

# THE BATTALION

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## The Weather

Today

Tomorrow

High .....	86	High .....	83
Low .....	68	Low .....	67
Chance of rain .....	20%	Chance of rain .....	20%

## Columbia flight going as planned

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — Space shuttle Columbia, first of a fleet of American space freighters, entered its second day in orbit today performing "like a champ" on its initial test flight with John W. Young and Robert L. Crippen at the controls.

The 107-ton winged spacecraft returns to Earth Tuesday, gliding to a wheels down landing around 1:28 p.m. EST on a sprawling dry lake bed at Edwards Air Force Base in California's Mojave Desert.

One of the jobs on today's schedule for Young and Crippen was to rehearse preparations for that return, which will mark the first time a large winged vehicle has flown in the "no man's land" region between space and the dense atmosphere.

The only uncertainty raised by Sunday's spectacular, textbook-perfect launch was the state of the 30,000 heat shield tiles designed to insulate the Columbia's aluminum skin from the searing heat of reentry into the atmosphere.

The astronauts discovered that 15 of the little ceramic tiles — or pieces of tiles — were missing from the two bulging pods that contain the ship's aft orbiting maneuvering rockets.

The pilots said from what they could

see, the tiles were intact on the rest of the 122 foot-long, 78-foot-wide spacecraft.

What they were unable to see is the underbody where some of the most severe re-entry heating occurs. Loss of even one tile in a critical area could be catastrophic.

Controllers said they were not worried, however, and engineers said the missing tiles posed no threat to the return since they were needed primarily to protect against takeoff heat. Analysts in mission control concluded no other, more vital tiles likely were lost.

However, special photography using high-powered groundbased Air Force telescopes was ordered to check the spacecraft.

"The bottom line is that we think there's no problem at all with the pieces of tile, or tiles, that we think might be missing and we don't plan to make any changes to the entry flight plan because of the tile loss," spacecraft communicator Henry Hartsfield told the crew late Sunday.

"Sounds good to us," Crippen responded. "We don't think there's a problem either."

Because the ship is so big, the space agency said it should be visible to the unaided eye shortly after sunset or just

before dawn. Depending on weather conditions and the position of the spacecraft, spokesman Rocky Rabb said "it could look like one of the brightest stars in the sky."

The Columbia was following a path that takes it over the southern half of the United States, up to 40.3 degrees north latitude. That includes such cities as Philadelphia, Cincinnati, Denver and San Francisco.

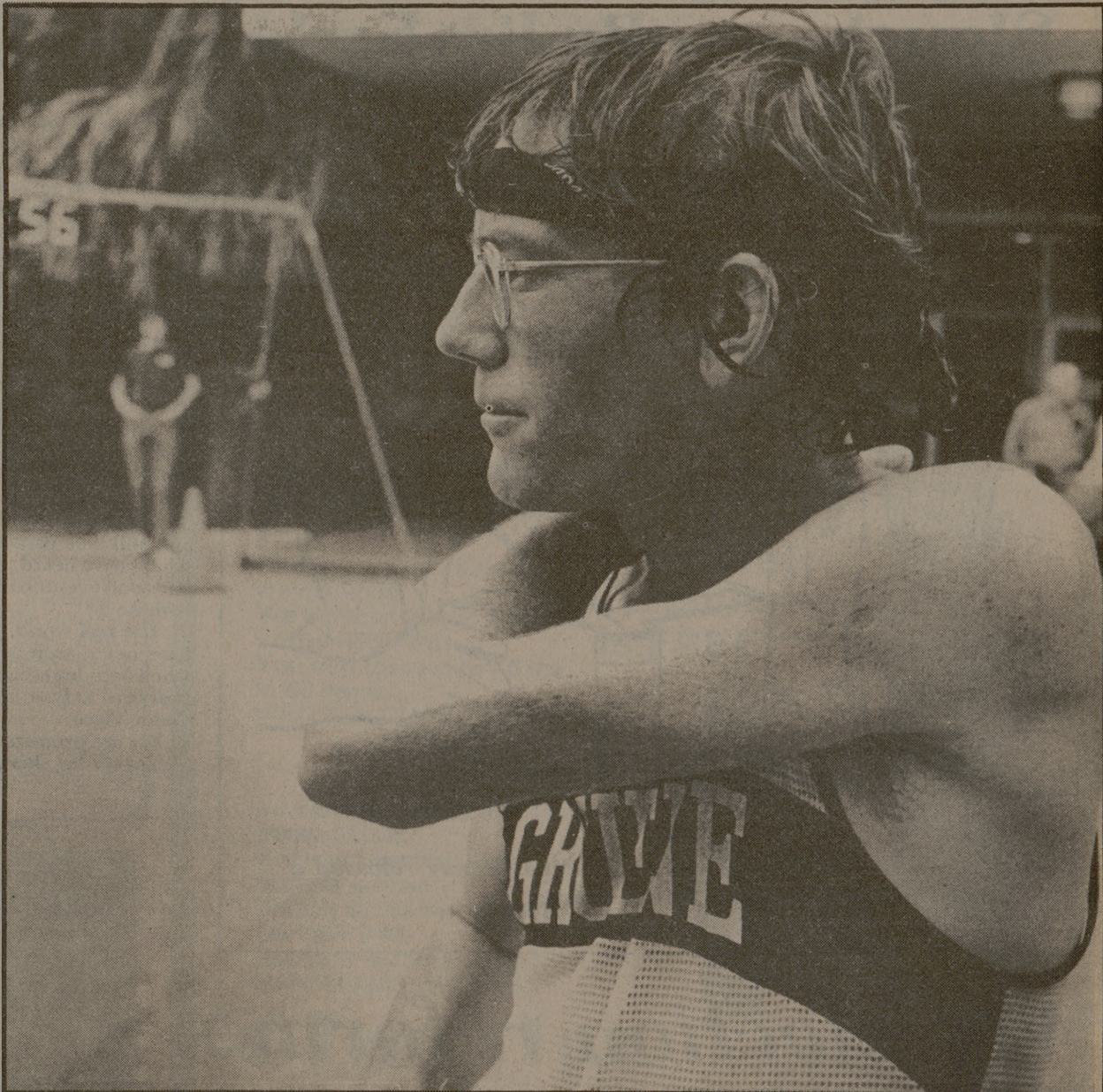
Young and Crippen ended their long initial day in space around 8 p.m. EST by putting on blindfolds, plugging their ears and settling into their seats for some well-deserved sleep.

Flight director Chuck Lewis said in a status report early today that the crew was reported feeling fine and everything was on schedule.

"Everything worked just as it was advertised to work," he reported.

Young, in an earlier television report to Earth, was obviously pleased with the performance of the revolutionary spaceship.

"It's gone as smooth as it could possibly go," he said. "The vehicle has just been performing beautifully, much better than anyone expected it to do on a first flight. No systems are out of shape. The vehicle has just been performing like a champ."



Marathon man

Photo by Todd Woodard

Tinker Murray, 29, won his third Texas A&M full marathon Saturday. Murray finished the 26.22 miles in two hours, 40 minutes and 28 seconds. In training for the Boston Marathon,

Murray had planned to run only 20 miles, but cloudy skies and cool temperatures enabled him to make the full marathon without breaking down too much. See related story page 3.

## Collection agencies must follow state laws

By KATHY O'CONNELL

Many people owing debts fear being hassled by collection agencies, but what most don't know is that they're protected by state statutes.

Dan Usiak, student legal adviser, said there are state and federal guidelines that agencies must follow when pursuing collection of debts.

The statute defines debt collection as "any action, conduct, or practice in soliciting debts for collection."

He said the Texas debt collection statute applies to "any person engaging directly or indirectly in debt collection ... and any person who sells or offers to sell forms represented to be a collection system." But, he said, these statutes do not apply to private merchants.

The statute says debt collectors cannot collect or attempt to collect debt by using threats, such as violent means that would cause harm to the person or his property.

They also cannot threaten to file charges or criminal action if the individual has not violated any criminal law. Threatening to repossess or seize property without proper court proceedings is also illegal; however, the collectors can exercise their statutory rights.

Collection agents are also prohibited from harassing the individual by using profane language, placing telephone calls without identifying themselves, causing the person to pay long distance fees or allowing the phone to ring several times with the intent to harass.

Collection agencies that violate any of the provisions in the statute are guilty of a misdemeanor and are subject to a fine of not less than \$100 nor more than \$500. Charges against collection agencies must be made within one year of the violation.

Usiak said there are a few students who go to the legal aid office for advice and these usually involve mail house orders. What will happen, he said, is that someone will order something through the mail and have it sent to someone else without that person's knowledge.

"I write a letter explaining the situation," he said. "Then

they (collection agencies) are usually good about understanding the problem."

Debbie Stevener, collection manager for a local collection agency said, "a lot of people fear collection agencies. People have the wrong impression of us."

"We are very fair," she said. "I'll work with the person in any way I can." Stevener said she will work out a repayment schedule with someone who owes a debt, especially if he is having financial difficulties.

She said all the debtor has to do is reply to a letter she sends out and acknowledge that the collection agency has his account. Stevener said if the person does not respond after 30 days, then she turns his name over to a credit bureau.

"The credit bureau," she said, "is a place where a credit file is kept on just about every person in town." She said being listed with the credit bureau can cause problems if someone is applying for a loan to buy a car. Banks and financing offices check with the credit bureau before they will lend money, she said.

Stevener said a person's name by law must remain on file with the credit bureau for seven years. "This is why I try to work with them (debtors)," she said, "because their credit can be ruined."

She said if a person thinks he has been treated unfairly, he can write or go to the credit bureau and fill out a consumer statement explaining why he thinks he shouldn't pay his bill. This statement, she said, also goes on file.

Stevener said doing this doesn't really have any effect on whether a lending institution will grant a loan, because it's up to them to decide whether to grant a loan or not.

She said it's better to go in person than to send a letter to a credit bureau.

Stevener said the agency she works for collects mostly for people in the medical profession, since "those are the bills people put off first." She said sometimes creditors, particularly doctors, will request that the account not be collected.

"They feel it's no use," she said. "It's really up to the creditor to do what he wants to do."

## Computer changeover improves future service

By BERNIE FETTE

The Texas A&M computing system now may be experiencing numerous problems following recent equipment additions, but Data Processing Center Director Dr. Dick B. Simmons is predicting better service in the long run.

The recent problems are small in comparison with those usually experienced when changes are made, Simmons said.

"If you compare it with large major industrial firms, our cutover has gone very smooth for the number of software systems we had to cut over," he said. Cutover is the addition of a new computer version to an old one.

Specific problems with the system, including those terminals in the Remote Computing Center, he said, involve the "locate" and "fetch" commands.

After additions were made to the

system, those commands were taking hours to complete when normally they should require only seconds. Now the situation has improved to minutes and will hopefully be back to normal in the fall, he said.

Operational problems, however, are not the only concerns surrounding the University computing system. Simmons said the DPC is also planning to install a new security system, pending contract approval.

"Any user will soon have a much higher level of security on all of his data," Simmons said. "He can put in extra passwords that are very difficult to break."

Security problems have been only minor so far, he said.

"The security problem is usually in the office of the guy that's using it," Simmons said. "The security problem has been more of a personality problem than a mechanical or technical problem."

For example, he said, presently it is essentially impossible for unauthorized users to gain access to secured data, such as grade reports.

But, if someone doing research doesn't take proper precautions, someone else could get access to the information, he said.

Simmons also said it is possible for someone with a thorough knowledge of computers to cause the system to break down, but that such an act could easily be detected.

"We would eventually catch it," he said. "But we don't go out of our way to protect ourselves from the students."

Simmons said monitors also keep users from monopolizing computer time. However, it is only remotely possible for someone to tie up the system, he said.

"Theoretically, it's possible, but that's not what's happening."

"Anyway, we'd know if they were doing it because we have hardware monitors and software monitors," he said. "It would be very difficult to do it and to my knowledge, nobody knows how to do it."

Simmons said the University is faced not only with existing problems but serious potential problems as well.

He said the University will be at a considerable disadvantage in the future compared to other universities if academic departments do not receive more money to spend on computing.

"The academic computing at Texas A&M is grossly underfunded," Simmons said. "Here at A&M, they do not put the amount in that they should for the largest engineering college in the United States."

Simmons said the DPC is similar to a bookstore on campus in that it provides a service. But, he said, sometimes certain academic departments don't have a large enough budget to afford the service.

"We sell our services and make enough by the end of the year to cover our expenses," Simmons said. About nine percent of the computing done by the DPC is for academic purposes and the DPC's expenses are about \$5 million yearly.



Students work to cleanup Northgate

Photo by T. Garrett

Frank Mitzed and Gerogeanne Collins, both landscape architecture majors, are two of the many students who participated in Cleanup Day Saturday sponsored by the Beautify Brazos County Association.

Five Texas A&M University organizations worked with the BBCA to try and clean up areas around the University. Cleanup day is just one of the activities of "Beautify Brazos County" month.

## Blood drive registration begins today in MSC

The Aggie Blood Drive will take place between April 20-23 at two sites on campus. Students interested in donating blood are encouraged to sign up this week in the Memorial Student Center.

Doug Snow, chairman of the Aggie Blood Drive, said the goal for this semester's drive is 2,000 pints of blood. He said 2,100 pints were collected in last semester's drive.

The Wadley Blood Bank of Dallas comes to Texas A&M University each semester for the drive.

To donate, a person must be 18 years old and must not be taking any medication for serious disorders. The blood

drive will take place on the second floor of the MSC and in a mobile unit outside of Sbis Dining Hall.

The donor's family as well as other Texas A&M students can benefit from a blood donation. Snow said he estimates 400,000 people could receive blood free from the benefits of the Aggie Blood Drive.

"This is probably our biggest incentive for both having the drive and getting students to donate," Snow said.

Wadley personnel will handle operations for the blood drive, and a nurse from Wadley will be in the MSC April 15 to answer questions about donor eligibility.