

Local

Noise pollution can be kept down

Noise pollution doesn't have to grow along with the cities of the Sunbelt now facing massive population increases, says a researcher at Texas A&M University.

"Steps can be taken to hold down noise levels that are bad for the public health and welfare," said Dr. Carl Gerhold, a mechanical engineer. "But it takes more than wringing your hands and saying that noise is just a price we pay for progress."

Gerhold has worked with noise problems in cities, including Houston, and is studying ways to reduce jet engine noise for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

The problem of noise is highly subjective, Gerhold said. What is a sound to some people is a noise to others.

"Noise is a sound that annoys you," he said. "But there are few clear examples. For instance, many people would say a loud engine sound is definitely noise. But the people crowded into the Indy 500 race grounds would differ on that."

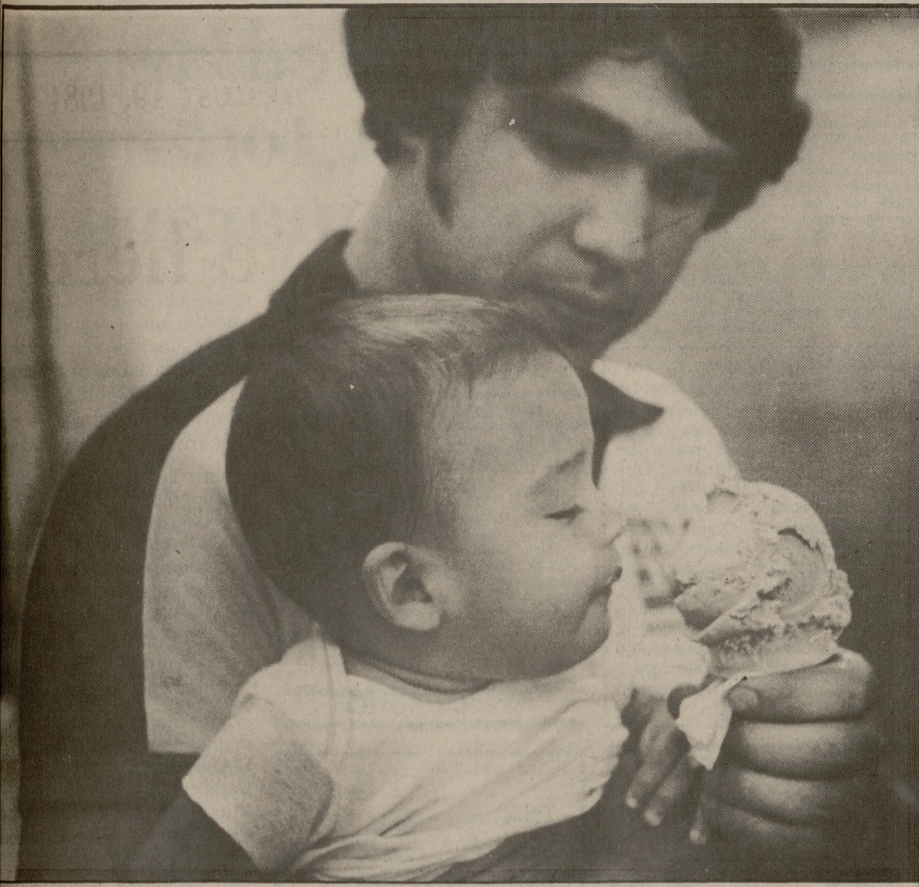
Noise can be bad for one's health, the researcher said, because the eardrum is like a mechanical system. If overstressed, it can be damaged and hearing loss can occur. Noise can also cause psychological damage, he said.

In growing cities, increased noise seems to slip up on citizens, Gerhold said. No one notices it growing and suddenly 10 years down the road, the sound level has increased tremendously.

Some cities and even some countries have taken steps to hold down noise pollution by setting limits on the amount of sound produced by automobiles, factories and businesses. A traffic cop that uses a sound level meter as well as a radar unit might someday be a necessary reality, he said.

"We need to measure sound levels as we grow," Gerhold said, because fixes afterwards are very expensive. Sound walls used along large roadways in cities to hold down traffic noises can cost as much as \$70 or more a linear foot, he said.

Too often, noise control has been seen as a luxury item, Gerhold said. It should be given more consideration — not just in ways to hide it, but also ways to eliminate noise in the first place through new product designs.



Super Scoop

Photo by Jeri Jones

Even young Aggies enjoy ice cream from the Texas A&M Creamery. Six-month-old Robert D. Miller shares an ice cream cone with his father Robert B. Miller, a petroleum engineering major, during one of the hot College Station afternoons.

Day students get their news from the Batt.

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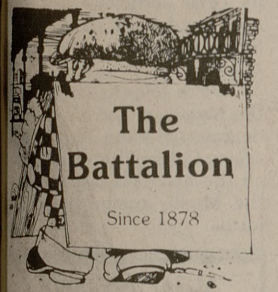
Monday through Friday 10:45 AM-1:45 PM

QUALITY FIRST

New vets to graduate this Friday

Commencement ceremonies for an estimated 138 students of Texas A&M's College of Veterinary Medicine will be held Friday. State Senator Kent Caperton (D-College Station) will address the graduates and their guests at the ceremony scheduled to begin at 7:30 p.m. in Rudder Auditorium on the main campus of Texas A&M University.

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