



## DA blacks out parts of fire marshal's report

By Jibrán Najmi  
THE BATTALION

At the request of District Attorney Bill Turner, the State Fire Marshal has blacked out portions of the final report issued by investigators of the July 20 fire at the University Apartments. Among the portions blacked out by the Fire Marshal's office was testimony from Texas A&M maintenance employee Todd Hubacek.

Hubacek was the maintenance employee who responded to the reported gas leak at the University Apartments off Hensel Drive.

"We asked that his statement not be released by the fire marshal's office while the investigation was ongoing," said Cindy Lalk, assistant District Attorney. "We launched a criminal investigation after the fire to determine if there were any criminal acts committed."

Ron Sasse, director of Residence Life, declined to speculate as to why Turner opened a criminal

investigation into the incident.

"All decisions concerning the University Apartments are on hold until the district attorney has completed his criminal investigation," Sasse said.

As a result of the criminal investigation by the district attorney's office, the presidential task force appointed by A&M President Robert M. Gates has been suspended until further notice. The task force has been charged with recommending corrective actions it deems necessary with respect to maintenance and safety issues throughout the University.

"Public release of records related to the University Apartments at this time will interfere with the investigation and detection of crime," Turner said. "However, as soon as our investigation is complete, the public will be made privy to all of those documents."

Turner denied that students were being endangered as a result of the task force not being able to complete its investigation.

"I think it's improper to speculate about the results of an investigation prior to the completion of our final report and investigation," Turner said.

Key testimony and the final conclusions from the fire marshal's report were blacked out, but the report did conclude that the fire did not originate in the kitchen as many had speculated earlier.

"There were no cooking utensils on the burners of the stove," said Jerry Hagins, spokesman for the State Fire Marshal. "All of the stove burner controls and oven controls were in the 'off' position." Hagins said the most extensive damage was in

the main bedroom of the apartment.

"There were two beds along the north wall of the bedroom," Hagins said. "The most extensive fire damage was observed on the bed nearest the doorway leading to the living room. The mattress was burned down to the springs."

Hagins said the burn patterns at the foot of

the bed indicated a more developed fire in the bedroom that traveled to the rest of the apartment.

No date has been set for the release of the blacked out portions of the fire marshal's report or the conclusion of the district attorney's criminal investigation.

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— Bill Turner  
district attorney

## Ivan brushes through CS

By Liang Liang  
THE BATTALION

Hurricane Ivan, which caused at least 52 deaths in the United States and 70 in the Caribbean, brushed through College Station as a tropical depression Friday night.

"(Re)birth of a hurricane rarely happens. As Ivan made a turn coming back to the coastline of the United States, the National Hurricane Center was almost going to name it Matthew but found the hurricane had enough Ivan DNA," said Courtney Schumacher, assistant professor and a tropical storms expert at the Department of Atmospheric Sciences.

The center issued a tropical storm warning for the Gulf of Mexico shoreline from the entrance of the Mississippi River

in Louisiana to Sargent, Texas, saying the worst scenario could have been for Galveston, Houston and College Station area to have 10 inches of rain over the weekend.

The City of College Station Emergency Operations Center moved to "level three," which means it was checking its resources, refreshing its plan and notifying staff to be prepared for any emergency caused by Ivan.

"If the plan was activated, we would have 24 personnel including those from Fire Station and Law Enforcement to act as rescuers. Fortunately, it didn't come out as heavy rain or flooding," said DeMerle Giordano, coordinator for Emergency Management, Brazos County.

Ivan went north in Texas with diminished winds after visiting

College Station, according to the National Hurricane Center. When it attacked Florida on Sept. 16, Ivan recorded winds up to 160 mph. It then weakened and broke apart as it traveled north. As Ivan drew a button-hook coming to the Gulf of Mexico, the Hurricane Center was expecting a wind speed of at least 50 mph. However, as Ivan reached Cameron, La., its wind speed was only 8 mph.

"Agreed by international committee, a wind speed of 75 mph is defined as hurricane, a wind speed of 38 mph is defined as tropical storm, and a wind speed of less than 38 mph is defined as tropical depression," Giordano said.

The reason for Ivan's regeneration remains unknown. The

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## Former student named Ms. Wheelchair America 2005

By Chelsea Sledge  
THE BATTALION

Juliette Rizzo has devoted her life to paving a bright and empowering road for the 54 million-plus Americans with disabilities.

Rizzo, Class of 1991, was crowned Ms. Wheelchair America 2005. The pageant was held in Richmond, Va., in July, where 27 contestants vied for the title, said Pat O'Bryant, the Ms. Wheelchair Association Executive Director.

"Adjusting to a disability means looking deep within yourself and seeing a new reality," Rizzo said. "After years of self-reflection, it was time to reach out to others and help change the world for people with disabilities."

Rizzo works as the director of communication and media for the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services in Rockville, Md. She also serves on the Arthritis Foundation, the Montgomery County

Commission on People with Disabilities and the Women's Committee for the National Symphony Orchestra. Rizzo graduated from Texas A&M with a degree in journalism and received her masters at the University of North Texas.

"Texas A&M's heritage and admirable traditions have helped me to develop the character and leadership skills that I take with me in my day-to-day life, my employment and in adventures as Ms. Wheelchair America," Rizzo said.

While at A&M, Rizzo held various positions at The Battalion, including staff writer and opinion editor.

"Juliette impressed the judges quite a bit," O'Bryant said. "She is vivacious, enthusiastic and very intelligent. People like her when they meet her. She makes them feel warm and comfortable."

At the age of three, Rizzo contracted an infection, which resulted in juvenile rheumatoid

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## Green thumb



SHARON AESCHBACH - THE BATTALION

Lab assistant and junior philosophy major **Nathan Osburn**, transfers *Arabidopsis thaliana*, a small plant grown in a petri dish, to a control sample of dirt Monday afternoon in the Norman E. Borlaug Center of Southern Crop Improvement. The plants are primarily used for studies of cross-breeding to grow and test mutant plants.

## Cushing explores expedition history

By Pammy Ramji  
THE BATTALION

In honor of the 200th anniversary of the first federally funded research project, the Lewis and Clark expedition, the Cushing Memorial Library and Archives opened a Lewis and Clark exhibit titled, "The Longer Road: Reporting the Lewis and Clark Expedition" Thursday.

In 1803, Jefferson planned the expedition to discover the northwestern United States. Capt. Meriwether Lewis and Capt. William Clark came to St. Louis with maps of their route and a \$2,500 appropriation for expenses. In May of 1804, the expedition began. After 28 months, the expedition came to an end in September 1806.

"This expedition was considered important years later," Patterson said. "We have more sufficient accounts in the last five years than in the last 195 years."

The travelers encountered problems on the expedition, such as going around the falls of the Missouri River. They built wheels made out of wood, and it took the group nine days to get from the lower end to the upper end of the river, Mellor said.

Jeff Stumpo, the first recipient of the Mary and Mavis P. Kelsey fellowship and the exhibit's designer, has been planning this event for several months.

"You get a different sense of the journey when working behind the scenes of this exhibit," Stumpo said. "I came across a newspaper from 1803, and people made fun of (former President) Jefferson for planning this expedition, but without the Louisiana Purchase we would not have a country past the

### Lewis and Clark at A&M

The Lewis and Clark exhibit, located at the Cushing Library is called "The Longer Road: Reporting the Lewis and Clark Expedition" and will be on display until February 2005.



|                    |                  |
|--------------------|------------------|
| Monday to Thursday | 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. |
| Friday             | 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. |
| Saturday           | 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. |

BRANDI DUNN - THE BATTALION  
SOURCE - JEFF STUMPO

Mississippi river."

The Kelsey fellowship, which includes designing and compiling exhibits and working on special collections, is co-funded by the Mary and Mavis P. Kelsey Cushing Library Endowment and the English Department.

"There are elements from the journey that haven't been made available to the public until the last 20 years," Stumpo said. "There are rivers in the Rocky Mountain area that were named during the expedition, but now they have different

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## Aggie Nights program faces financial problems

By Ji Ma  
THE BATTALION

In the MSC Flagroom, intense faces sized each other up in a Texas Hold 'em tournament while, downstairs, paintbrushes flew to the background music of the Dance Dance Revolution machine.

Friday nights are Aggie Nights at the MSC, a free late-night student program that features a multitude of events, including movies, arts-and-craft sessions, food and occasional special events, such as a poker tournament — but all of this may disappear next year if Aggie Nights doesn't get financial support, said David Salmon, assistant director of MSC and the chief adviser of Aggie Nights.

Since the late 1990s, many universities have introduced late night programs, and Aggie Nights became such an event for Texas A&M.

"It's a national trend," Salmon said. "The Big 12 vice chancellors and vice presidents met and advised that all schools in the Big 12 should consider such a program."

Aggie Nights is not a program of the MSC, but a collaboration of student programs under an oversight committee. Jennifer Ford, who sits on the committee, said Aggie Nights work with different student organizations to bring new programs.

In the fall of 2002, Aggie Nights began playing host to more than 9,000 students every semester, with freshmen and graduate students being the most frequented groups.

Aggie Nights require about \$90,000 every year to operate.

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