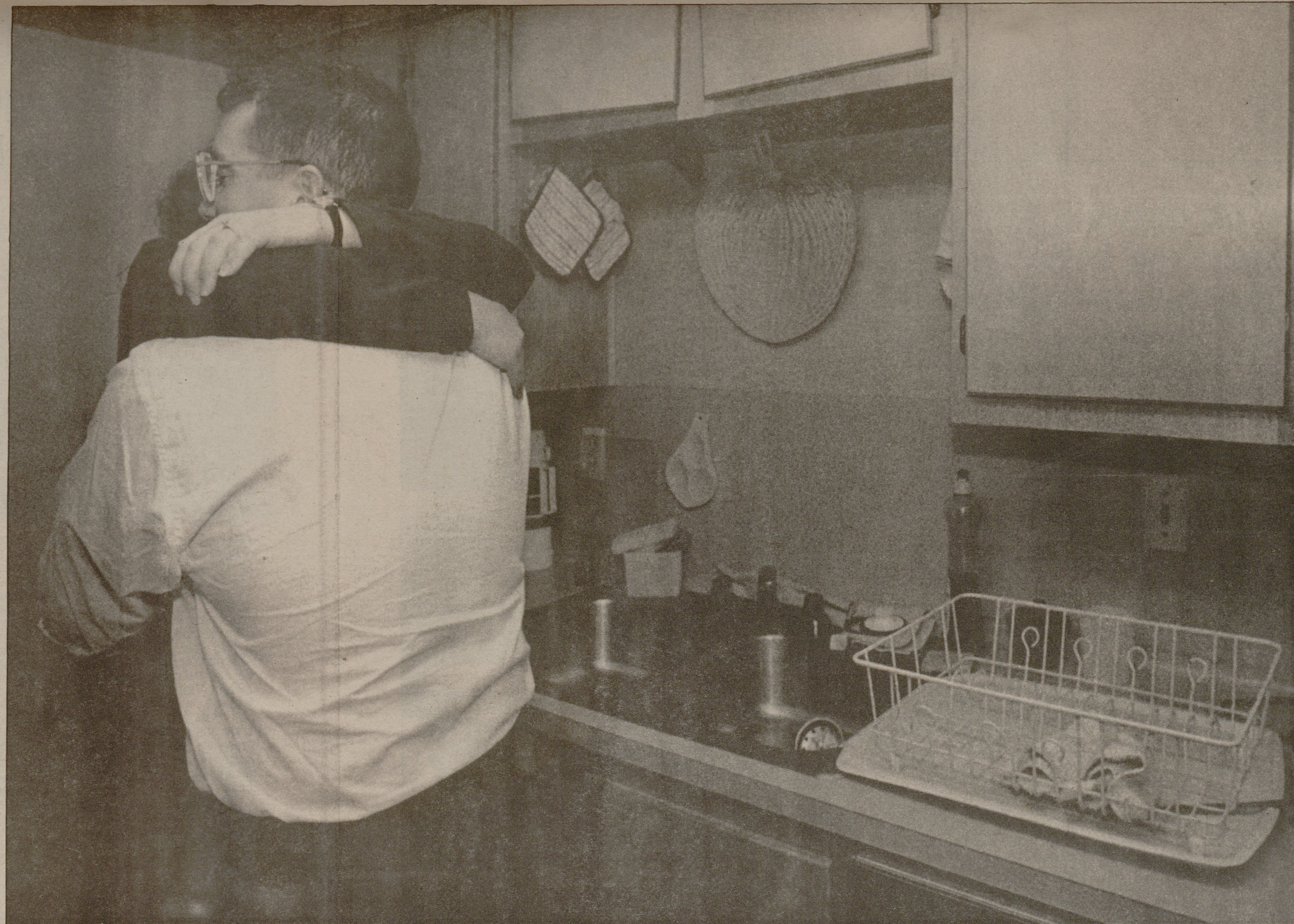
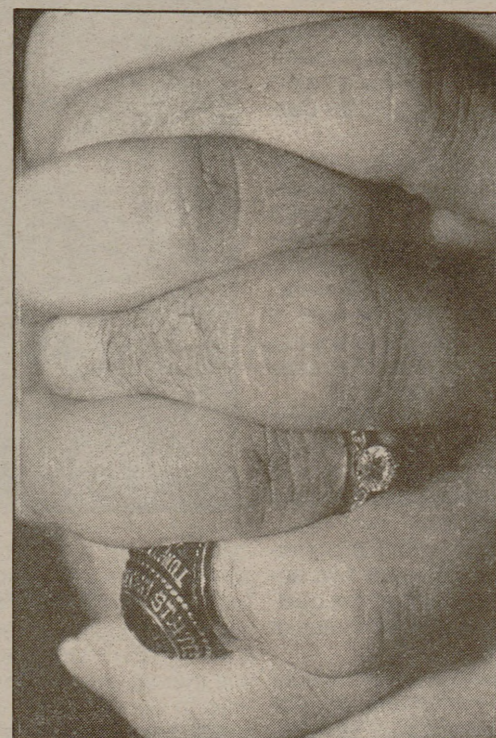


"You reach a time when there's nothing left to say to one another. You want to say something, but just don't know what."

— Tania Fauquet,
Gordon Slaton's fiancée



WAR doesn't seem so far away

An Aggie Marine shares his thoughts, feelings as he storms closer to battle and drifts farther away from home.

By Yvonne Salce

Photos By Phelan M. Ebenhack

Surrounded by green military gear, duffle bags and fatigues, Gordon Slaton packs his belongings and prepares to withdraw from Texas A&M University.

Just a few weeks ago, Slaton headed back from his hometown of Los Angeles to start his second semester at A&M. Now, within a matter of hours, he'll be leaving college to psyche himself up for the possibility of engaging in war.

"I came back ready to go to school, but with what's going on in Saudi Arabia, it doesn't look that way," says the 24-year-old Marine Corps reservist.

Equipment fills his cramped Corps of Cadets dorm room and covers the small floor. Filling his backpack, Slaton refers to the long list of items he's required to bring. Among those items are sunscreen, bug repellent and thermal underwear.

"They say it gets cold in the desert at night," Slaton says.

The chances of Slaton seeing and living in that desert are high. But first, his infantry reserve unit will fly from Houston to California for training. From there they will travel as far as their orders take them.

In the meantime, Slaton remains calm. The thought of war doesn't appear to frighten him. The worst part, he says, has been the waiting.

His unit was warned of the Middle East situation before