

State

A&M-Galveston turns away senior citizen

United Press International SEATTLE — Registration for James H. Petrie was canceled at Texas A&M University's Galveston Branch when officials found out he was a senior citizen. Petrie, 71, of Kirkland, Wash., was accepted by the university for a course of study that would have allowed him to become a Mer-

chant Marine officer. He obtained a federal education loan of \$2,400, and the president of the university had written him a letter of congratulations for choosing to attend Texas A&M. But when he reported on the campus Aug. 24, as directed by correspondence from the university, "certain school officials" dis-

covered his age and Petrie's registration was canceled. "It's purely a case of age discrimination," Petrie said. Texas A&M at Galveston is one of a few schools in the nation offering a course in Marine Transportation with the option of becoming an officer in the Merchant Marine. "You cannot be admitted to

program because you could not graduate from the license-option program until you are 76," university president William H. Clayton, said in a second letter to Petrie. "The potential is virtually zero that companies hiring license-option program graduates of this institution would employ a man of

your age," the letter said. Petrie is upset about that. "Since I already have a college degree, I could complete the course in three years, at the age of 74 — not 76," he said. "And there are lots of merchant marine officers on active duty in their 70s. It cost me nearly \$600 to drive down to Galveston with the expectation of entering school, and then drive back to Seattle. I'm terribly disappointed."

The university offered to let him take the course without obtaining his license as a Merchant Marine officer, but there's no point in that, Petrie said. "I am seeking a career, a job. President Reagan wants to do away with retirement at 62 or 65, and make us work longer. That's what I'm trying to do. "Maybe President Reagan better talk to a few people — like the

people who wouldn't let me in school." Petrie retired from the Southern Pacific Railroad in 1961 after 22 years of service as a technician in traffic control. He retired from Boeing Co. in 1974 after working as a technical writer and 747 airframe inspector. After leaving Boeing, he attended Seattle Pacific University for two years before applying to Texas A&M.

Preacher pleads guilty to theft of two families' life savings

United Press International HOUSTON — Two families swindled out of \$641,000 by a preacher who pleaded guilty to theft are sad and bitter about having to face the future without their life savings. David Franklin Boston, 67, a former preacher, pleaded guilty Tuesday to felony bond fraud. He also admitted misusing funds given him for management, \$541,000 by John Branch and

\$100,000 by CaRita Barrett. Branch, an engineer who worked overseas to make more money for retirement, said he has developed arthritis and needs to retire. He planned to use his \$541,000 to buy a home and educate his two learning handicapped children. Mrs. Barrett's husband, David, has been a paraplegic since an on-the-job accident 14 years ago.

They planned to use their \$100,000 to support themselves and obtain the best care possible for him without help from anyone else. "In both cases, they're just worried sick about their futures," said Janet Mortensen, a State Securities Board investigator who said Boston already was under scrutiny for bond fraud when the Branch and Barrett swindles surfaced.

"I paid him money to manage my account. I paid him money to steal my money, it looks like," Branch said. Branch, 56, said he found out his money was gone when he asked Boston for \$30,000 this year to cover debts. "He kept procrastinating and finally I got this letter to call his attorney. I found he had embezzled the whole thing. This has really upset my family. There is nothing I can do now but keep working."


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Sneakers recommended for children's school wear

United Press International PHILADELPHIA — Parents can do their pocketbooks and their children a favor if they buy sneakers instead of hard-soled shoes for school wear, says a children's health center director. Dr. Jeffrey Weiss has nothing against special shoes for some occasions and some foot conditions.

"Never leave this kind of judgment to a shoe salesman," Weiss says. Children who need orthopedic shoes usually will "toe in" or "toe out," the pediatrician says, or may suffer foot pain or have an unusual gait. Be prepared to spend about \$15 to \$20 a pair for children's sneakers, he says. "If they are too inexpensive they will not last."

Weiss also says sneakers should appear to be well-constructed with sturdy-looking canvas pieces that are glued on straight and vent holes that do not have any tears around them. Make sure sneakers fit properly and feel comfortable, he adds. If they are too loose, they will cause blisters; too tight, they will be very uncomfortable.

"It has nearly driven me out of my mind," Branch said. Mrs. Barrett expressed similar feelings. "That was our retirement so we could live off it and not depend on anyone else," she said. "He's one of the smoothest con men I've ever known. But he was our minister when we came to Houston in 1941 and Mr. Barrett had faith in him." Mrs. Mortensen said Boston had helped many churches legitimately float bonds after he quit preaching. State District Judge Miron Love ordered a background investigation and scheduled sentencing for November. Boston could face 10 years in prison and a \$5,000 fine.

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