

► **Nation**

**Inmates move to higher grounds**

ANGOLA, La. (AP) — About 3,000 inmates were temporarily evacuated to higher ground Tuesday as waters from the swollen Mississippi River threatened to undermine a levee protecting the nation's largest prison farm.

"We don't gamble with the lives of inmates," Warden Burl Cain said after the early morning move to a tent city on the only bit of high ground on the 18,000-acre Louisiana State Penitentiary.

As the inmates made the uphill climb, many could not help noticing a block-long trail of red ants going in the same direction.

The inmates were returned to their regular dormitories 10 hours later, after they piled on 30,000 more sand bags to stabilize the 21-mile-long levee that has held since the turn of the century.

"It is wet, it is soaked, but it is stable," Cain said. He added that if the river creates more problems, another evacuation would be ordered and could involve all of the prison's 5,000 inmates.

So far, death row has remained untouched. After a flood in 1973 that also threatened the levee, the state put that building on the hill so as not to worry about evacuation of condemned killers.

The prison farm rests in a horse-shoe bend 50 miles upstream from Baton Rouge.

The river is expected to crest near the prison Friday at a record 61.1 feet, more than 13 feet above flood stage

but not enough to reach the tops of the prison levee, said Dave Reed, a hydrologist at the Lower Mississippi River Forecast Center in Slidell.

"It's kind of scary, isn't it?" prison spokeswoman Cathy Jett said as she gave reporters a tour. "The water is almost level to our eyes."

"If we have a levee break, everything you see will be 13 feet or more under water — all but what is on this hill," she said.

**Bush jumps to fulfill long-time promise**

YUMA PROVING GROUND, Ariz. (AP) — George Bush took a flying leap Tuesday.

In doing so, the former president fulfilled a wartime promise to himself, jumping from a plane over the Arizona desert under a rainbow-colored parachute — a serene, Technicolor repeat of his leap to safety from a disabled Navy bomber half a century ago.

"It was wonderful. I'm a new man — and I go home exhilarated," the 72-year-old former chief executive said.

It was his second parachute jump, but his first planned one. Bush was forced to bail out of his Navy bomber in the Pacific during World War II, and promised himself that one day he would make a jump for fun.

He had a little help, with two jump masters holding onto his harness until he opened his chute safely, and half a dozen people — including wife Barbara — running to cushion his landing. Medical emergency personnel also were standing by on the ground.

Asked how he felt, Bush gave a thumbs up and said: "Like that."

## Florida execution goes up in flames

*Incident should detour people from committing murder, officials say*

STARKE, Fla. (AP) — A mask concealing the face of a condemned killer burst into flames Tuesday as he was put to death in Florida's electric chair, and the governor said the state will consider other methods of execution.

Pedro Medina, one of nearly 125,000 Cubans who came to the United States during the 1980 Mariel boatlift, was sentenced to die for the 1982 stabbing death of a woman who had befriended him.

There was no indication Medina felt the flames, Gov. Lawton Chiles said.

"We've had an occasion of smoke before," Chiles said. "But the question is really, 'Is this something that is torturous or painful?'"

However, Attorney General Bob Butterworth said the inmate's gruesome end would be a deterrent.

"People who wish to commit murder, they better not do it in the state of Florida because we may have a problem with our electric chair," Butterworth said.

It was the second time an inmate's mask has burst into flame during a Florida execution. The first time, in 1990, executions were suspended for three months.

While there was no visible reaction from Tuesday's 39 witnesses, some later said they were nauseated by the sight and the smell.

"It was something entirely out of the ordinary. I have witnessed 11 executions and have never seen anything like what we saw this morning," said a visibly shaken Gene Morris, spokesman for the Department of Correc-

tions.

Medina, 39, had appeared calm, pursing his lips and looking up while he was strapped into "Old Sparky," the three-legged oak chair built in 1923. He never looked at the witnesses seated in front of him on the other side of a window.

"Pedro was somewhere else when he was in there," said the Rev. Glenn Dickson, who spent the night outside Medina's cell. "He told me he was not afraid of dying."

Medina's last words were: "I am still innocent."

Then the black leather mask was lowered over his face to conceal his expression from the witnesses, and 2,000 volts of electricity were sent through his body.

There was a small flicker on the right side of the mask and then orange and blue flames up to a foot high erupted and burned for about 10 seconds.

When the witnesses were removed several minutes later, the room was still smoky.

Medina did not react obviously to the flames, having already lurched back and balled his hands into fists when the current hit him.

"The doctor says that there were no indications from the observation or anything else that Medina felt any pain as a result of what happened," the governor said. "The death was instantaneous."

Chiles said the doctor told him that "the

burns were no different than you'd see at an execution and, in his opinion, he felt no pain."

One witness disagreed. "It was brutal, terrible. It was a little alive, literally," said Michael Minerva, who heads a state agency that represents the row inmates.

Minerva said the governor should have scheduled two inmates scheduled for execution and quit signing death warrants.

Chiles said the state would consider alternatives such as lethal injection, "as we've done before."

Only five other states have electrocution as their only means of execution: Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Nebraska and Tennessee. However, Kentucky and Tennessee have executed anyone since the Supreme Court allowed states to reinstate the death penalty in 1976, according to the Death Penalty Information Center in Washington.

Medina was convicted of the 1982 killing of Dorothy James, 52, a teacher who had befriended him. He was found driving her car and a knife believed to be the murder weapon was found in the car.

**"It was something entirely out of the ordinary."**

Gene Morris  
Department of Corrections

**Correction**

A headline on the Opinion page of today's Battalion misidentified the Residence Hall Association. It should have identified the Department of Residence Life and Housing.

► **This day in history**

Today is Wednesday, Feb. 26th, the 57th day of 1997. There are 308 days left in the year.

On this date:

In 1802, French literary giant Victor Hugo was born in Besancon.

In 1815, Napoleon Bonaparte escaped from the Island of Elba to begin his second conquest of France.

In 1846, frontiersman-turned-showman William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody was born in Scout County, Iowa.

In 1870, New York City's first pneumatic-powered subway line was opened to the public.

In 1919, Congress established Grand Canyon National Park in Arizona.

In 1929, President Coolidge signed a measure establishing Grand Teton National Park.

In 1940, the U.S. Air Defense Command was created.

In 1951, the 22nd Amendment to the Constitution was ratified, limiting a president to two terms of office.

In 1952, Prime Minister Winston Churchill announced that Britain had developed its own atomic bomb.




In 1993, a bomb exploded in the garage of New York's World Trade Center, killing six people and injuring more than 1,000 others.

Five years ago: The U.S. Supreme Court ruled unanimously that sexually harassed students may sue to collect monetary damages from their schools and school officials. The Supreme Court of Ireland cleared the way for a 14-year-old girl to leave the country for an abortion.

► **Today's birthdays**

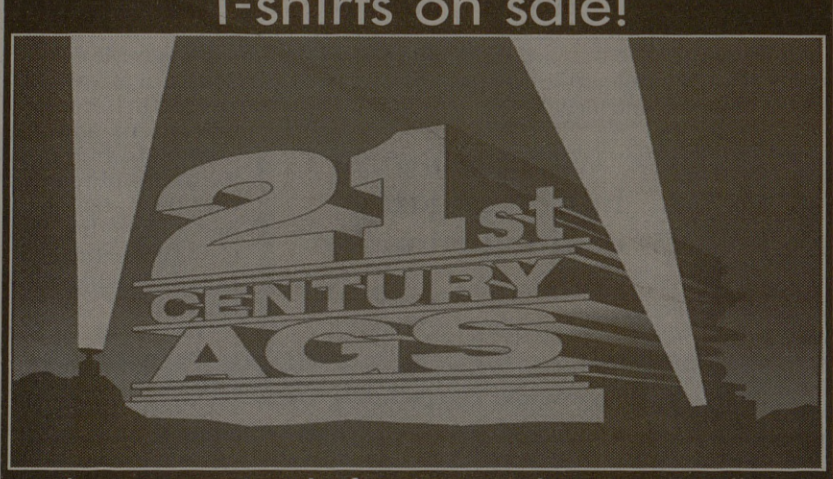
Today's Birthdays: Actor Mason Adams is 78. Actor Tony Randall is 77. Actress Betty Hutton is 76. Singer Fats Domino is 69. Political columnist Robert Novak is 66. Singer Johnny Cash is 65. Singer Mitch Ryder is 52. Singer Michael Bolton is 44. Actress Jennifer Grant (*Beverly Hills 90210*) is 31.

► **Weather**

Today	Tonight	Tomorrow	Highs & Lows
			Today's Expected High: 65°F
Cloudy with 20 percent chance of rain. North winds 15 mph.	Partly cloudy. North winds 10 mph.	Partly cloudy. Winds from the southwest.	Tonight's Expected High: 50°F
			Tomorrow's Expected High: 69°F
			Tomorrow Night's Expected Low: 55°F

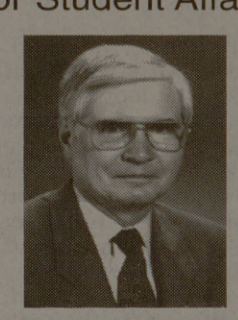
Information courtesy of TAMUSCAN

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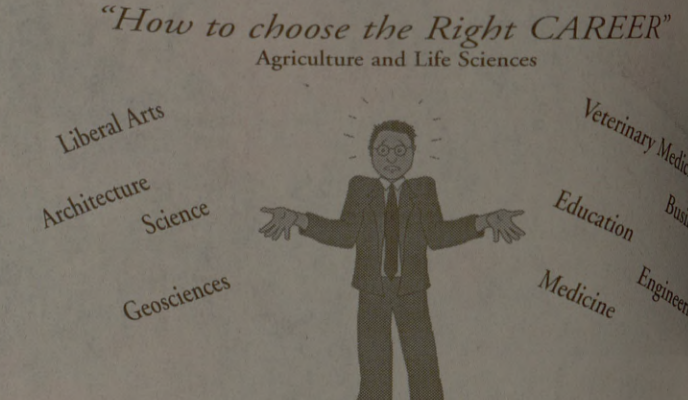
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If you have any thoughts or concerns regarding student life here at A&M, I'm very interested in hearing them. I am Malon Southerland, your Vice President for Student Affairs and my office is on the 10th floor of Rudder Tower. My door is always open and I encourage you to come by if I can ever be of assistance. Feel free to call me anytime at 845-4728 or contact me through e-mail: malon-southerland@tamu.edu

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
Classes start April 12th

MSC L.T. Jordan Institute for International Awareness Fellows Program presents:

**Bonnie Ponwith**  
**Tropical Rainforest Ecology**  
a case study from Costa Rica  
&  
**Rachel Preston**  
**Italian Architecture:**  
Bridging the Gap Between Renaissance and Baroque

Wednesday, March 26th, 7:00pm  
MSC Room 223J

For more information call 845-8770  
or e-mail: ji-fellows@msc.tamu.edu

 Persons with disabilities please call 845-8770 to inform us of your special needs.

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