Gore gains endorsements from 63 Texas Democrats

AUSTIN (AP) — Presidential hopeful Al Gore won endorsements Tuesday from 63 more Texas Democrats, including former Gov. Dolph Briscoe, who predicted the Tennessee senator could reclaim voters lost to Republicans in recent elections.

"Sen. Gore can, while holding the mainstream of the Democratic Party organization in this state, appeal to those and will bring back those who have been lost in elections in the past," Briscoe said.

"That, in my opinion, will make the difference here and make it possible for him as the Democratic nominee to carry this state," Briscoe, governor from 1973 to 1978, said.

Gore predicted he would win more Texas delegates to the Democratic National Convention in the March 8 primary and be one of the top two finishers in the "Super Tuesday" southern regional primary. Texas will send 198 delegates to the convention, the third-largest delegation.

Downplaying the importance of the first-in-the-nation Iowa precinct caucuses, Gore said that contest has lost significance when compared with the multi-state "Super Tuesday" primary.

"This (Super Tuesday) contest has revolutionized the process to an extent that many have not yet realized," he said. "There's a tendency on the part of many other campaigns to fight the last war and bet all their chips on Iowa and just assume that 3 percent of the people in one state that have gone Republican for the last 24 years will have the sole voice in determining who the Democratic nominee is."

The comments came during a news conference in which Gore and Briscoe were joined by Dallas financier Jess Hay and other Democratic civic and business leaders endorsed Gore.

Democrats must recapture support among middle-class voters if they hope to win the White House this year, Hay said.

"The Democratic Party has lost four of the last five presidential elections," he said. "It has done so in part because its candidates in those elections failed to relate their policies and programs effectively to the mainstream of American society.

"We have evaluated the seven people now seeking the Democratic nomination. . . . It is our considered judgment that Sen. Al Gore is the the one whose policies are most reflective of these broadly stated objectives."

Among others endorsing Gore were former Attorney General John Ben Sheppard, former Railroad Commission members Buddy Temple and Jon Newton, former state Sen. Peyton McKnight as well as former U.S. ambassador Edward Clark.

In other political news Tuesday:

- Texas Republicans began phoning voters whose names appeared on the nominating petitions for all six GOP presidential candidates after party officials decided to include all six on the March 8 primary ballot.

But if a candidate failed to submit the valid signatures of 5,000 qualified voters, he won't receive votes in the primary, John Weaver, GOP executive director, said.

Court removes legal guardian of millionaire

HOUSTON (AP) — The father of multimillionaire Ugo di Portanova was removed as his son's guardian after he failed to comply with a court order to show how $16 million of the son's trust fund was spent.

Probate Judge John Hutchinson ordered Paolo di Portanova on Monday to return all assets of his son's estate in his possession to River Oaks Bank & Trust Co., guardian of Ugo's estate, and to file an accounting of how Ugo's money was spent.

Ugo di Portanova, 51, is trying to get himself declared mentally competent by Texas courts.

The judge removed the elder di Portanova after he failed to comply with a November order to show why he should not file an annual accounting of how his son's funds are spent. He had been guardian of Ugo since 1967, when a Texas court declared Ugo incompetent to handle his affairs because of a schizophrenic condition.

Barmaids testify against constable before conviction

BROWNSVILLE(AP) — After three barmaids testified a Cameron County constable forced them to go to a motel where they said he raped one of them, the constable was convicted on four counts of official oppression.

Constable Albert Tovar, 32, of La Feria, had testified that he was investigating the consumption of alcohol by minors and an alleged prostitution ring located at El Tenampa bar in Santa Rosa during the July 24 incident.

Tovar testified he and a friend were approached at the bar several times by barmaids offering sex for money, and that he called other law enforcement agencies for assistance before detaining 18 illegal alien women.

He also arrested the bar's bouncer for alleged disorderly conduct.

Fifteen of the women were turned over to police, who then turned them over to U.S. Border Patrol agents.

Tovar was accused of misusing his power as an elected law enforcement offical to illegally detain three of the barmaids and unlawfully arrest the bouncer.

The three women testified he took them against their will to a motel in the Hidalgo County city of Mercedes and then raped one of them.

Tovar took the Fifth Amendment — his right not to incriminate himself — when questioned about his actions at the motel.

"I feel like I got injustice," Tovar said after the trial Monday.

"I'm going to appeal. Even if it has to go to the Supreme Court, we'll see justice done."

A jury in state district court on Monday recommended one year of probation and a $1,000 fine on each of the four counts.

Judge Gilberto Hinojosa set Tovar's sentencing for Jan. 22.

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Art and reason

When Mark and I decided to spend the weekend at his mother's house, I never imagined I would be walking into a mouse's nightmare. There were cats everywhere.

Cat plaques, cat statues, cat clocks, even a cat mat. I couldn't begin to duplicate her collection of kitty litter if I spent a year at a garage sale. Conspicuously absent, however, was a real cat. Strange, I thought, and began to fear that a weekend with cat woman could be a lot less than purr-fect.

But then she came home, and Mark introduced her. She was dressed surprisingly well—no leopard pants. In fact, you could say she was the cat's meow, but I'd rather not.

She offered me a cup of Dutch Chocolate Mint. Now that was something I could relate to. Then she brought it out in the most beautiful, distinctly unfeline china I'd ever seen. As we sipped, I found out that Mrs. Campbell has my same weakness for chocolate, loves the theater as much as I do, but, incredibly, never saw "Cats." So Mark and I are taking her next month.

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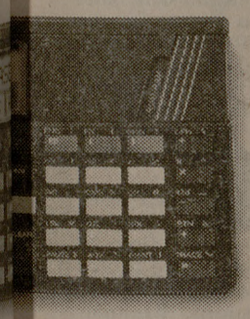

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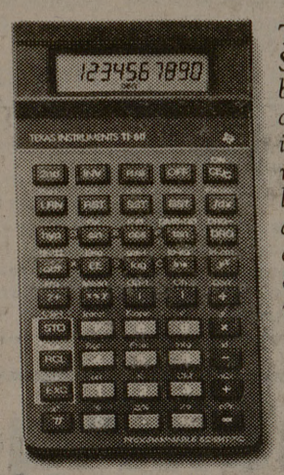

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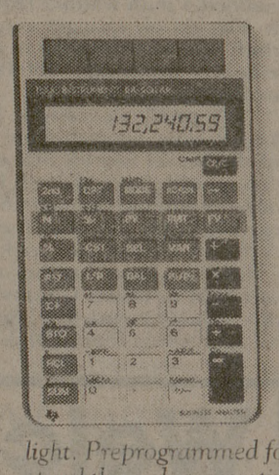

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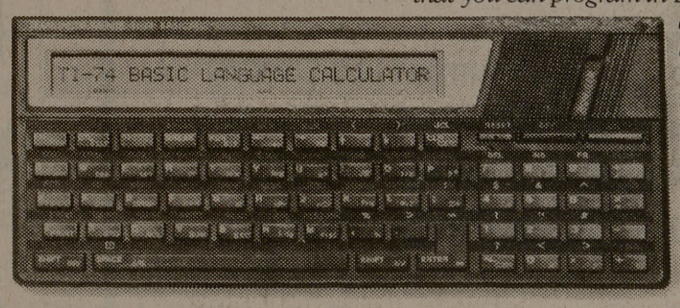

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