

Memories of S.A. cadet live on

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Even in death, Bryan McClain managed to bring smiles to the faces of his loved ones.

Hundreds of his friends, family and comrades from the Texas A&M University Corps of Cadets swapped stories about him while waiting in a line that extended around the Porter Loving Mortuary North building during a memorial service Sunday evening.

Some recalled his determination and school spirit. Others talked about his comical and sometimes playfully mischievous side.

One thing was clear: McClain, killed in the Bonfire tragedy last week, died doing what he loved for the school he loved.

"Bryan was where he wanted to be, doing what he wanted to do with people he truly loved, and these people truly loved him," said McClain's father, Phil. "In the last weeks, he worked tirelessly to make sure that this year's Bonfire would be the best."

McClain always knew Texas A&M was his university and didn't apply to other colleges. He wore A&M par-



McCLAIN

"He put all he had in everything he did and he was an inspiration to everyone around him," said 22-year-old Kyle Gass, who served as a mentor to McClain in the corps.

Although McClain wasn't scheduled to work late Wednesday night, he still joined the Bonfire group. His girlfriend, A&M student Jennifer Jose, brought him his work boots at about 11:40 p.m. It was the last time she saw him.

"He said, 'Baby, I love you for this,' then he gave me a kiss," Jose said. "I told him to be careful and he said, 'I will' and shut the door."

McClain's family and friends don't want to see the Bonfire tradition die with him.
"As a parent, I'd be very con-

cerned but I personally think the Bonfire tradition should continue," Phil McClain said.

His son's work ethic on Bonfire was similar to his determination academically that semester as he boosted his grades. Despite his busy schedule, he always made sure his friendships came first.

"Even with his increased academic workload, and his increased duties associated with the corps, Bryan somehow found the time to be with his friends, church, family and fellow students," said his father, his hands shaking and eyes welling up with tears while reading a prepared statement.

His family said McClain gave them the strength to speak with a group of reporters.

"He always told me, 'Jen don't cry. It won't help,'" Jose said. "Bryan's our guardian angel."

Stephanie Snyder, 21, who grew up in a small cul-de-sac with the Madison High School graduate, said McClain touched many lives.

"He taught me a lot about friendship and about believing in other people and how good they could be," she said.
McClain was an active member of

the corps, but he never intended on a military career. "I was surprised when Bryan chose the corps because he was not ROTC," Phil McClain said.

Instead, McClain took a special interest in entomology after taking a class that was originally intended for an easy A.

"We all called him bug boy," Jose said. "He would pick up a bug and tell us the species type and official name."

And even his newfound love of insects carried over into his joking nature.

"One time, he picked up a grasshopper and tried to put it down my shirt," Jose said with a quiet laugh and subtle smile. "He was full of surprises and full of jokes."

She also recalled his romantic side.

"He would just show up at my door with a bouquet of red roses," she said.

McClain found love in his girlfriend, whom he'd known since the first grade. For the past year, they had grown much closer, and the Jose family embraced McClain as one of their own.

"He was the kind of person you would see as a future son-in-law,"



KEVIN GEIL/STAFF

Phil McClain (center) is comforted Sunday by friends of his son Bryan during a memorial service at Porter Loring Mortuary North.

said Jose's father, David, adding it was his gentlemanly demeanor and love of children that made him such material.

Last year, Jennifer Jose invited McClain to a pre-teen girls' birthday party.

Since the younger boys chose not to dance, McClain took turns twirling the girls around the floor.

"All the little girls loved him," said David Jose, Jennifer's father. "They were waiting in line to dance with Bryan."

On Sunday, many more lined up to pay their respects to the brother and son and friend he was to so many people.

Service is set at 1 p.m. today at Alamo Heights United Methodist Church, 825 E. Basse Road.

The family has set up a scholarship fund. Donations can be made to the Bryan A. McClain Memorial Scholarship Fund in care of the Texas A&M University Foundation, 401 George Bush Drive, College Station 77840-2811.