

Parking peeves

Students face limited parking and long walks to class

By Kelcey Rieger
THE BATTALION

"I have paid this school - actually my parents have paid this school - nearly \$500 in parking tickets over the past three years," said Kristen Newman, a senior genetics major. "Parking tickets are like the squirrels on campus. There is not one particular one that I really hate. I hate them all."

For many Texas A&M students, parking on campus is a grim reality. Although Parking, Transportation and Traffic Services (PTTS) provides buses to get on and off campus, with 40,000-plus students attending A&M, parking on campus can be a nightmare.

According to PTTS there were 11,296 student parking spaces available on campus during the 2001 academic year. With an estimated 43,000 students, the parking spot-to-student ratio was approximately one to four. With the recent construction of the new parking garage on west campus, 900 student parking spaces are now unavailable.

Newman said she needed to park on West Campus this summer because of her job, but didn't have a parking pass. To remedy this, Newman said she found a way to avoid all of the parking mayhem.

"When I worked at the vet school I would park my car in the parking lot where cars are towed to," Newman said. "The lot is by the transportation building and right next to the vet school, which made it extremely convenient for me. So I guess you could say I was cheating the system in some round-a-bout way."

Amber Nickels, a junior special education major, said she is not too fond of the parking experiences she has had at A&M.

"I've gotten many parking tickets, but one ticket stands out in my mind more than the others because of the way I was able to get out of it," Nickels said. "I called PTTS pretending to be my mother and said I didn't know I could not park there. Then I said that since I was home now and my daughter had her car back, it wouldn't happen again. I really couldn't believe that worked."

Nickels said she has lived on and off campus, and both living accommodations came with their share of parking adventures.

"When I lived on campus, I had a garage spot," Nickels said. "My dad wanted me to have a garage spot to protect my car, but the space was on the roof anyway. People would always ask me for rides so they wouldn't have to move their car. They would have a great parking space in a red lot and did not want to lose it."

Nickels said parking garages make finding a parking spot easier, but are usually offered only to students who live on campus.

"I know from experience how hard it is to get a parking spot," Nickels said. "Waiting in line in Zachry lot for 15 minutes every morning became extremely frustrating, so I ride the bus now."

With so much traffic on and around campus, riding the bus is an efficient alternative to fighting the parking lot lines. But if parking is imperative to getting to class, a little generosity could go a long way, said Kyle Weisenborn, a senior mechanical engineering major.

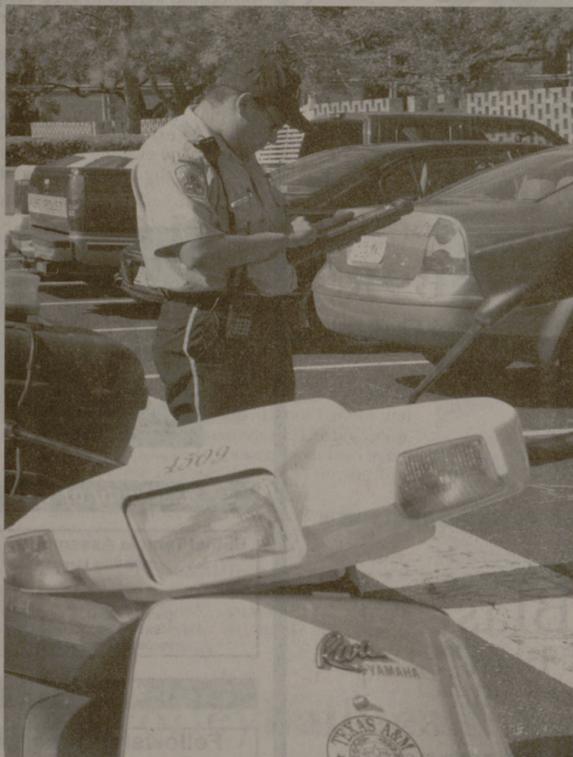
"Sometimes I wait at the front of the parking lot and offer people rides to their cars in exchange for their parking space," Weisenborn said. "I think if everybody did that instead of stalking people as they walk to their cars, not to sound cheesy or anything, but the world would be a better place. I just hate it when people follow me in their cars, especially when it is 100 degrees outside."

Weisenborn said that when he was a freshman living on Northside, he resented parking because of the difficulty in finding a parking space within a 10-mile radius of his dorm.

"I once circled the parking lot behind FHK for two and a half hours looking for a decent spot before I finally gave up and parked in Fish Lot," Weisenborn said. "When I would find a good spot, I would leave my car as long as possible, which kind of defeats the purpose of having a good spot in the first place, so I would bum rides off people until I absolutely had to move my car."

Weisenborn said he now lives off campus and doesn't bother trying to park anymore.

"I still haven't put a parking sticker on my windshield



ALISSA HOLLIMON • THE BATTALION

Parking, Transportation and Traffic Services worker Josh DeLeon writes a ticket to an illegally parked car on Thursday afternoon.

because I know I will never find a parking spot on campus," Weisenborn said.

Jeremy Thomas, a junior mechanical engineering and technology major, said he has no problem with parking on campus.

"My first year at A&M I thought it would be easiest to drive to campus," Thomas said. "I had heard all of the horror stories, but I usually had pretty good luck at seeing parking spots because I have always driven big trucks. I can see people pulling out and I just sneak in there and try and grab it. Sometimes there might be someone else gunning for the spot, but usually the sight of my truck barreling towards them convinces them to give me the right-of-way. But unfortunately there have been times when after about three tries I realize my truck won't actually fit into the spot, and I have to give it up anyway."

Thomas also drives a motorcycle to campus, which he said is good for him because of his frequent tardiness. Although parking for motorcycles is more convenient, Thomas says the parking problem still exists.

"One time I had an early test, so I decided to eat at Sbsa before the exam and I parked right outside the door," Thomas said. "I heard one of the ladies that worked there say something about another lazy motorcyclist getting a parking ticket. Immediately I knew she was talking about me and I had to think quick. I grabbed my book and ran out the door, yelling at the PTTS officer to hold on and let me explain."

Thomas fortunately fibbed his way through the ticket and the officer let him off the hook with just a warning.

"As I rode away I thought that my excuse was pretty lame," Thomas said. "So I parked, went back and ate my breakfast and I could hear the ladies that worked there just laughing at me."

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Stewart resigns from NYSE board of directors

NEW YORK (AP) — Martha Stewart, under federal investigation on suspicion of insider trading, resigned Thursday from the board of directors of the New York Stock Exchange.

"I did not want the media attention currently surrounding me to distract from the important work of the NYSE and thus felt it was appropriate to resign," Stewart said in a statement Thursday. Earlier in the day, she sent a letter of resignation to NYSE chairman and chief executive Dick Grasso before the exchange's board meeting.

The Justice Department is investigating Stewart's sale of nearly 4,000 shares of ImClone Systems just before the stock plummeted last December on bad news about the company's highly touted cancer drug. She has denied any wrongdoing.

A day earlier, an assistant to Stewart's stockbroker pleaded guilty to accepting money and other valuables to keep quiet about the sale. The assistant has agreed to testify against others.

Stewart, who was a stockbroker before launching her own business, was one of 27 NYSE board members. Her term was to expire next year.

The news further hurt Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia. The stock closed down 59 cents, or nearly 9 percent, at \$6.21 a share on the NYSE. It has fallen more than 60 percent since Stewart's alleged connection to the ImClone scandal was first reported in June.

Grasso said Stewart's decision was voluntary.

"We are saddened to lose Martha Stewart, who has built a brand and a company admired around the world," he said. "Our board will miss Ms. Stewart's counsel and insight."

Substitute teacher sues school over 9/11 remarks

PITTSBURGH (AP) — A substitute teacher who says he was surrounded by armed guards, detained for an hour and suspended over remarks perceived as supportive of Osama bin Laden is suing the school district.

In the federal lawsuit filed Wednesday, John B. Gardner, 52, said his free speech rights were violated after school officials found notes about bin Laden he had scrawled on a newspaper.

Gardner said the notes were related to a book he was writing about how to overcome adversity.

"Osama bin Laden did us a favor," the notes read. "He vulcanized us, awakened us and strengthened our resolve."

According to the lawsuit, Gardner threw the paper in a wastebasket in the teachers' lounge. He was then allegedly surrounded by armed school guards and detained for an hour in front of Arthur J. Rooney Middle School. He was suspended and later reinstated.

Gardner is seeking damages of more than \$50,000.

Pittsburgh Public Schools spokeswoman Pat Crawford declined to comment.

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