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Shuttle lands successfully

United Press International
EDWARDS AIR FORCE BASE, Calif. — Four astronauts flew the space shuttle to a smooth landing at dawn today from a \$250 million mission that proved the Columbia can launch satellites but raised questions about its spacewalking gear.

The winged space freighter broke through thin clouds and touched down at 8:33 a.m. for a flawless conclusion to its fifth orbital flight.

Vance Brand, Robert Overmyer, Joseph Allen and William Lenoir landed just eight minutes after the sun rose over the Mojave Desert 60 miles north of Los Angeles.

"Hey, Roy, are we down now?" asked co-pilot Overmyer, suggesting the landing was so smooth he couldn't feel it.

"Absolutely, it was beautiful, and you certainly lived up to your motto this flight," replied Roy Bridges in Houston Control. "Welcome home."

Bridges was referring to the "We deliver" motto the astronauts adopted during their satellite launching operations.

The Columbia, which now has traveled more than 10 million miles in space, was directed to the 15,000-foot-long concrete runway used for its July 4 landing because the long, broad, normally dry lakebed runways were muddy from recent rains.

It came to a stop right in the middle of the runway, with plenty of unused rollout space ahead of them.

The ship, protected from the fiery re-entry heat by a layer of glassy insulation tiles, slowed from more than 17,000 mph to the landing speed of an airliner in less than an hour.

The Columbia 5 astronauts prepared for the trip home when they

closed the ship's big payload bay doors at 4:31 a.m. for the re-entry back into the atmosphere.

Closure of the 60-foot-long doors was a key step in landing preparations and took on even greater significance after Monday's space walk cancellation. If the doors had failed to close, Lenoir would have had to walk in space to close them, wearing a space-suit that was not working normally.

But — "They are closed and buttoned up," Overmyer reported.

The five-day, 2.1-million-mile flight was the fifth mission of the Columbia in 19 months and the last for nearly a year. The \$1.2 billion ship will be modified at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida for launch next Oct. 30, when it will carry a big European-built laboratory module called Spacelab and a six-man crew.

Columbia set out on its initial operational mission when it took off from Cape Canaveral Thursday. It launched the first of two commercial communications satellites eight hours later and deployed the second Friday.

Those dual launchings were the primary objective of the mission and they demonstrated the Columbia can serve both as a space freighter and a stable launching platform high above the Earth.

The one big disappointment was the cancellation of a planned two-man, 3½-hour space walk Monday because of troubles with the \$2 million spacesuits the astronauts were to wear outside.

Project officials said it was possible one could be added to a 1983 mission to test the suits and rehearse satellite repair operations.



The suffering masses return

staff photo by David Fisher

Rudder Exhibit Hall, usually deserted, wasn't empty Monday morning, as shown in this photo, shot through a wide-angle lens. Pre-registration started, and so did the

crowding inside — and outside — Rudder. Students above are waiting to turn in their card packets. Pre-registration continues through Friday.

A&M grades not inflated: deans

GPRs rise as SAT falls

by Kathleen Hart
Battalion Reporter

College diplomas may mean less than they once did because of grade inflation — higher grades for lower quality work — which decreases the value and reliability of a grade.

But Dr. Terry Shoup, assistant dean of the College of Engineering, says Texas A&M University doesn't have a major grade inflation problem. "We've always strived for a high level of excellence in our programs, and it's possible that while the grades may be easier to get, our programs may have gotten more difficult so the net effect is the same," he said.

Scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test have declined consistently for 15 years — rising slightly this year for the first time. But grades here have risen during the same 15-year period, which many University officials translate to mean grades are being inflated.

Dr. Rand Watson, associate dean of the College of Science, said grade inflation occurs because some professors grade on a curve that changes with the quality of the students.

Dr. Bryan Cole, associate dean of the College of Education, said grading curves are outdated quickly by changing technology, changing en-

vironments and an increase in the amount of information to which people are exposed.

If grades rise at an institution, it's because "the folks that we have coming here are much better prepared than they have been in the past," Cole said.

Higher admission standards have been aimed at increasing the number of better-prepared students here.

Standards for honor graduates also have been raised. A student must have a grade point ratio of 3.5 to 3.699 to graduate cum laude. Before the change in May, cum laude graduates needed a GPR of 3.25 to 3.699.

Dr. Charles McCandless, interim vice president for academic affairs, said grade inflation didn't cause the changes; students asked for them.

"I think there was concern that there might be a demeaning of the coin," he said. "That if there were too many students graduating with honors, then graduating with honors became less meaningful."

Other standards also have been raised.

The College of Engineering recently raised the minimum requirements students need to enroll in junior- and senior-level courses.

Dr. Candida Lutes, associate dean

of students for the College of Liberal Arts, said standards for honor graduates and enrollment in upper-level courses must be high or the "really good students are penalized because graduate schools and employers can't tell them from the mediocre students."

For many employers and graduate schools, individual grades may not be as important as the general trend of a student's grades.

Louis J. Van Pelt, director of the Texas A&M Placement Center, said some students even draw graphs for prospective employers showing a general increase in their grades throughout their college career.

The student's GPR often is compared with the average GPR for the school in which the student is enrolled because some grades can be above average at some schools and below average at others, Van Pelt said.

Dr. William Ward, associate dean of the College of Medicine, said the medical school often looks at the number of Q-drops a person has. Those drops often indicate that a student is trying to manipulate the system to get an A instead of a B in a class, he said.

Van Pelt said extracurricular activities also are considered by employers

and graduate schools, but grades make the difference.

"One could expect a higher likelihood of employer offers versus interviews as his grade point average goes up, but that's a generalization because not every candidate is right for every job any more than every job is right for every candidate," he said. "A person can generate a flush (rejection) letter with a 2.0 or a 4.0."

Lutes said employers and graduate schools are "going to be a little bit leery of someone who manages to scrape through with a 2.0." But if a person can "land that first job, even with lousy grades, and if he can do well in that job, then he has undone the damage of low grades," she said.

Shoup said grades often are the only measurable indicator available.

Watson said such factors as bad teachers, illness and emotional problems average out over a student's college career, and the overall record are reliable when judging the academic ability of a student.

"We try to hire good people and we constantly evaluate their teaching abilities," he said. "These procedures assure that the grading system will be more or less uniform, consistent and fair."

Walesa visits friends, dodges press

United Press International
GDANSK, Poland — Former Solidarity chief Lech Walesa, welcomed home by jubilant supporters and tearful family members after 11 months of martial law internment, left his apartment Monday to meet with friends and former union advisers.

Family sources said Walesa dodged reporters by ducking into other buildings in the big high-rise suburb where he lives, leaving home to visit his former chauffeur, Miatek Wachowski, who is ailing in a Gdansk hospital.

Walesa returned to his six-room apartment to meet with reporters, flanked by former Solidarity advisers Andrzej Wielowiejski and Wladyslaw Sila

Nowicki, as well as his family priest, Rev. Henryk Jankowski.

Mrs. Walesa said her husband told her he had been held in Warsaw for more than a day after his release while he was lectured by Polish officials on martial law.

The former union chief had dropped from sight for more than 24 hours after officials announced he left the government lodge in remote Arlamowo on the southeast border.

Walesa, who arrived home Sunday, did not try to explain the absence. But he said the final order for his release was not signed until Sunday night.

Polish authorities, in an official PAP news agency report on Walesa's return, stressed that he was a private person now and suggested they would not allow him to take up a political role.

But Walesa, in a speech Sunday from his apartment window to a crowd of thousands of Poles chanting his name, insisted, "We shall win."

"We will need strength," Walesa said, his fingers raised in a V-for-victory sign. "We won't be down on our knees."

But he never mentioned Solidarity, the trade union he led until it was banned by parliament Oct. 8.

Nuke plant 'whistle-blower' fired three times this year

United Press International
DALLAS — A man who says he is being blacklisted by the nuclear industry because he reports safety violations was fired from his third job this year at a nuclear power plant.

The third firing, like the previous two, has been ruled illegal by the U.S. Department of Labor.

A spokesman for the Labor Department said Monday that Charles A. Atchison was dismissed in violation of the federal law designed to protect "whistleblowers."

Atchison was fired from the Comanche Peak nuclear power plant near Glen Rose on April 12 and from the

Waterford III nuclear power plant near Taft, La., hours after he was hired on Sept. 27.

In both cases, the Labor Department ruled the firings were a result of testimony Atchison gave to a federal board about alleged safety problems at Comanche Peak.

Atchison told the U.S. Atomic Safety and Licensing Board about supposed safety defects at the controversial Texas plant.

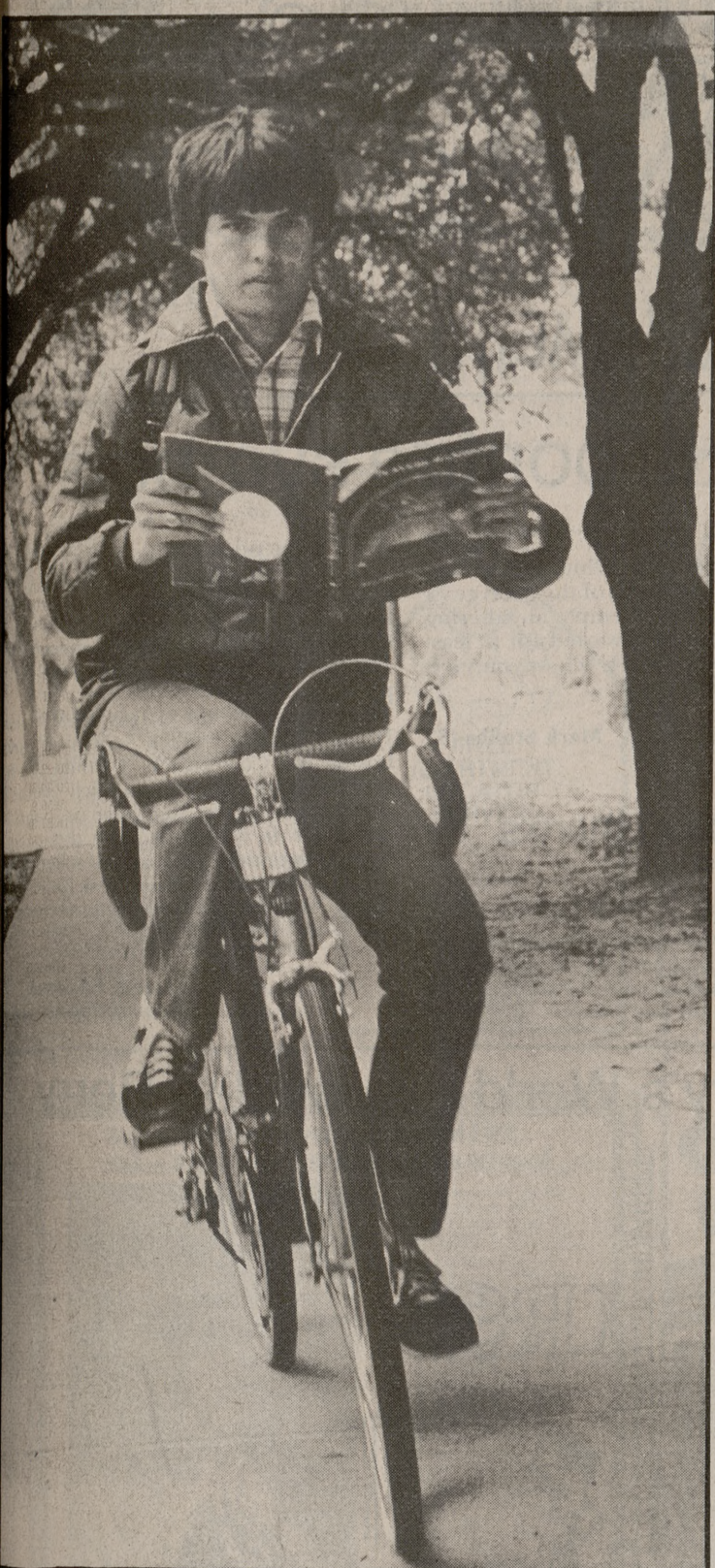
The third firing happened in August by Mercury of Northwood Inc., a subcontractor at the Louisiana plant. The Labor Department has also ruled

that the firing was illegal because it was in punishment for Atchison's testimony.

Atchison said he was fired from his Comanche Peak job for reporting too many pipe welding flaws.

"They're essentially trying to blackball him from the nuclear industry," said Atchison's lawyer, J. Marshall Gilmore. "It's a situation where a guy is being blackballed for doing a good job."

All three companies have denied charges of wrongdoing. The three also have appealed the rulings by the Labor Department.



staff photo by Irene Mees

Readin' and ridin'

Dungeons and Dragons can be obsessive, so much so that its devotees can't put it down. In fact, freshman Mike Kana of El Campo reads the rules of the fantasy role-playing game even while riding his bicycle. Kana is an electrical engineering major.

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forecast

Mostly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of rain. Highs in the 60s, with southeast winds near 10 mph. Cloudy tonight with a 40 percent chance of rain. Low tonight in the upper 50s.