

Texas A&M to Cancel Bonfire Again

By LINDSEY WHITE
Staff Writer

Texas A&M University administrators recently announced that cost and safety concerns are forcing the university to again reconsider a 90-year-old tradition.

Texas A&M students traditionally built a bonfire every November to mark the yearly football game against the University of Texas at Austin.

But in 1999, the 55-foot high bonfire

collapsed just a few days before it was supposed to be lit.

The collapse killed a dozen people and wounded 27 others.

Ray Bowen, Texas A&M president, held a press conference last week to announce that it would cost about \$2.5 million for construction, insurance and design of a professional safety plan.

Bowen stated in a press release that the university could not afford to spend that much money.

Bowen also stated in the release that he only spoke for the year 2002, as he is resigning later this year.

But this marks the second year in a row that the university will not have a bonfire to commemorate the rivalry game.

Bowen stated that he hopes to encourage the beginning of a new tradition and believes that the bonfire did not define Texas A&M.

"My advice - for whatever the advice of a lame-duck president is worth - is that the students face the inevitable and focus their energy on creating a new challenge, a new tradition," Bowen stated in the release.

"I believe that with a little effort another tradition can be created which has the benefits of bonfire but does not carry the danger, on the one hand, or the expense, on the other."

Students and alumni have varying opinions on the end of the bonfire tradition.

Texas A&M Student Body President Schuyler Houser said students are generally disappointed that the university will not have a bonfire for the second year in a row.

But Houser said she thinks the student body understands the reasons behind Bowen's decision to suspend the bonfire.

Houser said she hopes that students will become excited about other spirit activities and begin new traditions to replace the bonfire.

"Great traditions can evolve," Houser said.

Some Texas A&M alumni said they feel safety is a vital concern but that other solutions should be considered before the university abandons the bonfire tradition.

"It's the symbolism of what you do and the people working together," said Mike Taylor, who graduated from Texas A&M in 1970.

"They are working toward a common

goal."

Taylor said he thinks there is a certain amount of university pride that comes with the tradition.

"The bonfire symbolizes our burning desire to beat our archrival, Texas," Taylor said.

Because of the amount of time that has passed since the 1999 accident, about half the student body does not understand the importance of the bonfire tradition, said Trevor Voelkel, Texas A&M Corps of Cadets public relations officer.

The Corps of Cadets assists with the design and construction of the annual bonfire.

Voelkel added that a large percentage of the university's student body is unhappy with Bowen's decision to suspend the bonfire.

For this reason, Voelkel said he empathizes with Bowen's decision.

He said, "I definitely wouldn't want to be in his shoes."

The State & National Editor can be reached at stntdesk@unc.edu.

"My advice ... is that students face the inevitable and focus on creating a new challenge, a new tradition."

RAY BOWEN
Texas A&M University President

Developments in the War on Terrorism

Rice: U.S. Assuming Bin Laden Is Alive

National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice said Thursday that the United States continues to aggressively pursue bin Laden because "we assume he's alive," even as his al-Qaida network operates without its former command structure.



Al-Qaida Suspect Linked to Terrorism

The family tree of an al-Qaida suspect who blew himself up reads like a wanted list of international terrorists — his father was a known al-Qaida operative, one brother-in-law was a Sept. 11 hijacker, and another is on an FBI list of men plotting an attack.

Pakistan Doubts Pearl Death Claim

A British-born militant with a history of kidnapping Westerners confessed Thursday to the abduction of Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl and, in a chilling declaration, told a Pakistani court he believes the journalist is dead.

Campus Calendar

Today

8 p.m. — **The Vagina Monologues** will be put on in Memorial Hall. Tickets are \$7 for students and \$10 for non-students. Buy tickets at the Union box office or by calling 962-1449. Proceeds benefit the Family Violence Prevention Center of Orange County.

Saturday

8 p.m. — The second showing of **The Vagina Monologues** in Memorial Hall, followed by a silent auction and gala.

9 p.m. — **The Residence Hall Association, Olde Campus Upper Quad and Carolina After Dark** present "Viva Las Vegas! Casino Night" in the Great Hall of the Student Union until 1 a.m. There will be free professional dealers, music, mocktails and food! Prizes include DVD player, MP3 player and 100 Flex Dollars! You will receive extra tickets to bet with for every canned good you bring for the IFC Food Pantry.

Sunday

7 p.m. — Join CUAB and N.C. Hillel in planning for Holocaust Remembrance Week. The committee will plan events for Holocaust Remembrance Week, including a 24-hour vigil, a drama presentation and a discussion with survivors in Union 200.

Items of Interest

The Daily Tar Heel is extending its deadline for membership on the Community Feedback Board, consisting of students, faculty, staff and residents who critique the DTH. Applications can be picked up in Suite 104 of the Union, and are due by 5 p.m. Monday.

The Daily Tar Heel

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