

State and Local

Minister says he enjoys his job

Chaplain works 15-hour day

By LORA BEST
Reporter

Being a college chaplain is not a 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. job, it's a 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. job, says Rev. Mark Wilburn, one of 14 ministers in Bryan-College Station working mainly with students.

"I enjoy what I'm doing," he says. "I really do. If I didn't, I'd need to get out of this business."

Wilburn explains that as a college minister, he has three main duties at St. Thomas Episcopal Church.

The first of the duties is being a priest, he says. He explains that he is a priest in the sense that he is in charge of some services at St. Luke's chapel and at St. Thomas and he occasionally assists at St. Francis in College Station and at St. Andrew's in Bryan.

Wilburn says his second duty is managing the church's student-related organization. He helps coordinate the activities of the students and the church for meetings, retreats and services, he says.

Wilburn says his duties also include aiding personal growth and giving spiritual counseling. He says these are the most time-consuming duties he has.

He says most priests must do personal growth counseling. This type of counseling involves anything from boyfriend-girlfriend problems to employment, he says.

But Wilburn says the type of counseling he does most is premarital counseling, which is required by some Episcopal ministers before they will marry a couple.

"College students are in the highest percentage of those approaching marriage," he says.

He says that a lot of times, couples will be referred to him from other ministers in other areas of the state.

"Friends throughout the state will

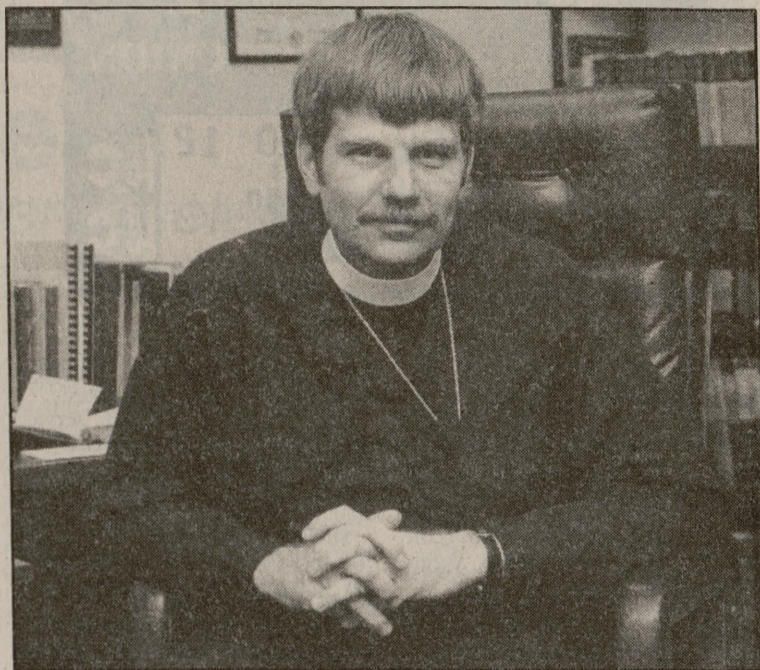


Photo by GREG BAILEY

The Rev. Mark Wilburn sits in his office at St. Thomas Episcopal Church.

contact me and say, 'I have two Aggs who want to get married. They are there. Will you do the counseling for me?'" he says.

Wilburn has a varied background. The Pennsylvania native attended a military high school and Belhaven College in Jackson, Miss. where he received a degree in mathematics. He then went to the Columbia Theological Seminary and was ordained by the Presbyterian Church in 1973. In 1981 he became a deacon in the Episcopal Church and in 1983, he was ordained as an Episcopal priest, he says.

Wilburn says he was offered many

types of jobs, such as commissions in the Navy and the Marine Corps and several high school teaching positions. The reason he chose to become a minister was because he knew about math but not about working for the church, he explains.

"I could be a lot of different things," he says, "but I wouldn't be as happy as I am now."

As a college chaplain, Wilburn says he has had the opportunity to become quite familiar with students at Texas A&M.

He says he has learned several things about A&M students from his dealings with them.

Wilburn says the majority of A&M students have an idea of what they want to be. He says the University of Texas has two to three times as many freshmen and sophomores in general studies than A&M. Although it is good for students to know what they want to become, Wilburn says students get so involved with their curriculum that they forget other things.

"They're growing in an academic situation, but because they jump in, their religious, moral and philosophical growth is minimal," he says.

Second, Wilburn says, the military environment at A&M gives students a view on issues that they wouldn't find on most campuses. He says A&M is unique because the ideas of war and peace take on whole new meanings because of the military influence.

He says most Aggies, especially those in the Corps of Cadets, are concerned about issues such as nuclear war and the proper use of military force, and they are not afraid to discuss them.

"I think it's not totally unhealthy," he says. "I'm a firm believer that if Christians don't enter military service, heaven help our military service."

Next he says that A&M students have an excellent chance to experience other religions. He says there are many denominational and interdenominational churches in the area, and students should investigate them to find their own religious niche.

He says it is important for people to find the religion that suits them not one that suits their parents or friends.

"This is the time to say 'Hey, this is what I am,' and claim it for yourself," he says.

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UT scientists working on "Stars Wars" weapon

Associated Press

AUSTIN — University of Texas researchers are working on a "railroad into space" that could be used to shoot down Soviet nuclear missiles or hurl one-ton cargoes into orbit around the Earth.

Military scientists say that huge versions of the electro-magnetic rail gun, a three-foot-long black rectangle of machined steel, would be mounted on satellite battle stations as part of the Strategic Defense Initiative program commonly known as

Star Wars.

But the National Aeronautics Space Administration says the same technology can be used in building a rail gun 1.2 miles long that would hurl one-ton commercial cargoes into orbit around the Earth.

"To do anything serious in space, military, scientific or commercial, you need a railroad into space," said William Weldon, director of the UT Center for Electromechanics.

Weldon supervises development of the weapon version of the rail gun for the Department of Defense in a

new facility at the Balcones Research Center in Austin.

Both the weapon and the cargo launcher would be powered by a unique high energy "compact homopolar" electrical generator developed by Weldon and other UT engineers.

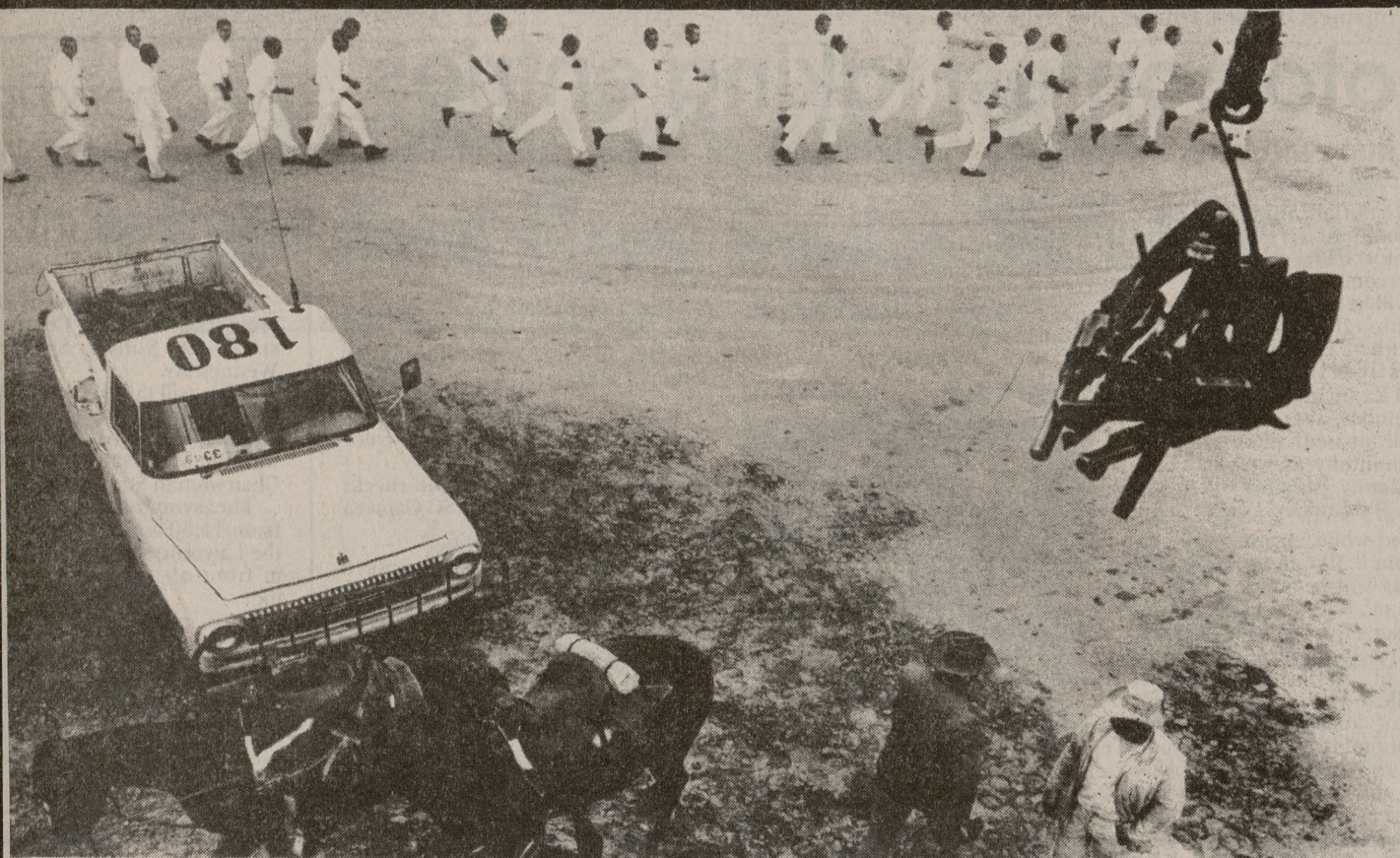
In the current weapon test model, the black steel casing surrounds two copper rails about a half-inch apart. Brief bursts of 2,500 megawatts of electricity have accelerated plastic cubes between the rails to velocities of 2.79 miles per second.

That velocity is more than twice as fast as the fastest bullet from a conventional gun.

The challenge, Weldon says, is to achieve velocities of more than 5 miles per second without disintegration of the cubes, which weigh less than a penny.

The Star Wars program envisions putting rail guns ... long as 25 feet into low Earth orbit.

Weldon said the rail gun could launch a ton of cargo into orbit for 65 cents a pound compared with about \$4,500 a pound.



"From the picket tower, Ferguson Unit," 1967-69

DANNY LYON

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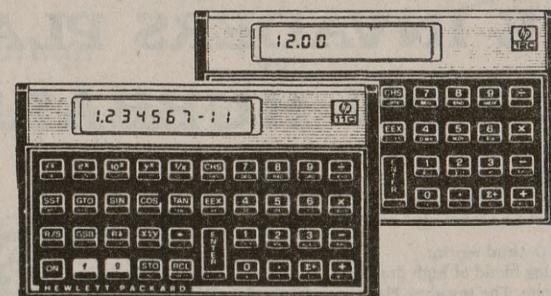
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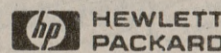
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