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Photo by Robert W. Rizzo

Just A Little Wink

Grant Castleberry gets a better look at freshman Kenneth Myers of I-1 in final review from the shoulders of his grandfather, Bob Myers. Castleberry's father, Kelly, was A&M Corps commander in 1982. Castleberry was lost in action in September while flying a mission in an F-4 over the Atlantic Ocean.

Lawmakers push for Senate debate on tax proposal

AUSTIN (AP) — Two Republican lawmakers and an anti-income tax group urged Lt. Gov. Bill Hobby Tuesday to allow Senate debate on a proposed constitutional amendment to require voter approval before imposing an income tax.

"All the people who ran for office this last year . . . Democrat and Republican, liberal and conservative, said they are against a state income tax," said Sen. Buster Brown, R-Lake Jackson. "Let's let the people of Texas have a say."

Richard Ford, chairman of Texans Against State Income Taxes, said voters often decide major issues and an income tax should be treated the same way.

"We're here today to tell the lieutenant governor and the Texas Senate that we're tired of horsing around about income taxes," Ford said. "We're tired of being saddled with the threat of a state income tax."

Ford noted that voters in November will vote on a proposal to legalize pari-mutuel wagering on horse racing.

"We want to tell the Senate and Lt. Gov. Hobby that if they think we're intelligent and smart enough to make the proper decision about horse racing, certainly Texans are smart enough to make the right decision about a state income tax," he said.

The House last month passed the proposed constitutional amendment, but it since has been stuck in the Senate, where it hasn't even been the subject of a committee hearing.

Rep. Bill Ceverha, R-Dallas, said he is convinced a majority of senators would vote to place the amendment on the ballot if the measure could reach the Senate floor.

"The obvious key is Lt. Gov. Hobby (who presides over the Senate)," Ceverha said. "If he wants to let the people have a choice on this, it'll happen. There's no doubt about it. The votes are there in the Senate."

Brown said he also thinks there is sufficient Senate support to approve the proposal, but that they don't think it will ever reach the floor for a vote.

"When asked, 'Will you vote for this on the floor?' the response is, 'This is not coming out of committee,' " Brown said.

But Brown said he believes the issue is of such importance to the average citizen that the tax ban question belongs on the ballot.

"It is such a fundamental issue to the people of Texas . . . I think that should not be a decision that's made by a legislative body. It ought to be made by the people," he said.

3 people die in fires; burglar bars prevent attempts to escape

DALLAS (AP) — Three people trapped in their homes by burglar bars burned to death within an hour of each other as neighbors frantically tried to free them, police said.

An elderly Fort Worth couple who nailed plywood across their windows and chained the doors shut were killed in a one-alarm fire early Monday when neighbors were unable to rescue them, fire officials said.

And in Dallas, a 19-year-old man was killed and eight others were injured as fire swept through their house, officials said. Neighbors used a sledgehammer to break through burglar bars on the windows to rescue the family.

Arthur A. Branch, 81, and his wife, Alice, 84, were pronounced dead in a Fort Worth hospital shortly after being taken from their home. Passer-by Tom McIntire said he and a neighbor found Branch within six inches of a locked back door. Branch's wife was found on a nearby sofa.

The would-be rescuers kicked a hole in the bottom of the door, but they were stymied by a heavy chain that ran across the door, which also was secured by two night chains, said Fire Captain W.E. Dunkin.

McIntire said, "The smoke was unbearable. The place wasn't suitable for living — not the way it was boarded up."

Branch barricaded the house about 10 years ago at the request of his wife because "she felt like someone was always trying to break in," said her 71-year-old sister, Jewel Wheat.

Dunkin said the fire apparently started near a gas space heater in the bedroom.

In the Dallas incident, firefighters found Curtis Taylor Jr. under a mattress and box spring in his bedroom. He died of smoke inhalation and heat exposure, medical examiners said.

Taylor's wife, four of his brothers, a sister, a niece and nephew escaped.

"The smoke was unbearable. The place wasn't suitable for living — not the way it was boarded up."
— Tom McIntire, eyewitness

"They were inside beating on the windows, but they couldn't get out because of the bars," said neighbor Donald Evans, who along with his brother and father broke the bars and pulled family members out.

The fire, which began in the living room, apparently was accidental, investigators said.

Some neighbors recalled a similar fatality in their neighborhood last summer, when burglar bars prevented a man from escaping a fire in his home.

"I would never have them (burglar bars)," neighbor John Beck said.

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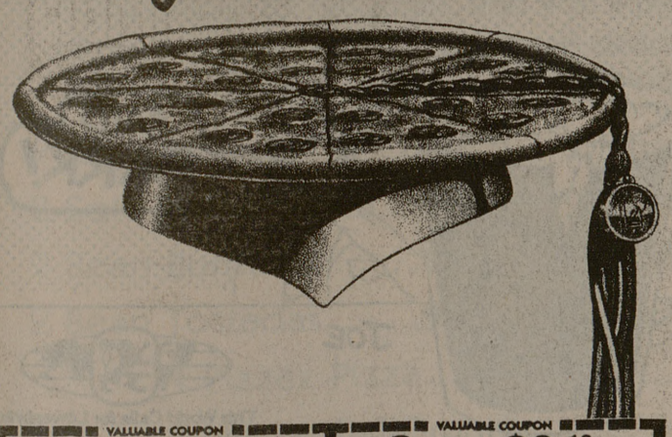

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