

Opinion

Space safety

It's been a rough two years for NASA. The explosion of the space shuttle Challenger two years ago today ended the space agency's fairy-tale era of exploration and brought hard questions about how well the program was run and how safe it was.

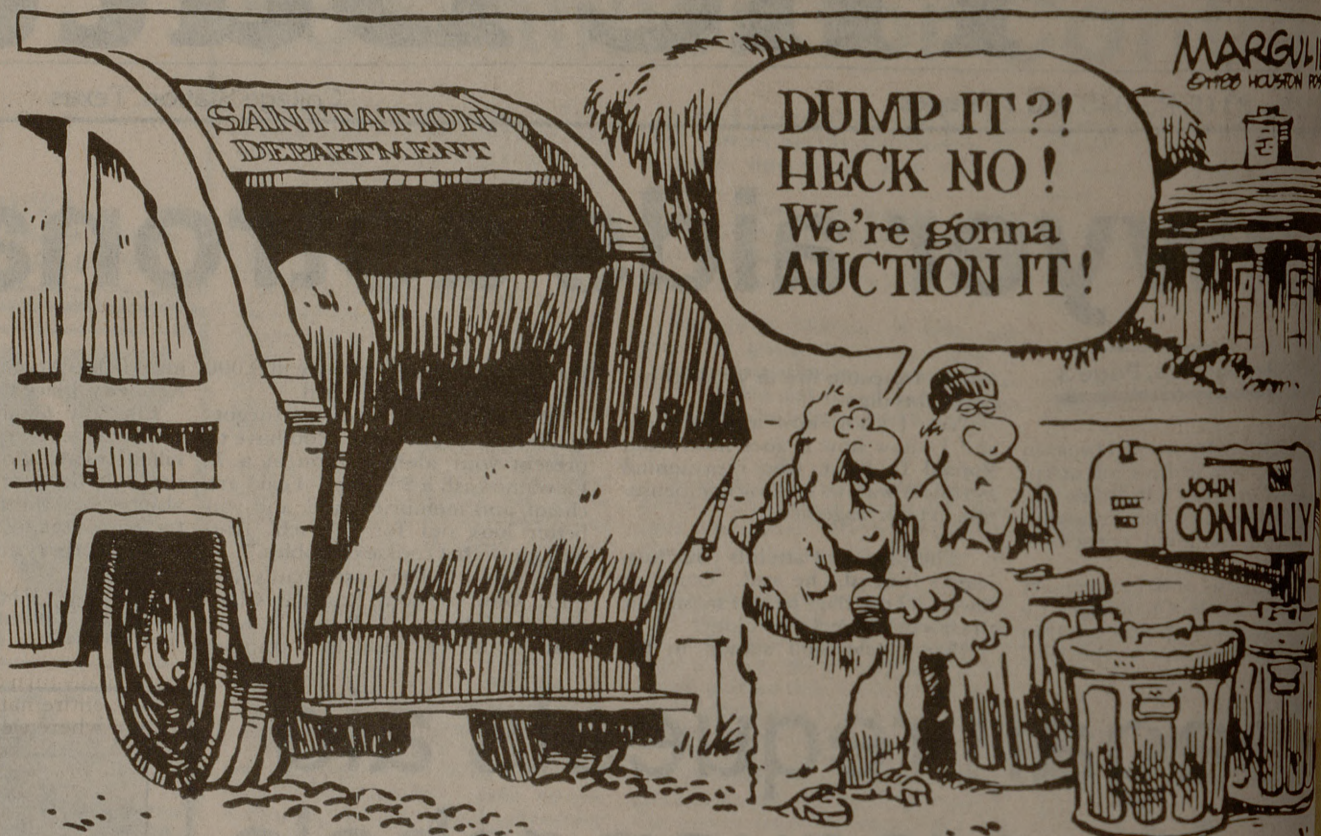
Morton Thiokol's redesigned booster rocket has shown signs of problems, leading the space agency to delay the planned launch date for Discovery. And the astronaut corps is participating in more decisions that at any time since the space program's early days.

Concern for safety needs to be emphasized, as Challenger tragically pointed out, and no one will argue that the shuttle should fly before the rocket booster's design flaws are corrected.

But NASA, prompted by the concerns of Congress and the nation, is in danger of abandoning what should be the legacy of the seven who died aboard Challenger. Engineers — and the rest of us — must realize that designing a perfectly safe shuttle is an impossibility. So is designing a perfectly safe car.

Space is not a safe place. Those who go there must know and accept the risk they take. NASA must do all it can to minimize that risk, but the agency and the country must not become so paralyzed by fear that they abandon manned space exploration. Doing so would tarnish the memory of the Challenger crew.

— The Battalion Editorial Board



The Health Center isn't such a bad place after all

I found out last week how an illness can knock your feet out from under you and make you realize how you tend to take your health for granted. Now, you have to understand, I'm the kind of person who doesn't have time to be sick; I tend to ignore anything that's wrong with me for as long as possible, hoping it will just go away.



Amy Couvillon

So it really threw me for a loop last Tuesday night, in the emergency room of the A. P. Beutel Health Center, when I found out the back pain I had been trying to ignore for three days meant that I had a kidney infection.

"We'll have to keep you here for a couple of days and put you on an intravenous antibiotic," explained the very patient night doctor. "We need to watch you until your fever goes down."

"Do what?" I thought, slightly hysterical because my brain was being baked by a 102 degree fever. "I can't be in the hospital. I have classes to go to. I have things to do, people to see. Aaaaack! I'm graduating this semester. I can't get behind. The Battalion won't come out without me. I can't get sick. I won't get sick."

I was sick. I was extremely sick. My world — which had once included Bryan-College Station news coverage, 15 hours of classes, a usually unsuccessful search for permanent employment, a so-called social life, friends, apartment, car, campus, city streets The Battalion, The Battalion and The Bat-

talion — had suddenly dwindled to a hospital bed, a narrow window with an occasionally interesting view of Puryear Hall, a thermometer in my mouth and about four feet of plastic tubing which connected me to my I.V. pole.

"This is 'Charlene,' the nurse explained to me, indicating the 6-foot-tall pole which was to be my constant companion for four days. "She needs to go with you wherever you go."

I got to be pretty good friends with Charlene, with her hanging bags of glucose solution and her wonderful wheels that had minds of their own like those on grocery store shopping carts. I took her everywhere I went — to the bed, to the bathroom, to the bed, to the bathroom, etc.

During my four days of hospital fun, I spent time wondering if the whole miserable situation was just my body's not-

so-subtle way of telling me to slow down and stop stressing myself so much. (But how could I slow down? I'm a college student.)

My biggest concerns were trying to figure out what time it was (is that a.m. or p.m.?), and whether or not I had given the nurses their urine sample *de jour* yet.

The inpatient care nurses at the Health Center are some of the most patient, friendly people I've met in a long time. Even when I was at my most cranky — "I hate having this stupid needle in my hand" — or when I was babbling incoherently or asking stupid questions like "What day is it?" and "When can I go home?" the nurses were consistently helpful, and I could tell they really cared.

I was also impressed to find out that my \$15-a-semester health center fee

covers up to 10 days of hospitalization with only small charges for medical medicine. That's an incredible bargain considering the costs of health care there in the "real world."

I think the Health Center has a deserved bad image. It's hard to appreciate and be prepared to treat someone that could affect 39,000 students but from what I've seen, the staff is doing an admirable job.

Along with almost every other A&M student, I have complained about having to wait a few hours to see a doctor at the Health Center, and the guilt of referring to it by its pernickname (which is also undesirable).

But I'm sure glad it was there when I needed it. Amy Couvillon is a senior journalism major, city editor and columnist at The Battalion.

Apathy is everywhere

President Reagan recently gave his annual State of the Union address, historically important since it is the last one he will give as president. But what importance does it have if no one listens and no one cares?

Todd Honeycutt
Guest Columnist

I wanted to watch the president. I am not a big fan of his but I was, however, very interested in what the president had to say. After all, he is my president, whether I like him or not.

I went down to the Hart Hall lounge hoping others would be watching the speech with whom I could discuss it afterward. Imagine my surprise when I found two students watching a science fiction movie... No one had the least interest in watching the president.

I tried to reason with them. I pleaded with them. I became angry and argued with them, all to no avail. "It's not my problem what goes on, why should I be concerned?" Though I pay rent, an activity fee and am entitled to privileges accorded a resident, I did not feel that I had the right simply to go up and change the channel. Instead, I watched the president as a rather blurred image on a black and white TV.

Look around. Apathy lurks everywhere. Students have no interest in Reagan's speech, or other important issues. Texas A&M is traditionally conservative, traditionally placid, traditionally complacent. Why change the status quo if every thing is all right?

But is it? Are we aware of what is really going on? Can we piece together the whole truth from what is told to us? Or do we accept blindly what is placed

before us by the media? When shall we realize that for our government to work at its best we all have to participate and take responsibility? We have to involve ourselves with the issues.

It takes time, and maybe that is the cause of our apathy. Our time has become so valuable and precious. We rush here and there. Someone else, we think will take care of the government. But if everybody's doing something else, the government is free to roam — to violate the Constitution, to waste money, to argue over petty differences. If the people do not care, why should the government?

Good government takes time from the citizen, as it should. The government is by the people. But we have the freedom of choice to do practically anything, even the right to do nothing. A fool knows that is a dire path to follow. So may citizens of other countries do not have the opportunity of self-rule. For Americans to become apolitical and apathetic is to see the decline of America. Our fall is just around the corner, perhaps to be overcome by communism or totalitarianism.

We have time now to watch our television, to listen to our music, to play our games, to drink our light beer — all in order to escape from our dreary life. Ah, what a desolate nation we live in. Imagine having too much food, so much leisure time, freedom of speech and religion. Would it not be better to be on food rations, to be told what to be? Why not, as long as we could watch our movies and play our games?

Todd Honeycutt is a freshman general studies major.

Mail Call

Suckered

EDITOR:

We are members of the Texas Aggie Credit Union. As all the other members, we are outraged by its recent changes in policy.

When we joined we were told we would have to pay a one-time fee of \$25. Since that time, it has started charging for balances under \$500 and for writing more than 25 checks a month. It has put a five-day hold on personal checks and has cut back drastically on their hours.

It advertised that it was "Aggies helping Aggies." We fell for it. Either we were suckered by its advertising, or it was lying.

For all of you who feel the same way, Homestead offers all those good things the credit union used to. We plan on moving there unless the credit union changes back to its original way of doing business, and we urge you to do the same.

Susan M. Dean '88
Lisa M. Johnson '88

Respect the buses

EDITOR:

As a passenger of the A&M bus system, I am very concerned about the community's lack of knowledge on exactly what these buses can and cannot do mechanically. First, I have noticed many cars pass the buses on the left because the buses do not accelerate very quickly. After passing these buses, they cut in front of them to turn right at traffic lights. When this happens the bus driver has to use the brakes harder to avoid hitting the vehicle causing the passengers to be thrown forward. Buses are not capable of stopping quickly, especially when fully loaded.

Second, I have observed buses setting up for right turns so they would not hit any curbs and have seen cars, motorcycles, and bicycles move in to the right, interfering

with this maneuver and causing possible hazards. Buses are very long and have to make wide turns. By knowing this information maybe the rest of the community will be patient and wait behind the bus. Bus passengers are concerned about their well-being. Buses carry many passengers, and what you may do as a driver affects not only yourself but those people as well. Please have respect for these and other school buses so there will be a safer driving environment.

When I am driving and see a large bus or truck, I allow sufficient room for the vehicle to maneuver and do not cut it off. If we all do this, then many people will not be seriously injured or killed.

Greg Moore

That's what Ags are for

EDITOR:

Friday I rode my scooter to the MSC to purchase a textbook I had ordered on Tuesday. As I reached into my pocket, I was immobilized with fear, realizing the plain white envelope containing my scholarship money was no longer there. The last time I had checked my pocket was sometime after noon, before entering the library. I searched my pack and finding nothing, I went to the library, and as I entered the restroom a fellow sitting on one of the sinks asked me if I had lost some money. "Yes," I claimed, "about \$600!" "It's all here," he replied, "I found it and figured someone'd come looking for it." "How long have you been sitting in here?" I inquired. "Since about 12:30, I skipped a quiz and a lab, ain't no big deal," he added. I offered him compensation for his troubles, but he refused, replying, "Hey, that's what Ags are for!" I left the library thinking to myself it's great to know you're at A&M when you're having a bad day.

Ronald W. Pippin '88

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 author's name, address and telephone number of the writer.

The Battalion

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Opinions expressed in The Battalion are those of the editorial board or the author, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of Texas A&M administrators, faculty or the Board of Regents.

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

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