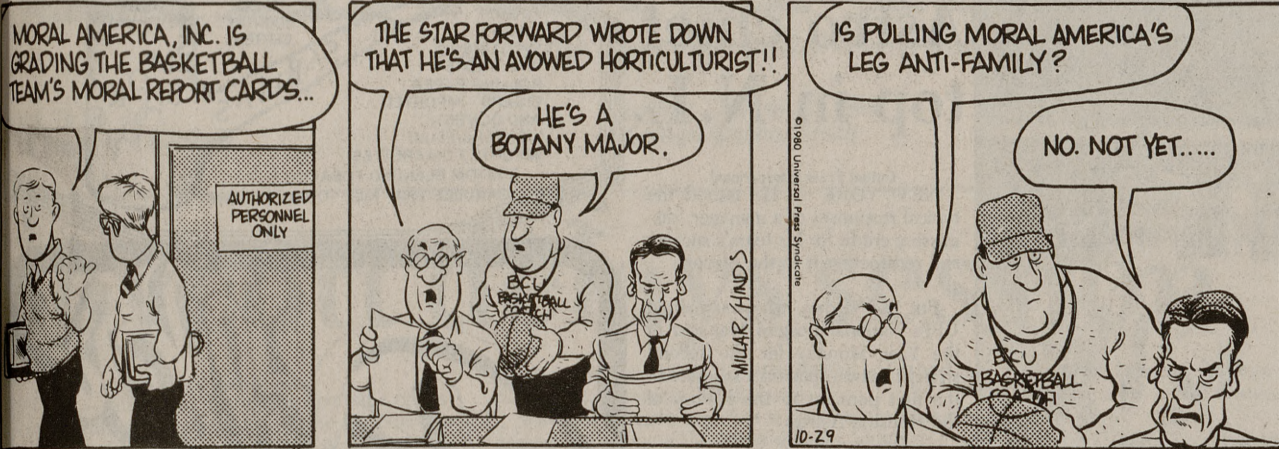


TANK McNAMARA

by Jeff Millar & Bill Hinds



Houston angry over Smith firing
McMullen says Astros' team 'not a winner'

United Press International
HOUSTON — Forget the standings. Forget first place. Forget the thrilling, five-game National League championship series against Philadelphia. Houston Astros owner John McMullen says his team is not a winner.

And in the sense that the Astros were 93-70 instead of 162-0 in 1980 and that they made baseball's Final Four but not its Final One, the white-haired millionaire from New York was correct.

But wasn't this the Astros' greatest season? Didn't they win their first ever division title?

"That's different. That's not a winner," McMullen said.

On a Tuesday afternoon in the security-tight bowels of the Astrodome, reporters trickled in and out one or two at a time for scheduled 15-minute audiences with the man who 24 hours earlier fired — without giving a reason — Tal Smith, president of the Astros and the National League's executive of the year.

With new Astros President Al Rosen sitting mutely at the side of his new boss, McMullen apologized for the interview format. He thought reporters might be "inhibited" at a news conference. McMullen invited his guests to play "devil's advocate" and denied that his need for adulation required Smith be canned — an evaluation made by McMullen's own partners in the team's ownership.

"In the first place I don't think I

have an ego," said McMullen, whose news releases refer to him as "Dr." McMullen in recognition of his engineering Ph.D.

"That (ego) is not my problem and never has been. I'm a relatively secure person. The people with egos are always the people who are very insecure. This (Smith's firing) has nothing to do with me personally."

Repeatedly, McMullen was asked where Smith went wrong, what mistakes had been made in transforming 1975's fifth place finishers into 1979's second place team and 1980's NL West champs.

"I'm just not going to go into all these details," he said. "It serves no purpose at this point. I apologize and I appreciate your interest in finding out, but I just don't choose to go into every single one of these details."

Considering the team's accomplishments, could Smith's firing be characterized as inconsistent, unusual or surprising?

"I can accept that, that could be an interpretation, yes," McMullen said. "But on the other hand there could be — look, Tal's been here for five years and as I keep saying, I think it's my responsibility to try to do better. Certainly I feel like what I'm doing is an improvement for the organization."

And later:
UPI: What can Al do for you, what difference can he make?
McMullen: I don't know, you'll have to ask him.
UPI: You hired him.

McMullen: I know I did.
UPI: You must have been sold on him. You got rid of one of baseball's acknowledged best executives. What has Al shown you?
McMullen: Well, he hasn't shown me anything yet. That remains to be seen and next year will be the test and I happen to think it will be better. If I'm wrong I'm sorry but I don't think I am. But I made this decision and I think it's the proper decision.

Ag Reunion Rodeo to be held in Snook

By RICHARD OLIVER
Sports Editor

Fall brings us football, sweaters and cool weather. This weekend, autumn brings us the annual All-Aggie Reunion Rodeo.

Sponsored by the Texas Aggie Rodeo Association and the Texas A&M Rodeo Club, the event will bring together Aggie riders from all over the country to participate in what is becoming a Texas A&M tradition.

The rodeo, to be held in Snook at 8 p.m., starts Friday and will continue through Sunday. Events are open to past and present students, faculty and staff.

On Friday, one of the main events takes place — steer riding. That contest is open to four-man corps outfits, clubs or simply individuals, with prizes awarded to winners. There will be divisions for men, women or mixed. The individual entry fee will be \$10, and teams of four will be \$40.

Also Friday, the Association will sponsor a Jick-O-Ween dance at the Starlight Ballroom from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. Saturday.

Other events featured during the rodeo will be: bareback riding, saddle bronc, bull riding, calf roping, team roping, girls breakaway, steer wrestling, barrel racing and goat tying. Entry fees for those events range from \$20 to \$30.

Persons interested in participating in the rodeo should call in entries to 272-8826 between 7 and 10 p.m. today through Thursday. For additional information, call 696-2188.

Tickets for the dance may be picked up at a booth the rodeo club has in the MSC, at Court's Western Wear or from any club member.

Club member Rick Ensor will be riding across campus on a horse today passing out leaflets concerning the rodeo. He will leave the Animal Food and Science Center at approximately 12 noon and ride over to the drill field.

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Texas 100 scheduled

Texas World Speedway will hold the Texas 100 on Nov. 9.

The race will feature the best short track drivers from Texas and surrounding states, and will be contested in two halves around the Global 250 at the Speedway.

Several name racers will participate in this year's race, including Robin McCall, a female racer who made her mark last year when she graduated to full size stock cars after starting out in midget categories. McCall won the National Quarter Midget Championship two years ago.

She was the first lady ever to enter the Texas Race of Champions last March in College Station, which is the state stock car racing championship.

Another racer present will be Terry Edwards, 16, who hails from Castroville. He finished third for the year at the HiWay 16 race track in San Antonio, and was voted rookie of the year at that track.

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