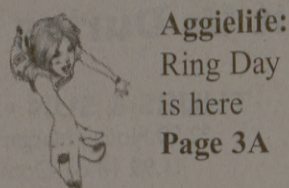


THE BATTALION



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University compensates apartment residents

By Sonia Moghe
THE BATTALION

While Saquib Ejaz's wife and father recuperate in Galveston, other University Apartment residents who were affected by the July 31 explosion hope to find out what the University's actions will be at a conference between administrators and residents Thursday.

"The residents were keeping mum until the State Fire Marshal's report (was released)," said Srinivasan Rajaraman, a resident of University Apartments. "Since that has come out, we want to know what the administration's reactions are going to be and how are they going to deal with this matter. I think it would have been naive on (the administration's) part if they thought the State Fire Marshal's report would have come out differently."

Several University Apartments residents were forced to relocate to a La Quinta Inn while gas lines were being checked and replaced for as long as 10 days in August, said John Sodalak, assistant director at the University Apartments.

Affected residents additionally received compensation of \$25 in Aggie Bucks if they were unmarried and \$50 if they had families.

The University is also paying for the Ejaz family's apartment in Galveston while his wife recuperates.

"The residents were too worried to think about the money," said Alireza Shapoury, resident and vice president of the University Apartments Community Council. "I believe (giving money) was one of the provisions of (the University's) critical responses. I don't think the amount of money is of much concern to residents ... it was a good move."

Rajaraman said discrimination might have been involved in the handling of the maintenance of the apartments.

"There is discrimination, and I can't define on a scale how much it is," Rajaraman said. "I come from a country where there is (also) discrimination against foreigners. When it comes to concerns of safety and health, discrimination shouldn't happen at any level."

Executive Director of University Relations Cynthia Lawson said the condition of gas lines is not restricted to University Apartments.

"Some of the same problems that existed (at the University Apartments) perhaps have existed (on campus)," Lawson said.

Chuck Sippial, vice president for administration, said gas lines at University Apartments have been checked and replaced, and that

TXU is inspecting lines on campus.

"From what I know and what I think, there is no case to say that the lines in (the University Apartments) received less attention than those throughout the campus —there is no evidence of that whatsoever," Sippial said.

Shapoury said that perhaps a language barrier between residents and maintenance staff could have contributed to ineffective maintenance.

"I have heard of some incidents where the maintenance could not pinpoint the cause of (a problem) because of the language problem — it's just my guess," Shapoury said.

Rajaraman said he has heard a few residents talking about filing lawsuits, but that no one has taken action yet. He said action will be taken based on University responses at the conference today, which starts at 6:30 p.m. at the Community Center and is open to the public.

"I don't think (the University is) dealing with the issue in a fair manner," he said. "Whenever any such instance happens, the University always defends itself and the system. I've never been aware of what the system is here and how it works."

Reporters stress value of newspapers for election

By Liang Liang
THE BATTALION

William M. Welch, a reporter for USA Today, Carl Hulse, a reporter for The New York Times and Billy Dan Wood, a Texas A&M political science professor, encouraged students to read newspapers as much as possible to get information about the upcoming presidential election at a panel discussion Wednesday at the Stark Gallery in the MSC.

"Newspapers will give you the analyses that help to make up your mind (for the coming election)," Welch said.

During the discussion, Welch and Hulse refrained from taking a specific stance on the coming election.

Hulse said newspapers are better resources for election information than television news.

"You may disagree with the newspapers, (but) they will give you a lot more. It takes a longer time (to read), but it helps you to understand a lot of issues. TV news is comparatively brief on the issues," Hulse said.

Wood agreed with Hulse and Welch that reading newspapers will help students decide on the election.

"Unfortunately, democracy is not only

something people take from. It is also something that people ought to give to. The democratic values and a lot of functions of democracy depend on if they can make up their own minds not just follow what mum or dad told me," Wood said.

When asked if the election will affect the A&M Corps of Cadets in a way that decides if they will be going to war with Iraq, Welch said young people in the military should be careful with the current situation in the election and look at the war in Iraq.

"This is something you should think about. But it also depends on what you believe," Welch said.

In talking about public education issues, Wood said that in the past three years, tuition in the public universities has increased 35 percent, but that no campaign in the election has addressed the issue. Wood said it seems that the issue is not getting attention from Democrats or Republicans.

Both reporters said that although the two parties agreed to cooperate to work on the improvement of public education, the Democrats have been blaming the Bush administration for not backing the No Child Left Behind

See Election on page 2A

YCT joins pro-life campaign

By Stacy Thompson
THE BATTALION

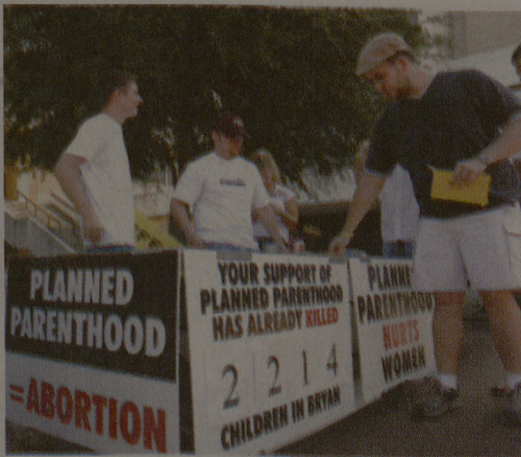
The Young Conservatives of Texas announced its backing for the 40 Days for Life campaign with a table Wednesday at Rudder decked out with anti-abortion posters and armbands at Rudder on Wednesday.

Wednesday marked the halfway point in the 40 Days for Life campaign geared toward closing the Planned Parenthood of Bryan, Texas, which provides health services and abortions for all of the Brazos County area.

The YCT started its abortion protest by placing 2,214 hearts around campus at midnight on Tuesday to indicate the approximate number of fetuses aborted at the Planned Parenthood facility on 29th Street.

"These hearts are really to bring the visual

See Abortion on page 6B



EVAN O'CONNELL - THE BATTALION

Junior electrical engineering major **Josh Pearce**, left, sophomore communications major **Patrick Leon** and junior industrial engineering major **John Barnett**, right, protest abortion outside the MSC Wednesday.

See Plea on page 9A

Ring camping



EVAN O'CONNELL - THE BATTALION

Senior biomedical science major **Regan Lyon** waits at the front of the line outside the Clayton Williams Alumni Center for a ticket to pick up her Aggie ring Wednesday evening. **Lyon** has been in line since 10 a.m. Wednesday morning. Aggie rings are being distributed Thursday, starting at 3 p.m.

British hostage pleads for his life

By Kim Housegho
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A British hostage appeared on a video posted on an Islamic Web site Wednesday weeping and pleading for his life as Iraq's leader and U.S. officials crushed reports that a high-profile female Iraqi weapons scientist could be released from jail soon — as demanded by the kidnappers.

The captive, Kenneth Bigley, appealed to British Prime Minister Tony Blair to intervene. "I think this is possibly my last chance," he said. "I don't want to die."

Later Wednesday, an Internet statement purportedly by a group which claimed to have kidnapped two Italian aid workers in Iraq said it had killed the women.

The Web site posting could not be immediately verified. Simona Pari and Simona Torretta worked for "Un Ponte Per ..." ("A Bridge to ...") when they were seized Sept. 7.

Bigley was being held by a militant group led by Jordanian-born terror mastermind

Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. The group has already beheaded Americans Eugene Armstrong and Jack Hensley, whom it abducted along with Bigley from the Westerners' Baghdad home last week.

On Wednesday, the group also posted a video of Hensley's killing on the Internet, as it had two days earlier of Armstrong's beheading. Hensley's decapitated body was found Wednesday in Baghdad.

The gruesome hostage drama played out as fighting raged on in Iraq, killing three U.S. soldiers and wounding four others.

Suicide attackers struck key diplomatic and commercial centers of the capital, and American tanks and troops searching for weapons stormed into the Sadr City slum, a stronghold of Shiite militants, only to come under a barrage of mortar and automatic weapons fire. The violence across Baghdad left at least 17 Iraqis dead and 100 injured and underscored the inability of U.S. and Iraqi forces to bring security to even the

Integrity important to academics Aggie Honor System Office hosts 'Digger'

By Shawn Millender
THE BATTALION

Legendary Notre Dame men's basketball coach Richard "Digger" Phelps brought his experience in athletics and social work to the Memorial Student Center Wednesday, as part of A&M's Academic Integrity Week, hosted by the Aggie Honor System Office.

Phelps addressed a crowd of about 130 people about the value of academics early in a child's life and keeping urban youths off the streets and out of trouble with after-school programs.

He said declining academic standards and increased emphasis on athletic performance

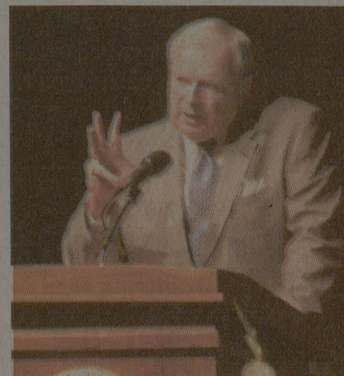
are a major problem.

"If you invest in them from six to 16, you can save them," Phelps said. "We in college sports are a reflection of society. You can't put a Band-Aid on a gunshot wound, you have to take away the gun."

Phelps coached at Notre Dame from 1972-91, setting the all-time university record for wins. In 1993, he resigned and went on to serve as a men's college basketball analyst for ESPN.

Phelps said that when he was coaching, his focus was always on the players' future success after their days at Notre Dame.

"It was always student first, athlete second," Phelps said. "In the late 60s, where Woodstock



WHITNEY MARTIN - THE BATTALION

Richard "Digger" Phelps addresses issues of character at the MSC on Wednesday afternoon. Phelps coached Notre Dame for two decades.

See Integrity on page 6B