

# No excuse for risks like falling metal

Texas A&M students assume they can walk across campus during the day and feel reasonably safe doing so. Most of the time it's a valid assumption.

Oh, sure, pedestrians have to keep an eye out for cars when they cross the streets, and every once in a while they have to jump out of the way of a mad cyclist.

By and large, students can expect to make it to class without serious injury — and certainly without being hit by falling pieces of metal.

But that's exactly what happened Monday to Roger R. Gekiere. The freshman general studies major was walking from his class in the Blocker Building when a 15 pound, 3 feet by 3½ feet piece of sheet metal hit him on the head. Gekiere spent the night at St. Joseph Hospital.

There's no excuse for an accident like this.

Sure, Monday was an exceptionally windy day. Winds of 30 to 40 mph caused power outages and property damage across town.

The piece of metal that struck Gekiere was covering the top of an exhaust fan at the corner of the Blocker Building. The heavy winds blew it off the corner of the building — but that's still no excuse.

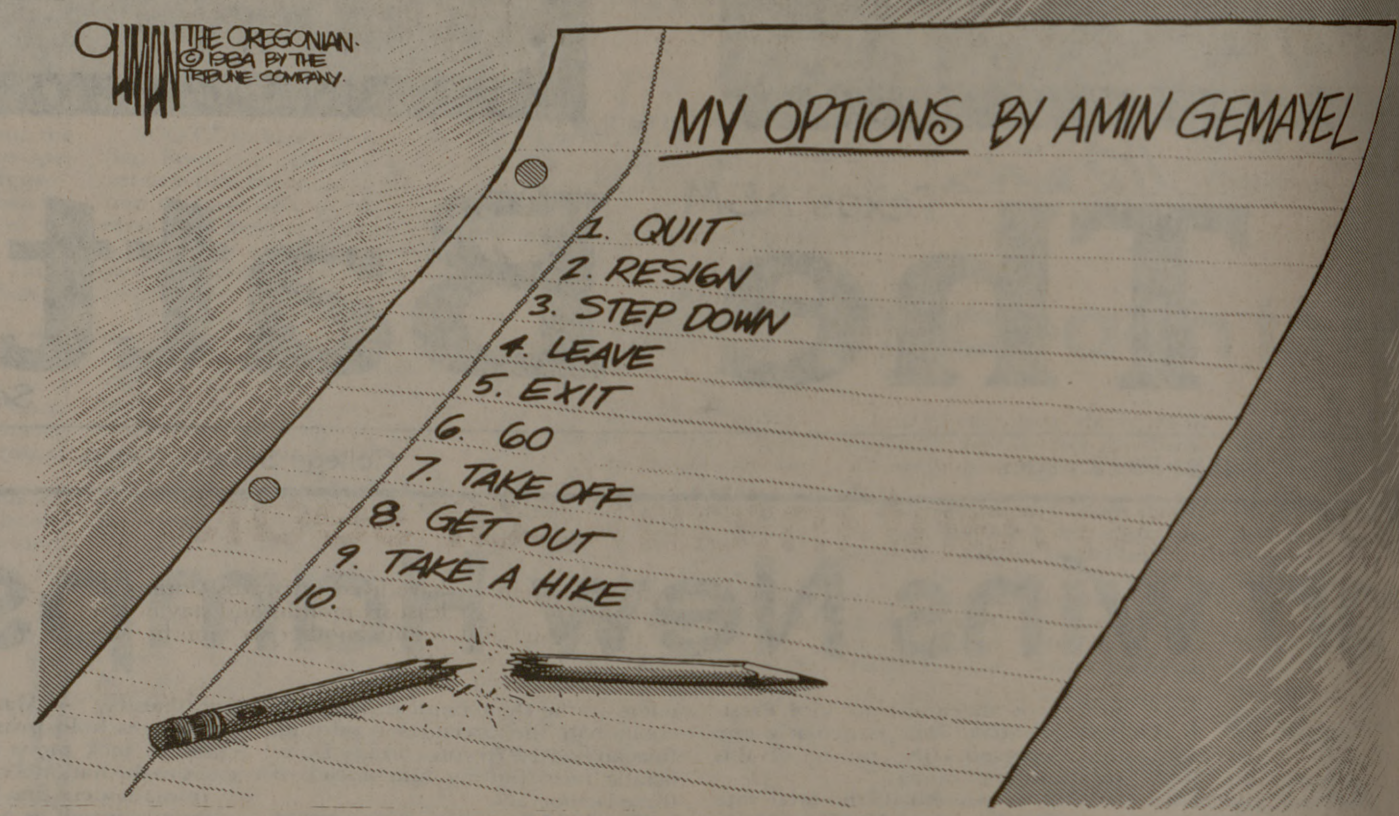
Construction is going on at several places on campus. Students and faculty are inconvenienced by roped-off areas and noisy equipment, but most of them realize the work is necessary and are willing to put up with minor inconveniences.

For their part, the construction workers are expected to take precautions to keep the pedestrian traffic areas on campus safe. A minor consideration would be keeping equipment on top of buildings tied down in case of high winds.

If Gekiere had cut through a roped-off area, he would have at least known he was risking injury. But no warning signs are posted by the Blocker Building, and students aren't usually on the alert for falling metal sheets.

And there's no reason they should have to be.

— **The Battalion Editorial Board**



# Nobody has to watch

Convicted murderer James David Autry wants his execution to be televised.

I'm in favor of the death penalty so I'm not mad about his punishment. I'm mad because he wants the rest of us to go through it with him.

I know what you're thinking. "You don't mind him dying as long as you aren't involved."

Why should I go through it with him? I'm not the one who shot the convenience store clerk for a six pack of beer.

And I'm not going to go through it with him. If Autry's death is televised, I'm not going to watch. Nobody has to watch if they don't want to.

But who will watch, and why?

Adults can make a conscious decision whether to watch, but what about the children who start watching without knowing what's really happening, or whose parents have no control over what they watch?

I don't doubt there will be a large audience for Autry's execution. After all, we are curious creatures. Most people have never seen a real, live execution before.

But even if nobody watches, think about the sensationalism the ordeal will create.

Will CBS, NBC and ABC bid for the broadcast?

Will Snickers become the official candy bar of the 1984 Autry execution? Will they preempt Dynasty? Interrupt for a special news report?

The sensationalism alone will attract an audience.



I don't agree with the people who say Autry's death is private, because the decision to make it public was his. But publicity and political statements are two different things.

He wants to die as a martyr, to further the fight against capital punishment. He wants the execution televised

so people will see how awful capital punishment is.

Of course it's awful. Death is awful but he should have thought about it before he pulled the trigger.

Perhaps he's trying for another execution. On Oct. 5, 1983, Autry was strapped to a gurney for an hour as harmless sodium pentothal was injected into his veins. Within 30 minutes of his scheduled execution, Supreme Court Justice Byron White granted his request for a stay.

I realize that this is Autry's "last wish," but this is one wish they don't grant. Public execution was out in 1923 when a man was hanged from the gallows in Waco. Do we want to take a step backwards?

Autry's execution is scheduled for March 14. The Texas Board of Pardons will decide March 12 whether Autry will die on television.

If the TDC grants Autry's wish, the next decision is ours.

Karen Wallace is a sophomore major and staff writer for The Battalion.

# Negotiator for U.S. distrustful of Soviets

By **JIM ANDERSON**

*Columnist for United Press International*

Since the Soviets walked out of the medium-range missile talks in Geneva, Paul Nitze, the U.S. negotiator, is a man without an occupation.

The Soviets stalked out when the United States began deploying its medium-range missiles on schedule in December. With nobody to talk to in Geneva, Nitze has returned to the United States.

He was the principal speaker at anniversary ceremonies this week in celebration of the 108th anniversary of the founding of Johns Hopkins University, and he chose as his subject "Concepts of Peace."

He is a veteran of negotiations with the Soviets. He was part of the SALT 1 team (but quit in dissatisfaction over U.S. methods) and was a tireless and articulate critic of some of the terms negotiated in the SALT 2 treaty, which has never been ratified.

In 1979 congressional hearings, Nitze summed up his view of the Soviets when he said of the Soviet SALT negotiators, "They negotiate like shysters."

Nevertheless, or perhaps because of these attitudes toward the Soviets, Nitze was tapped by the Reagan administration in 1981 to handle the medium-range missile talks in Geneva. Nitze accepted and, from accounts by State Department and Western European officials, has done a serious, workmanlike job.

In his Johns Hopkins speech, he departed from the field of arms control into the more complex and treacherous field of language.

Nitze, who does not speak Russian, points out that the Russian word "mir" has several meanings. The primary meaning is "the world" or "the environment" and in post-Lenin Soviet-style Russian it has the more specific meaning of a world that has reached the first

stage of communism, which is socialism.

The secondary meaning of the Russian word "mir" is "peace" or, more precisely, "the absence of conflict."

Nitze says in the Johns Hopkins speech that the two meanings of the Russian word can be directly contradictory — the first stage of communism is achieved by struggle, not by "peace."

Nitze's suggestion is that Americans such as Richard Nixon, who toured Russia in 1959 shouting "Mir y Druzhba," may have thought they were wishing everybody "peace and friendship" but Russians who were responding so enthusiastically understood the phrase to mean an American endorsement of the first stage of communism, or socialism.

It is an interesting theory, which fits with Nitze's well-publicized views about the sly Soviet character and the willingness of bright-eyed Americans to be duped.

Unfortunately for the Nitze theory, Russian language experts at the State Department and the Voice of America say that it is total nonsense.

They say that "mir" clearly means "peace" to any Russian speaker when used the way Nitze suggests, such as in conjunction with the 1955 "Spirit of Geneva" or with the word "Druzhba" or "friendship."

One Russian expert said there may be confusion in the mind of Mr. Nitze, "but that the two meanings of the word in Russian are always made crystal clear in the context of a sentence."

Another Russian speaker says that Nitze's theory says more about Nitze than it does about the Russian language.

It also says something about the Reagan administration's view of the Soviets, since Nitze's openly expressed views of the Soviets were well known to all — including the Soviets — when Nitze was chosen for the key job of trying to negotiate an important agreement with the Soviet government.

# Letters

## All Aggies needed for Big Event

**Editor:**  
It's almost here! On March 31, the second annual Big Event will sweep across the twin cities.

What is the Big Event? It is several thousand Aggies and sponsors volunteering themselves to "overhaul" our area.

The old cliché, "People helping people," sums up the Big Event quite accurately. People in our area can use a little help, and what better people are there to give it than the Aggies?

Do not hesitate to get involved in the Big Event. Bryan/College Station needs each one of you more than you know. Remember, March 31.

**Joe Nussbaum**  
Big Event Chairman

## Equality cornerstone of Baha'i teachings

**Editor:**  
Last week, the Texas A&M Baha'i Club posted flyers in approved areas inviting Aggies to a meeting introducing the Baha'i teachings. Another group of individuals subsequently removed these posters and distributed a modified version, bearing the Baha'i Club's name, which used obscenities, communist symbols and an obviously racist statement — "Find out how to ruin your race!"

While we, the members of the Baha'i Club, are somewhat flattered that somebody deems us worthy of attacking, we nevertheless feel obligated to inform the Texas A&M student body that the above-mentioned posters are not ours, and are apparently the work of a group that opposes the equality of races and nationalities. The equality of the races and nationalities happens to be the cornerstone principle of the Baha'i teachings.

The fact that the United States Congress and President Reagan himself have made appeals on behalf of Baha'is in Iran, who are being actively perse-

cuted and in hundreds of cases put to death, clearly demonstrates that the Baha'i teachings are completely unrelated to communism.

To set the record straight, the Baha'i Faith is a religion, is non-political and is supported by donations which come only from Baha'is.

Baha'is are striving to bring about a peaceful world through the elimination of racial, religious and nationalistic prejudices, the establishment of universal

education and a common auxiliary language, by promoting equality of men and women, and by encouraging individuals to investigate the truth for themselves.

Everyone, including practitioners, promote perversion, is welcome to friendly and informal meetings at any time and place of which are listed in The Battalion's "What's Up" column.

**John J. ...**  
Secretary, TAMU Baha'i Club



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USPS 045 360  
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The Battalion also serves as a laboratory newspaper for students in reporting, editing and photography classes within the Department of Communications.

**Letters Policy**  
Letters to the Editor should not exceed 300 words in length. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit letters for style and length but will make every effort to maintain the author's intent. Each letter must be signed and must include the address and telephone number of the writer.

Reader's Forum columns and guest editorials also are welcome. Address all inquiries to the editorial page editor.

The Battalion is published Monday through Friday during Texas A&M regular semesters, except for holiday and examination periods. Mail subscriptions are \$16.75 per semester, \$33.25 per school year and \$35 per full year. Advertising rates furnished on request.

Our address: The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald Building, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843.

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Second class postage paid at College Station, TX 77843.