

THE BATTALION

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Students observe third Bonfire anniversary

By Brad Bennett
THE BATTALION

When Albritton Tower chimed 12 slow bells at 2:42 a.m. Monday, the crowd of about 3,000 assembled around the site of the 1999 Aggie Bonfire Collapse fell silent.

By the time the bell tower finished playing "Spirit of Aggieland," the crowd had entered the ring of electric lawn lights surrounding the site where three years earlier the 60-foot stack tumbled to the ground killing 12 Aggies and injuring 27 others.

University-sponsored remembrances were held Sunday afternoon, but impromptu remembrance events emerged early Monday.

After a moment of silence, the group

huddled around the 12 crosses in the center of the site and sang a solemn rendition of "The Spirit of Aggieland," followed by "Amazing Grace."

Janice Kerlee, mother of Bonfire victim Tim Kerlee Jr., led a response. After each line, the crowd repeated the words, "We will remember." Kerlee then read a roll call of the absent, similar to the lists read at Muster, with people answering for each of the fallen 12.

Most of the crowd arrived after 2:00 a.m., many wearing Bonfire pots and several being supported by friends as they shared their grief. One Corps of Cadets company approached the site side-by-side in 10-man long lines with their arms over the shoulders of the cadets next to them.

Richard Braus, whose son Dominic was injured in the collapse, arrived from Houston for the unofficial observance. Dominic, a senior member of company L-1, also had a friend killed in the collapse.

"I am here to remember those who died," Richard Braus said. "It is an anniversary I remember all year."

Josh Maxwell, a senior agriculture development major, came at 12:30 p.m., arriving early to remember on his own.

"I heard the collapse from outside my apartment," Maxwell said. "I hope that none of the younger classes have to feel this way."

Maxwell and other upperclassman said more education is needed for the members



JP BEATO III • THE BATTALION

Students gathered at the Polo Fields at 2:42 a.m. Monday morning to observe the 3rd anniversary of the 1999 Bonfire Collapse that killed 12.

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Freeze frame



JOHN C. LIVAS • THE BATTALION

Chemistry graduate student **Steve Furyk** fills a dewar tank with liquid nitrogen to use in kryogenic degassing. **Furyk** is taking part in a 20-year ongoing research project of polymer bond catalysts that is funded by the Welsh and National Science Foundations.

Performance review of Duke underway

By Rolando Garcia
THE BATTALION

A top student leader who concocted a story that he had been kidnapped and robbed and later admitted he had lied to police may be removed from his position after the Memorial Student Center Council began disciplinary procedures Monday.

Chris Duke, the MSC executive vice president for marketing, is now the subject of a formal investigation and sanction process that has only been invoked a handful of times in the 50-year history of the MSC. The performance review was initiated at the request of MSC Council President Barry Hammond.

Hammond shared with the council a report from Dr. Dave Parrott, dean of Student Life, who investigated the incident. Hammond said the report includes a summation of facts gathered from police reports and Parrott's analysis of whether Duke's actions violated student rules or the MSC constitution.

Hammond declined to discuss the contents of the report, but did say that Parrott concluded Duke did not violate student rules or MSC rules. The investigation will examine how Duke's behavior impacts his performance as an MSC officer and decide whether any sanctions are warranted, Hammond said.

Duke's senior position within the organization requires that the council deal head on with Duke's

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Bin Laden recording authenticated by U.S. Rotter: Bonfire not end of all A&M traditions

By Lauren Smith
THE BATTALION

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. intelligence have concluded that a new audiotape of Osama bin Laden is an authentic, unaltered and recent recording of the al-Qaida leader, U.S. officials said Monday.

"Intelligence experts do believe that the tape is genuine," White House spokesman Scott McClellan said. "And it is clear that the tape was made in the last several weeks as well."

The technical analysis of the tape furnished the first proof in almost a year that bin Laden is alive.

The audiotape, broadcast on the al-Jazeera Arab language television network, is what it sounds like: bin Laden himself, reading a prepared statement promising new terrorism against the United States and its allies, a U.S. intelligence official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said earlier Monday.

The analysis of the tape was performed by technical experts, linguists and translators at the CIA and National Security Agency, who compared the message to previous recordings of bin Laden. While no analysis is 100-percent certain, the experts are as certain as they can be that it is genuine, the official said.

Because it mentions recent terrorist attacks, officials concluded the tape was made in the last few weeks, the official said. It had been a year since U.S.

intelligence received any definitive evidence that bin Laden had survived the U.S. attacks on Afghanistan in the months after Sept. 11.

Asked about the tape at the a White House briefing, McClellan said that while "it cannot be stated with 100 percent certainty," intelligence experts were still certain bin Laden's voice on the tape.

"They do believe it is. It's a reminder that we need to continue doing everything we can to go after these terrorist networks and their leaders wherever they are, and we will," McClellan said.

The tape gives little clue to bin Laden's location or his health, officials said. Although his whereabouts are unknown, U.S. officials believe he is probably hiding in a remote mountainous region in the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

American officials have never confirmed rumors that bin Laden was wounded or suffering some kind of kidney ailment.

The message also was a determining factor in a new spate of terror alerts in the United States and elsewhere last week. Previous public statements from bin Laden have served as preludes to terrorist attacks, officials said.

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Though the student body should not forget the legacy of Bonfire, it should not overshadow remaining traditions, said Craig Rotter, coordinator of leadership development and adviser for Residence Life.

"Aggies are mourning the students whose lives were lost in the 1999 Bonfire, but they are also mourning the passing of the greatest tradition at A&M. Don't get caught up on one path so much that you forget the other traditions of this University," Rotter said Monday at a Bonfire history forum.

The building and burning of Bonfire was the one thing that former students could count on to be the same when returning to the A&M campus, he said.

"A&M changed so much that early students

could not even recognize the campus, but the old Aggies still had that symbol of Bonfire to connect them back to the campus," Rotter said.

An up to date chronology of Bonfire was never kept up, he said, because Aggies thought the tradition would always continue. The only true Bonfire expert is a deceased truck driver for H.B. Zachary fondly nicknamed "Preacher" by students who worked with him for over 20 years on Bonfire.

It is impossible to talk about Bonfire without taking a look back into the past, present, and future, Rotter said.

The 1960s were a time of great change for A&M as women, minorities and "non-reggs" flooded onto campus, Rotter said.

From 1970 to 2000, the student population tripled, causing the University become more mainstream and depart from

the traditionalism and conservatism A&M had always known, Rotter said.

The Aggie Bonfire was broadcast on satellite for the first time in 1986, and Monday's audience witnessed the occasion in a recording Rotter shared. From the picture of the Aggie Bonfire in 1969 that set the world record for the tallest burning fire to the 1948 Bonfire made of mostly outhouses and scraps, Bonfire has not always been the wedding cake design of 1999.

These little fires begin to happen more and more in the early 1900s among the all male, all military student body before Bonfire became the big symbol for A&M that it is today, Rotter said.

Rotter, Class of 1992, taught many of the

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Chief of Staff speaks on job duties

By Jeremy Osborne
THE BATTALION

Despite America's ongoing tension with Iraq and the looming possibility of war, White House Chief of Staff Andrew H. Card, Jr. chose not to discuss policy issues Monday in his talk at Texas A&M and instead spoke to the crowd of high school and college students about his job responsibilities.

Speaking at the George Bush Presidential Conference Center, Card said the structure of the White House and the way it functions is determined by the chief of staff.

Card has served as special assistant to the President for intergovernmental affairs for President Reagan, deputy chief of staff to former President Bush and chief of staff to current President Bush. He said through his years of experience at the White House he observed that different chiefs of staff create different White Houses.

"You don't really apply to be a president's chief of staff," Card said. "It's an invitation that you cannot turn down and it's an invitation that carries much more responsibility than even the person who made

the invitation understands." Despite the noticeable impact of the job, Card said he holds a humble view of his position at the White House.

"Because of the experiences I had working with other chiefs of staff, I view my job as the following: I am to be the president's staffer who is responsible for the rest of the staff," Card said. "I am not the prime minister or the president in waiting."

Card also said the president's time is incredibly

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Chief of Staff **Andrew H. Card Jr.** spoke at the George Bush Presidential Conference Center on Monday.