

THE BATTALION

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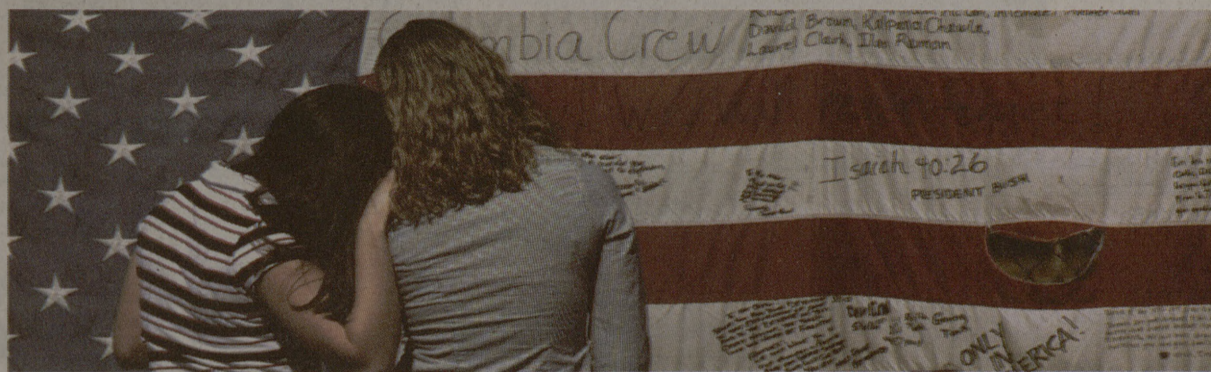
Texas A&M University

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Bush pays tribute to Columbia crew

By Ron Fournier
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



Alyssa Varsos, left, and Julie Martin look at a memorial set up at the entrance to the Johnson Space Center for the crew of the space shuttle Columbia on Tuesday, February 4, 2003, in Houston, Texas.

SPACE CENTER, Houston — Under sapphire blue skies that once held Columbia and her crew, President Bush paid tribute Tuesday to the shuttle's seven astronauts and rededicated the nation to space travel. "They go in peace for all mankind. And all mankind is in their debt," he said.

The president joined at least 10,000 teary-eyed NASA workers, aging astronauts, political leaders and families of the fallen crew for a memorial service in a plaza outside Mission Control usually reserved for celebrations of space triumphs.

The shuttle broke up Saturday as it was returning to earth. In Bush's words: "Their mission was almost complete, and we lost them so close to home."

The president met with family members after the service, which ended with the ringing of a Navy bell — seven times, one for each of the deceased astronauts — and a "missing man" formation flyover: four T-38 NASA jets roared above the crowd, with one peeling away and soaring high and out of sight.

Bush bowed his head and first lady Laura Bush wiped tears from her eyes as the United States Navy Band Sea Chanters led the crowd in song.

The words to one hymn, "God of Our Fathers, Whose Almighty Hand," were printed on the back of the service's programs, allowing the NASA family to raise its voice in tribute to "shining worlds in splendor through the skies."

Leading the crowd in prayer, Harold Robinson, a captain in the Navy's Chaplain Corps, said the astronauts found true humility while viewing "our little planet from outer space."

Fighting back tears, NASA Administrator Sean O'Keefe then declared, "Today, our grief is overwhelming."

He promised to find out why Columbia broke apart, correct the problem and make sure it never happens again. To the families of those lost, he said: "We will keep this solemn pledge."

Bush recalled that Navy Capt. David Brown, a medical doctor aboard Columbia, was asked several weeks ago by his brother what would happen if something went wrong with the mission. "This program will go on," the 46-year-old Navy flight surgeon replied.

"Capt. Brown was correct," Bush said. "America's space program will go on."

Earlier, aides said the president supports continuing the shuttle program, despite criticism by some.

At the Johnson Space Center, crew members were remembered in separate eulogies that shared with the world their nicknames, habits, likes and dislikes and, in many cases, their near-last words.

O'Keefe recalled that mission specialist Kalpana Chawla, 41, told Mission Control how beautiful the Earth looked from miles above as she summoned her fellow crew members to the shuttle window, where the world was reflected in her eye.

"It is this image, the image of Columbia's crew joyfully joining Kalpana to see our beautiful planet reflected in their friend's eye, that we will remember and treasure forever," O'Keefe said, his voice cracking.

The president spoke briefly about each astronaut as their smiling faces looked down from a picture of the crew placed on stage.

See **Memorial** on page 2

Solemn ceremony



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Members of the Squadron 16 Flag Detail **Eric Bruton** (left), a freshman general studies major, **Ian Coccozza** (middle), a sophomore education major, fold the flag flown at half-staff in front of the Academic building Tuesday afternoon for Silver Taps. Also present are freshman general studies major **Omar Pastrana** (right),

Budget cuts to affect summer classes, staff

By Rolando Garcia
THE BATTALION

Texas A&M President Robert M. Gates has compiled a list of spending cuts that will slash \$10 million from the University's budget this year and force academic programs to shoulder a substantial portion of the burden.

The final figure, which meets A&M's obligation to cut 7 percent from its state funds, is less than the \$16 million amount administrators initially thought would have to be cut. About half of the cuts will come from the operating budgets of academic departments. A major source of savings will be from vacant faculty positions, said Dr. Jerry Strawser, dean of the Mays College of Business and chair of the committee tasked with recommending cuts to Gates. It takes up to a year to hire faculty, and funds that would have been used to pay graduate assistants and offer summer courses may be cut, Strawser said.

"It's going to be a real challenge to try not to cut back on our summer course offerings," Strawser said.

Departments may also postpone the purchase of equipment such as computers. Each college

dean will be responsible for a specific amount of cuts, Gates said, and will have leeway to determine where the savings will come from. A simple across-the-board cut was ruled out, Gates said, because academic programs that are nationally ranked must be protected to uphold the University's academic standing.

"We need to keep our strong programs strong," Gates said. The staff hiring and travel freeze Gates imposed this past week is expected to net less than \$3 million. The rest of the cuts will come from administrative spending, Gates said.

In a memo sent Tuesday to A&M System Chancellor Howard Graves outlining the University's budget cuts, Gates warned that further state fund reductions for next year would cause a "major disruption in services." He added that the hiring freeze, could last until the end of the fiscal year in August, would deteriorate student services.

Bob Wright, Graves' spokesman, said early estimates from state budget officials call for a 12 percent cut in state funds for next year's budget.

Gov. Rick Perry requested on Jan. 23 that all state agencies cut spending 7 percent to help balance the state budget this year.

A&M student wins \$8,000 on 'Who Wants to be a Millionaire'

By Kendra Kingsley
THE BATTALION

More than a 12 students crammed into a tiny dorm room on Tuesday to watch one of their best friends compete for \$1 million. Scott Smith, a sophomore chemical engineering major at Texas A&M, appeared on the college edition of "Who Wants to be a Millionaire" and took home \$8,000.

Smith said he and friends from his Edmund, Okla. high school academic team auditioned for "Who Wants to be a Millionaire" last summer at the Oklahoma City Zoo.

"At about 5:30 in the morning, there were already 9,000 people (at the audition)," Smith said. "All of us took a test, and the top 300 scores got interviews."

Smith said he credits his own top score to past participation in academic tournaments.

"I participated in 12 years of 'nerd bowls,'" Smith said. "That was my only preparation for the audition, but I guess it worked."

In addition to his broad knowledge of trivia, Smith had one other asset.



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Tuesday afternoon **Scott Smith**, a sophomore chemical engineering major, and fellow dorm mates watch an episode of "Millionaire College Week."

"I was wearing my 'Louisiana Girls State' T-shirt, which is my luckiest shirt," he said. "It got a lot of attention at the interview."

Selected as the sole contestant from the Oklahoma City audition, Smith joined nine other college students in New York City to film "Who Wants to be a Millionaire's" college week.

"The 10 of us hung out and went to clubs,"

See **Money** on page 2

Cargo vessel found underwater 30 miles off the Louisiana coast

By Lauren Smith
THE BATTALION

A team of researchers led by Texas A&M graduate student Brett Phaneuf is trying to uncover the mystery behind a 65-foot-long boat lying 2,700 feet beneath the surface in the Gulf of Mexico.

Federal Minerals Management Service officials overseeing the A&M researchers say this project is the deepest nautical exploration in the Gulf of Mexico.

Divers initially thought the 200-year-old vessel found 30 miles off the Southeast Coast of Louisiana was a whaling boat, but none have ever entered the Gulf of Mexico.

After further investigation and reviewing video images of the wreck to confirm initial conclusions, researchers found the vessel actually transported cargo and immigrants in the

1800s as part of a ship company called Carins Line.

"The ship is named the Western Empire, built in 1862 in Canada," Phaneuf said. "It was primarily used to ferry immigrants from London and Liverpool to the U.S."

On the ship's first trip in 1878 to New Orleans, the Western Empire, carrying a load of lumber, sank in 1,300 feet of water, Phaneuf said.

Top-of-the-line underwater technology allowed researchers to explore the ship at its location on the ocean floor.

"Using a robotic vehicle, the team dropped down to the vessel

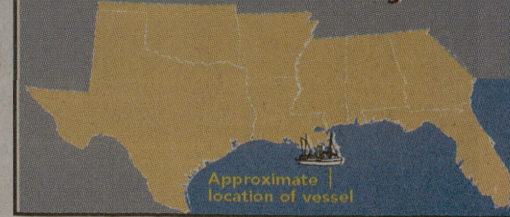
where we found the ship to be incredibly well preserved; 50 percent of the ship is still there," Phaneuf said.

Phaneuf said the sinking was odd because the ship was only 16 years old. He said he believes the ship was either poorly

See **Ship** on page 2

The Western Empire

- Found 30 miles off the Southeast Coast of Louisiana
- Built in 1862 in Canada
- Sank after first voyage in 1878
- Transported immigrants and cargo



SOURCE: BRETT PHANEUF
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