

Fire safety needed to prevent disaster

In Wednesday's Battalion, the first article in a series on fire safety asked the question, "How many people would know what to do if a major fire broke out?"

But to The Battalion Editorial Board, the major question raised is: How many people would know if a major fire broke out — before it was too late?

Ten to 15 buildings on campus still do not have fire alarm systems.

Knowledge of evacuation routes in case of a fire is a moot question if there's no way to issue a warning. How useful is an evacuation plan when the building is blazing and you're trapped?

One woman who works on the first floor in Bizzell Hall — one of the buildings without an alarm system — said the lack of an alarm system would bother her if she worked on the third floor.

It would probably bother her even more if the building was on fire.

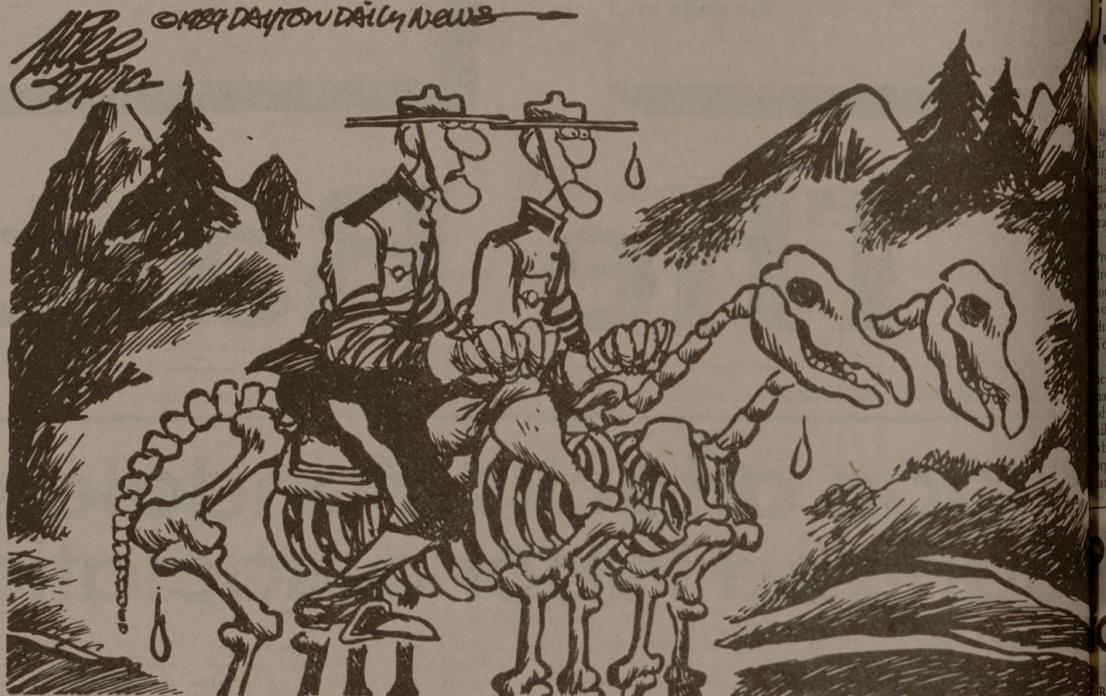
Only \$30,000 of the University budget goes toward fire safety. Robert H. Stiteler, health and safety officer at Texas A&M, said it costs \$5,000 to \$10,000 per building to install alarm systems.

College Station fire chief Douglas W. Landua says the University's been lucky so far. It takes a major disaster, he says, to make people realize the importance of safety.

But do we really want to sit around and wait for a major disaster to catch up with us? Why not stop playing games with chance now and do all we can to prevent such a disaster?

Surely a University as large as this one, funded from a variety of sources, could come up with the money to insure its students' and employees' safety.

— The Battalion Editorial Board



CONFIDENTIALLY, SERGEANT... I'M GETTING WORRIED ABOUT ACID

Student rebel refuses to give in to apathy

Those of you who are wholly satisfied with your experience at Texas A&M, who are not nagged by a feeling that something is wrong, who are not irritated in some vague but chronic way by your environment here, please do not read past this point. I am not writing to you, and you will only find what follows offensive.

However, those of you who from time to time (or just plain constantly) ask yourself why you came to this University — and whose discomfort with Texas A&M may range from occasional self-ostracism to pangs of nausea — you are the ones I address here. I'd like to inquire into a few things that concern us both.

Somewhere around my second semester at Texas A&M — about the time I sobered up from first semester — I realized that, perhaps, I had made a mistake. Perhaps I didn't belong in the College of Engineering, perhaps not even at Texas A&M.

Well, I did wind up changing my major, twice, but I elected not to dash off to Austin quite yet.

In staying at Texas A&M I faced three basic alternatives.

First, I could do my best to fit in. The best I did was to sort of mouth the words to the "War Hymn" at yell practices.

Second, I could withdraw from the whole mess altogether, sadly apathetic.

Third, I could take a decisively antagonistic position against the status quo and try to Do Something About It.

Of course, these three basic alternatives aren't mutually exclusive. They are all shades of grey and I've spent most of my last three years swimming about in the grey pool between apathy and antagonism.

However, on the eve of my graduation I am wondering, have I done the right thing? Given my situation at Texas A&M, have I done what was warranted by that situation? Indeed, does a given situation warrant anything?

There is a tremendous amount of "oughts" on this campus. One ought not walk on certain patches of grass. One ought to yell our cheers with the crowd. One ought to maintain a facade of

friendliness as one walks across campus. Draw a line from ought to ought and you have a picture of a good Ag.

But if I opt not to honor these oughts, do I free myself from that set of oughts only to bond myself to another? In other words, if I decide that I don't have to go to Saturday's game, do I have to not have to go?

reader's forum

This is as unclear in my head as it is on paper.

But it boils down to this: As of yet, I am not convinced that there are any intrinsic oughts in this world, ones that by virtue of our merely being alive are imposed on us. If anyone on this campus feels compelled to behave a certain way or do certain things, that compulsion is from within themselves. A person might have willfully duplicated the oughts of others, but the oughts have their origin and validity within that person.

I doubt seriously that there is anyone on this campus who functions without oughts. Oughts are simply what get things done. However, not all people realize that their oughts (and shoulds and have-tos) are self-imposed.

Those of us who are discontented, disgruntled, or disillusioned with Texas A&M and who are in a position to choose between compromise, apathy and antagonism might bear in mind that we are no more obligated to choose any position than we were formally obligated to let someone else choose for us.

If I have failed to Do The Right Thing for, within or against Texas A&M in my years here it is not on the choice I have made, but how much heart I have put no that decision.

What I think could be important at a University is not what others think one ought to do, nor even what one decides for oneself that one ought to do, but rather how well one decides to do it.

Dave Spence
Class of '84

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Letters — American military lags in band technology

Albritton bell tower is a monument to ego

By DICK WEST

Columnist for United Press International

The NATO defense ministers have been meeting in Turkey to review Europe's military position in light of the breakdown of Soviet-American arms control talks.

Let us hope they also did some high-level thinking about what has been called the "piccolo gap."

Although Rep. Thomas Downey presumably was being facetious with his warning that the Soviet Union is forging ahead in marching music, his words did not exactly fall on deaf ears.

Frivolous or not, his demand for an increase in America's military band budget gives us all something new to worry about.

According to Downey, the Soviets not only have achieved "vast numerical superiority in tubas, trombones and piccolos," but have "introduced mobile amplifiers into their marching bands" as well.

As a result, the New York Democrat said, they now have "a decibel advantage of serious proportions." But it need not be.

"With our technological advantage in computerized musical synthesizers, a single GI could deliver the harmonic power" equivalent to "a brigade of bassonists," Downey pointed out reassuringly.

I don't doubt the veracity of his remarks, even if uttered with tongue in cheek and fingers crossed behind back. There are, however, some considerations that mere competence in electronic instruments can't remedy.

NATO meetings remind us of the

danger of unilateral, or solo, performances. We need allies — the bands of France, Britain and West Germany — to augment our martial music.

There also is a danger we might come overly reliant on computerized synthesizers and other forms of technological amplification.

Soviet concern over western proficiency on conventional musical instruments may be seen in the Kremlin's tile reaction to the deployment of American-made saxophones in NATO countries.

In the Middle East, in particular, there is a need for sight-reading that can whip up a 4-4 beat on a moment's notice, without prior rehearsal.

That need, however, confronts the United States with the touchy question of how far we should go in supporting moderate Arab musicians with drums, cymbals and other modern instruments.

Some nations, as we know, have been stocking up on French horns in flag violation of wind instrument non-proliferation treaties.

As for the Soviets' new mobile amplifiers, everyone knows that finding suitable basing mode has been more of a problem for us than any budgetary considerations.

Proposals to attach electronic earbuds to existing woodwinds have been rejected, and rightly so.

Even though we can never hope to match the Soviets tuba for tuba, our country must retain conventional marching band capability for the foreseeable future. We have an obligation to participate in so-called brush fire grades wherever they might break out.

A&M follows the herd

Editor: Just a few comments about the continuing push by the Board of Regents to create their idea of a "World Class University."

The newest evidence of such is the huge phallic symbol being constructed for purposes unknown. Evidently, the rationale behind building a tower is to be the same as everyone else.

"Texas has one" seems to be good enough for the board.

While the educators in the trenches scream for equipment and money, our beloved "excellence board" has how much surplus?

Just remember, Bum — "It's not how big it is, it's what you do with it."

Scott M. Reid
Class of '81

Lost wallet returned

Editor: On Tuesday my wallet fell out of my purse in the Memorial Student Center. By the time I got home two hours later, someone had brought it by my room.

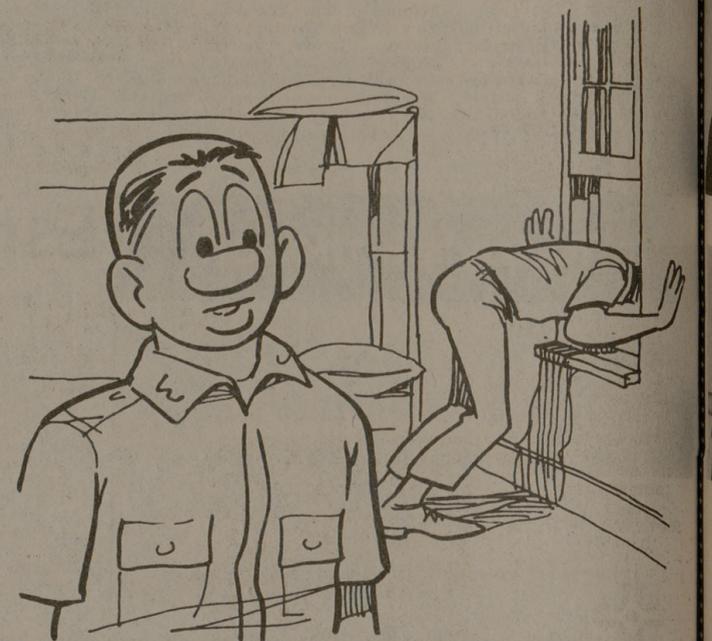
Since I wasn't home, the person left it with the girl across the hall. He wouldn't leave his name, so all I know about him is that he was wearing a green shirt.

I had credit cards and a lot of cash in my purse, and not a thing was missing.

I am graduating soon, and it is so nice to leave here with a reconfirmed faith in Aggie spirit. Whoever you are, thank you for doing such a considerate thing.

Tracey Phillips
Class of '84

Slouch by Jim Earle



"There's always the possibility you're not cut out to be a tobacco chewer."