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# WORLD & NATION 8

Thursday, February 9, 1989

# Tower finds 'old-boy club' won't grease confirmation

WASHINGTON (AP) - The Senate's "old-boy,club," which for generations has cheered on former senators if they advanced into the upper reaches of the executive branch, has come unglued under the weight of former Sen. John Tower's nomination to be secretary of de-

Tower's Senate confirmation is in serious jeopardy, the nominee battered by unproven accusations of heavy drinking, womanizing and lack of objectivity when it comes to defense contractors.

Many had expected that Tower's nomination to be the nation's de-fense chief would enjoy an effortless

slide down a carefully greased chute. Tower, after all, had been one of the powers of the Senate where he served for two dozen years and presided as chairman of the Armed Services Committee - the same panel now being asked to confirm

If he expected special treatment, he didn't get it.
Instead, his nomination became

snared in a web of allegations and FBI investigations. Sen. Sam Nunn, D-Ga., the cur-

rent Armed Services chairman, had made clear months before last fall's election that he intended to subject new nominees for top Pentagon positions to intense scrutiny in an effort to improve the quality of key of-

"I said several times that it wasn't going to be an old-boy hearing, that we were going to have a thorough review," Nunn said. "The presumption that it was going to be some-thing less was wrong from the begin-

ning. Period." think everybody thought that the old-boy network would work as it always has and John Tower would go sailing through, but it hasn't worked that way," said Sen. James Exon, D-Neb., the Armed Services Committee's second-ranking Demo-

In part, Tower's troubles may stem from the fact that he apparently entered the confirmation process with a relatively low reservoir of good will among his former col-

Many senators say privately that they were not fond of what they say was Tower's testy temper and autocratic operating style.

Senate. But it is probably also the case that he doesn't have a lot of intimate friends here or any aura of popularity or good will," said Sen. Richard Lugar, R-Ind., who was chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations committee at the time Tower

headed Armed Services. The question inevitably is raised of whether the Tower nomination is being hammered by old-fashioned

partisan politics. Not so, said Nunn, whose own credentials are hardly those of a leftwing Pentagon basher. Sen. John Warner, R-Va., a former secretary of the Navy and the panel's ranking

Republican, backs Nunn up. Sam Nunn has been fair, equitable and - steadfastly - he has been non-political," Warner said late last

Warner said he put the question of fairness directly to Tower himself. "I said, 'John, if you were in the position Sam Nunn and I now find ourselves in, . . . would you do it any

differently? The answer? Sen. Tower looked us right in the eye and said, 'No,' "Warner said.

# **Dukakis struggles for footing** as popularity hits 10-year low

BOSTON (AP) - Gov. Michael Dukakis has had a hard time regaining his footing since he was knocked off his feet in the presidential election

Publicly, he hardly had his coat off when his political

allies started attacking him because of severe state budget problems and for his decision that more taxes were the only way to balance the books. Privately, fatigue and depression associated with the

presidential campaign defeat led to his wife Kitty entering an alcohol treatment program.

And a recent public opinion poll found him about as popular as a swim in polluted Boston Harbor.

I don't believe I can remember a Massachusetts governor who went from that high to such a relatively low period in such a short period of time," John Volpe, a former Republican governor, said. "You can go down-hill as fast as you can go uphill."

Most of Dukakis' friends maintain that his stoicism is

seeing him through. "I don't see a Mike Dukakis who is worn down or torn down by these events," said Boston attorney Paul Brountas, chairman of Dukakis' presidential campaign

and a personal friend.

If Dukakis occasionally seemed distracted, it was because "the family is obviously the most important consideration," Brountas said. "I don't think it's easily com-

These should have been his golden years culminating more than a decade in the state's highest office. Instead,

since becoming a lame duck by announcing in January that he won't run for governor again, Dukakis has wrestled with some of the biggest problems to face state gov-

ernment in years.

And he is doing it without the usual support. On Sunday, a week after Kitty Dukakis entered a Rhode Island center to be treated for an alcohol problem, headlines announced that, for the first time in his statewide political career, Dukakis' favorability rating had dipped below 50 percent. The poll of 603 Democrats and independents by Secretary of State Michael Connolly showed only 43.5 percent rating the governor

On Monday, Dukakis went before the state House Taxation Committee to defend a \$735 million tax increase proposal. He says he needs the money to help close a \$600 million budget gap this year and keep next year's budget in balance.

All this for a politician who in 1986 won re-election by better than a 2-1 margin, who gained the Democratic presidential nomination after winning primaries in every region of the country, and who as recently as December had a favorability rating among Democrats of 83 percent.

Since the presidential election, Dukakis has occasionally shown more fire than he did on the campaign trail. In his state-of-the-state address, for example, he called his opponents on fiscal issues "gutless wonders.

# U.S.-Mexican governors plan topical session

SALTILLO, Mexico (AP) - Border ecology and industrial devel-opment will be among the items on the agenda this week when gover-nors from all 10 U.S.-Mexico border states meet in this Coahuila state

capital, organizers said. Governors from California, New Mexico, Arizona and Texas will spend Friday discussing topics of mutual interest with their counterparts from Mexico's six border states, said Gerardo Hernandez, Coahuila state public relations direc-

"The governors themselves choose the themes and many are similar to those discussed in previous meetings," Hernandez said by tele-

Although relations between the United States and Mexico tend to be strained at the federal level, border governors often attempt to work out problems between the states among

themselves, he said. Hernandez said U.S. Ambassador Charles Pilliod Jr., Mexican Ambassador Gustavo Petricioli and Sergio Gonzalez Galvez, Mexican foreign relations undersecretary, will be among those to address the confer-

ence Friday. Coahuila Gov. Eliseo Mendoza Berrueto and California Gov. George Deukmejain will make opening remarks at a Thursday evening dinner launching the Seventh Border Governors Conference.

The governors last met in Decem-ber 1987 in Las Cruces, N.M., and addressed topics including the fast-growing "maquiladora" industry along the border. Maquiladoras, foreign owned assembly operations, make goods largely for export. Hernandez said Friday's topics

during panel discussions and private meetings also will include maquiladoras and border crossing points. Meanwhile, the Autonomous University of Coahuila is planning a con-ference on border issues Wednesday

and Thursday, also in Saltillo.

# **Balloonist gets ready** for trans-Pacific flight

YOKOHAMA, Japan (AP) — Fumio Niwa is not sure where the winds will take him on his first solo balloon flight across the Pacific Ocean, but he'd rather alight in San Diego than on a mountain peak in the Alaskan wilderness.

"My biggest worry is what di-rection the wind will blow," Niwa said as he prepared for Tuesday's takeoff. "My second-biggest worry is that while I'm trave alone in the dark, some strange creature from outer space may appear at the window of the gondola.

"But I'm really not very wor-ried. If there are any problems, all I have to do is come back

Niwa, 38, says he's making the flight "for fun" and to test the pressurized gondola and helium balloon he designed himself.

Niwa quit his job at a computer firm in November to prepare for the 5,000-mile flight, expected to take four days. He plans to hitch a 90 mphride with high-altitude easterly winds about 26,400 feet above Earth, about 7,000 feet below the

An experienced balloonist,

level at which airplanes fly.

Since the balloon's route depends on the wind, Niwa said he forries he will not make it to San Diego, the sister city of his home-town of Yokohama.

"But even worse would be if I came down thinking I was in Alaska, and then found out I was actually still in northern Japan," he said Monday as he and his assistants filled the balloon. "I'll be happy if I land anywhere in

If Niwa succeeds, it would be e first solo balloon flight across

He learned about the high-alti-tude easterly winds from a book about Japan's desperate attempt in the closing months of World War II to attack the United States

with bombs carried by balloons. During a three-month period, Japan launched about 9,000 bal-loon bombs, of which about 300

reportedly made it to the United

States. Little damage was done by the attacks, which U.S. wartime authorities kept quiet.

Niwa contacted retired Maj.

Teruhiko Takeda, 76, who assembled the research team that lanned the bomb attacks, and

Takeda became Niwa's good friend and adviser for the flight. "Before, the world was at war."
Niwa said. "Now, with good relations between the United States and Japan, I'm happy to be able to use the wind to carry a message of friendship between our two countries," Niwa said.

The first successful trans-Pacific balloon crossing was made in 1981 by four Americans and Jap-anese, including Rocky Aoki, owner of the Benihana restaurant chain. The balloon crashed into a tree in a snowstorm in mounts

north of San Francisco and the gondola fell 40 feet to the ground. No one was injured.

Niwa says his floatable gondola, made of a high-technology plastic, would be able to withstand such a landing - and even

The interior of the bright orange gondola contains a seat, amateur radios, a radio beacon and food. Under Japanese law, an aviation radio is forbidden because the balloon doesn't qualify

as an airplane.

Niwa has no navigation equipment and will depend on radio reports of trackings of his radio

Solar panels around the out-side of the globe-shaped goadola charge batteries that power the radios, lights and heating coils in-side Niwa's clothes — designed to protect him from nighttime tem-peratures of minus 60 degrees.