

Professor: Professional ethics promote 'greatest happiness'

By Dean Sueltenfuss
Reporter

Professional ethics should attempt to promote the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people, an A&M professor said Monday during "Ethics in Engineering," a program sponsored Texas A&M branch of The National Engineering Honor Society in the Zachry Engineering Center.

Dr. Manuel Davenport, an A&M professor who has given a number of presentations on ethics, said professional ethics are a small part of philosophy in general, and that much of philosophy involves asking questions for their own sake.

"Philosophers are really more interested in asking questions than they are in answering them," he said. "They're a lot like mountain climbers — what they really enjoy is climbing — they're not too crazy about getting to the top."

Davenport said ethics involves the question of what actions are correct. "To answer this question, what we do is come up with ethical theories," he said.

"Ethical theories, quite simply, are definitions of right and wrong actions. There must be hundreds of ethical theories running loose in the world and if you go into the history of philosophy there have probably been several thousand."

Davenport said some ethical theories are particularly effective in professional fields.

"Follow those rules of behavior which generally promote the greatest happiness of the greatest number (of people)," he said. "That, I suggest, is a very workable ethical theory — especially in the context of engineering."

Davenport added that it can be very difficult to apply a broad ethical theory to a particular profession.

"Each profession really requires a different professional ethic because in each profession there's a different relationship between the professional and the client," he said.

Students do seem to gain a sense of professional ethics from college level courses, Davenport said, citing some of his experiences as a professor.

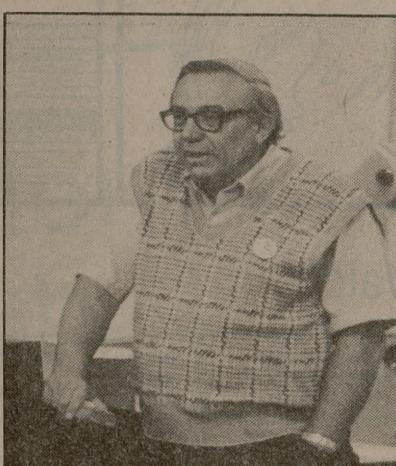


Photo by Jade Boyd

Manuel Davenport

this: I'm not sure that I really acted any more ethically than I would have otherwise, but I was certainly aware of it when I was not acting ethically. It (my class) increased their ethical sensitivity."

Jim Bayless, a junior electrical engineering student, said today's engineers seem to have a higher standard of ethics than engineering students currently enrolled at A&M.

"I've seen a lot of them (students) going down the tubes," Bayless said. "There are a lot of engineering students that I think really shouldn't be allowed to get their degree. I've seen a lot of cheating going on and I think it's a pretty big problem at A&M."

Davenport said there are two questions that should be asked when the ethical actions of an engineer are called into question — how you would like to be treated if you were in the same situation, and what the practical consequences of that choice would be.

"There's no simple, clear-cut answer to these very, very tough kinds of questions," Davenport said.

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — His mother sometimes wishes he'd picked a different profession, but Jim Bagian has waited seven years to fly on the space shuttle, and he's not about to let the Challenger accident ruin his dream.

Bagian, 36, a physician and engineer from Philadelphia with boundless enthusiasm for the space program, learned two weeks ago that he had been picked for one of the shuttle crews that will get the program back on its feet. It has been grounded since seven astronauts died on the Challenger on Jan. 28, 1986.

Bagian is stationed at the Johnson Space Center in Houston, although he frequently returns to the Philadelphia area to see his parents and conduct shuttle-related experiments at the Naval Air Development Cen-

ter in Warminster, a suburb of Philadelphia.

Bagian's mother, Rose, realized her worst fears about her son's precarious profession when the Challenger exploded as it lifted off from Kennedy Space Center in Florida.

"That made it all a little worse. It brought home that it can happen," she said. Still, she said she knows better than to try to talk her son out of it.

For Bagian, who had worked with five of the Challenger crew members since becoming an astronaut in 1981, the accident was neatly placed under the heading, "Occupational Hazard." He had been assigned to fly on the Challenger himself during 1986, but all manned U.S. space flights were put on hold after January.

"Commercial airliners crash, too. That doesn't stop you from doing things. We want to get going," Bagian said. "One of these days if we keep flying the shuttle, we'll probably have another accident. That's just life, the way it goes. You knew the job was dangerous when you took it."

Karl Scherzberg, a longtime friend from high school and Drexel University, said he never heard Bagian reconsider his commitment to the shuttle program, although he believes the accident must have provoked some serious thought.

"I'm sure after the accident he's been thinking about the reliability of systems and equipment," Scherzberg said. "But there hasn't really been a difference in him because the acci-

dent only confirmed what he knew already about risk."

Bagian said, "My own particular background or style or upbringing is that you don't make too big a deal about things."

He said he may have inherited his coolheadedness and love of aviation from his father, a World War II fighter pilot.

As someone who "was always at the top of his class in everything," the younger Bagian "may have traded security for the uniqueness of being an astronaut," his father, Philip, said.

"I'm familiar with risk," Philip Bagian said. He said he understands his son's excitement with the space program every time he looks at the moon and feels "awed" that people set foot there.

Prosecutor begins closing arguments in supremacist trial

FORT SMITH, Ark. (AP) — The government asked a jury Monday to convict 13 men, explaining defects in government witnesses by saying, "Plots made in hell don't have angels as partners."

U.S. Attorney J. Michael Fitzhugh, whose witnesses have been branded by defendants as dishonest men looking out for themselves, said government attorneys take their witness as they find them.

Attorney N.C. Deday LaRene, representing Robert E. Miles, had just called the key government witness "a man who was filled with madness and megalomania — a mental disorder."

The case went to the jury Monday afternoon.

"It's all in Yahweh's hands now," Sheila Beam, 21, wife of defendant Louis Ray Beam Jr., said. "If the truth be known, they'll be acquitted."

Fitzhugh said nine defendants accused of sedition conspiracy have tried to convey the idea that they only hoped to bring about a white-supremacist nation through a peaceful move by whites in the northwest United States.

If that is the case, he said, why did:

- Defendant David Lane say in a tape-recorded conversation that he needed to bomb a major telephone facility?

- Some supremacists kill Walter West, a man whose death in Idaho has been reported but whose body has not been found?

- Defendant Bruce Pierce became a member of The Order, a violent white-supremacist group which committed armed robberies purportedly to finance supremacist activities, by taking an oath declaring a "full state of war"?

- Members of a white-supremacist group based in Arkansas under the leadership of James Ellison collected an arsenal of automatic weapons, silencers, grenades and other explosives?

Closing arguments began late Thursday and continued Friday and Saturday, concluding Monday with the arguments by LaRene and Fitzhugh.

The government contends that a conspiracy was made in July 1983 at

Hayden Lake, Idaho, at the Aryan Nations Congress sponsored by the Rev. Richard G. Butler, 70, founder of Aryan Nations.

Butler, Beam and Miles are leaders of white-supremacist activities, while other defendants accused of the attempt to overthrow the government have convictions for racketeering, murder, and civil rights violations through murder.

Ellison is serving 20 years for racketeering and hopes for a sentence reduction for cooperating with the government, according to his testimony. He had himself crowned King of the Ozark Mountains, believed he received messages from God, and led the Covenant, the Sword and the Arm of the Lord until his arrest in April 1985 at the CSA compound in north Arkansas after a four-day standoff with state and federal authorities.

CS woman reports rape in apartment

A College Station woman told police Sunday that she was raped in her apartment that morning at about 6:30 a.m. by a man who entered her home while she was sleeping.

The incident occurred at the Oakwood apartment complex, 503 Southwest Parkway, in College Station.

The woman described her attacker as a white male with a heavy build, wearing blue jeans and tennis shoes.

Sunday's report brings the number of reported rapes in College Station this year to six, half of the number reported in all of 1987. Police records show that two of the 12 sexual assaults reported last year resulted in arrests of a suspect. No records were available as to the number of arrests resulting from reported rapes this year.

SENIOR WEEKEND 1988

Senior Bash

Friday, April 15, 8 p.m.
Texas Hall of Fame, \$5/couple
Featuring *Melissa Prescott*



Senior Banquet

Saturday, April 16, 7 p.m.
College Station Hilton, \$30/couple
Cocktail Hour, 5:30 p.m.
Guest Speaker *Gene Stallings, '57*
Coach of St. Louis Cardinals

Ring Dance

Saturday, April 16, 9 p.m.
MSC and Rudder Exhibit Hall, \$35/couple
Featuring *Michael, Michael and the Maxx*
Ed Gerlach Orchestra

The Senior Weekend Package at \$65/couple, includes all three events. Tickets are on sale at Rudder Box Office at 845-1234.

All tickets are presale.

Apply for MSC OPAS* 1988-89

Information Sessions:

Tues. April 5, 7:00 pm, 308 Rudder
Wed. April 6, 7:00 pm, 510 Rudder

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Paul at 268-8682 or 845-1515

*Memorial Student Center Opera and Performing Arts Society