



Fond memories

Bryant's friends recall 'a great man'

by Frank L. Christlieb

Battalion Staff
Friends, former Texas A&M football players and associates of Paul "Bear" Bryant say the former coach of the Alabama Crimson Tide left an unremovable mark on many people during his 38-year coaching career.

Bryant, who died of a heart attack Wednesday afternoon in Tuscaloosa, Ala., coached the Aggie football team during the 1954-57 seasons before moving on to his position at Alabama. He retired from the profession after coaching a record 323rd victory in the Crimson Tide's defeat of Illinois in the Liberty Bowl last month.

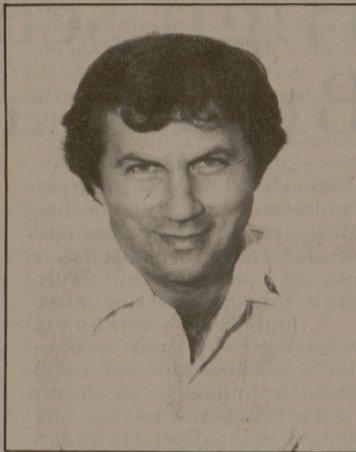
Aggie secondary coach Curley Hallman, who worked under Bryant from 1973-77, says the experience had a strong impact on his life.

"Coaching for him for four years gave me the opportunity that I didn't have for four years as a player under him," Hallman said Wednesday. "It was a big break in my life, and I look back and it's still hard to comprehend that Coach Bryant's no longer with us. His impact on people and the game of football will go on for years and years because of the people he's coached who are all around."

"It's a very sad day — I don't think it's hit home yet. I don't think we'll see another one like him."

Hallman, who played for Coach Gene Stallings' Aggie football squad during 1966-68, said: "There may be someone to break his record, but there just won't be another one really like him. I'm just thankful for having the contact with him and being able to learn about the way he deals with people and his players."

"I've never heard anyone who's said they played for Ala-



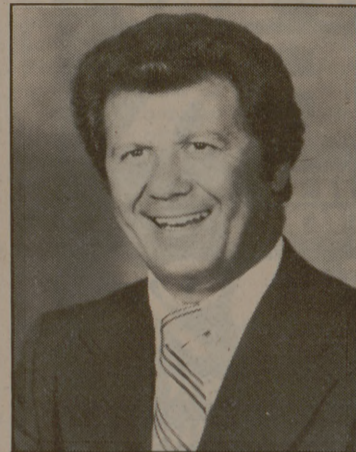
Coach Curley Hallman says Bryant's influence strong

bama. People always say they played for Coach Bryant, and that's the way I am about it. Instead of saying that I coached for Alabama, I say that I've coached for Bear Bryant for four years."

During August 1954, Bryant's first season with the Aggies, he drew national attention after taking the team more than 200 miles to Junction to hold summer workouts. Bryant took three busloads (96 players) to the West Texas town to spend time working out in the 110-degree heat, but the team returned in only one busload after 69 of the players couldn't complete the two weeks of practice.

The trip to Junction and recruiting violations by Bryant and his staff cost the Aggies two years of probation.

Marvin Tate, a Texas A&M Athletic Department official until 1981 and a starting senior offensive guard during the 1954 season, described the trip as an attempt "to build a oneness and a team togetherness." One of the 96 "Junction Boys" who made



Former AD Marvin Tate: 'We've lost a great man.'

the trip, Tate said the two weeks weren't easy.

"He brought us out to Junction to live, eat, sleep and play football for two weeks," Tate said. "He saw it as a resort area, even though he had never seen the place. They had had the worst draught there in 25 years, I think."

"We lived in little tent-like setups — they had floors, but no air conditioning or anything. It was hot as the devil in the middle of August, and it was a tremendous strain physically and mentally. Those who could handle it stayed and those who couldn't quit."

Like many of Bryant's other players, Tate said that his former coach has had a strong influence on his life.

"The 'great' is overused,"

Tate said, "but we've lost a great man. He's had a tremendous influence on my life just like everyone else he's been in contact with. He's a leader. He's set an example and has set a mark (his 323 career victories) that I don't think will be topped."

"He's a class person, and anybody who's ever been associated with him has been better for it. It's hard to explain to people who haven't had the opportunity to work for him or play for him. I guess you could say he was the first one there and the last one to leave, and he never asked anyone to do anything that he wouldn't have done better himself."

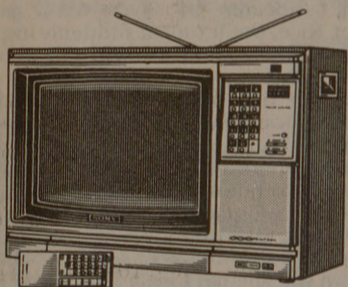
"One thing that Coach Bryant had the ability to do is that if you played for him or coached for him, he'd never forget you," he said. "He was always glad to see you and he made you feel welcome. If you tried, then he respected you for it."

Dennis Goehring, who played for Bryant from 1954-56 and is now president of the College Station Industrial Development Foundation, said he considered Bryant's "life is a football game" philosophy an important one.

"It's a sad day for me," said Goehring, an all-American guard in 1956 and an all-conference performer in 1955 and 1956. "There are very few people who have had that much impact on my life, but he had a greater impact on my life than any one individual I've ever known."

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