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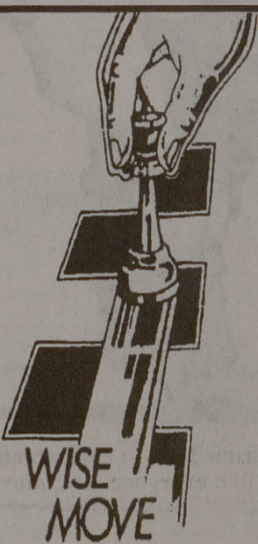
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## Man of steel



BRIAN RUFF/ THE BATTALION

Senior mechanical engineering major **Matt Dreiss** will use the metal for an experiment that tests the strength of the rod as it is pulled apart.

## Mother of convicted INS officer speaks out

By Mark Babineck  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HOUSTON — The mother of one of three federal agents convicted this week of not helping an injured illegal immigrant blames politics, overzealous prosecutors and juror confusion for the verdict that could land her son in federal prison.

Maria Gomez, a third-generation U.S. citizen whose grandfather immigrated to flee Pancho Villa's revolutionaries in the 1910s, said federal prosecutors went after her only child, former Immigration and Naturalization Service agent Louis Gomez, and two colleagues to help mend fences with Mexican president Vicente Fox.

"The whole thing was political from the beginning," Mrs. Gomez told The Associated Press by telephone Tuesday from her Hill Country home north of San Antonio. "Two years ago (Texas) executed one of theirs, so they gave Fox three little shrimp served up on a platter."

A federal jury Monday found Louis Rey Gomez, 37; Richard Henry Gonzales, 37; and Carlos Reyna, 43, all of San Antonio, guilty of willfully denying Serafin Olvera-Carrera medical care after the illegal immigrant was paralyzed from the neck down during a March 25, 2001, raid in Bryan. Each faces up to 10 years in prison.

Mrs. Gomez said the extraor-

dinary prosecution — which took government attorneys to seven states and parts of rural Mexico looking for witnesses — was done to restore goodwill with Fox's administration.

She cites the much-publicized tiff last summer that started when Fox canceled a visit to Bush's ranch after Texas ignored his pleas and executed a Mexican-American drug smuggler for killing a Dallas police officer.

Mrs. Gomez said the United States should not kowtow to its neighbor.

"We are not responsible for Mexico's problems," she said. "Mexico is responsible for its own problems."

Assistant U.S. Attorney Ruben Perez said his office only had justice in mind, not politics.

"Of course not," Perez said responding to the Mrs. Gomez's accusations. "All I can tell you is what I told the members of the jury. You know, these officers violated the law and we prosecuted them. It's very simple."

While the events that led to Olvera-Carrera's broken neck are not clear, Perez said, the resulting paralysis and inability to breathe on his own culminated in a heart attack in February 2002 that caused his family to take him off life support. Reyna was found innocent of beating the immigrant, while Gonzales was convicted of unnecessarily dousing him with pepper spray.

Gomez was in another room of the house they were raiding

when Olvera-Carrera was injured, Mrs. Gomez said, and her son had no idea the Mexican man was hurt. Instead, she said they thought Olvera-Carrera was being uncooperative. He never claimed injury, she said.

Prosecutors, however, said Olvera-Carrera moaned and pleaded for help from the officers for hours before finally receiving medical assistance seven hours after the raid.

Mrs. Gomez also contends the jury only heard from the defense for a few days after prosecutors spent three weeks laying out their case, which might have worn down or confused the panel. Gomez's attorney, Jay Norton, echoed the point, but Perez said the defense could have taken more time, but chose to rest Wednesday.

Perez said he regrets having to pursue such cases, but the facts demanded action by the Justice Department.

"It brings us no joy to prosecute police officers, but they have a duty and a responsibility to protect and to serve," he said. "When they violate that duty, somebody has to hold them responsible."

Mrs. Gomez said her son, who is married with two young children, would never have willfully committed a federal felony, which is exactly what the jury decided he did.

"Give me a break. Why would Louis throw all that away?" she said.

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Perry signs health and human services restructuring bill

AUSTIN (AP) — Gov. Rick Perry signed into law Tuesday a money-saving social services reorganization bill expected to eliminate thousands of state jobs.

The legislation by Rep. Arlene Wohlgenuth, R-Burleson, will reorganize the state's health and human services agencies, consolidating 12 departments into four under the umbrella of the Department of Health and Human Services.

The bill is estimated to save more than \$1 billion. Sen. Jane Nelson, R-Lewisville, the Senate sponsor, said the bill would result in 2,162 fewer state jobs in the coming years. But one Senate Democrat put that figure closer to 4,000 to 5,000.

Perry also signed into law a bill by Nelson intended to help the State Board of Medical

Examiners more efficiently and effectively regulate doctors.

#### Judge refuses venue change in windshield death case

FORT WORTH (AP) — A judge on Tuesday refused to grant a change of venue in the murder trial of a woman accused of hitting a man with her car, driving home and ignoring his cries for help as he bled to death lodged in the windshield.

State District Judge James R. Wilson also denied another defense request to have Chante Jawan Mallard's statements to police suppressed. Jury selection was expected to begin next week in Fort Worth.

Mallard, 26, was indicted last year on charges of murder and tampering with evidence in the death of Gregory Biggs, 37.

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