

THE BATTALION

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Off-campus bonfire burns after memorial

By C.E. Walters
THE BATTALION

Standing 35 feet tall on a driving range in Magnolia, TX, an off-campus bonfire was lit Tuesday night under a starless sky to a crowd of more than 2,500 Texas A&M students, alumni and Magnolia residents.

The ceremony, which competed with the cold and rainy weather, began with a Silver Taps honoring the victims of the 1999 Aggie Bonfire Collapse followed by a hushed rendition of "The Spirit of Aggieland."

The fire was lit during a more enthusiastic performance of "The Aggie War Hymn." The

wind quickly picked up a combination of smoke, dirt, ash and fire which began to land on observers and tents at the High Meadow Ranch Golf Club.

Michael W. Nolen, Class of 1990 and a resident of Magnolia, brought his young son, Clayton, with him to see the bonfire. Nolen, who said he was disappointed with the University's actions regarding Bonfire, said it was important to come out with his son to see the tradition.

"It's (bonfire) about camaraderie and working together," he said.

Members of the off-campus Bonfire Coalition were there to help with the perimeter guard.

The organization, which seeks to return Bonfire to campus, was there to help in any way possible, said Charles Teel, Bonfire Coalition co-chair and junior political science major.

In response to comments that the best way to honor the memories of the victims of the Collapse would be to cancel Bonfire permanently, Teel said the memories of the dead and the injured influence every decision made by the group.

"(The victims) are at the forefront of our minds," he said.

Bonfire Coalition supports the University in the creation of a permanent monument, Teel said. The organization, he said,

has several family members of victims on their board, but Teel does not know of any who do not support the group's actions.

"I'm sure (there are) some who view (us) differently," he said.

David Goff, general manager of the club and Class of 1980, said the cost of the bonfire would be covered by a golf tournament fund raiser.

Goff said there was less concern regarding safety issues because the bonfire builders were members of the maintenance crew at the club. These workers were experienced



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Senior agricultural development major **Daniel Loggins** stands as a bonfire perimeter guard Tuesday.

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Autopsy reveals football player dies from clot

Staff & Wire
THE BATTALION

COLLEGE STATION, Texas (AP) — Texas A&M football player Brandon Fails died from a blood clot in his lungs that resulted from a leg injury, the Travis County Medical Examiner's Office said Tuesday.

Fails was on his way to breakfast Monday morning when he told his roommate, tight end Patrick Fleming, he was having a hard time breathing, head coach R.C. Slocum said. Fails collapsed moments later, and was rushed to St. Joseph Medical Center and was pronounced dead at 9:03 a.m.

The 6-foot-1, 307-pound Fails hurt his right knee in practice and had knee surgery Oct. 22.

The Travis County Medical Examiner's office, which contracts with Brazos County, made the initial ruling about the massive pulmonary thromboembolism after conducting an autopsy Tuesday.

"It's a condition you can anticipate (after) surgeries that requires you to be immobilized for extended periods of time," team physician Jesse Parr told the *Bryan-College Station Eagle*. "But he was not immobilized. He was up and able and on crutches pretty quickly."

Parr said there would be no warning signs for such a clot.

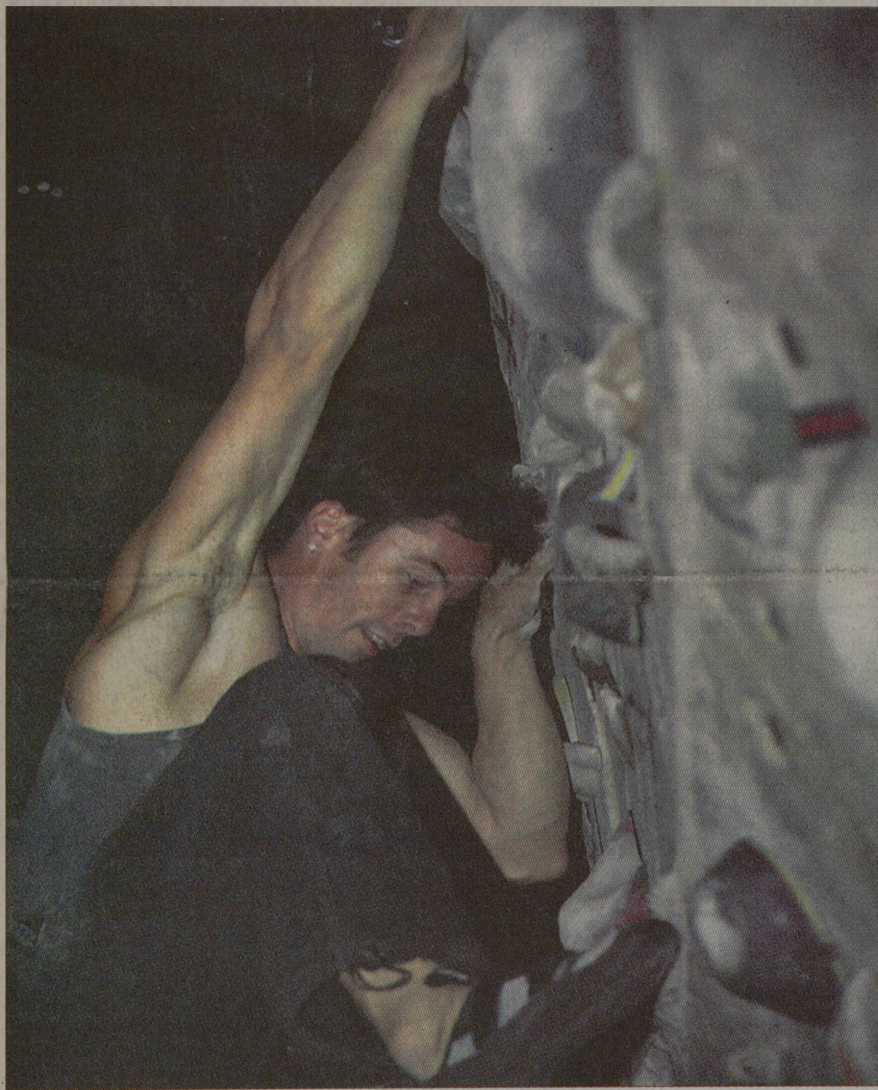
"What happens is just what we saw — a catastrophic, sudden event," he said. "Life can be so good on Sunday night visiting with his parents, but then things can suddenly deteriorate."

"It's one of these things that you don't have any control over."

Pulmonary embolism occurs when a blood clot, or a portion of it, breaks free and circulates through the bloodstream to the lungs. It can become trapped in the arteries there. If the clot restricts blood flow to a large section of the lungs, sudden death can result.

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Vertical limit



SUBMITTED BY MATT RINGMAN

Rock climber **Matt Tait** establishes a secure hold as he checks his footing at the Rec Center Tuesday night. Tait was visiting from New Zealand.

Poultry disease has no holiday effect

By Kim Weatherley
THE BATTALION

A recent outbreak of a disease that infects birds, including turkeys, may have worried people who are planning their Thanksgiving dinners, but experts say there is no need for concern.

Southern Californians have recently witnessed the second outbreak of Exotic Newcastle Disease (END) in more than 30 years. END marks the death of almost 100 percent of affected poultry. According to the USDA Web site, the last recorded epidemic took place in 1971, also in Southern California.

According to the USDA, the effects were so intense that it took the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) more than three years to completely eradicate the outbreak. Almost 12 million birds were destroyed and the whole incident cost taxpayers more than \$56 million. In turn, the price of poultry items increased dramatically.

If you're planning on eating turkey this Thanksgiving, this outbreak might make you think twice. However, Bill Mattos of the California Poultry Foundation is quick to point out that there's no risk in enjoying a succulent bird this holiday season.

"It's perfectly safe," Mattos said. "The disease has not and hopefully will not spread to commercial poultry. It has only been found in backyard flocks thus far."

Even if commercial poultry was affected, as was the case 30 years ago in California, Mattos said, digesting the infected tissue of a chicken or turkey cannot harm the individual eating it. END is strictly a bird disease that cannot be contracted by humans, he said.

Leticia Rico, a spokeswoman for the CDFA, said in the most rare cases, lab technicians and poultry workers came down with conjunctivitis, or pink eye, when introduced to grossly high levels of the disease.

END has not spread to Texas, she said. In the unlikely case of a Texas epidemic, officials said they would like the general public to be informed so they can prevent its spread.

Rico said symptoms of infected birds include sneezing and coughing, nasal discharge and greenish diarrhea. END also affects the reproductive process. If the bird can reproduce at all, it will generate thin-shelled eggs.

She said the virus can be spread through contact with bodily discharges of infected birds. These include droppings and nose, mouth and eye secretions. It is proven to spread more quickly among birds held in confinement, such as those on commercial farms.

Rico said a quarantine is already in place to prevent the spread of the disease. She also states that biosecurity, a form of extreme cleanliness has been

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Holiday travel expected to rise, despite disadvantages

(AP)—Despite the threat of long lines at airports, higher gas prices and ugly weather marching toward the Northeast, more Americans are expected to travel this Thanksgiving than last year.

The AAA travel group predicted air travel nationwide will climb 6 percent over Thanksgiving 2001, which came just 10 weeks after the Sept. 11 attacks.

"The increase in air travel shows that a lot of people think the (security) system today is a little easier to maneuver and is still effective," said Tom Calcagni, a spokesman for AAA.

By Tuesday evening, early birds who hoped to beat the holiday crunch

began taking to the nation's roads, rails and skies. AAA predicted 35.9 million Americans will travel at least 50 miles from home by Sunday, a 1.7 percent increase from last year.

At a relatively calm Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport, extra security screeners stood ready, though passengers merely trickled through.

"Tomorrow will be the nutty day," airport spokesman Ken Capps said.

Some of the lowest air fares since the late 1980s could boost air travel, according to the Air Transport Association, which represents the major U.S. carriers.

And wait times at security check-

points nationwide averaged only nine minutes Tuesday afternoon, said Brian Turmail, a spokesman for the Transportation Security Administration, which finalized its takeover of the nation's airport security last week.

Still, 30.8 million Americans were expected to choose the highway over the runway, a 1 percent increase over last year, AAA said. Some cited the lower cost of car travel; others feared crowd delays at airports.

"I'm not as concerned about flying as in the last year," said Joe Koch, a 38-year-old salesman who planned to drive from Washington, D.C., to Albany, N.Y. "It's the challenges of the airport,

all that waiting on long lines, that make driving easier."

However, bad weather was expected to complicate travel in the Northeast, where up to 6 inches of snow were forecast in some places. Snow fell Tuesday across Illinois, Indiana and Ohio, and a mix of rain and snow hit Kentucky and West Virginia.

"It is New England, so it's not the first time we're going to see snow," said Maj. John Leyden Jr. of the Rhode Island State Police. "But it's the first time we've seen it this season. We recommend that drivers leave more time to reach their destinations."

Drivers are also contending with gas

prices that are up about 25 cents, to \$1.45 a gallon, from last Thanksgiving.

Amtrak expects to sell more tickets as the weather deteriorates. Spokesman Dan Stessel said the commuter railroad added 58 trains in the Northeast and some have already sold out.

As Chicago's Union Station filled with rail travelers, Deb Desmond was on the floor near her husband and 10-year-old daughter. They had been waiting for nine hours to transfer to a train that would take them to La Crosse, Wis.

"All three of us, it cost \$467," she said, explaining they chose the rails. "To fly, it would have been \$250 to \$300 each."

Professor believes monkeys' preferences show genetic predisposition

By Brad Bennett
THE BATTALION

The widely held belief that human preferences are learned is being challenged by Texas A&M assistant professor of psychology Dr. Gerianne Alexander's research, which appears in the *Journal of Evolution and Human Behavior*.

Alexander's research showed that when given masculine and feminine human toys, vervet monkeys, who have no learned knowledge of what the toys are for, preferred toys according to their gender.

Alexander said her research shows that monkeys and, therefore, humans may have a genetic predisposition in personal preferences.

"Clearly socialization is important, I am not dismissing that, but this shows that there are clear differences between the sexes," Alexander said.

Dr. Heather Bortfeld, assistant professor in cognitive physics at A&M, said in her research with infants and language, input is the most important factor in human development.

"(Humans) are biased to learn, input is key," Bortfeld said.

Bortfeld said using nonhuman species is the only way to test theories in genetic preferences, because human learning starts soon after birth.

"Socialization manifests early, so we can't tell (in humans) what's socialized," Bortfeld said.

Bortfeld said Alexander's study can't be used to make conclusions about human behavior or even the behavior of monkeys, but is a good place to start.

"This study did a great job observing a phenomenon," Bortfeld said. "Now her job is to see what's behind it."

Dr. Susanna Priest, associate professor and professor of research methods, said she agrees that more research needs to be done.

"This is a good pilot study and hopefully it will lead to other research," she said.

Priest said the main shortcoming of the study seemed to be a problem controlling outside variables.

See **Monkeys** on page 2

VERVET MONKEY'S TOY PREFERENCES



• MALE MONKEYS HAD MORE CONTACT TIME WITH A CAR AND A BALL THAN FEMALES

• FEMALE MONKEYS HAD MORE CONTACT TIME WITH A DOLL AND A POT THAN MALES

• MALES AND FEMALES HAD EQUAL CONTACT TIME WITH A PICTURE BOOK AND A STUFFED DOG

SOURCE: JOURNAL OF EVOLUTION AND HUMAN BEHAVIOR

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