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Caught In NY Blackout

Aggie In The Dark

By **DANI PRESSWOOD**
Battalion Managing Editor
Where was Gary Sherer when the lights went out?

The infamous New York blackout of last year caught the Aggie junior in a rather awkward position: carrying a loaded food tray in an eighth floor cafeteria. "When I entered the cafeteria the lights started going on and off and dimming to a low degree," Sherer recalls. "I had just gotten my tray and all of a sudden all the lights went out."

The irony was yet to come, he explained, when he could not pay for the meal because the "electrically operated cash register wouldn't open."

Sherer, of Binghamton, N. Y., is a transfer journalism major from Broome Technical Community College in New York.

WORKING PART time for a department store in capital city Albany, Sherer had just gone up to the top floor employee cafeteria for his break.

"Going up the elevator, I remember the one I was on was going very slowly, even slower than usual," he noted. "And the other one wasn't working at all."

"Nobody was caught in either one when the electricity did go, and even more amazing was that in the 16-story bank where I worked in the daytime nobody was stranded in any of its seven elevators."

One of the more fortunate employees was just getting off work when he realized what was about to happen.

"He tore up the stairs to push in his time card before the power went off completely," Sherer said, "and just in time. The lights went off just as he'd pushed it in."

THE FIRST thought that struck universally when the lights went out, Shearer remembers, was

an attack on the United States. "To enhance this the radio gave no explanation until about an hour and a half after the lights went out. However, people were too occupied trying to figure out what happened to panic."

After the people were informed that a power failure had caused the blackout "it was funny for awhile, then it became frustrating."

"Everybody wanted television and all the selfish reasons erupted," Sherer explained. "First they worried about the country and then about themselves."

Sherer's first experienced inconvenience was eating in the dark before candles were lit. His next bottleneck was encountered in trying to leave the store.

"At first they were trying to stop everybody to make sure there wasn't any looting," he said. "But that got to be too big a problem and they stopped."

"IT TURNED out after it was all over there was practically nothing missing anyway."

His next problem was in getting to his girl friend's apartment during the rush hour.

"It took me 30 minutes to make a 10 minute drive," Sherer continued. "Of course the street lights were not operating and the traffic was a real mess."

The power failure, which darkened the east coast from Canada to New Jersey, forced the Albany Airport to utilize automobile headlights to light the runway for incoming planes.

"They spaced about 10 or 12 cars along the runway with their lights on," he said. "During the time the lights were off 12 planes were landed safely."

One of these carried New York's Gov. Nelson Rockefeller.

Sherer noted that the blackout gave people a realization of how

much their daily lives depend upon electricity.

"**PEOPLE JUST** sort of take it for granted," he pointed out. "Until something like this comes up they don't realize how many things operate on electricity."

The blackout was a major headache for the restaurant business in New York. Loss of refrigeration caused a huge spoilage problem and service was halted until the power was restored.

"One restaurant in Albany specialized in candlelight meals," Sherer said. "People packed the place just to see each other at talk."

"Although the restaurant was unable to serve, the owner said it was the most customers he had ever seen."

Lack of electricity put gasoline pumps out of commission for the endurance of the blackout as only one generator-equipped radio station was able to broadcast.

The blackout period ranged in longevity throughout the area with Albany plunged in darkness more than three hours. Some cities were without electricity up to 13 hours.

"The whole thing was as if somebody said 'stop' and everything stopped and then he said 'go' and everyone went," Sherer summed up.

**Camera Club
To Show Films**

Two color films will be shown at a Camera Committee meeting in the Memorial Student Center Monday, announced president Ken Reese.

The 67-member club will meet at 7:30 p.m. in Rooms 2C and D. After a brief business meeting, color films on the Blue Angels, "Jet Colorama," and travel will be screened, program chairman Dan Hatzenbuehler said.

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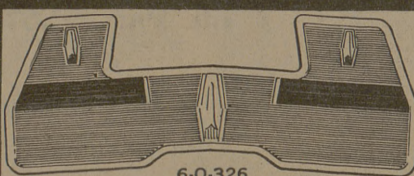
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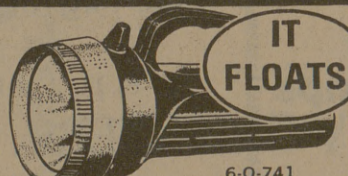
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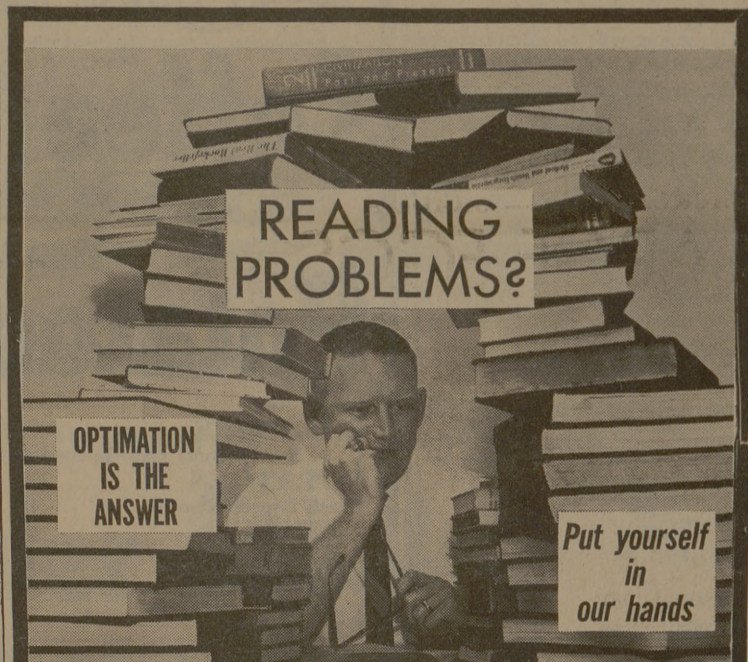


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