the process of revising the chosen designs, said 2002 Steering Committee facilitator Dr. Bryan R. Cole. Turner has been working "night and day," Cole said, to help prepare the safety elements of the three designs, elements that are vital to proceeding to the next step in planning for Bonfire in the fall of 2002.

The steering committee cut down a pool of 16 potential Bonfire designs to six last week, and Tuesday chose the three designs students will consider before the

committee chooses the final one in late January. By early February, the committee hopes to have a final decision from University President Dr. Ray M. Bowen.

Bowen's decision will depend on several factors, including cost, how safe he deems the design, and the status of pending litigation that alleges negligence on the part of Bowen, other administrators and some student leaders in the 1999 Aggie Bonfire collapse. A total of 10 lawsuits were filed in federal and probate courts before the two-year deadline to file Monday.

"The lawsuits have got to be factored in, and they certainly will be a factor," Cole said. "I can't speak to his decision, but it's something he will have to consider."

Cole couldn't comment on the three final designs, saying they are not complete. But the three designs the committee cut out of the running for the final design had some potential problems in safety and aesthetics, he said.

One design was made of a steel centerpole with cross sections that would

See BONFIRE on page 2.

Groff sports Aggie pride



By EMILY PETERS THE BATTALION

When Wally Groff became athletic director nine years ago, Texas A&M was in very poor standings with the NCAA. The athletic program had received numerous reprimands for recruiting practices and athlete favoritism, and A&M was the second-worst rule violator in the NCAA.

"My promise when I interviewed for this job was to run the cleanest program we could possibly run," he said. "Now we have one of the largest and most compliant staffs in the country."

Under Groff's motto, "Do it the right way," A&M athletics have shaped up such that when other schools ask NCAA for help dealing with athletic issues, they are told to call A&M for advice.

Groff earned a business degree from A&M in 1965 and has not left Aggieland since — nor has his Aggie ring left his finger. His wife, three kids and five grandchildren all live in College Station, but he has built much more than a home and a family here — he has built an athletic legacy.

As athletic director, Groff's jurisdiction spans from recruitment to game security, from Cain Hall study facilities to the construction of the Bernard C. Richardson Zone at Kyle Field. But he said he has a simplified philosophy on how to handle it all.

First you must have a great

See GROFF on page 2.

Cold turkey



Courtney Schmidt, a senior finance major, tries to select a Thanksgiving turkey at a College Station grocery store Tuesday. Turkeys are selling briskly as Thanksgiving Day approaches.

BRETT MARETH • THE BATTALION

Bus Ops: Student riders mostly Ags

By AMANDA SMITH THE BATTALION

Texas A&M Bus Operations' preliminary survey results indicate that the overwhelming majority of bus passengers are A&M students.

The survey was conducted after a study indicating that ridership figures were up significantly from previous semesters.

The passage of a \$50 transportation fee last semester opened access to on- and off-campus bus transportation to all students beginning Fall 2001. However, no identification is required for any of the bus routes.

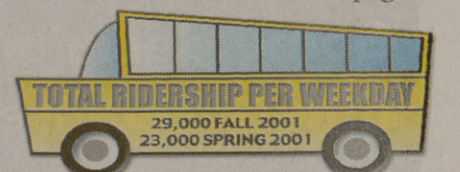
Gary Jackson, manager of Bus Operations, said the survey was prompted by concerns that non-A&M students would be riding the buses with greater frequency.

"There had been some concern expressed last year about the large number of Blinn students who would be riding the buses on the A&M students' dollar, so we wanted to check to see if indeed this was a problem," Jackson said. "Thus far, the numbers of riders from categories other than A&M registered students is very low — so low in fact the percentages carried out to two decimal places show up as zero. I don't think we have a problem."

Jackson said Bus Operations will continue to conduct random surveys during Spring 2002, with continued evaluation of ridership figures.

"If the number of Blinn students is significant at that point, measures will be taken to get funding from Blinn to subsidize operations,"

See BUS on page 2.



CHAD MALLAM • THE BATTALION

Police urge holiday shopping safety

By AMANDA SMITH THE BATTALION

Bryan-College Station officials are preparing for the holidays and urging the Texas A&M community to keep safety in mind.

Sgt. Betty Lemay, a member of the University Police Department's (UPD) crime prevention team, said safety should be a concern when traveling and shopping, particularly during the holidays.

"Always, always, practice good personal safety habits," Lemay said. "When leaving for the holidays, whether on or off campus, make sure the doors and windows are locked. Don't give a thief an easy entrance. This sounds pretty simple, but it is amazing how many entrances are made without force."

Lemay said traveling also demands safety attention, particularly during the holidays when long trips are more likely. Travelers should have

See SAFETY on page 2.

Holiday Safety checklist: Have car checked before travel, Travel with an emergency kit, Have the post office hold your mail, Stop newspapers, Engrave valuables and jewelry with driver's license number, Do not carry a lot of cash, Use a secure browser when paying with credit cards online.

CHAD MALLAM • THE BATTALION

UT lobbies to host George Bush library

Staff & Wire THE BATTALION

AUSTIN (AP) — George W. Bush was president for only a few hours when University of Texas president Larry Faulkner began lobbying to host his presidential library.

Faulkner sent Bush a letter in August outlining two possible locations for a presidential library in Austin, one in the northwest on UT-owned land near the J.J. Pickle Research Campus, the other on state-owned land downtown between UT and the Capitol Complex.

Faulkner got a noncommittal thanks-for-the-interest response from the White House in a letter dated Oct. 23.

See BUSH on page 8.

PUBLIC EYE

In 2000, a reported 22.7 percent of Texans were obese, up from 15 percent in 1995

TODAY

AGGIELIFE

Over the river and out of College Station. Students head home for Turkey Day

SPORTS

Page 5

Ags take on Stanford. No. 8 A&M in third round of NCAA tournament

OPINION

Page 9

Three crimes, and you're out. Pro-Con: Three strikes law

WEATHER

TODAY

HIGH 65° F, LOW 32° F

TOMORROW

HIGH 69° F, LOW 43° F

FORECASTS COURTESY OF www.weathermanted.com