

**Society shows
low-standard
verbal skills**

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For a soldier in the Army, "Secure the building" means to capture a building and keep anyone from leaving. In the Marines, it means to capture the building and keep anyone from getting into it. For a sailor, this statement means to close all doors and turn off the lights. And to the Air Force, it means to lease with an option to buy. It is very important for a soldier to understand the instruction to "secure the building." In this way, when it is almost effortless to communicate with anyone in the world, it is even more important to understand each other. Americans have gotten lazy with their words.

The different regions of the country have their dialects, but there are a few common problems which need to be corrected in American communication.

Thinking is defined as "forming or having in the mind" by the *New Merriam-Webster Dictionary* — this does not sound at all like "feeling." Thinking and feeling are not the same things, although they often are used interchangeably within this society. Consider the statement, "I think Joe Schmo is guilty."

This translates to, "I have considered the facts and have determined that Joe Schmo committed the crime." Now look at "I feel Joe Schmo is guilty." This is equivalent to, "I have a gut feeling that Joe Schmo did it."

While there is nothing wrong with gut instincts, many people use "feel" when they actually have considered the facts and thought about the situation. A quick test to determine whether a person should use "think" or "feel" is to add the word "because" to the end of a sentence.

If a person can say "I feel Joe Schmo is guilty because..." followed by some reasons, then "think" is the word the person should be using.

Another problem with inaccuracies in communication concerns those that are intentional. "Little white lies" are rarely little, and no lie is really white. In reality, lies are more damaging to the speaker than the recipient, but consider for a moment how a lie to "protect" someone's feelings can affect that person.

If a woman who just got a hair-do resembling Medusa's is told that her hair looks (insert positive adjective) and then asks a guy at a club to dance, there is a distinct possibility the guy will look at her hair and laugh (or turn to stone). This would crush her far more than if a friend had broken the news.

(Note: The author will not be held responsible for truthful answers to "Does my butt look big?")

Truth in communication is important. If people can never know when they are being lied to, they can never know who to trust.

The key to accurate communication is to say what is meant and to say it truthfully. A person from China or Sweden might not understand "acceptable" mis-statements.

Any person who barely speaks English is going to have trouble understanding what the common euphemisms mean and perhaps the reason for them.

In the presence of many international students, and in preparation for entrance into the "global village" technology has created, Americans must learn to speak accurately.

Car ... cushion ... caution
Sensory air bags represent future of vehicular safety devices

Air bags will allow safety officials to further understand accidents, but the issue of hypersensitive air bags and the fatalities they cause still remain.

Although advancements in air bag technology were unveiled at the Society of Automotive Engineers Convention, car makers still must strive to ensure greater air bag safety by decreasing the chances of false deployment.

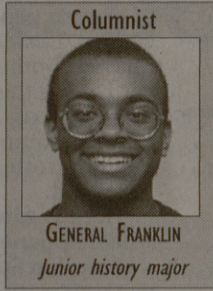
Furthermore, consumers must recognize these improvements as a launching point to greater car safety and pressure manufacturers to continue developing the technology and equipment to provide maximum safety in accidents.

Air bag suppliers have responded to 15 recent air bag deaths by introducing new systems to modify the rate and force of air bag deployment. These changes are needed since an infant's skull can be irrevocably damaged by the trajectory and velocity of a 150 mph air bag.

In response to this issue, Siemens Corporation designers have constructed sensors programmed to deactivate air bags when they detect the presence of an infant car seat in the passenger's seat. Specifically, the Siemens sensors emit electromagnetic signals which are received by resonators built into the child safety seats. The resonators then relay signals to the car confirming the presence of a child seat. Finally, the same message is forwarded to the air bag control unit where the shutdown of the bag commences.

These overdue technologies will require cooperation as car makers and child safety manufacturers must collaborate on the installation of sensors and resonators. Car makers estimate that the cost of Siemens' air bag restraint system will add an extra \$40 dollars to the cost of a standard vehicle. Additionally, Andrea Hurl of Siemens projects the resonators to cost an additional \$8 dollars per car seat. Certainly an extra \$48 can hardly compare to the lives that will be saved for having invested in such equipment. Jim Lee, a manager with Gerry Baby Products has already committed his company to modifying the seats for the new technology, but again an industry standard is imperative to end infant death.

In spite of the promise of Siemens' technology, other firms such as General Motors Delphi Automotive Systems have developed more extensive air bag systems. Moreover, Delphi's "air bag restraint system," not only



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shuts down air bags when necessary, but controls the force of deployment by measuring various conditions. In fact the system can detect seat belt wearing, weight, severity of accident and distance from the dashboard when determining how and at what force the bag should inflate. This system holds great promise since the car's emergency response is geared to these unique conditions. This versatility of function allows air bags to respond to all possible measurable crash conditions.

Multitudes of other companies are exploring the function of air bag sensors, all with the purpose of minimizing the hazards of false air bag deployment. Further down the road, designers plan to expand the usage of air bags by having them deploy from various positions such as the seats, the ceiling and floorboards to provide optimal cushion during collisions. Also, they estimate the average car will house at least 10 air bags all equipped with sensors to tailor air bag response to accident severity.

Before images of an inner tube on wheels haunt your dreams at night, consider how automakers must refine the air bag response system before pursuing more ambitious safety features. Unfortunately, plans for an "air bag mobile" must be halted until designers address the problems of deflation and malfunction.

Although air bag reforms are safety-oriented, certain aspects of this technology seem to increase the very likelihood of fatality they were designed to decrease. One dangerous aspect of air bags, aside from the embarrassment of driving the "Wiener mobile," is the possibility of malfunction and false deployment. Without these, the potential for injury is greater if specialized sensors fail to analyze the car's data accurately, thereby activating air bags at a force and speed dangerous to passengers.

The designers have not addressed deactivation of deployed air bags. In the event of a collision-causing fire, the air bag cushion has the potential of not only securing passengers from impact, but also the adverse effect of pinning occupants. Without some mechanism for immediate deflation, many fatalities will occur since the removal of injured bodies will be impeded by inflated air bags.

Furthermore, the cost of air bag replacement is so overblown, pardon the pun, it becomes prohibitive for people to replace. In the event of false deployment, a driver will

probably presume air bag safety is just hot air and avoid the \$2,500 reinstallation fee. One can only hope the over-inflated price will reduce with more usage in cars. Until more affordable costs are offered, many people will pass over the important safety devices, risking their lives in the process. However, if the combination of expense and malfunction are the best car makers can offer, motorists should be advised to equip their cars with cheaper tools bearing more reliability, a bicycle pump and a flotation device.

Another defect of the new sensor technology is the amount of time required to miniaturize the components for cars. Quite simply, no one has addressed where the additional bags will fit. Although BMW and Mercedes plan to offer their air bag gadgets in future models, most of the high-tech solutions will require long research and experimentation before any measurable driver benefits will materialize.

In light of the slow progress, it is imperative for car makers to bolster low-tech solutions while formulating sophisticated solutions for air bag safety. The focus on high-tech safety has fueled a de-

bate from several safety advocates and victims alike who believe a basic approach is more immediate.

Robert Sanders, whose young daughter was killed by an air bag in 1995, thinks air bags should only deploy in severe crashes thereby preventing deaths from ultra-sensitive deployment. Although plausible in theory, this idea fails since a driver in an accident cannot determine the appropriateness of air bag deployment. Simply yelling "Go, go gadget air bags!" should be left to "Inspector Gadget" since a voice-mediated response would come too late after the collision. In spite of the impracticality of his idea, however, Sanders was correct when he said, "The crisis doesn't require Star Wars technology," but common sense such as wearing seat belts and placing car seats in the rear.

In order to progress and save lives, it is important for manufacturers to promote easy preventative measures while developing more sophisticated air bag technology. Perhaps the day will arrive when we can watch the "force" on film and use the "force" in our air bags.

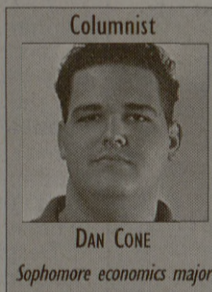


Campus construction hinders travel for students

Getting around campus is more and more difficult every semester. The urge to build and improve has overcome the Texas A&M administration. The improvements, when finished, will be welcome additions to the campus. Until then, they will only cause frustration and inconvenience to anyone who wants to travel across campus.

There is no doubt that improvements need to be made all over campus, and many of these needs are being addressed. The problem is that too many things are being done at once. Since the end of the spring semester, more roads and paths which were the only convenient way to get around campus have been blocked off.

The endless work on the Cushing Library only has been wors-



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ened by the additional work now being done to the Sterling C. Evans Library. It now has become impossible to go from the Southside Commons to anywhere without having to detour around construction, a fact which New Student Conference attendees are quick to learn. This inconvenience will be the first of many the Class of 2001 will have to endure.

To make things even worse, there have been no provisions made for pedestrians other than fences. There are no covered walkways to protect people from hard-hat areas on the other sides of these fences. The additional traffic from the heavy equipment that has been brought in and the detouring of vehicles also makes walking around these areas an adventure.

In addition to the work on new

construction and empty buildings, renovations on buildings-in-use truly makes learning an experience. For students who have classes in Nagle Hall, there only are two options: learn to read lips, or hopefully, move to another building. The construction makes it impossible to hear anything but power tools in the halls.

For anyone trying to get a quick meal on campus, good luck. Sbsa and the Memorial Student Center cafeteria are both closed for summer, leaving only the Commons and the overpriced snack areas. Sbsa has become another construction zone to be avoided, and the sign at the MSC reads, "Special Event," although there is no one there. Students who want a meal without leaving campus should look forward to dodging trucks and walking around fences to get to the Commons.

Driving on campus has become even worse than before. Since Ross Street began to sink

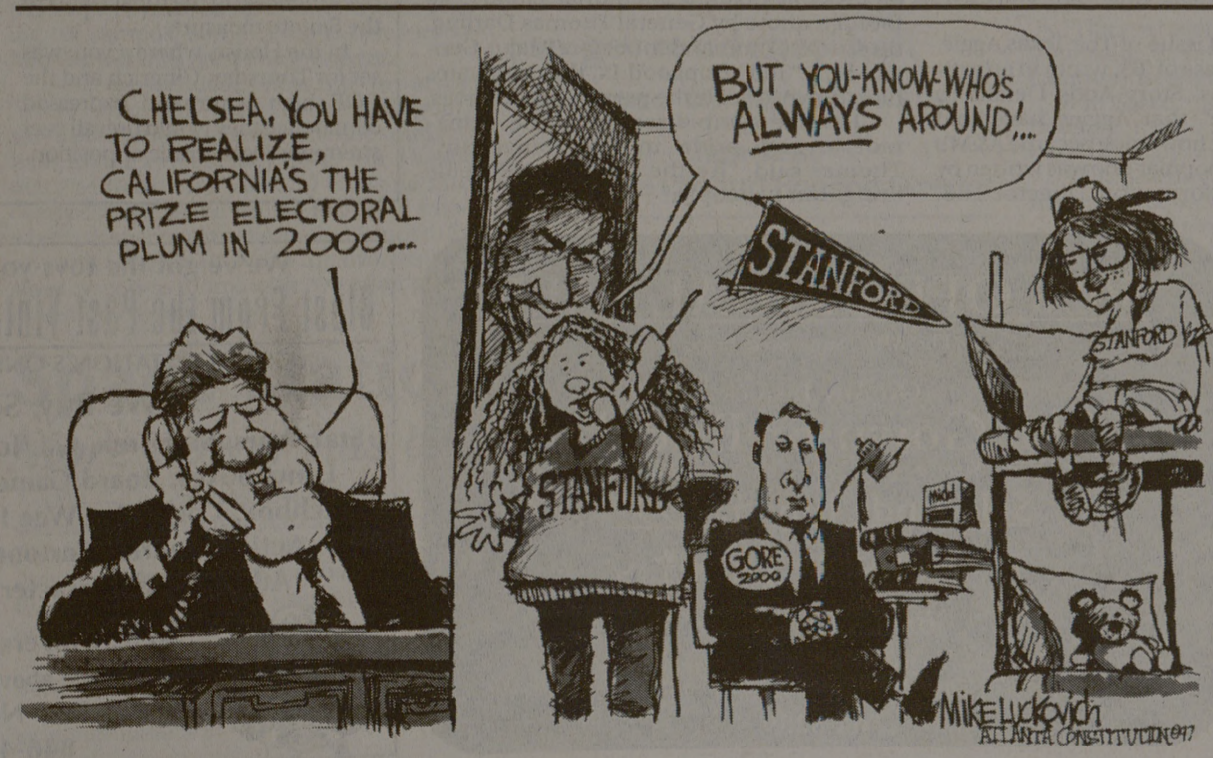
and was closed to southbound traffic, there was only one way to travel north and south on campus: Lubbock Street. After the end of the spring semester, however, Lubbock Street was blocked off from Koldus, extending past the Commons. With the additional blocking of Spence Street in front of the Pavilion, cars have been detoured between the Chemistry Building and the Bright Building, a very heavily used pedestrian walkway. If someone isn't hit by a car in that area, the University will be lucky to avoid a large law suit.

The road construction on campus is nothing in comparison to the lack of progress on Texas Avenue and George Bush Drive, but sooner or later, the Texas Highway Department will finish its jobs. That has yet to be proven about A&M.

The battles students face on campus is worsened by the additional construction on West Campus. The widening of Olsen Road and fences around where Reed Arena will be, are more obstacles to be avoided when traveling on that side of campus. In addition to Olsen Road, Agronomy Road has become impossible to use. Still, more fences have gone up by Kleberg.

There is no doubt that when finished, all of these construction projects will improve the campus tremendously. Being the largest undergraduate university in the nation calls for continual improvements and repairs. As an Old Ag might put it, however, there are too many irons in the fire.

Instead of working on many projects at the same time, the University should work on one or two projects at a time. This will prevent the inconvenience that is the current norm, and it may speed up the construction process. If there are fewer projects to be overseen, more eyes can focus on the completion of construction in the works.



MAIL CALL
Sexual control relies on individual choices

In response to Mandy Cater's June 25 column:

Sexual responsibility is a matter of making the right moral choices. Until sex is understood to be an act of love reserved for a lifelong monogamous marriage, problems like these will continue to occur. The goal of the "conservative rhetoric" is not to burden young people with guilt, but to give them wisdom to make responsible and moral choices.

Although many people may not respond to teaching right

and wrong, the message must still be made clear.

It will be a sad day when the truth is overlooked because it is "old-fashioned." Notice how we don't hear about those people who make the right choices regarding sexuality. How often does a virgin or a happily-married couple throw a baby in the trash can? There is no basis to say preaching is ineffective. We should applaud individuals who live morally, and expect the same of others.

Additionally, why is it wrong to kill a baby after birth, while abortion is a "legitimate possibility?" Did abortion become ethical because the Supreme Court, a human institution, allowed it to be legal? Cater is concerned for the welfare of Melissa Drexler, and that is good — her parents may have been uninterested in her life.

Discarding a life is wrong, however, and still would be had she had an abortion. **People must act on conscience, not circumstance or environment.**

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