

## Jailbreak Hotel

Two recent escapes from jail in Huntsville reveal need for new methods of prison security



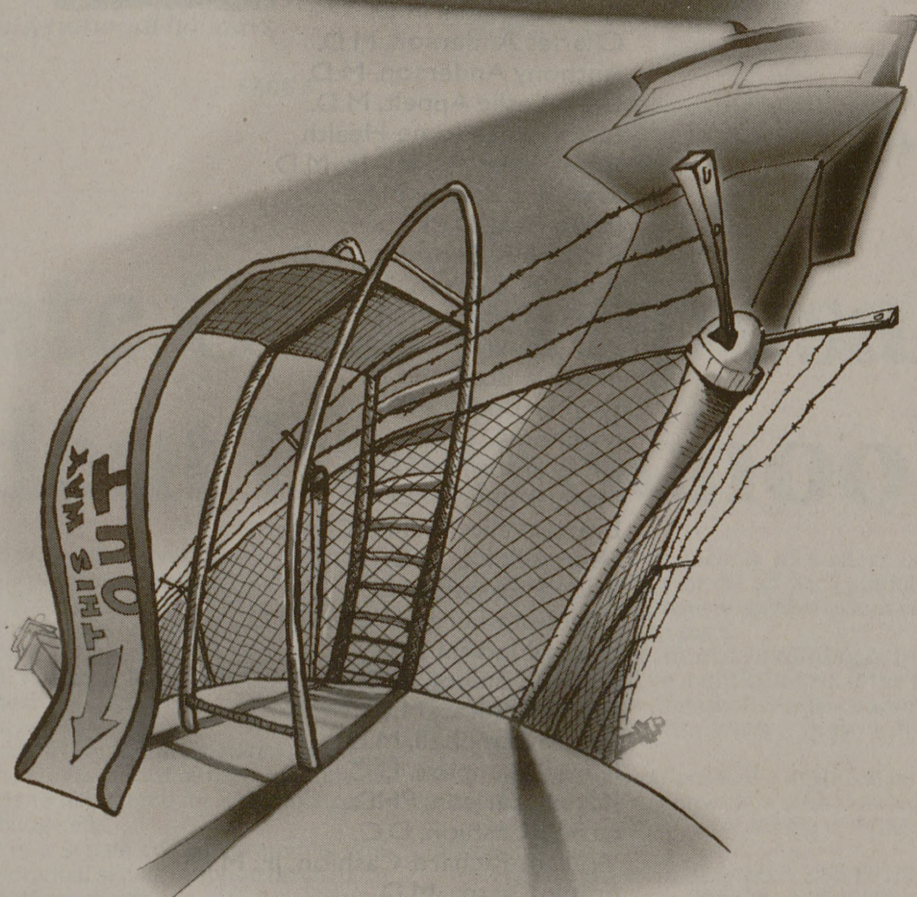
BEVERLY MIRELES

In movie theaters around the country, *Summer of Sam* is playing. But in homes across the nation, the summer of insecurity is playing out. While every town with train tracks has Rafael Resendez-Camirez on their minds, the people of central Texas have something more local to fear — Huntsville prison escapees. It is frightening to think that prisoners can escape any high-security prison. But compounding that fear is Huntsville's recent history, which includes two prison breaks in the past seven months. Three weeks ago, a convicted killer named Clifford Dwayne Jones took the opportunity to break out of prison. Two guards were escorting him through the recreation yard of the Estelle High Security Prison Unit when Jones managed to flee. Jones somehow avoided gunshots from his guards and reached the perimeter fences unscathed. He scaled a total of three fences, two of which were 12 feet tall and topped with razor wire. Jones was eventually caught, but only after an intensive manhunt lasting for days. Before Jones, there was Martin Gurule. On Thanksgiving, convicted murderer Gurule escaped from Death Row, something that is supposed to be impossible. Seven men had attempted to break out, but Gurule was the only one to actually escape. He was found dead in a creek a week

later, but his memory lives on for many convicts. Gene Hathorn, a resident of Texas Death Row for 14 years, best expresses prisoners' emotions on the unfeasibility of Gurule's escape on Lamp of Hope, an organizational Website devoted to prisoners on Death Row. "Excitement was high among the convicts. We had never heard of such a thing," he said. "There had been numerous attempts through the years. But, these were thwarted, and one wonders whether they were genuine attempts, or just window dressing to give certain individuals bragging rights. "But, Gurule had made it. He had, at least for now, bested the walls, fences and the machinery of state-sanctioned death." To the inmates of all Texas prisons and "the machinery of state-sanctioned death," Gurule and Jones may be heroes and fine examples of daring. For the rest of us, Jones and Gurule serve as reminders that there is something very wrong with security at Huntsville State Prison. With signs of hero worship of the escapees by fellow convicts, people must keep in mind that other escape attempts are going to be made. That makes Huntsville seem a whole lot closer. The danger of a future prison break has shown to be more than just a figment of the imagination. A reevaluation of security must be made. Prison building is almost a cottage industry in Texas. However, if the security is not there to back up those high cement walls, then "high security" units will cease to exist. Obviously, we cannot stop prisoners

from wanting to leave prison. If they wanted to stay, then something would be wrong with the system of criminal punishment. However, one plausible solution is to increase the number of guards at Texas prisons. Right now, there is a shortage of guards in the state corrections system. Having a shortage of prison guards is a little like having a part-time nuclear safety inspector — for the most part, everything works fine, but in an emergency, there is going to be trouble. Another solution, put forth by some private security agencies, is to renovate the fencing system. The Huntsville system only sounds an alarm when damaged. But technology is available that can monitor the fence and send guards to the exact location the fence was damaged. A more animalistic — but highly effective — solution is to equip the fence with a voltage that emits a lethal dose of electricity. Perhaps this is too gruesome a suggestion, but a fence that could stun an escaping prisoner might do the trick. However, until officials get the initiative to change security measures at Huntsville, there continues to be a risk. Criminals already in prison have shown themselves to be particularly dangerous. Solutions have to be found. Until then, we will have to make do with the hope that if there is another escape, the prisoner won't know that Highway 30 exists.

Beverly Mireles is a junior microbiology major.



MARK MCPHERSON/THE BATTALION

## Heart of the matter

Healing power of forgiveness, peace needed to counteract dangers of vengeance in Kosovo

There remains one obstacle to peace in former Yugoslavia, and it will prove to be the biggest obstacle of all. Although the bombings have ceased, the mass killings have been stopped and the refugees have begun to return, the hatchet has not been buried. For the moment, of course, it may seem as though peace has arrived, that violence has ground to a halt. But until peace is made permanent by reconciliation, this current calm will only be followed by another storm. For peace in Kosovo to last, the victims of oppression must forgive their oppressors. It may not be today, it may not be tomorrow and it may not be next year, but as long as Albanians harbor hopes for vengeance, renewed conflict will always be just over the Balkan horizon. In fact, some returning refugees have already committed retaliatory killings and vandalisms of their own. But the solution to this cycle of violence will not be found in getting even. It will only be found in giving forgiveness. Of course, this issue of forgiveness is a dicey matter, and it bears some thinking at the end of an incredibly bloody century. Surely, Kosovar Albanians and others must justifiably wonder, there are some crimes which cannot be forgiven, some evils which cannot be overlooked and some privations that must be revented. And those who call for reconciliation should not treat this reaction against forgiveness lightly. It reveals the moral complexity of the challenge of forgiving. *The Sunflower*, an autobiographical book by Holocaust survivor Simon Wiesenthal, illuminates the incredible difficulties of that challenge. The book tells how while working one day as a prisoner in a Polish concentration camp,



CALEB MCDANIEL

Wiesenthal was taken to the bedside of a dying Nazi soldier. The soldier, a German named Karl, asked the Jewish Wiesenthal for forgiveness and absolution for horrible crimes of genocide he had committed. In Wiesenthal's judgment, Karl was truly penitent and sincere, but, partly repulsed and partly flabbergasted by the request, Wiesenthal responded by walking silently out of the room. Years later, Wiesenthal asked a panel of distinguished men and women whether he had done the right thing by refusing to answer the soldier. The variety of responses to Wiesenthal's story illustrates the variety of theories on forgiveness. Many of the respondents resolutely defended Wiesenthal's decision. Writer Cynthia Ozick said, "There are spots forgiveness cannot wash out."



presume to say what they would have done in the same situation? First and foremost, our awareness that we are unbenefit of our lives, loved ones or dignity must temper everything we say to those who have seen such miseries. But with that cautious qualification, a few of the writers in *The Sunflower* advocated forgiveness as a way to move beyond the hopelessness of returning hate for hate. Jose Hobday, a Native American, recalled the words of her Seneca mother when she was once wronged and wanted revenge: "Do not be so ignorant and stupid and inhuman as they are. Go to an elder and ask for the medicine that will turn your heart from bitterness to sweetness. You must learn the wisdom of how to let go of poison." If peace is to be found in the Balkans, the international community must urge Kosovo to learn the truth of Hobday's insight, to be more human than their hateful tormentors. Such counsel does not show a lack of sympathy or sorrow over the crimes done. Neither is such advice self-righteous, for honest persons will remember how quickly they ponder revenge at much slighter provocations. But we should advise forgiveness because it is the only way to arrest violence. The only path to peace is the wisdom of letting go of poison. That course is difficult, and many wounds in the Balkans will be reopened before they are finally closed for good. But without failing to appreciate the anger expressed by many in Kosovo and many in *The Sunflower*, those who long for peace must walk a longer mile. For as Desmond Tutu said in his contribution to Wiesenthal's symposium, "It is clear that if we look only to retributive justice, then we could just as well close up shop. Forgiveness is not some nebulous thing. It is practical politics. Without forgiveness, there is no future."

Caleb McDaniel is a junior history major.

### MAIL CALL

#### Cabarets not "up to date"

In response to July 8 mail call.

I agree wholeheartedly with Nordost's wish to bring Bryan "up to date" with a cabaret. In fact, there are many regards in which Bryan is quite lacking behind a normal "up to date" city. I am disappointed that along with the lack of sex, we have a lack of violent crime. It is a true disappointment to read local papers and see little mention of murders, robberies or rapes. Perhaps I can modernize Bryan by starting a company which will really make citizens fear to walk the streets. I am also disappointed that the cost of living is so low, unlike many "modern" cities. What a true shame that we are forced to live with this. Also, I absolutely detest people being friendly. It is such an unfortunate by-product of that "old style" country living. If we modernized, perhaps we could throw that out too. Get real. An argument that a cabaret would

"bring this town up to date" is missing the point. Jeff Wischkaemper Class of '02

Since Nordost is "glad people have different opinions," I'll give my own and say that applauding John Skruck is applauding the possibility of breaking families apart, spreading disease, destroying relationships and producing sex criminals all for the sake of pleasure. When God gave us the law, he did it for our own good, not so that he

could deny us the pleasures of life. By breaking these laws, we hurt ourselves and other people. McDaniel has shown where the root of the problem lies, and that is the love people have for sin. If you want to bring this town up to date, bring it up by loving your neighbor. John Skruck doesn't will the good of God or love his neighbors. He loves his money and himself. Armando Chavez Class of '01

## Israel should extradite suspect

Since September of 1997, there has been only one suspect in a gruesome murder and dismemberment case in southern Maryland. The suspect, a teenager by the name of Samuel Sheinbein, has been charged with first-degree murder in the death of Alfredo Tello. But Sheinbein has not yet come to trial in this high publicity case because he has fled the country. Since 1997, Sheinbein has been in Israel. Since his father was a Jew who resided in Palestine before the creation of the Jewish state in 1947, Sheinbein can automatically claim Israeli citizenship. Attempts by the State of Maryland to have Sheinbein returned to face trial have been rebuffed repeatedly by the Israeli government and Supreme Court, saying in part that a Jew would not be able to merit a fair trial in the United States. Appeals from the U.S. State Department have been similarly ignored. But things have changed in the past few weeks in Israel, and it is high time for the U.S. government to once again assist the State of Maryland in demanding that Sheinbein be extradited to face justice. Ehud Barak has been elected Prime Minister of Israel on a platform calling for peace and cooperation between Israel and its Arab neighbors. While it is very encouraging that Barak intends to undo the damage that his predecessor,



MARK PASSWATERS

Benjamin Netanyahu, did to the peace process, he should also look at repairing the rift between Israel and its closest ally, the United States. Netanyahu did not simply bite the hand that fed him; he very nearly bit it off. In order to ensure that America will continue to support Israel, Barak must make amends for the sins of the man he follows. Sheinbein's extradition would be an excellent starting point. It is common knowledge that the United States and Israel have been very close allies for nearly a half century. However, in the past decade, that relationship has come under strain. President Bush and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzak Shamir were not on speaking terms, nor were President Clinton and Netanyahu by the time the Israeli was ousted from office. Some times, American and Israeli interests do not coincide, but these two men were unwilling to take American concerns into account. The past year has been the most glaring example of this situation. The United States brought the Israelis and Palestinians to the negotiating table at Wye, Md., last fall in an attempt to solidify a peace agreement already in place. Several times, the Israelis backed off from positions that they had previously agreed to, in an attempt to gain concessions to the United States, who was not even an active party at the negotiating table. Once the accords were signed, Netanyahu almost immediately violated them, ordering the construction of more Jewish settlements on the occupied West Bank and not withdrawing Israeli troops from areas that were ceded to the

Palestinians in the Wye accords. In so doing, Netanyahu destroyed any trust that he and the late Yitzak Rabin had gained with the Arabs, and made the United States look like fools for thinking he would stick to his word. Now, Netanyahu is gone, and Barak would like to start anew with the Arabs. However, Barak will not be able to get very far in his plans for peace if he does not have the complete backing of the U.S. Government. There must be some way to prove to the United States that Israel once again means what it says and is a loyal ally. Sheinbein's extradition may just be the peace offering that is needed to achieve a much larger goal — peace in the Middle East. It would be simple and correct to say Samuel Sheinbein is an American who committed a heinous crime on American soil and should answer his accusers in an American court. It is equally simple for the Israelis to say Sheinbein is also an Israeli citizen, and because Israel has no formal extradition treaty with the United States, it can try Sheinbein in its own courts. But looking at the larger picture shows that Israel has some public relations work to do, and it may be time to play "Let's Make a Deal." In exchange for the return of one teen-age criminal, Israel would regain the complete backing of the most powerful nation on earth. Extraditing Sheinbein is a very small price to pay for the prospect of a lasting, continued peace for Israel and its neighbors. Mark Passwaters is an electrical engineering graduate student.