



Engineering dept. interim head moves up

By S.C. Millender
THE BATTALION

The Dwight Look College of Engineering has named Dennis O'Neal head of its mechanical engineering department.

O'Neal, Class of 1973, is the holder of the Aldredge/Paul Professorship in Engineering and has served as the interim department head since May 2003.

"Dr. O'Neal has done an outstanding job of serving as department head," said G. Kemble Bennett, vice chancellor and dean of the College

of Engineering. "Following an exhaustive search, Dr. O'Neal was clearly the best candidate to lead the mechanical engineering program and I look forward to his continued contributions to the department, college and entire University in the future."

O'Neal was one of four final candidates being considered for the job.

"I was pleasantly surprised," O'Neal said. "I'm anxious to serve the department and I'm looking forward to the challenges associated with running one of the biggest mechanical engineering programs in the country."

O'Neal came to Texas A&M in 1983 as an assistant professor after earning his Ph.D. in mechanical engineering from Purdue University in 1982.

"The reason I came is to work with students," O'Neal said. "Interacting with them and being able to solve problems is something I enjoy. If a faculty member comes to me with a problem, I like being able to hook them up with the resources they need to solve it."

O'Neal said the department is currently facing one pressing issue.

"We desperately need to hire new faculty,"

O'Neal said. "A strategic plan is in place in conjunction with the dean and the president to hire new faculty over the next four years."

Bernie Koronka, a department of mechanical engineering office assistant, has worked with O'Neal since last May and considers him a great co-worker.

"He's a really great person to work with," Koronka said. "He's got a lot of confidence in himself and that makes my job a lot easier."

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Sew carefully



BRIAN WILLS • THE BATTALION

ery Bingham, a graduate student of nuclear engineering, leads a hole in a Teflon component that will become a target for a laser beam. Bingham has been fabricating the parts with the help

of Ron Hart, a professor of nuclear engineering, for about two weeks and has spent the entire semester planning and designing the project.

'I Love America' Display to be held at Bush Library

By Erin Price
THE BATTALION

Bush Library Hosts Lions Club's Fourth of July Celebration

He may be young, but his love for Elvis Presley is just as powerful as the motion in his hips. Jason Adams, a 29-year-old Elvis impersonator from College Station, started his career in Las Vegas three years ago and said he is looking forward to his Fourth of July performance at the Bush Library.

"I've played in Las Vegas and all over Nevada, but this will definitely be the highlight of my career," Adams said.

Adams is one of the many acts invited to perform at the College Station Noon Lions Club 44th Annual "I Love America" celebration and fireworks display hosted by Texas A&M, The George Bush Presidential Library and the cities of College Station and Bryan.

Adams, a 1993 graduate of A&M Consolidated High School, said he is honored to be a part of this celebration because very few people get the opportunity to do a show on the Fourth of July at a presidential library.

"The performance will be something different because of the emotions involved in the celebration," Adams said. "I am sincerely appreciative and it feels very good to be asked to be here."

Brian Blake, public relations specialist for the Bush Library said admission to the event is free, but you have to pay for concessions once inside. College Station Noon Lions Club sponsors most of the

The George Bush Presidential Library and Texas A&M University will host the College Station Noon Lions Club's annual Fourth of July Celebration, "I Love America."

- Bush Library & Museum open from noon - 8 p.m.

- Concessions open at 5 p.m.

- Live entertainment begins at 5:30 p.m.

- Special Performance by Elvis Impersonator at 8:35 p.m.

- Brazos Valley Symphony Orchestra with Brazos Valley Chorale at 9 p.m.

- Fireworks Display before 10 p.m.

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SOURCE: BRIAN BLAKE

games and activities.

"This is our gift back to the community for all their support during the year," Blake said. "It will be a lot of fun."

Adams will be accompanied throughout the evening by performances from the Texas High Life Band, Magician Sneak Pete Rizzo and the Brazos Valley Symphony Orchestra, Blake said.

Costumed characters, such as George and Martha Washington and Abraham Lincoln, will be in atten-

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Rocket leaves atmosphere in private manned flight

By John Antczak
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MOJAVE, Calif. — An ungainly-looking rocket plane punched through the Earth's atmosphere and then glided home to a desert landing Monday in history's first privately financed manned spaceflight — a voyage that could hasten the day when the final frontier is opened up to paying customers.

Pilot Mike Melvill took SpaceShipOne 62.2 miles above Earth, just a little more than 400 feet above the distance considered to be the boundary of space. The flight lasted just 90 minutes.

The spaceship — with its fat fuselage and spindly white wings — was carried aloft under the belly of a carrier jet. The jet then released the spaceship, and its rocket engine ignited, sending it hurtling toward space at nearly three times the speed of sound. It left a vertical white contrail in the brilliant blue sky.

SpaceShipOne touched down in the Mojave Desert at 8:15 a.m. to cheers and applause.

Melvill, 63, said seeing the curvature of the Earth was "almost a religious experience."

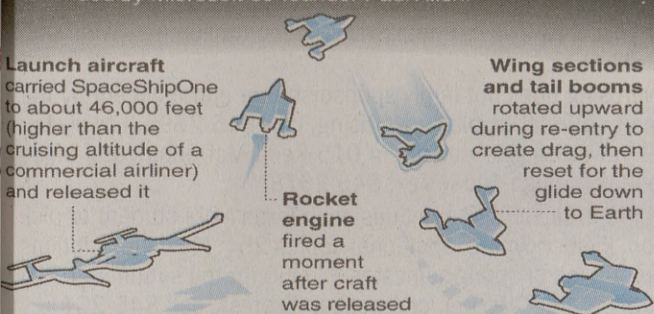
"It was really an awesome sight," he said. "It was like nothing I'd ever seen before, and it blew me away."

The flight is an important step toward winning the Ansari X Prize,

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Giant leap for private spaceflight

SpaceShipOne completed the first privately financed manned spaceflight Monday. The spacecraft climbed to 62 miles above the Earth before it landed. It was designed by Scaled Composites and funded by Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen.



SOURCE: SCALED COMPOSITES

Aggie moms create new scholarship

By Natalie Younts
THE BATTALION

The J. Malon Southerland Aggie Leader Scholarship was established by the Austin Texas A&M University Mothers' Club to provide financial assistance to students who display strong leadership skills.

Nancy Harrison, while serving as the club's scholarship chairwoman during the 2003-2004 school year, said the scholarship will provide assistance to students from the Austin area who have completed at least 30 hours at A&M and demonstrate leadership qualities.

"We wanted something that went on and on after we're long gone," she said.

The club has committed to giving \$25,000 to the A&M Foundation for the scholarship by 2009. So far, the club has donated \$8,000 toward the scholarship, said Patsy Nichols, who was the club's president during the 2003-2004 school year.

The money for the scholarship will come in the form of interest and dividends from the \$25,000. No student will be awarded the scholarship until it is fully endowed, or complete. Once complete, one \$1,000 scholarship will be awarded to a student per

year and will be valid for one year.

Nichols said the money has been raised through Singing Cadets concerts and the James Avery Exclusive Block Texas A&M Bracelet, which sells for \$90.

Nichols, whose son, Travis Nichols, is a sophomore in the College of Veterinary Medicine Biomedical Science Program and former deputy Corps of Cadets commander, said she enjoys helping students.

The club usually gives up to eight \$500 scholarships to Austin-area students per year. She said the members decided they wanted an additional scholarship that would be perpetual.

"Students 100 years from now will still get scholarships through this funding," Nichols said.

Edmond Solymosy, director of development for the Division of Student Affairs, said all Aggie Leader scholarships carry the name of J. Malon Southerland, the former vice president of student affairs.

"He inspired the scholarship. It was called the Aggie Leader Scholarship," Solymosy said. "When Dr. Southerland announced his retirement, the Division of Student Affairs thought that a nice tribute to him would be to name this scholarship in his honor."

Aggie R-r-ring surveys student mentoring

By Suzy Green
THE BATTALION

An Aggie R-r-ring survey conducted in spring 2004 found that 63 percent of Texas A&M students have mentors, and that mentors usually provide general advice and guidance about career planning.

Aggie R-r-ring is a monthly telephone survey program that gathers student opinions, said Darby Roberts, assistant director for the Department of Student Life Studies. Its goal is to provide information to A&M about its students.

"We identified mentoring as an important topic on campus and thought it would be an interesting survey," Roberts said.

The survey may help campus mentoring programs understand how students are using their mentors, Roberts said. It may also help faculty members understand the needs of their students.

Paul Ammons, an information and operations management professor, mentors students through the ATMentors program.

Ammons said he decided to become a mentor because he always had mentors in his past.

"It's critical for freshmen and important for older students to have mentors," Ammons said.

Mentors can serve as an added source of information or just someone to talk to, he said.

Ammons said mentors themselves can

also benefit from the experience. "(Mentoring) keeps me young and in touch and gives me a chance to talk to students other than who I teach," Ammons said.

Peggy Georg, a junior agricultural development major, found her mentor through the Aggie Access program.

"Coming from a small town, like I did, to a big university like this, it helps having someone who knows the ropes," Georg said. "Having a mentor makes the transition easier, especially since you're away from family."

Georg and her mentor meet daily to work together on the Aggie

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