

Judge Ruffino visits Aggieworld

See page 5

Attorney General hearings begin

See page 9

Baltimore Colts may go to Indianapolis

See page 12

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Candidates withdraw

United Press International

Walter Mondale said Thursday he no longer is the front-runner in the battle for the Democratic presidential nomination, while Sen. Ernest Hollings and former Florida Gov. Reubin Askew dropped out of the race, narrowing the field to five.

"It is clearly a two-man race and it is very close," said Mondale, who was upset by Sen. Gary Hart in New Hampshire earlier this week. "Forget all that front-runner talk; it's all over."

Mondale said he sees a two-way battle with the Colorado senator that could go all the way to the San Francisco convention.

The former vice president said he will change his strategy and take on Hart head to head — a tactic that ig-

nores the significance of Sen. John Glenn's continuing campaign.

Also still in the running are civil rights activist Jesse Jackson and former Sen. George McGovern, the Democratic presidential candidate in 1972 who may withdraw after the Massachusetts primary March 13.

Hollings and Askew, both broke and badly beaten in the season opening Iowa caucuses and the New Hampshire primary, pulled out — one day after Sen. Alan Cranston of California became the first casualty in the original eight-man race.

Askew's withdrawal could have a major impact on the primary in his native Florida where the latest polls showed him running a weak second behind Mondale but ahead of Glenn and Hart.

Askew freed his delegates, telling them to choose a new candidate, which could mean a boost for Glenn or a possible opening for Hart who has not filed delegates in all districts.

In a Washington news conference, Mondale said he clearly has failed to get his message across to the voters and he now will climb into the trenches to fight with Hart because he feels that is what the voters want.

Mondale — criticized as a captive of special interests — said he will change his campaign tactics to engage in more people-oriented events rather than organizational events.

Asked why he did poorly in New Hampshire, he said: "Partly that I haven't joined the issue directly with an opponent. I have not spent a lot of time defining where I am different."

He said that had ended and he gave an example, accusing Hart of claiming to be for a nuclear freeze when he had worked against it after waffling for months.

Earlier Hollings, the tart-tongued Southerner, announced his withdrawal decision in Washington, following weak showings in Iowa and New Hampshire.

"The usual statement is, something funny happened to me on the way to the White House," Hollings said. "Nothing happened to me on the way to the White House."

Hollings predicted Mondale will win the nomination and ridiculed Hart's "new ideas" campaign.

Several hours after Hollings made his announcement, Askew joined him on the sidelines.

Expected Beirut agreement not announced by Gemayel

United Press International

BEIRUT — President Amin Gemayel ended a Damascus summit with Syrian President Hafez Assad Thursday without announcing an expected agreement to Syrian demands that he scrap Lebanon's peace accord with Israel.

In Paris, the French Foreign Ministry said the presence of its forces in Beirut was no longer "appropriate" following the collapse of a French-sponsored resolution to replace them with U.N. troops.

But French Defense Minister Charles Hernu said France would not "for the moment" withdraw its 1,300-man contingent.

The plan to send U.S. troops to Beirut was vetoed by the Soviet Union Wednesday in the Security Council out of Moscow's desire to bring a "just and lasting peace" to Lebanon, the official Soviet news agency Tass said.

Gemayel described his four-hour

meeting with Syrian President Hafez Assad as "quite excellent" but did not elaborate before leaving the Syrian capital, state-run Beirut television said.

Official Syrian television said one government source described the talks as "positive and fruitful."

The TV commentator also said "President Assad assured Mr. Gemayel that Syria will help Lebanon retain its Arab character and the unity of its territory and people."

There was no immediate official word on Lebanon's May 17 peace agreement with Israel, which Gemayel has been expected to abandon under pressure from Syria and Syrian-backed Moslem rebels fighting his minority Christian government in Lebanon.

Gemayel's departure from Damascus was similar to his arrival Wednesday, with bands playing the Lebanese and Syrian anthems and soldiers fir-

ing a 21-gun salute at Damascus airport.

Syrian television showed Foreign Minister Abdel Halim Khaddam clasp Gemayel's hands and shaking them warmly. Smiling broadly, officials of both countries hugged and kissed each other goodbye.

A Beirut television reporter who returned from Damascus said Gemayel was expected to arrive Friday in Beirut, but did not say where the president was staying overnight. Some reports had him headed to Saudi Arabia, a mediator in the Lebanese crisis.

Rebel Druze Moslem leader Walid Jumblatt, who made a surprise return to the Lebanese capital Thursday after 10 months of self-exile, called Gemayel's visit to Damascus a "victory for Syria over the United States."

The Syrian-backed rebel leader, who narrowly escaped assassination in Beirut in December 1982, also re-

peated his call for Gemayel's resignation.

"We cannot have respect for Amin Gemayel because he bears responsibility for the Shouf mountain war, the massacres of Sabra and Chatila and the destruction of the suburbs," Jumblatt told Druze radio.

Jumblatt also said abrogation of the May 17 troop withdrawal accord, which ended a state of war with Israel, would not in itself solve Lebanon's internal problems.

In Tel Aviv, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir warned that scrapping the agreement would be a "grave step" for Lebanon and amount to the country relinquishing its territorial sovereignty.

Despite the diplomatic activity aimed at quelling nine years of civil war, persistent sniper fire erupted along the "green line" that separates Beirut into its Christian and Moslem halves.

Iraq claims sinking Iranian ships

United Press International

Iraq said its warplanes and ships sank seven Iranian ships Thursday in the Persian Gulf in a new attempt to threaten Iran's economic lifeline by blockading its oil shipping route.

Iran said its forces in the 42-month-old Gulf War launched yet another ground attack Wednesday night, seizing a strategic bridge on the southern front and wiping out an Iraqi brigade.

The official Iraqi news agency INA said Iraq's air and sea attack took place in the narrow Khor Moussa inlet, a narrow channel in the approaches to Iran's Bandar Khomeini port.

"The destroyed targets were seen

gutted by fire and then swallowed by the waters of the sea," Iraq said, but it gave no details about the vessels allegedly attacked.

"Iraqi naval and air force units destroyed today seven enemy naval targets in the Arab Gulf and shot down two enemy jets elsewhere in the battlefield," a military spokesman said.

Traders on the London shipping and insurance markets said they had no independent news from the area to confirm or deny the Iraqi report.

"As before, it's a case of claim and counter-claim. We have no direct word from shipping in the area because tankers observe radio silence in the Gulf beyond the Strait of Hor-

muz," a spokesman at Lloyd's insurance said.

"The destruction of the naval targets is a further demonstration of the capability of Iraqi armed forces to continue blockading enemy ports," an Iraqi military spokesman said.

The reports raised new concern that Iran might close the Strait of Hormuz to shipping — cutting off Western oil supplies not only from Iran but Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates as well.

Some 20 percent of the Western world's oil flows through the 40-mile wide strait in giant supertankers. Iran has said that if its oil shipments are hampered "not one drop" of oil

will be allowed to pass through the strait.

President Reagan has said the United States would not allow the strait to be closed.

The air war also escalated. Iraq said it shot down two of Iran's U.S.-built Phantom fighters on the southern battlefield. Iran said it shot down an Iraqi Sukhoi-22 fighter early Thursday.

Reports from both sides indicated fierce fighting raged in the southern marshlands to the north and east of Basra, Iraq's second largest city and the gateway for the country's imports.

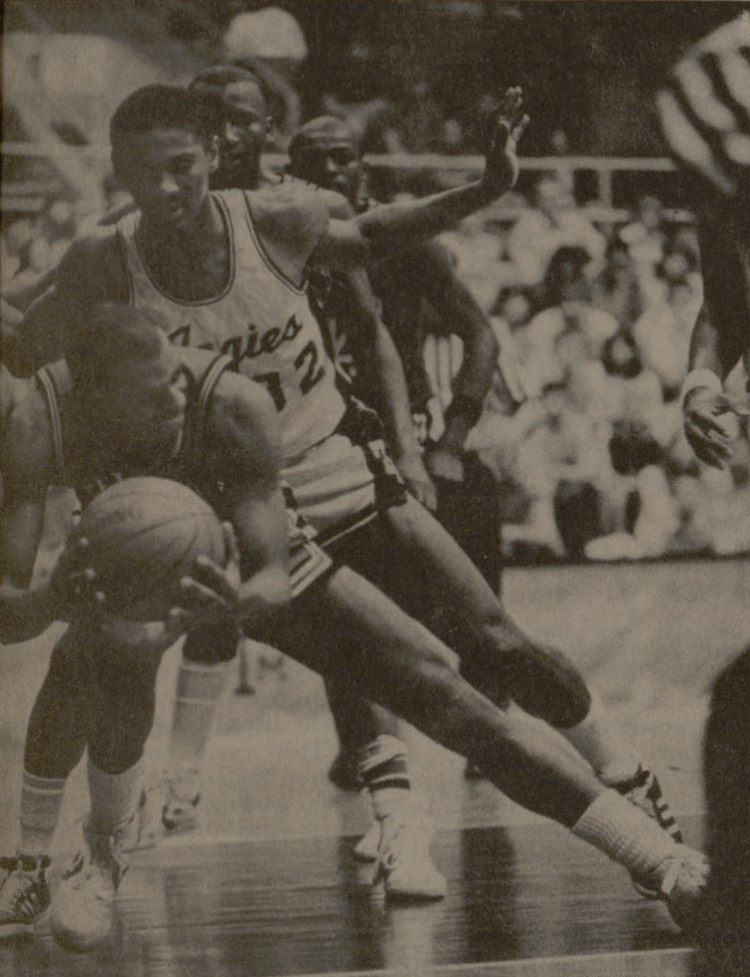


Photo by BILL HUGHES

Ags lose finale

The Aggies lost their last regular season game 62-53 to Texas Tech Thursday night. See story page 11.

O'Neill considers retiring from office

United Press International

WASHINGTON — House Speaker Thomas O'Neill said Thursday he will remain in office no longer than 1986 — one more term — but did not indicate he might not serve out the whole term if a Democrat wins the election.

O'Neill, questioned about reports that he would like to retire and be named ambassador to Ireland, said he would "guarantee" to stay in office "at least 100 days" to help any Democrat who might succeed Reagan.

But O'Neill, 71, said he would stay at least 100 days so I can help guide him... or maybe longer."

O'Neill said he is sure he could be re-elected to another two-year term. "I'm in pretty good shape at home," he said.

He also said he will run for another term in the fall "no matter who gets elected."

Reporters asked O'Neill about his plans after reports in the New York Times, The Boston Globe and The Wall Street Journal quoting him as saying he would serve one more term and then probably retire.

Talking with reporters in his office shortly before the House convened, O'Neill suggested with a broad smile that he had not been serious when he told Martin Tolchin of the Times he would like to become the ambassador to Ireland "or some place like that."

O'Neill, who has endorsed former Vice President Walter Mondale's presidential candidacy, agreed that the victory of Sen. Gary Hart, D-Colo., in the New Hampshire primary had slowed Mondale.

"I thought it would be all over by Saint Patrick's Day," he said. "But he's going to make a fight out of it."

O'Neill said he will continue to support Mondale and will "walk the streets of Boston" to help his campaign if asked.

House Democratic leader Jim Wright, a likely successor to O'Neill when he leaves office, was present during O'Neill's chat with reporters.

Barroom rape trial of 6 continues

United Press International

FALL RIVER, Mass. — Prosecutors in the trial of six men charged in the barroom rape of a young mother said Thursday they will subpoena a news reporter who wrote that one defendant told him the woman wanted sex and "kept coming on to me" in the tavern.

Bristol County District Attorney Ronald Pina asked Boston Herald reporter John Impemba to appear Monday in Superior Court to answer questions about his interview with defendant Victor Raposo. The Herald published the story Thursday.

Pina also called Herald Editor Joe Robinowitz and James Ragsdale, editor of the New Bedford Standard-Times. Impemba worked for the New Bedford paper when he conducted the jailhouse interview last

August at Raposo's request. That paper never published it.

The Herald said Raposo's story differed sharply from testimony given earlier this week by the 22-year-old woman, who testified the defendants grabbed her, threw her on the pool table at the Big Dan's tavern in New Bedford last March 6 and raped her as two other men tried to force her to perform other sex acts.

But Raposo, 23, told the reporter that the woman "kept coming on to me" and that she initiated sex with defendant Daniel Silva.

"They make this girl sound like a goody two-shoes, and she's not," Raposo was quoted as saying.

Assistant District Attorney Raymond Veary said prosecutors want to question Impemba and the two editors about "what inconsistencies there may be between what's in the

story and what's not in the story."

Carlos Machado, the bartender at Big Dan's Tavern at the time, testified at the unusual tandem trial — with four defendants tried in the mornings and two in the afternoons — that he saw only one man actually having sexual intercourse with the woman.

Machado told the jury he saw Silvia "on top of her doing piggy things."

He contradicted the woman's earlier testimony that defendant Joseph Vieira also had raped her, saying that when Vieira tried to climb on top of her the woman "jumped and ran" from the barroom.

Machado added that he had tried to stop the incident, saying he had yelled "stop that, stop that" when he saw Silvia trying to tear off the woman's jeans.

"It was such a quick thing," said Machado, who testified in Portuguese, his remarks translated into English by a court interpreter. "I don't know how it got started."

When two defendants dragged the woman onto the bar's pool table, he again yelled at them to "stop that. Finish that. Leave the girl alone," Machado said.

In his cross-examination of Machado, defense lawyer Kenneth Sullivan said police reports from an unrelated incident last October indicated the bartender told officers he had "spoken with the devil."

But Machado said he did not remember making that statement when police arrived at his home to investigate reports of a disturbance.

Under further questioning by Sullivan, Machado said police had been called to the now-closed bar at least 50 times in its last year of operations.

In Today's Battalion

Local

- An Ultimate Frisbee tournament is scheduled for this weekend on the drill fields. See story page 3.
- A median is being constructed on Harvey Road to help maintain traffic flow. See story page 3.
- Gov. Mark White dropped in on College Station Thursday to endorse Neeley Lewis for the District 14 House seat. See story page 6.

State

- Students at the University of Texas raised such a fuss over the new location of graduation ceremonies that officials were forced to move it back to the original location. See story page 7.