

THE BATTALION

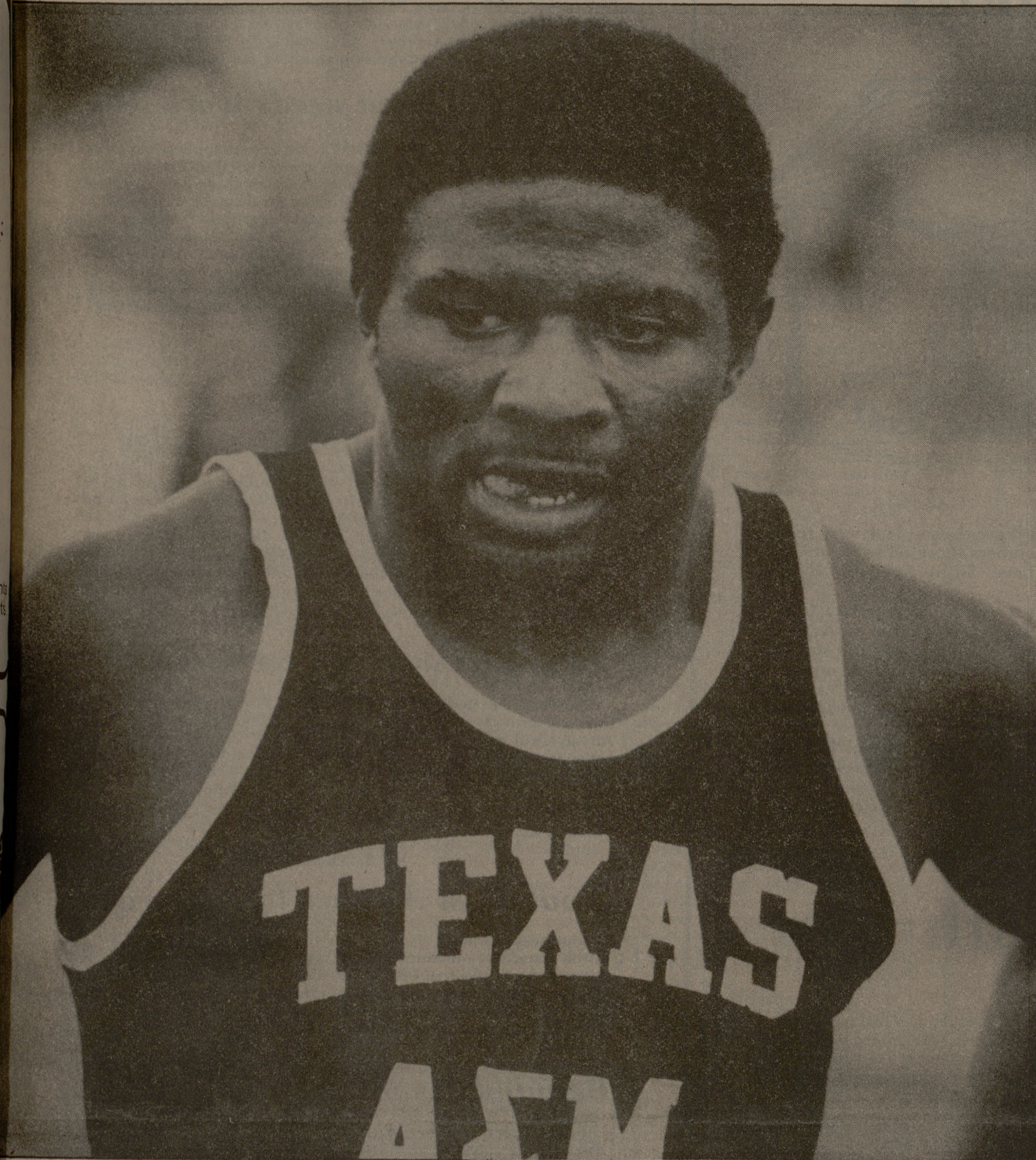
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The pause that refreshes

Battalion photo by Pat O'Malley

Curtis Dickey takes a minute to relax after winning the 100-meter dash during Saturday's 63rd annual Southwest Conference track and field meet. Dickey finished with a time of 10.05, just

ahead of Texas' Johnny "Lam" Jones. Texas A&M won the meet with 126 points, the first conference victory for the Aggies since 1970. See related story, page 6.

Hill crime task force said working illegally

By United Press International
AUSTIN — Gov. Dolph Briscoe's Criminal Justice Division said Tuesday that Attorney General John Hill's Organized Crime Task Force is operating illegally.

The 55-page report from an audit requested by the governor said Hill's task force members have operated illegally as peace officers, performed undercover police work, participated in gun-point arrest and engaged illegally in intelligence activities.

"Until and unless the Legislature acts to grant such powers to the attorney general any exercise of police power, which is granted by law only to 'peace officers,' must be viewed as an illegal activity," the report said.

A Hill spokesman termed the report ridiculous and said the allegations of illegal activity are "sour grapes from a lame duck."

"There are going to be a lot of mad people in law enforcement when they read this report," Tim James, task force director, said. "The way they read the law nobody but the Department of Public Safety

is authorized to maintain any intelligence files. They're saying cities, counties, and everybody else can't keep files. It's amazing to me that they would put out a report like this."

Briscoe asked his staff to look into activities of Hill's task force and to audit the federal grants totaling \$1.7 million that the governor's criminal justice division had awarded the organized crime unit in the past five years.

The audit report was released late Tuesday after Hill and Briscoe left Austin for Washington for a series of separate meetings with President Carter and congressional leaders.

Robert C. Flowers, head of Briscoe's criminal justice division, said copies of the report were delivered to the governor and attorney general.

The report says Hill circumvented the Legislature's expressed intent in refusing to certify his task force members as peace officers and obtaining certificates for them to carry guns through a district attorney.

In addition to questioning arrangements under which the task force members re-

ceived authorization to carry guns, the governor's group criticized Hill's unit for assigning three members of the task force to work with state and local law enforcement agencies.

Flowers also said auditors found poor and inaccurate records, incomplete employee activity and time reports, and a lack of, or weakness in, controls over expenditures.

The audit report questioned 19 financial records and cited a "net overstatement in allowable expenditures of \$3,728."

James said the \$3,728 involved "padding" bookkeeping matters.

The task force director denied the unit has operated illegally and said the group's surveillance and undercover work is authorized under state law.

"Certainly we do surveillance work, undercover police work, general police work — how else can we combat organized crime. We do it and we're proud of it. We're certainly authorized to do it," James said. James questioned the timing of the report's release—10 days after Hill defeated Briscoe in the Democratic primary.

Safety agency levies fines related to grain explosion

By United Press International
DALLAS — The federal government today recommended that Continental Grain Co. be fined more than \$47,000 for willful and serious health and safety violations at a Westwego, La., grain plant that exploded last December killing 36 persons.

The fines were recommended by the Labor Department's Occupational, Safety and Health Administration's regional office in Dallas.

"The OSHA's actions follow the agency's investigation of the explosion at a Continental Grain elevator in the Louisiana town Dec. 22, 1977," an OSHA spokesman said. "The penalties proposed were \$40,000 for eight alleged willful violations, \$7,300 for 10 serious violations and \$100 for one of three violations in other or non-serious categories."

An OSHA official said Continental had 15 days to appeal or pay the fines.

The "willful" violations listed by OSHA included allegations Continental failed to exercise proper safety precautions in using compressed air to blow dust from around machines on the top floor of the grain company's headhouse.

The explosion that killed 36 workers was centered at the 250-foot headhouse, located along the Mississippi River five miles above New Orleans.

OSHA also alleged that Continental violated safety regulations by failing to provide "adequate means for removal of static electricity from the conveyor belts."

Grain dust is highly explosive. Some in-

vestigators have said they thought the blast may have been set off by sparks from one of the conveyor belts used to shuttle grain from ships along the Mississippi River to the plant.

"Among the 10 alleged serious violations, four were cited under the National Electric Code," said an OSHA spokesman. "(They included) not providing proper current-breaking contacts; improper fittings and boxes where dust could enter; using unapproved electric spark-producing equipment, and no grounding for exposed non-current carrying metal parts."

Gas well still burning but reported stable

By United Press International
WALTON, Tex. — A leaking natural gas well that has forced three evacuations in the past six days was reported Tuesday as "uncapped but stable" and burning with a 30-foot flame.

About 110 families who live in the rolling hills surrounding the East Texas well remained barred from their homes, which they had to leave last Thursday, because of the threat of poisonous hydrogen sulfide gas.

A spokesman for the Department of Public Safety in nearby Tyler said capping activity at the well site was at a standstill while workers awaited new strategy and new equipment from Houston.

Ronald Hengen, a spokesman for the N.F.C. Petroleum Corp., owners of the well, said the evacuation was ordered only

as a "precaution." "It is emphasized that at no time has there been any evidence of the escape of hydrogen sulfide beyond the wellsite," he said.

"As previously reported, Red Adair is continuing measures to control the well that blew out when a valve above the drilling platform failed. Heavy duty equipment is being moved to the wellsite and a relief well will be spudded as a further precaution as soon as a rig has been moved on location," he said.

The well first erupted early last week. It blew out again Monday.

County deputies, DPS patrolmen and local police quickly evacuated residents living as far as seven miles from the well. By late evening, the evacuation line was reduced to only two miles.

Man airmails himself out of Saudi Arabia

By United Press International
HOUSTON — A Texas businessman airmailed himself out of Saudi Arabia because of a contract dispute with local Saudi officials, he said. He escaped by air-freighting himself from the Arab country in a packing box.

"It was quite a hair-raising experience and we're glad it's over," Mrs. John L. McDonald said. Mrs. McDonald had been trying to arrange alternate escapes for her husband, such as using a false passport.

McDonald, 47, president of Heritage Building Systems International, said he contracted with the Saudis to supply concrete housing forms. But he said the Saudis claimed the \$400,000 deal included installation of the forms and erection of housing.

On Nov. 19, the Saudi government seized McDonald's passport. Although he was free to roam the country, he said he became convinced he would not be allowed to leave for years, if ever.

"Our contracts were solid. They (the Saudis) didn't say anything about erecting the building until we got there and then

they took my passport," McDonald said. He charged the Saudis later tried to trick him into signing a statement that he had been treated fairly by presenting him one document in English and a different one in Arabic.

"I can read Arabic and they weren't the same as the English documents they wanted me to sign. I told them I would die before I would sign their documents. They told me that could be arranged," he said.

"I prepared the escape for six weeks. I didn't tell anyone but my confederate," McDonald said.

That included his wife, Pat, who was waiting in Houston.

McDonald built a box four feet high, two-and-one-half feet wide and two-and-one-half feet deep with small air holes drilled among crating nails so as not to attract attention. It also had a trap door in the bottom. He tested it for livability.

Then, on May 7, McDonald placed a bag of cement approximating his weight inside the box and had it delivered to the Dhahran airport for clearance through customs.

After customs clearance, McDonald went to the airport and slipped inside through the trap door while guards weren't looking. When the box was unloaded at a European airport, he climbed out and declared himself. He arrived in Houston May 8.

McDonald said he lost 158 days work time and probably \$82,000 the Saudi government owe him. He said he will continue business with other Middle East countries but not Saudi Arabia. He blamed the Saudi government and official American passiveness.

"There are hundreds of Americans locked up unjustly in Saudi Arabia every

year and nothing is done," McDonald said. "It goes all the way back to Washington. They're anxious to prove they're nice guys."

He said he has turned the matter over to a law firm for possible legal action but was not optimistic because "they don't have any civil courts over there."

McDonald declined to identify the people who helped him, the European city where he emerged from the box or the air route he flew from Saudi Arabia.

"I'm not saying what city or what airport because that might affect some other people," he said.

Outcome of pari-mutuel vote uncertain

By United Press International
AUSTIN — The canvass of votes in the Democratic and Republican primary elections Tuesday showed Attorney General John Hill and Bill Clements as winners of the nominations for governor, but left considerable doubt concerning the outcome of a referendum on pari-mutuel betting.

The State Democratic Executive Committee took no action concerning the pari-mutuel vote, and the State Republican Executive Committee canvass reversed the earlier apparent outcome favoring the legalized horse race betting.

The SREC tally showed the issue was defeated by GOP voters 74,281 to 69,638. Unofficial returns compiled by the Texas Election Bureau had indicated Republicans approved the issue by a slight margin.

SDEC chairman Calvin Guest said Tuesday there were more than 30 counties which still had not reported the outcome of the pari-mutuel vote to the party headquarters, and said the results will be announced by a June 13 SDEC meeting (see related story, this page).

The vote canvass Tuesday showed Hill received 51.43 percent of the vote in the Democratic primary, compiling 932,338 votes to 753,305 for Gov. Dolph Briscoe, 14,785 for Donald R. Beagle, 20,274 for Ray Allen Mayo and 92,088 for former Gov. Preston Smith.

The tally also showed Rep. Bob Krueger, D-Texas, the winner of the Democratic nomination for the U.S. Senate with 853,460 votes to

Christie's 707,738; Warren G. Harding won the Democratic nomination for state treasurer with 816,334 votes to 491,615 for Harry Ledbetter and 208,012 for Charles R. Sanderson; and showed Jerry Sadler and John Poerner in a runoff for the nomination to a Railroad Commission seat.

The final count gave Sadler 656,069 to Poerner's 408,283, Jake

Johnson's 213,051 and Ray Lemon's 164,121. Reagan Brown was officially declared the Democratic nominee for agriculture commissioner, compiling 741,213 votes to Joe Hubenak's 414,161 and Don G. Sewell's 256,490.

Comptroller Bob Bullock, who was unopposed in the primary, was the top Democratic vote getter with 1,141,032.

Backers of pari-mutuel gambling want to delay referendum results

By United Press International
AUSTIN — Backers of a move to legalize pari-mutuel horse race gambling in Texas said Tuesday they will take legal action to delay announcement of the outcome of the referendum in the Democratic primary because of allegations of vote irregularities.

Al Pujol of Houston, past chairman of the Texas Horseracing Association, and Tom Russell, executive secretary of the Texas Thoroughbred Breeders Association, said they have reason to believe there were frequent transpositions in reporting of results on the pari-mutuel referendum. He said one concerned higher interest rates on small loans and that ineligible voters were allowed to vote in the election in some counties.

The Texas Election Bureau reported the referendum had been

soundly defeated, but the State Democratic Executive Committee Tuesday did not consider the vote because of incomplete returns. The State Republican Executive Committee certified results showing GOP voters had defeated the referendum rather than approving it as originally indicated by the TEB.

Pujol said backers of the pari-mutuel issue had attempted to independently tabulate returns from each of the state's 254 counties.

"The last tally we had showed us with a 20,000 vote majority, but there are some counties we haven't even counted," he said. "We're in the process of attempting to get a temporary restraining order that would allow us to go county by county and box by box to find the truth."

"I can tell you there's no 60-40 margin. We think we won it,"

Pujol said. The referendum is nonbinding, but was considered an indication to the 1979 legislator of voters' sentiments concerning the gambling issue.

Pujol said his group has discovered errors in reporting of votes that resulted in switching of more than 30,000 votes, but conceded there is little chance for an accurate recount of votes on a statewide basis.

"I don't think the results will ever be known, but it'll be real close," he said.

He said the pari-mutuel was listed as proposition No. 1 on the ballot in some areas, but as proposition No. 2 in others. Compilation of the votes often confused the horse race issue with a vote on higher interest rates for small loans, he said.

Billy Carter to talk at graduation in small Colorado farming town

By United Press International
ARAPAHOE, Colo. — This tiny eastern Colorado farming town has a population of 65 and nine graduating high school seniors. Commencement exercises are expected to draw up to 5,000.

The reason is — Billy Carter is coming to town.

"I'm not really sure, but I think we'll have anywhere from 3,000 to 5,000 here. Some people have been talking about 35,000, but I doubt that," Dr. Harold Tuttle, superintendent of Arapahoe District R-3, said.

Carter, the loquacious brother of the president, has agreed to speak to the nine graduating seniors of Arapahoe High School Wednesday night. Although he normally charges a fee, this time Carter has agreed to speak for free.

Arapahoe, which has no motels, no cafes and only one gasoline station, is preparing as well as it can for the huge number of visitors. The ceremonies will be held in the football field west of the main school building, the only place that can be found to hold all the people.

"If it rains or the wind blows we'll be in trouble," Tuttle said. "We'll have to move into the school gymnasium, which can hold about 1,600. But we don't have any

place for anyone to stay or to eat. "There's a couple of motels down at Cheyenne Wells (nine miles away) and some over at Burlington (45 miles), or they can go to Sharon Springs in Kansas."

Tuttle said the school had persuaded the 75-piece band from Limon High School to perform at the exercises because Arapahoe's band only has six musicians. The entire school system, which covers 450 square miles, only has 70 students in grades kindergarten through 12.

Service today for graduate math assistant

Graveside services for John Bennet Voorhees, a graduate teaching assistant in the Mathematics department at Texas A&M University will be held at 2 p.m.

Voorhees, 25, died Saturday. The Dallas native, a resident of College Station for the past seven years, received a bachelor's degree in physics from Texas A&M in 1976.