

THE BATTALION

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Reflections display added to Muster tradition

By Dallas Shipp
THE BATTALION

Muster 2003 begins a new tradition in honoring deceased Aggies this year with a Reflections display accompanying each name on the Muster roll call. During Monday night's campus ceremony in Reed Arena, each name on the roll call will have an item or picture on display in the Memorial Student Center Flagroom representing their life as an Aggie. Those being honored who did not have an item donated by their family will have a candle and name card on a table for visitors to view. In past campus ceremonies, Aggies who died the previous year in the

Brazos Valley were remembered by friends and relatives who lit a candle and answered "here" during the roll call of the honored.

Senior marketing major and Muster committee member Shannon Vogt said officers read the idea for the Reflections display in an application from someone applying to join the committee, which plans the annual Muster ceremony.

"One of the questions in the application was, 'What would you do to make Muster 2003 a memorable experience?'" Vogt said. "Someone came up with that idea and we thought it was a good idea."

But because this marks the first year for the new addition to Muster, some

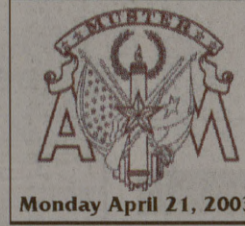
friends and family members were unaware of the Reflections display.

Vogt said she has received touching feedback from family members and students.

"We've gotten several notes in with the pictures saying that it was really tough to go through all the pictures and stuff again," she said. "Most of the families think it's a really good idea."

One student being honored this year is former Aggie football player Brandon Fails, who died last November due to complications from a blood clot in his leg. His parents, Charles and Valerie Fails, allowed Vogt to use pictures of their son for the display. The Athletic Department is also allowing Fails' A&M football helmet to be displayed.

Muster at a glance:



Monday April 21, 2003

- Camaraderie Barbecue in Academic Plaza, 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.
- Roll call for the absent in Reed Arena at 7 p.m.
- Absences from classes after 5 p.m. will be University excused

SOURCE: MUSTER COMMITTEE • TRAVIS SWENSON that he's not forgotten there in the hearts and minds of the students. It helps to ease the pain."

Charles Fails said he thought it was a good idea to add the Reflections display and said the support from the University community has helped to ease the pain of losing a son.

"It's tough when you see his dorm, the school, the athletes," Fails said. "(But) it is comforting because it shows

The Reflections display will be open to the public from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Monday, before items are returned to the families at Reed Arena later that night.

Looks like spring



RANDAL FORD • THE BATTALION

Texas A&M employee **Eddie Velasco** waters a section of yellow pansies planted near the Academic Plaza on Wednesday afternoon.

The yellow pansies have been recently planted all over campus and should continue to bloom until the end of June.

Memorial planners say site to be 'uplifting'

By Bernhard Hall
THE BATTALION

With the Bonfire Memorial set to be dedicated on Nov. 18, 2004, project designers held an open forum Wednesday to discuss their progress and the details of the memorial.

The completed memorial will be the culmination of months of work by a team that says it has strived to memorialize the 12 Aggies who lost

their lives and the 27 who were injured, and to honor the tradition of Bonfire and the spirit and unity it represented.

"We want the memorial to be not just a downer, but also uplifting," said Bob Shemwell, speaker for the group from Overland Partners, Inc. the firm designing the memorial.

The memorial will consist of three components: the Traditions Plaza, the History Walk and the Spirit Ring, Shemwell said.

The Traditions Plaza will be a visitor center as well as a museum containing memorabilia and artifacts from past Bonfires, he said. The plaza will also contain poems and other material, including "The Last Corps Trip," which was traditionally read at each Bonfire.

The History Walk is a path from the Traditions Plaza to

See **Memorial** on page 5A

Media Board retains students

By Rolando Garcia
THE BATTALION

The Student Media Board discussed but did not vote on a proposal to bar student leaders from sitting on the panel that selects The Battalion editor in chief each semester, with most board members expressing opposition to the measure.

Brady Creel, a former Battalion editor in chief, proposed amending the bylaws of the Board to prohibit officers of student organizations such as the Student Government Association, Memorial Student Center and the Corps of Cadets from serving on the body. The Board, which oversees The Battalion, consists of three student members nominated by the student body president. Faculty and staff comprise the other five voting members, and any decision to hire or fire an editor must be approved by the Provost.

In the past, the student body president has nominated himself, members of the SGA executive council, the MSC council president or other high-profile student leaders. In a statement submitted to the Board, Creel said this situation compromises the independence of The Battalion by subjecting editors to pressure from the student leaders they cover.

But most Board members said the participation of student leaders on the Board has not led to conflicts of interest.

"I see the potential problem, but I've yet to see any evidence this problem has occurred," said Leroy Dorsey, chair of the Board and interim head of the journalism department.

Prakash Krishnan Nair, a student member of the Board and an officer in the Graduate Student Council, said it is unlikely the Board could exercise undue influence on The Battalion's editorial decisions since the group only meets once a semester and does nothing more than hire the editor in chief.

Barbara Gastel, a Board member and journalism professor, said the proposal raised legitimate concerns about student leaders who are covered by The Battalion selecting the newspaper's editor in chief.

"I can remember some situations when some people (on the Board) had personal agendas," she said.

Creel was not present at the meeting but said later that he was disappointed by the Board's decision. The continued presence of student leaders on the Board could have a chilling effect on Battalion staff, who may fear retribution from student members of the Board for a controversial or critical story, Creel said.

In other business, the Board nominated Sommer Bunce to be editor in chief of The Battalion for Fall 2003. On April 4, the Board nominated True Brown as editor in chief for the summer semester and Heath Taylor Crawford as editor of the AggieLand yearbook. The nominations must be approved by the Provost.

Maj. Rodriguez educates students on military life

By Esther Robards-Forbes
THE BATTALION

Texas A&M Naval ROTC Program Director and 20-year Marine Corps veteran Maj. Justin C. Rodriguez discussed common misconceptions and the reality of military life Wednesday night at the Stark Gallery as a part of the Memorial Student Center Current Issues Awareness series.

While many myths exist about the military, life as a soldier is nothing like the movies, Rodriguez said.

A common misconception of enlisted soldiers is that these personnel are "dumb high school drop outs," he said. In reality, the U.S. military requires a high school diploma as a condition of enlistment.

Rodriguez described the military's teamwork in all aspects of life, from training to home life, with families coordinating child care schedules. He also spoke about the kinder, gentler side of the military, describing a caring environment in which officers look out for enlisted personnel and enlisted personnel look out for one another.

Rodriguez also discussed the enormous responsibility of commanding soldiers in dangerous situations.

"We're in the people business," he said. "I have ordered America's finest young men to do things that I knew might get them killed, but I would not have done that if I did not have full confidence that they were the best trained people in the world. I also made sure that before we left on that mission that their families were fully taken care of."

Rodriguez declined to speak about the current conflict in Iraq and said that because he was not there, he could not address the topic.

When asked for his opinion on the patriotism of campus protesters, Rodriguez called their demonstrations "the sound of freedom," and said that while he did not agree with their stance, he believed they were still patriotic and had a right to exercise their freedoms.

Rodriguez has a degree in political science from A&M and teaches naval science at the University. He lives with his wife and seven children in Bryan.

U.S. forces capture airfield Baghdad

By John Sullivan, Peter Smolowitz and Carol Rosenberg
KRT CAMPUS

BAGHDAD, Iraq - The war is not quite over after all.

U.S. Forces from the 4th Infantry Division captured the Taji Army Airfield northwest of Baghdad on Wednesday after sporadic fighting and bombing from U.S. warplanes.

Soldiers found large caches of rocket-propelled grenades, missiles and artillery rounds at the military facility about 15 miles northwest of the Iraqi capital.

A U.S. Kiowa helicopter fired missiles into a bunker laden with munitions, triggering thundering explosions and billowing mushroom clouds for 10 hours. Shock waves from the explosions could be felt for miles as detonated rockets and blazing debris landed hundreds of yards away.

U.S. warplanes also spotted seven surface-to-air missile sites around the

airstrip, destroying five with 500-pound bombs. Hundreds of Iraqi civilians hoping to catch a glimpse of the spectacle gathered too close to the remaining two sites, which prevented U.S. forces from destroying them.

Soldiers from the 10th Cavalry, which took the brunt of the fighting, also detained about 110 men dressed

in civilian clothing found walking along the road or driving trucks near a military compound. Ten were held for further questioning.

No U.S. troops were injured. Elsewhere, American troops killed seven Iraqi civilians in the northern

See **Capture** on page 2A



ERIK CAMPOS • KRT CAMPUS

Members of the 404th Aviation Support Battalion join in fueling their vehicles with other units from the U.S. Army's 4th Infantry Division near Camp Udairi in northern Kuwait on last Friday.