

Opinion

Death to road-blocking Gabbers

I was on my way to philosophy, backpack loaded with 1,200 pounds of Locke, Rousseau, Asian politics, and blue books from I don't know when. My head was bent down; the ground was a blur. I had 20 seconds to make it to class. Twenty seconds to make it across the unbridled, untamed A&M campus.



Mark Nair

Twenty seconds. Fifty miles. No problem. But I forgot about Them. You know who They are. You've seen Them. Maybe you're even one of Them. They're the people who must stand in the middle of a busy sidewalk, right when classes are changing, and talk. They just stand there, talking. Gabbing. Chatting. I hate Them. And I had 20 seconds. "Oh, excuse me," I told her, slamming into her at Mach 3. Books flew into the air. Loose-leaf paper covered the ground. Who says it doesn't snow in College Station? "Oh, like, ohmygawd!" she exclaimed, squealing. I could tell from her dress: the aluminum-foil shoes, the satellite-dish earrings. She was one of Them. A Gabber. "Oh, like, ohmygawd!" said her friend. "Are you, like, OK? Now what was that about Robby?" She helped her friend gather her books. I grabbed my backpack from the hole it left in the ground, mumbled an apology, and left. Hit and run? So what? She was a Gabber. Hog the road, pay the price.

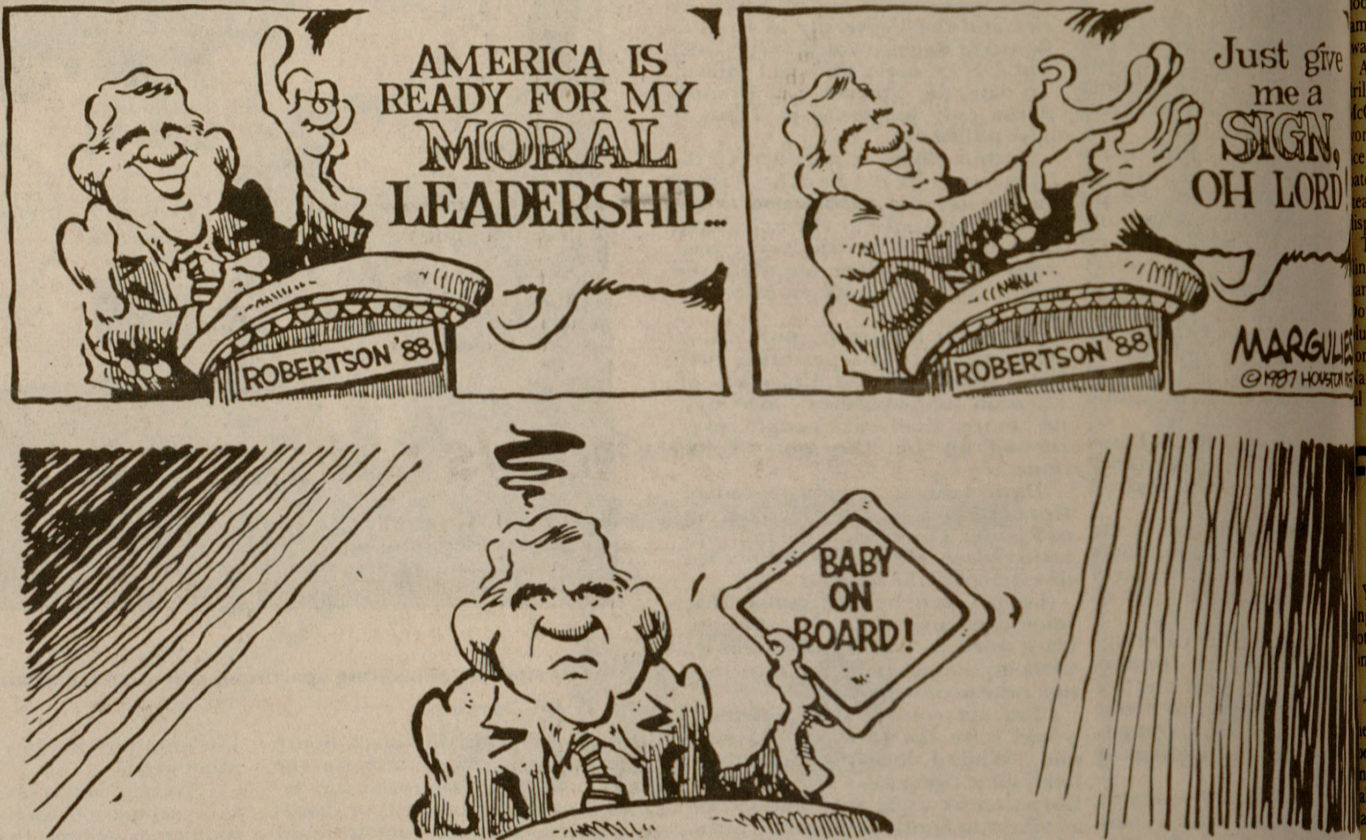
Besides, I had 15 seconds. But there were more. There always are. Standing in the busiest, narrowest part of the sidewalk, oblivious to the crowd trying to push its way through, They trade jokes, tell stories, catch up on drunken weekends. They gab. And they are everywhere. Take Sbisa for example. Here I am, hungry, my tray laden with the fruits of Mr. Sbisa's hard day's labor over a hot stove. I see the path to the French Fry line is clear. I make the attempt, hoping to avoid the Gabbers. But it doesn't work. They appear out of nowhere. Standing in the middle of the busiest part of Sbisa, food on trays, they talk. And talk. And talk.

I make a hard right, just in time to avoid a rear-end collision. I save the majority of my dinner, but sadly watch the chicken fried steak fly off my tray because of the momentum. The gravy glues the chicken fried steak to the Gabber's back. I don't tell him. He'll find out when he sits down. If he sits down. Fifteen seconds. "Gary!" exclaimed the guy in front of me, stopping suddenly. I put on the brakes, but still left an imprint of my face on his backpack. "Say, dude," said his friend. "How's it going?" "OK, how's it going?" "OK, I'm glad it's going OK." "I'm glad it's going OK, too." "Dude, that's great." "I heard that. That's OK." "You said it, dude." I couldn't bear it. Their conversation sounded like something out of "Araby." "Hey, excuse me. Hey! Hey!" "You know," said Gary who was now firmly rooted in the cement, "I really like clogging up the flow of traffic on

these sidewalks." "Yeah," said his friend. "Especially when we engage in totally meaningless, inane conversation." "Like we always do," said Gary. "You said it, dude," said his friend. They shook hands, laughed loudly, and started talking about scholastic probation. "Aaaargh!" I said. When I quote Charlie Brown, you know it's serious. I pushed Gary aside into the mud. Dodging his witty companion, I leapt over a bush, ran out into the street, and

crashed into a stationary Volkswagen Rabbit. Inside the car was one of Them, a Gabber, talking to another one of Them on the sidewalk who was holding up traffic all by herself. Her parents must be proud. I yelled. I couldn't escape. Five seconds. I had too far to go. I'd never make it. Four seconds. I see the building. Three seconds. I just broke the world record for the 400 meter dash. I'm in the building. Two seconds. I take the stairs eight at

a time. One second. There's the classroom. I won't be late. I won't die the professor's miserable, horrible cold-stare death. I will live to be late for another day. But guarding the door are two of Them. Two Gabbers, just standing there. Talking. Gabbing. Chatting. Talking. Gabbing. Chatting. Never moving. Aaaargh. I hate Them. Mark Nair is a senior political science major and a columnist for The Battalion.



Quaking in L.A.

I knew Lanie when she lived in Atlanta. She's a tall, striking blonde who is originally from Alabama. Lanie's always had some stars in her eyes. She always felt there was more out there than she was getting staying put near the comforts of friends and family.



Lewis Grizzard

A couple of months ago, Lanie got a break. She was hired by a company that organizes celebrity golf tournaments all over the world. The company wanted Lanie to move to Los Angeles, and she jumped at the chance. She took an apartment on the third floor in West L.A. Lanie called me the afternoon of the Los Angeles earthquake. She was trying to get in touch with her best friend, Susan. She hoped I had Susan's number. "I just wanted to tell Susan I'm OK," she said. It took me a moment, but then I realized why she would want to assure her best friend she was still among the living. The earthquake. The one that hit near Pasadena on Thursday morning. The one that had killed at least six people and injured scores of others. "It was awful," Lanie told me. I sensed she was fighting back tears. "I was in the bathtub with conditioner in my hair. First, I hear this low rumbling sound. You can't imagine anything more frightening than that sound. "Then, water started splashing out of the tub. Next, the walls around me began to shake. They looked like they sort of swelled out, like in one of those horror movies about haunted houses. "Then things started falling and shaking all around me. My perfume bottles hit the floor.

"The lighting fixture above my head began swinging back and forth. "That lasted 20 or 25 seconds. Then, I began to hear alarms going off. "Earthquakes, somebody told me later, always set off automobile alarms. "Then there were all sorts of sirens, and I could hear the screams of people in the apartments next to me." "Did you panic?" I asked. "Of course I did," said Lanie. "After the rumbling and the grinding noises stopped, I got out of the tub and ran into the living room and turned on the news to see if I could find out what was happening. "You could see the news set shaking on the TV, and the newscaster was crawling under his desk. Everything was still for a few minutes and then the tremors started. I think they call them aftershocks. "I don't know how many there were, but I cried my way through each of them, and just about the time I would get one of them out my system, another one would start. "Besides being afraid," I asked, "what else did you feel?" "The worst part of the entire thing," said Lanie, "was the absolute lack of control. There was no place to run, no place to hide. I was totally helpless. But I was lucky I didn't get too many things broken, including any parts of me." I asked Lanie if the earthquake would bring her back home. "I guess I'll stick it out," she said. Earthquakes, to me, are the most frightening of all natural disasters. The ideas of the ground opening up and swallowing me or a building crumbling around me are terribly chilling. "Did you think you were going to die?" I asked Lanie. "Worse," she said. "I thought they were going to find me dead in my tub, naked, with no makeup on." I'll give her six more weeks, especially after the second earthquake struck the West Coast. Tops.

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Mail Call

Behind the times

EDITOR: On Monday night, the communist road show came to A&M, much like a quack doctor hocking his miracle cure for "all that ails ya." To the ignorant masses, these members of the Communist Party came to tell us the great benefits of their system and how it cures all of society's ills. Their system's goals are lofty ones, but looking at a supposed communist state such as the Soviet Union, one must wonder if their ideals and those of other communist state are the same. True, the unemployment rate is negligible, and their education system is good, but what of their other goals? Their standard of living is low, and they have to stand in long lines just to get everyday items like toilet paper. There is no freedom of thought or expression, unless you like Siberia. Jews are persecuted for their beliefs, and religion as a whole is tolerated but not accepted by the "true" party members. Alcoholism is widespread among the people, and absenteeism from work is a major problem. Capitalism is not a perfect system either. Many social problems exist, but has there ever been a system in which all these great ideals have been embraced? Monday's speaker said, "The Communists have the strongest party in the world for gaining peace and ending exploitation." Well, what do you call Afghanistan and an economy which mostly supports the military regime? About as peaceful as a pit bull on a mailman's leg. Well, 'nough said. Maybe one

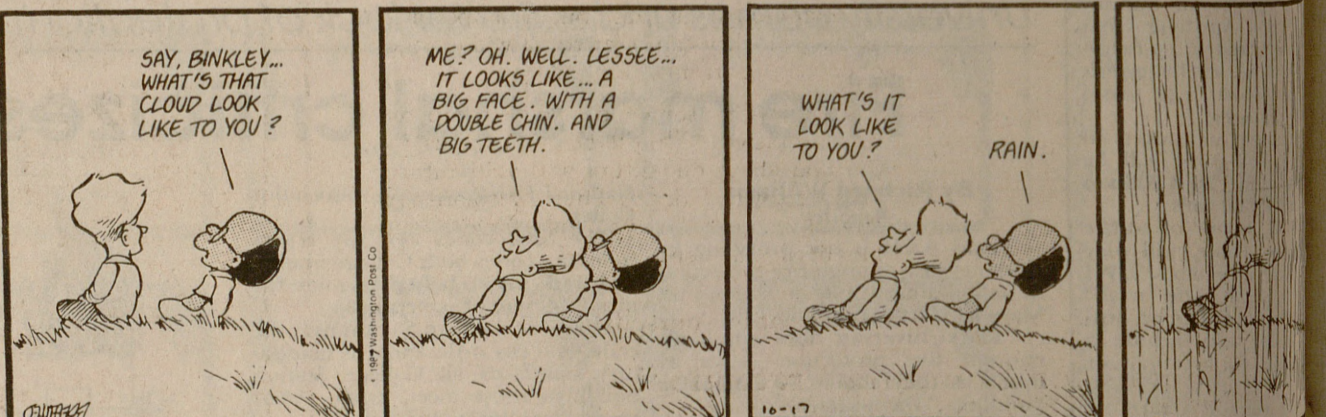
day a new system of government will be better suited to society's ills, but for now I'll stick with good ol' capitalism. Ralph Kramer '87

Health care, Soviet style

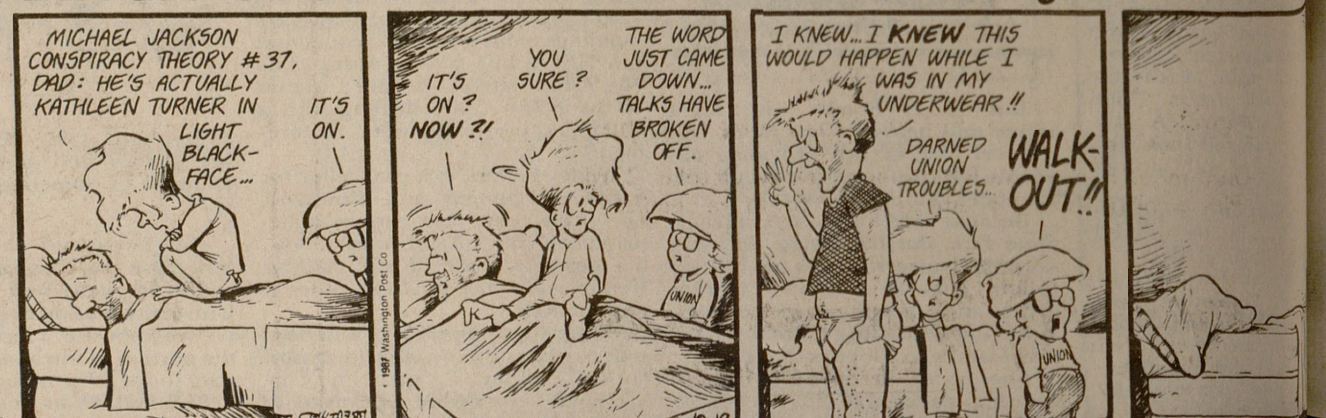
EDITOR: For all students who have not had the opportunity to visit the Soviet Union, one can experience a slice of Soviet life right here simply by visiting our health center. Like the Soviet Union, the health services here are free except for a \$15 health center fee charged each semester and any prescriptions we might need. As in the Soviet Union, the wait is long; hopefully, illness happens on a day which is academically unimportant. And finally, as in the Soviet Union, the quality of care is usually poor — not to mention that the doctors are rude and rushed in the whole five minutes they spend examining you. My suggestion is to quit charging everyone \$15 a semester for "health services" or offer a quality service that can trust to be thorough and treat students with respect. Kelli Wright '90

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BLOOM COUNTY



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