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Paramedics in Beirut war zone survive unforgettable routine mission

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GEORGE NASR

Guest Columnist



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He pointed at some mummy on a stretcher "Here he is ... Stable condition, the severed arm and leg should not bleed, nor should his face.

He's in a coma, and shouldn't make any trouble. Assist respiration. Bye, chabeb!"

Put patient in ambulance. Set his oxygen. Report departure from HDF — Pray. Keep pumping. Life signs OK. Bombs getting louder, but no explosions visible. Glad Noguea is driving like a maniac — Pray more. Report arrival at H. St. Charles. There is a god for freaks. CAT scan room. Wear protective clothing. Keep pumping and monitor life signs while the room basks in radiation from the scanner.

The machine hums. Behind the window, I could see the operator pushing buttons, and monitors lighting up one by one, displaying different slices of Sami's brain. "That boy is

brain dead," a voice echoes in the scanner room. "You guys came for nothing. He's dead."

That's when I heard Sami crying. A brief, faint sound. "Are you sure?" I pleaded. "But he's crying!" I hear that cry again. Did I hurt him? No, he's dead! How can a dead boy be crying?

"Yep! Extensive brain damage!" The operator replied. "Anyway, he can't make a sound with that tube down his throat."

"How about those tears?" I pleaded.

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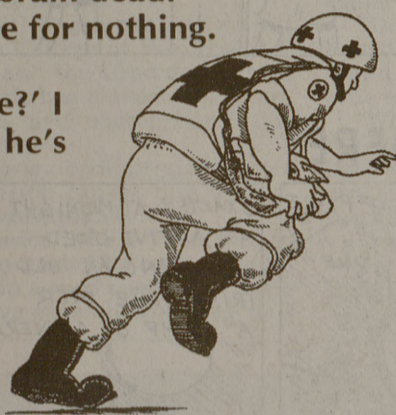
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George Nasr is a graduate civil engineering student

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In the morning of that day, Team 4 was dispatched to what remained a house in the Berjawi neighborhood; an unexpected guest had dropped in on a family at lunch. The "grad" rocket blew up the kitchen, the father and the mother, uniting them in a magma of body parts and rubble. Their son, Sami, was lucky not to be part of this sordid recipe from hell, but was badly wounded. The first-aiders patched him up and evacuated him to Hotel Dieu de France (HDF), a hospital in Beirut, where what remained of Sami was placed in intensive care.

In the afternoon, HDF called the Sector. Sami was in a deep coma, and his condition was worsening. They needed a CAT scan conducted in order to assess brain damage, but had no machine operational.

"Team 2! Quasimodo — mission chief! Noguea — driver! Hassibo — sicouniste!" Scoubidoo shouted. "Transport from HDF to Hospital St. Charles for a CAT scan and back, lotsa candies [shelling] on the road, so be careful! Allah maa'kon chabeb."

Routine mission. Call the team, put on a helmet and flak jacket. Jump in ambulance. Hook up VHF scanner. Turn on siren — Cool! Report departure. Sound of sniper fire — Pray. Noguea is driving like a maniac — pray more. Report

Marriage represents more than just living with someone

A paralyzed Buddhist monk used to advise all those who passed by: "Get yourself a wife right away! It was my lot to be a scholar, and I have been single since my youth. I had a great many disciples and followers, but after I became paralyzed and crippled, these people no longer care about me ... I feel that if I had a wife and children I might not have come to such a bitter pass." — from a story called "The Monk Who Encouraged Marriage" in "Sand and Pebbles"

JOSEF ELCHANAN
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relation to the surrounding community and toward the future of the Jewish people. As for a sense of duty and loyalty, Dr. Richard Maples of First Baptist of Bryan, had this to say of marriage: "It is a, 'Divine institution, created by God himself, composed of a husband and a wife who commit to each other for life.

It is the most important institution in society and should be maintained at all costs."

Also relevant is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints' Bishop David Ellis' statement that, "The marriage and family is crucial, the cornerstone of the church. For us, the wedding ceremony does not say 'till death do us part,' but rather 'for all eternity.'"

So, why is everybody so unhappy? Why do approximately half of all marriages end in divorce? Dr. Sarah Horsfall, a Texas A&M instructor on marriage and the family, had quite a bit to say concerning this problem. She explained that couples and young adults do not have enough role models. "[Our society] has privatized the family. Our center of values, which are also privatized, ... causes young people to be isolated. In the past, the whole community had standards and expectations. Children were raised not as much by their families as they were by the whole community. They were rigorously censored by their peers. Now, there is not a community to go to, but only to professional and scientific authorities. This forces young people into their own world. Without the larger community, [young people] learn only from their own family experiences. Many families do not have strong values due to many current problems, like single-parent families, family break-ups, and the lack of educated adults."

Father Michael discussed similar findings. He believes that there is "a vicious cycle where dysfunctional families raise children who are less capable of having healthy marriages, so then the emotional or family problems of our generation become a determinant to the success of later generations. In many cases, young people must go



through some healing before they can go into a healthy marriage." He also stated that a marriage must consist of "commitment and sacrifice."

Dr. Maples took a stronger stance, stating that divorce comes from "a modern movement to selfishness and self-gratification," and marriages are "entered without commitment."

It came as a surprise to me that these statements, when placed together, form such a cohesive whole. Religions across the spans of time and locality continue to support marriage as the

backbone of their communities. Each group promoted a certain combination of dedication and understanding, a strong intolerance of family violence and the desire to maintain a marriage and build something for the future. Perhaps these are the most important, most difficult and most rewarding parts of two people sharing their lives with one another.

Josef Elchanan is a senior business management major

MAIL CALL

KINE 199 requirement should remain in place

The May 30 article on the possibility of the HIV/AIDS class being required of all students listed an option to replace one of the existing KINE 199 requirements with the AIDS class. As a physical educator, this concerns me. Reports show that Americans need more physi-

cal activity in their lives. KINE 199 classes allow the students to take classes that not only condition them now, but also give them skills to continue participation throughout their lives.

While there is little doubt that AIDS education is extremely important, a possible solution to the problem already exists. Starting in the fall of 1994, the Health and Kinesiology Department is offering a KINE 199 class called Health and Fitness. This class combines half a semester of lecture on current health topics, which will include HIV/AIDS. An important difference between this and the suggested required class is that this is an optional class. This will allow the students interested in this area to be in a class with others that are interested in pursuing these topics. This will greatly enhance the level of participa-

tion and allow the course to be conducted in a manner that will not alienate a large number of the student population who are already educated in the course content.

Frank Thomas
College Station

Gun laws worsen crime

Elizabeth Preston wrote a very generalized column (June 1) that did not persuade me to lay down my arms. She alienated me and many others immediately with an unnecessary racist, sexist remark: "... takeover of America by white European males." Preston said, "The claim that the Second Amendment to the Constitution guarantees private citizens the right to keep and bear arms is com-

pletely unfounded. The writers of the Constitution did not intend this right for the private citizen, but for civilians in the state militia." Is this true?

James Madison: The Constitution preserves "the advantage of being armed, which Americans possess over the people of almost any other nation ... [where] the governments are afraid to trust the people with arms."

John Adams: "Arms in the hands of individual citizens may be used at individual discretion ... in private self-defense."

Samuel Adams: "The Constitution shall never be construed to prevent the people of the United States who are peaceable citizens from keeping their own arms."

Does gun control protect everyone? I leave you with this thought: Thomas Jefferson once quoted the 18th century crim-

inologist Casare Beccaria as saying, "Laws which forbid the carrying of arms ... make things worse for the assaulted and better for the assailants; they serve rather to encourage than to prevent homicides, for an unarmed man may be attacked with greater confidence than an armed man."

Darin W. Smith
Class of '95

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor and will print as many as space allows. Letters must be 300 words or less and include the author's name, class, and phone number. We reserve the right to edit letters for length, style, and accuracy. Address letters to: The Battalion - Mail Call 013 Reed McDonald Texas A&M University College Station, TX 77843-1111 Fax: (409) 845-2647

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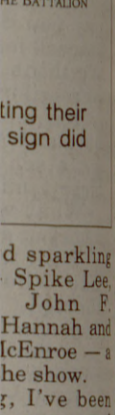
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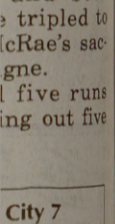
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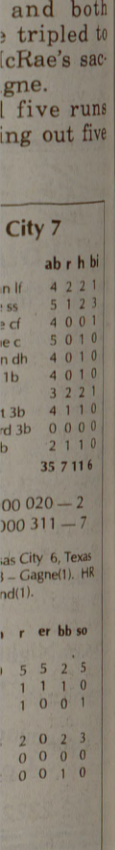
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