

B Street



by Jon Caldara Prisoners can take vacations by state law

DALLAS (AP) — Juries that send convicts to prison don't have any idea that a new state furlough law allows the inmates to come back to their communities "on vacations," police say.

Passed by the Texas Legislature last year, the law gives prison officials sole authority over which inmates are furloughed and where they're allowed to go. Police, however, say the practice threatens public safety.

Texas Department of Corrections officials value furloughs for inmate rehabilitation and claim they benefit only qualified prisoners.

"I think they are opportunities for inmates to secure family ties and employment, which are the two most important things to have to stay out of prison," TDC spokesman David Nunnelee said. "You can't put these people in prison and just forget about them because they're going to return to their communities sooner or later."

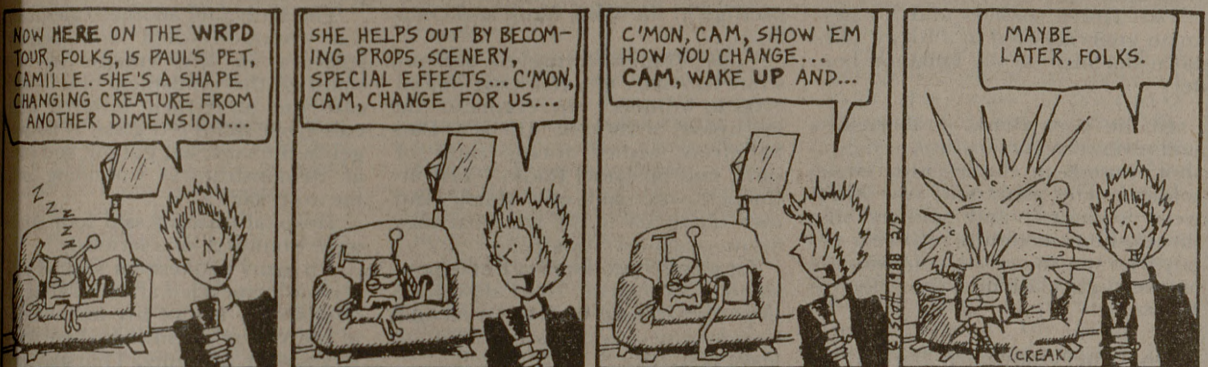
TDC officials used to honor requests from police in seven counties — Dallas, Tarrant, Harris, Bexar, Ellis, Anderson and Lee — to limit inmate furloughs to funerals of immediate family members. But in November, the TDC decided against allowing such "blanket" requests, officials said.

Dallas Police Chief Billy Prince wrote a letter of protest to a prison board member after an inmate on furlough was arrested in connection with a burglary last month.

The prisoner had been granted a seven-day furlough to visit his sister in Dallas and earn money to put in his prison account, Nunnelee said.

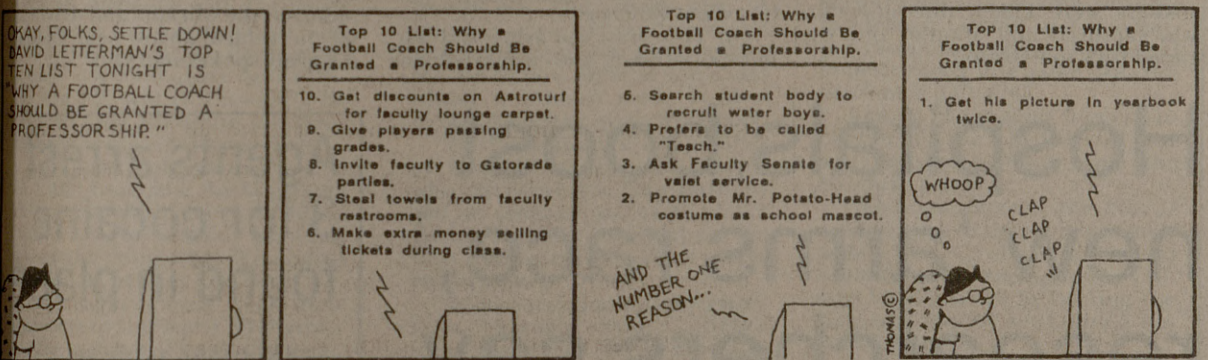
Police Lt. Larry Sellers said, "Typically they go back to the same setting that sent them to prison in the first place."

Warped



by Scott McCullar

Waldo



by Kevin Thomas

Researchers prepare to delve into 'unknown' with cyclotron

By Jamie Russell
Staff Writer

The world's fastest plane travels at around 2,200 mph, the fastest train at more than 200 mph. But imagine bouncing atoms off each other at speeds reaching 62,000 miles per second.

On the evening of Jan. 21, scientists watched their new "state-of-the-art" K500 cyclotron at the Cyclotron Institute at Texas A&M accelerate its first beam of particles.

On Thursday, government officials and scientists toured the cyclotron as part of a two-day Texas Research Seminar sponsored by A&M and the University of Texas.

A&M's cyclotron institute and visiting scientists will use the new cyclotron to explore new frontiers in particle acceleration, said Dr. Jeff Bronson, a senior scientist at the Cyclotron Institute.

"We don't know what practical applications will come out of it," Bronson said. "If we already knew, there wouldn't be a point in doing all this."

The future of the cyclotron is indeterminate, he said; there may be a world beyond what is known, but scientists must take its exploration one step at a time.

(The Jan. 21 test) is the first significant step — for all internal parts of the cyclotron to work where a beam (of particles) is actually produced and accelerated inside the cyclotron," Bronson said.

What this means in basic terms is that the cyclotron is injected with particles called ions. The ions (nitrogen ions for this experiment) are atoms without all their electrons. The loss of some or all of the electrons from the atom leaves a magnetically charged core.

As the ions spiral outward in a 26.5-inch circular vacuum, they are confined inside the chamber by a magnetic field. Energy is pumped in, causing the ions to spiral faster, reaching about 1/10th the speed of light. As the spiral gets larger, it eventually reaches and hits an insulated metal probe placed about 15 inches from its center.

During the test, the cyclotron only produced a fraction of the energy it will produce at full power, Bronson said. Scientists have to test the machine little by little.

"The further out you go with the beam, the more the parameters affect the magnetic field," Bronson said. "We have to tune the beam as we work it out."

"Eventually, we'll pull the beam out of the machine, pipe it off somewhere and actually do an experiment."

A cyclotron is made up of three main components: a magnet, which causes the circular path of particles; an oscillating radio frequency (rf) electrical field, which accelerates the particles, and an ion source, which provides the particles.

Equipped with liquid-helium cooled superconducting coils rather than standard water-cooled copper coils, the K500 achieves super-cold

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— Dr. Jeff Bronson, Cyclotron Institute senior scientist

temperatures, reducing electrical resistance and creating a stronger magnetic field. This enables researchers to give the particles more energy while confining them with the stronger magnetic field.

The K500 and the building expansion was funded in part by \$6.25 million obtained through the University by a specific line item the Texas Legislature put into the state budget, Bronson said.

An additional \$1 million in support of chemistry research in Texas was donated by the Robert A. Welch Foundation.

The complete cyclotron facility is worth about \$35 million.

"So building the new machine here where we can use a lot of the old facilities has ended up saving us a lot of money and given us an equivalent of a very expensive facility here," Bronson said.

Not only is the outcome — the K500 — notable, but the minds and physical labor behind the machine are remarkable, he said.

"One of the byproducts of this is we now have the technical accelerator group here at A&M that is one of about three in the world capable of building an accelerator like this," he said.

Officials capture escaped bear from wild animal orphanage

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — A 100-pound Himalayan bear named Cheech only had a partial day of freedom before he was captured and returned to his cage, in which he lives with his sister, Chong, officials said.

The 3-foot tall bear was recaptured Wednesday when dogs found him about a quarter-mile from his cage at the Wild Animal Orphanage for abused and unwanted exotic animals.

The bear was tranquilized and then moved back to his cage with Chong, who had remained behind.

Carol Asvestas, the director of the refuge, was detained in the hospital because she was having a baby Tuesday when Cheech escaped through an opening in the cage.

Several hours after giving birth, Asvestas left

her hospital bed to help search for the 1½-year-old animal.

"He's not an attack bear," she said. "But he could hurt you. He's not the one you could run up to and cuddle."

The bear and other animals were being moved to a new facility Monday night and refuge volunteers did not see that the bears' cage was not secure enough, Asvestas said.

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