

The Road Less Traveled

Some Texas A&M graduates have divine aspirations for their careers

By Jimmy Hisson
THE BATTALION

Since January, Jonathan Demma, a junior computer engineering major, has not enjoyed his bedroom in the same manner as he did when he was younger. His evenings are spent curled in slumber on the bare floor alongside his bed.

His stereo, PDA and other electronic accumulations of affluence have been carefully stowed within his closet. Demma's sacrifice of comfort and the depletion of his personal possessions are in preparation for a lifelong journey of servitude he will embark upon beginning Sept. 8.

Like other college students, Demma is currently taking actions that will lay the foundation for the path of his professional life. But the considerations of salary and a sound retirement package have managed to stray from his list of occupational benefits. Demma is among a handful of college students who will pursue a life of servitude in commitment to the Christian faith.

"Growing up, my family always lived very comfortably," Demma said. "I was happy, but never really took the time to concentrate on the things that made me that way."

On a trip to Toronto, Demma encountered a Franciscan Order from New York and the chance to question his own motivations for happiness.

"Through prayer and deprivation, I found that money and the things I had were not the sources of joy in my life," Demma said.

The Franciscans' embrace of poverty mirrors Demma's beliefs regarding possessions and happiness. Franciscan monks are forbidden a multitude of belongings including monetary currency of any form.

They possess only woolen robes and a pair of sandals, aiming to live as the destitute population they service.

Franciscan Brothers concentrate on relaying their messages of penance and prayer through outlets with audience appeal. Plans have already been made for Demma to bring his musical talent and juggling skills north to do outreach for the order of Franciscans Demma plans to join and serve. His guitar will become property of the community.

The choices made by Demma stand as a striking contrast to the typical formula of American life. Childhood leads to college. College leads to a career. The cycle is so familiar that Demma said he may not have strayed without driving faith and the support of family and friends.

"College is frequently a time when individuals question many aspects of their lives. Among them is religion," said Mary Walker of the Catholic Press.

Rachael Harmon, a biomedical science graduate, said she struggled to find her place during her undergraduate education. A childhood love of animals motivated her to attain the veterinary career she thought she wanted, but a spiritual retreat during her sophomore year urged her to contemplate another lifestyle choice.

"I was staring at a tapestry when I heard a voice clearly in my head calling me to be with him," Harmon said. "God was calling."

In a rapid attempt to pay off her accrued scholastic expenses, Harmon moved home and got a job. Harmon said she prepared herself to enter a convent by visiting a number of them.

"You have to make sure the convent is right for you, and you are right for the convent," Harmon said.



GRAPHIC BY: WILL LLOYD • THE BATTALION

However, the extended time period involved in convent selection and application allowed Harmon a chance to reconsider her decision to leave the University. Harmon said she realized the importance of both a bachelor's degree and the explo-

ration of faith. She graduated this spring and will begin her postulancy within the Carmelite of the Divine Church of Jesus in St. Louis, Mo. this fall.

"Universities grounded in ritual and tradition infer a sense of character and

service in students that coincides with Christianity and religion," Walker said.

While Bruno Perossa, a graduate student with a degree in modern and classical languages, has no official ministry title yet, he has already discovered the potential of the University system as a mechanism through which to teach ministry. Perossa spreads his faith during the summer and attends school during the academic year. Perossa has been involved in a number of University outreach programs that have taken him to Italy and now Peru. Perossa said he plans to continue to share the teachings of the Bible with undergraduate students around the world.

Jason Blackwelder received a degree in finance from A&M in the spring of 2003. Following graduation, Blackwelder entered a seminary in pursuit of his faith. After a year within the seminary, he said he can relate to the positions which each of these students finds themselves.

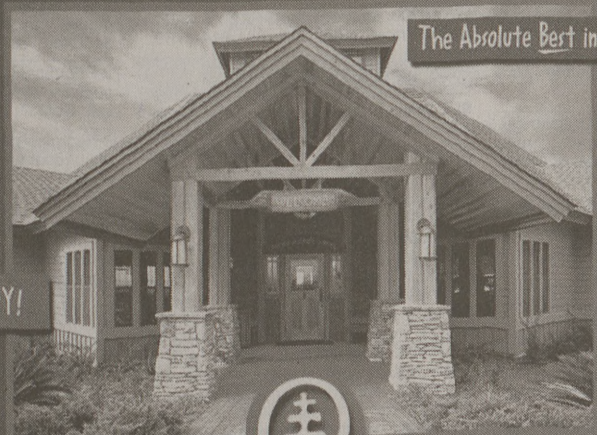
Blackwelder said he studied finance as a means of attaining what he believed was important at the time: success.

"I went to school to get a job to get money to be successful," Blackwelder said. "But I never really found the closure I wanted in my studies. I thought I lacked a sense of purpose. It wasn't until my junior year that I even thought of a seminary as a possibility. It was then that I felt I owed it to myself and God to at least consider it."

Though most students won't pursue a career in religion, many agree that it is an integral part of everyday life.

"People can find out a lot about themselves through solitude," Blackwelder said. "Everyone should find the time to quiet the televisions and distractions in their lives for a little time each day to at least look."

Welcome Home!



The Absolute Best in Student Living!

HOWDY!

Campus Lodge

3645 Wellborn Road Bryan, TX 77801

Ph 979 691 6400

The Moose is Loose in Aggieland!

Check us Out! - Now Leasing Summer/Fall 2004

Hurry in & Reserve Your
BRAND NEW Bungalow Today!

Stop by or Call Today!

Hot Points

- 1,2,4 Bedroom, Individual Leases
- Fully Furnished Bungalows, Gated Entry
- Screened Veranda, Play Action Pool
- 100% Private Baths • 6" Quiet Walls
- Laundry Room in Every Bungalow
- High Speed Computer Lab • 32" Color TV
- Truly Awesome Amenities!

SEE US on-line @
www.campuslodge.com

Wow!

Under New Management
Lower Prices • New Dancers

The **Silk Stocking** Lounge

The Best in Adult Entertainment

-- Happy Hour Daily until 7pm --
\$2.00 Well / \$2.00 Drafts

Sun.: \$2.00 Wells
Mon.: \$2.00 16 oz. Drafts
Tues.: \$2.00 Domestic Longnecks
Wed.: \$2.00 Wells
Thurs.: \$2.00 16 oz. Drafts

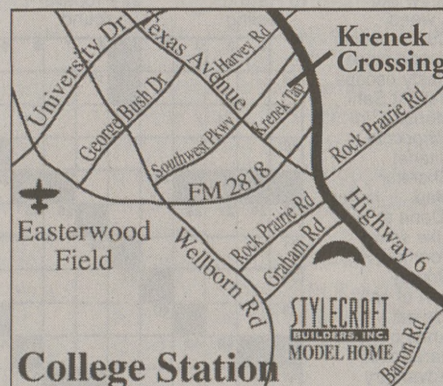
2 for 1
Cover
with
Student ID

Mon. - Sun. 5pm-2am
(979) 690-1478

4075 S Highway 6 - take Rock Prairie Road exit

Does Your Aggie Student Need A Home In College Station?

Introducing Krenek Crossing in College Station. Homes starting at \$115,000! These homes are designed exclusively for college students and feature choices of great 3 and 4 bedroom floorplans. Located on the corner of Dartmouth and Krenek Tap Roads, Krenek Crossing is 2.5 miles from Texas A&M University on the Texas A&M Shuttle bus route. Call Eric, Dan or Jane today!



STYLECRAFT BUILDERS, INC.

James Hardie SIDING PRODUCTS
Charming exteriors featuring durable, low maintenance James Hardie Siding.

MODEL HOME OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK! 979-764-9900