

*Insurance came before doctors*

# Passengers talk about derailment

**United Press International**  
A California man said Amtrak officials summoned an insurance claims adjuster and armed railroad guards before calling medical personnel to the scene of a passenger train derailment near Houston last week.

David St. John, a 32-year-old state certified nurse from Santa Cruz, Calif., said he was bound for Tuscon, Ariz., when the car in which he was riding jumped the tracks.

"The cabin attendant, or conductor, named Mr. Fitch, had just called out '10 minutes to Houston' and everyone started getting up and getting their stuff," St. John said in a telephone interview with UPI. "After that the train made a terrible rumbling sound and people started bumping around like tin soldiers in a little kid's shoe box."

"The coach car I was in was leaning at least at a 20 degree angle, he said.

St. John said two elderly women, a young girl, and a young man were slightly injured. He said the women—one who suffered high blood pressure and the other, a heart condition—were taken by ambulance to a Houston hospital.

"No one would explain anything to us," he said. "We begged for them to explain what was going on. The level of anxiety in that car was incredible. I was testing their pulses and their blood pressure was going to the ceiling."

St. John said R.G. "Rags" Guidry, a conductor on the train and father of New York Yankees pitcher Ron Guidry, should be commended for "a very heroic act."

"He was in the dining car, which was the furthest one down the line that was unaffected," St. John said. "When the train started to go off the tracks a young man named Michael was between cars. Rags reached over, grabbed the kid and jerked him into the dining car just as the sleeper twisted."

"At the same moment, he (Guidry) reached up and pulled the brake which slowed down the back part of the train and kept the other two cars on the track," St. John said.

"Everyone was really badly bumped around," he said.

"They (railroad employees) walked into the car and passed out little slips of paper and told us to write our names and whether we were injured," he said. "Then a (insurance) claims man came in and he talked to a couple of people that were hurt. Soon after that, two guys that looked like cowboys came in with badges and one of them had a pearl handled .45 revolver."

"They said they were yard police," St. John said.

"Then, I asked if there were any medical personnel and they all looked at me like 'What are they needed for?'" he said. "I said I was a nurse and wanted an ambulance out there and they brought two out there."

Houston City Ambulance Chief Don Bailey said none of the passengers was seriously hurt.

St. John said the accident occurred less than 200 yards from an elevated freeway trestle. But he said railroad employees refused to let the passengers off the train although they were near a street and could have been bused to the station.

Cliff Black, an Amtrak spokesman in Washington, D.C., Sunday said train No. 1 of the Sunset Limited was en route from New Orleans to Los Angeles when three of its six cars jumped the tracks 1.2 miles from the Houston station at 10:33 p.m. Wednesday.

Black said the train was traveling about 10 mph through the Amtrak yard when the accident occurred.

"If people were held on the train it is possible that that was because the train was not on a station platform and therefore not at a safe place for people to get off. Particularly in a railroad yard, it would be extremely dangerous to let people get off and wander on the tracks," Black said.

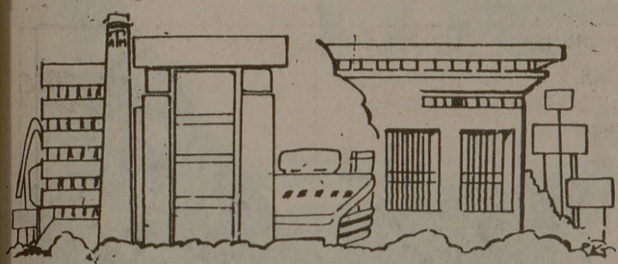
St. John said an attendant told him a freight train had derailed on the same frog, a crossover where tracks come from four directions, a few weeks earlier and that the mechanism was cracked.

Black said the cause of the accident was listed as "wide gauge."

"The tracks have a standard gauge," he said. "For some reason, unknown to me, the gauge of that track was wider than standard. It could be attrib-

utable to warpage. It could also be attributable to ties that are in bad condition. I just don't know in this particular case."

Black said the three derailed cars were moved to New Orleans Saturday for inspection.



## Around town

### OPAS sponsors free noon concert

The **MSC Opera and Performing Arts Society** will present a free concert Wednesday by a local, 15-year-old pianist, **Ossie Borosh**. The concert, part of OPAS's **High Noon Concert Series**, will be held in the main lounge of the Memorial Student Center at noon. Borosh will play pieces by Bach, Chopin and Mozart among others.

Borosh gave her first recital at age 10, and last summer she studied music at the Boston University Tanglewood Music Institute on a \$1,000 scholarship. She attends A&M, Consolidated High School and plays piano for the school choir. She studies music with professors at Texas Christian University. Borosh is the daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Itshak Borosh of College Station. Dr. Borosh is a professor in the Department of Mathematics.

The High Noon presentations are a monthly series of free, open mini-concerts by local artists. They are designed to help make performing arts more available to students, and serve as a medium for the artists to display their talents.

### Defensive driving course is offered

A **defensive driving course**, offered by the **Brazos Valley Safety Agency**, will be held today and Wednesday from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. The course, which can be used to have certain misdemeanor traffic offenses dismissed and to receive a 10 percent discount on automobile insurance, will be held at the Ramada Inn. The fee for the course is \$20. Participants can pre-register by calling 693-8178 or at the Ramada Inn at 5 this evening.

### Visiting lecturer speaks Wednesday

The **Department of Medical Microbiology and Immunology** will present a lecture Wednesday by **Professor Harry Smith, F.R.S.**, from the University of Birmingham in Birmingham, England. Smith is a President's Lecturer, a Scholar of the College of Medicine and visiting professor of microbiology. His speech, "The Determinants of Microbial Pathogenicity" will begin at 2 p.m. in lecture hall one of the Medical Sciences Building. It is free and open to the public.

### Lecture addresses health care issues

The **Departments of Political Science, Philosophy, and Humanities in Medicine** will present Wednesday a speech on "**Financing Primary Health Care: Interests and Incentives**." The free lecture will be given by Professor Deane Neubauer, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. It will begin at 4 p.m. in 501 Rudder. The public is invited to attend.

To submit an item for this column, come by **The Battalion office in 216 Reed McDonald**.

## Galveston family might not be allowed to rebuild house

**United Press International**  
AUSTIN — A district-court judge Monday gave a Galveston homeowner until Dec. 5 to prepare for a civil suit that could bar him from rebuilding his hurricane-damaged house.

District Judge Harley Clark issued a temporary restraining order barring Robert Matcha and his wife from rebuilding their beach home, which was heavily damaged by Hurricane Alicia.

The injunction was requested by Attorney General Jim Mattox, who claimed Texas' Open Beaches Act prohibited Matcha from rebuilding the house.

Under state law, everything between the waters of the Gulf of Mexico and the first line of vegetation on the beach is public lands.

In his suit, Mattox claims that storm shifted the vegetation line, with the result being that

Matcha's house was on public land.

Clark delayed a hearing on

Mattox's suit because Matcha's attorney had not had time to prepare his case.

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