

A year to remember

Some passing thoughts on a memorable 2011 in Waco

Before losing ourselves in merriment tonight, the Tribune-Herald editorial board offers our readers a distinctly upbeat, local perspective on the year just lived and that to come:

■ **The 2011 Baptism by Fire Award:** An abundance of good fortune blessed Baylor University, including the bubbling potential of the Baylor Research and Innovation Collaborative taking shape at the old General Tire building; the singular distinction of Baylor's ranking in the top 15 in football as well as men's and women's basketball this season; and the definite shine placed on Baylor through quarterback Robert Griffin's

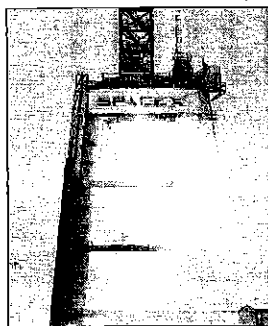
radiant personality and well-deserved winning of the Heisman Trophy this month. Thursday night's wild, high-scoring Alamo Bowl victory vividly demonstrates why Griffin commands not only the affection of football fans

far beyond Waco but the admiration of his teammates. Consider the play where, after performing his quarterback duties, he raced down the field more than 30 yards to do some pivotal blocking, allowing for a touchdown by tailback Jarred Salubi. It all comes after a decade of great turbulence and strife at the state's oldest institution of higher learning. If Baylor wasn't a Baptist institution, we'd say Griffin was in line for sainthood.

■ **Most Ground-Shaking Development of 2011:** SpaceX's forays in space travel really took off this year, including its contract to ferry cargo to the International Space Station. Founder Elon Musk says the next step involves hauling astronauts to the ISS, but don't expect his high-flying goals to stop there. He's



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Staff photo — Rod Aydelotte

at community revitalization. The biggest surprise is not that community leaders and city officials got along but that HUD officials proved flexible, reasonable, even helpful throughout the process. Go figure.

■ **The 2011 "There Goes the Neighborhood" Award:** The Tribune-Herald editorial board has steered away from sounding off on the abortion topic, believing most Central Texans are already entrenched in their perspectives, pro or con. However, in terms of sheer inventiveness, you have to hand it to Pro-Life Waco, which in June unveiled its "Hope House" right next door to the Planned Parenthood clinic on Columbus Avenue. A benefactor arranged the lease and paid rent on the house. We can only imagine what other homeowners in the neighborhood must think about all this.

■ **The Vehicular Insanity Award of 2011:** Is there anyone who wasn't bewildered by the bright, lime-green boxes painted along Fourth and Fifth streets last summer as part of a bike-lane project linking Baylor and downtown Waco? Designed to create a safe space for bike riders to stop at intersections, they instead added confusion deluxe for some motorists. A substantial percentage routinely pulled into the green boxes painted behind crosswalks at traffic signals when they should have left such space open for bicyclists. A smaller percentage of drivers used the bike lanes as right-turn lanes. No wonder bicyclists are afraid to tread there. Motorists' confusion was rivaled only by their inability to properly negotiate roundabouts on Austin Avenue.

■ **The Horse of a Different Color Award of 2011:** This goes to anyone who had anything to do with painting the McLennan County Courthouse dome the wrong color in June. We're just glad it wasn't lime green.

■ **Best Reason for Optimism Award:** Things looked grim for the ramshackle, financially strapped animal shelter operated by the Humane Society of Central Texas, which has been losing up to \$8,000 a month just to keep the facility operating. However, when the Tribune-Herald revealed the possibility of the shelter's closing its doors, civic

