

THE BATTALION

A Texas A&M Tradition Since 1893

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Friday, December 12, 2003

A&M student takes up residence in MSC

By Sonia Moghe
THE BATTALION

Coming from a comfortable middle-class family, Walt Sims never thought he would be homeless for a semester in college.

Sims, a senior history major who will graduate next week, spent his last night in the Texas A&M Memorial Student Center on Thursday after a semester of self-imposed residence within its walls. He slept on the couches, preferring the ones on the first floor, used the punctuality of 5:30 a.m. vacuuming routines as an alarm clock and paid nothing but \$40 in rent for the entire semester, which was included in his student fees.

"There are so many fees that students pay for

that they don't even make use of," Sims said. "I wanted to make the most of them."

The experience provided a glimpse into a world previously unbeknownst to him — a world of homelessness in which he would be taken out of his comfort zone.

Sims' days consisted of being woken up by janitors around 5:30 a.m. and walking across campus to the Student Recreation Center to shower and change his clothes. He would then attend his classes, eat meals, have dinner in the TV room in the underground MSC and eventually retire to one of his favorite sleeping spots.

Sims had been planning the details of his adventure into the realm of homelessness since the spring. He knew he would need a locker, a

meal plan and he would need to research the rules, of which he could find no stipulations regarding sleeping at the MSC.

"I tried to be careful not to let people notice me — especially staff," Sims said. "I did my best to not cause disturbances because I really didn't want to break any rules."

Sims said because there is at least one student who falls asleep in the MSC every night, he managed to remain inconspicuous. He even went so far as to make sure he fell asleep with a book every night and used his jacket as a pillow.

MSC staff, who declined to comment on the situation, said there is no rule against sleeping in the MSC.

Sims said his parents were worried about him

getting sick and failing out. They offered to pay for alternate housing but Sims refused, hoping to gain an outlook on himself and on life through his experience. He said he often thought of giving up.

"Coming home was hard," Sims said. "I actually found that I've gotten so used to sleeping on those couches that I can't sleep well on an actual bed."

As his semester comes to a close and he graduates, Sims will find himself moving out of the MSC.

"The MSC was kind of my home," Sims said. "In fact, I'd been at A&M for five years and during this one semester alone, I've learned more about campus than all previous years combined."

Sims said he hopes others who wish to partake in this adventure are careful not to ruin the opportunity for others by causing disturbances.

Getting ready



JOHN C. LIVAS • THE BATTALION

Freshman nutritional science major Rachel Cox studies for a chemistry final along with friend Michele Shute, a freshman biomedical sciences major, Thursday afternoon at Research Park.

Webb nominated as Battalion top editor

By Sarah Szuminski
THE BATTALION

When Elizabeth Webb applied to be a copy editor at The Battalion in the fall of 2001, she had no plans to move up to any higher positions. However, after more than two years working at the newspaper, Webb has been nominated to take on the challenge of serving as editor in chief next spring.

"The more I worked here, the more I came to love The Battalion," she said.

Webb, a senior English major, was nominated as next semester's editor in chief by Texas A&M's Student Media Board on Dec. 5. Final approval by Provost David Prior is pending.

During her time at The Battalion, Webb has been a copy editor, copy chief, features writer and managing editor. As she steps up to take on the top position next semester, Webb will be responsible for the entire staff and content of the paper.

"I am a little bit nervous, just because I've had many different people (as editors) before me and I don't know where I'm going to fit in," she said. "But I'm excited."

The Battalion's current editor in chief, senior journalism major Sommer Hamilton, said a key quality in Webb's leadership is the determination to do even better than what came before.

"Liz (Webb) will work hard to continue the positive changes we've been making together this semester and then some," Hamilton said. "She's got her own ideas on how to improve newsroom production, how to boost the staff's progress in the learning environment and how to remain connected with the student body we serve."

Some of Webb's goals for the spring



JOHN C. LIVAS • THE BATTALION

Senior English major Elizabeth Webb is Texas A&M Student Media Board's nominee for spring 2004 Battalion editor in chief.

include creating a space online for additional Web-exclusive material, posting weekend news coverage online and motivating the staff to feel more ownership in the newspaper.

"I want the whole staff to care about

See Webb on page 5A



04:10:02 12/06/2003

PHOTO COURTESY OF : WWW.AGGIEATHLETICS.COM/STOLENBANNERS

Unidentified students broke into G. Rollie White Coliseum Saturday morning. The students removed 11 of 12 Big 12 banners valued at \$300 each.

Students steal banners from G. Rollie White

By Sarah Walch
THE BATTALION

In the early hours of Saturday, Dec. 6, four males and one female broke into G. Rollie White Coliseum, the Texas A&M's volleyball team's home, and took down 11 of the 12 banners representing each Big 12 school that were hanging in the rafters, leaving only the banner from the University of Texas. The banners were valued at more than \$300 each, with the entire value of the stolen banners totaling more than \$3,300.

The group entered the building at about 3:45 a.m. and exited at about 4:10 a.m.

The banners were hung during the previous week for an NCAA volleyball tournament that took place Dec. 5 and (Dec.) 6. A&M hosted the first and second rounds of the tournament. The tournament included teams from Wisconsin, Arizona and Nicholls State.

The Athletic Department has contacted the University Police Department, and if the individuals responsible do not cooperate,

See Burglary on page 10A

Graduation slated for Dec. 19, 20

By Eric Ambroso
THE BATTALION

Dec. 19 will be one of the most important days in Nathan Kotschi's life. Along with more than 3,600 other seniors, Kotschi will graduate with a bachelor's degree.

After three and a half years at A&M, Kotschi is ready to move on and receive his degree in economics, but said he is also sad to leave.

"Texas A&M is a very special place," Kotschi said. "I don't know of any other school that has such great traditions and such a friendly campus. I'm very proud to be an Aggie."

Four graduation ceremonies will be held next week at Reed Arena. On Friday, Dec. 19 at 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. and Saturday, Dec. 20 at 9 a.m. and 2 p.m.

Don Carter, registrar for A&M, said there were more than 3,600 students who applied

to graduate. Carter said he believes 700 to 800 students will attend each ceremony.

Carter said usually 90 percent of undergraduates and 65 percent of graduate students receiving degrees attend the ceremony. He said he expects the handing out of diplomas to take an hour at each ceremony. Carter said he discouraged students from leaving early after their names are called. The University frowns upon students leaving early, but will not take any actions to prevent them from doing so, Carter said.

"I think it's just good manners for them to stay and watch their fellow classmates graduate," Carter said.

A&M President Robert M. Gates will begin the ceremony by welcoming the graduates before the national anthem. The Association of Former Students will then welcome and congratulate the students.

See Graduation on page 10A

Graduation Ceremonies

Next week's graduation ceremonies at Reed Arena will feature the following keynote speakers

Friday, Dec. 19 at 9 a.m.

Dr. Don W. Brown, commissioner of Higher Education

Friday, Dec. 19 at 2 p.m.

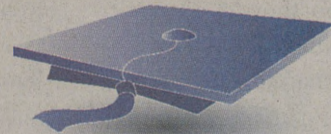
Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al Missned, chairperson of Qatar Foundation

Saturday, Dec. 20 at 9 a.m.

Dr. Norman Borlaug, distinguished professor of International Agriculture at A&M

Saturday, Dec. 20 at 2 p.m.

John Carter, U.S. congressman for the state of Texas



SETH FREEMAN • THE BATTALION
SOURCE : OFFICE OF REGISTRAR

North Dakota abduction concerns University officials

By Rhiannon Meyers
THE BATTALION

On Nov. 22, Dru Sjodin, a 22-year-old University of North Dakota student, was abducted in the parking lot of Columbia Mall in North Dakota. Search parties were immediately formed, but so far they have been unsuccessful in locating Sjodin.

Sjodin's disappearance has sparked a nationwide concern for safety in public areas. Texas

A&M University Police Department Lt. Bert Kretzschmar of the Crime Prevention Unit said even though abductions by strangers are rare, it could happen at A&M.

"This could happen anywhere you go," Kretzschmar said. "A&M is basically a microcosm of society itself, and we have the same problems as a small city does."

Kretzschmar said because A&M is an open campus, any-

one can come to campus.

"Stranger abductions are a rare occurrence," Kretzschmar said, "but if it were to happen, we take it very seriously because time is of the essence."

Kretzschmar said UPD is always on-call in case something similar ever happened at A&M. He said missing student cases are taken seriously and are investigated immediately after being reported.

Kretzschmar said female students in isolated areas who

are not paying attention are most susceptible to attacks.

Stephanie Gelner, a junior kinesiology major, said she did not question safety on campus until she attended a Healthy Living lecture on safety.

"I never thought twice about safety here at A&M," Gelner said. "But at the lecture I learned that a college campus is an easy place for attackers to go unnoticed. All they really have to do is dress like

See Abduction on page 10A

CONGRATULATIONS - GRADUATES
Thursday, December 9, 2003
UNWEAR THE BOLDNESS
THE BATTALION
UNWEAR THE BOLDNESS
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Tuesday, December 9, 2003