

The Battalion

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Senate committee OKs hate crimes bill

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

AUSTIN — Riding the emotion of a controversial jury verdict in the slaying of a black man by a white supremacist, a Senate committee Tuesday approved a bill cracking down on hate crimes.

The Senate Criminal Justice Committee voted 6-0 to approve a measure that would enhance punishment for crimes motivated by the race, color, ethnicity, religion, national origin or sexual orientation of the victim.

The bill, sponsored by Sen. Rodney Ellis, D-Houston, will now be considered by the full Senate. Gov. Ann Richards has said she favors the measure.

The committee's vote followed moving testimony by Carolyn Thomas, the wife of Donald Thomas, who was killed in Arlington in 1991 by a member of a white supremacist

group. A Fort Worth jury last week sentenced Christopher William Brosky, 18, to 10 years probation for his part in the shotgun slaying of Thomas.

Brosky and two companions who assisted in the shooting are skinheads. "I believe in my heart things will work out. That's why I'm here. I want the hate crimes bill to pass. I will be here until justice is done," Thomas said.

"My husband and I had goals. We wanted to get an education, further ourselves and have kids one day. That's taken away from me now because three white teen-agers came by and decided to kill my husband because of the color his skin."

More than 200 people from the Fort Worth area traveled to Austin on buses Tuesday to voice their support to the hate crimes legislation. They held signs reading, "There Is No

Place for Hate Crime in Texas" and "Texas — End Plantation Mentality."

The supporters, who packed a conference room with their signs, gave the Senate committee a standing ovation after its vote.

"It is up to our elected officials to pass laws that will make Texas safe. We hold them accountable for their actions," said Marylyn Miles, organizer of the support group called African American Summit. "We don't want any death to be in vain."

Ellis said the "recent case in Fort Worth underscores the feeling of many minorities that justice in Texas is for whites only."

Both Robert Kepple of the Texas District Attorneys Association and John Boston of the Texas Criminal Defense Lawyers Association testified in support of the bill Tuesday.

The bill increases the punishment for crimes motivated by hate, including murder, kidnapping, sexual assault and harassment.

Get involved with campus through voting, leader says

By JENNIFER SMITH

The Battalion

Texas A&M students should get involved in campus issues by voting in Wednesday and Thursday's campus elections, said an Election Commission chairwoman.

Michelle Campbell, a junior chemical engineering major, said low voter turnout for student elections is a result of students not understanding the responsibilities of each position.

"People that don't know what each position is or does should find out," Campbell

said. "Students can't complain about things that don't get done for them if they didn't vote to try to put someone into office who can do something."

She said many students underestimate the importance of the students who represent them.

Campbell said the Election Commission has tried to publicize the elections with advertisements in The Battalion, banners at the MSC and fliers.

"Nothing's going to get any better unless people get out and

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The wall at A&M?

German citizens to present part of Berlin wall to Bush

By KEVIN LINDSTROM

The Battalion

The citizens of a free Berlin will present Former President George Bush with a piece of the Berlin Wall in a ceremony April 21 at Texas A&M University.



Bush

The ceremony will take place behind the Bush Library Center, near the Twelfth Man statue, where the wall will temporarily remain until a permanent site is found at the presidential library.

University President William Mobley said the 2 1/2 ton section of the wall will give students and visitors to the campus a tangible piece of the Cold War.

"The Berlin Wall was a major symbol of the struggle between East and West," he said. "Having a section of the wall will be interesting to all who come to the campus."

Mobley is expected to attend the one-hour ceremony which will begin at 11 a.m. and is open to the public.

Shirley Joiner, assistant executive director of the Bush Presiden-

tial Library Foundation, said the wall will serve as a strong reminder of the importance of freedom and the suffering East Germans had endured.

"This is visual proof of what the people of East Berlin were staring at," she (Joiner) said. "It represents a divided nation, a people for many years oppressed."

Perry Adkisson, executive director of the Bush Presidential Library Foundation, said the wall will serve as a reminder of the hardships of the cold war.

"This way the current generation will understand what the struggle between East and West was all about," he said. "The piece of the wall will be a reminder that freedom is bought by blood."

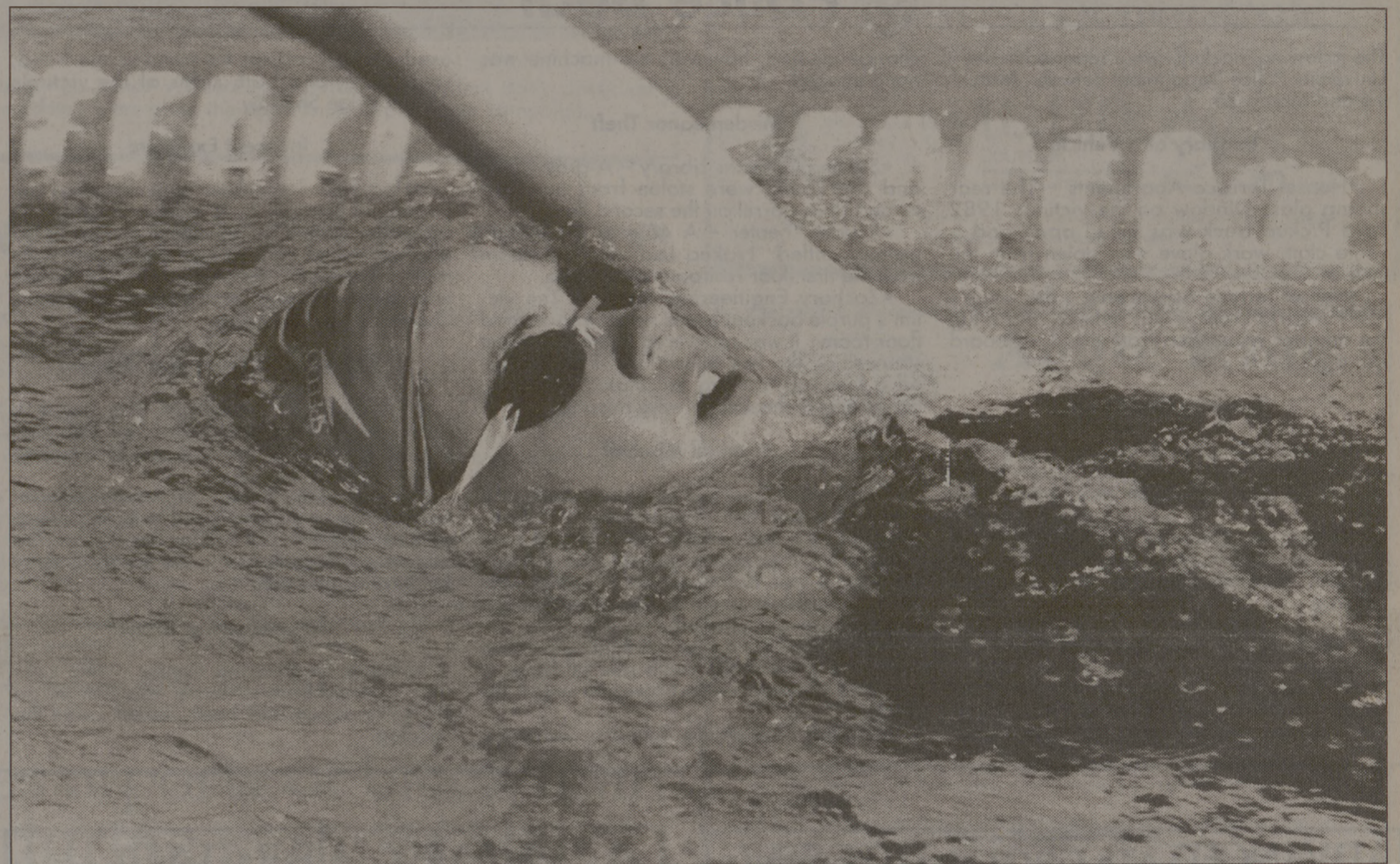
Chairman of the Board of Regents Ross Margraves will also attend the ceremony along with Dr. Hildegard Boucsein, undersecretary for federal and European affairs with the Berlin Senate.

While at A&M, Bush will also attend this year's Muster but not participate in the ceremony.

Two German businesses, the Axel Springer Group and the Krone Group, sponsored bringing the section of the wall to A&M.

The ceremony will be broadcast in Europe through the U.S. Information Agency.

Aggie swimmer keeps in shape



DARRIN HILL/The Battalion

Cindy Focht, a junior political science major from Lake Forest, Calif., practices her swimming technique at the Wofford Cain pool Tuesday. Focht is a member of the Texas A&M University swimming team and

recently took third in the 1650 at a conference in Austin. Focht swims twice daily to keep in shape and once volunteered to practice her swimming last winter when it was hailing.

Space pioneer describes flying X-15 aircraft

By JASON COX

The Battalion

A former test pilot during the early days of NASA's experimentation into orbital flight called the X-15 aircraft a "hero and a stepping stone to space."

Bill Dana, assistant chief of Flight Operations at NASA's Dryden Flight Research Facility, said flying the plane, which achieved altitudes of over 254,000 feet, was the "literal high point" of his career in a speech sponsored by the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics Tuesday.

At 50 feet long and with a wingspan of 22 feet, the X-15 was NASA's first attempt at developing a vehicle that could leave and re-enter the atmosphere.

The plane was launched from under the wing of a B-52 and required 8,000 to 10,000 feet of runway for landing. It had a typical flying time of 11 minutes — four of which were

spent in pre-landing flight patterns.

Dana said upon re-entry to the atmosphere, the speed of the vehicle caused the pilot's sensations of motion to reverse and extreme temperatures would cause buckling of the aircraft's skin that sounded like "the crackling of a hot stove."

Having flown the triple-sonic YF-12 research aircraft and the Advanced Fighter Technology Integration (AFTI) F-16, Dana said the X-15 was his favorite and a "bargain" at \$600,000 a flight.

He said the program, which was only in its planning stages in 1954, had reached all of its objectives by 1959.

Dana said he thinks the one death incurred during the X-15 era caused NASA to abandon the project.

"The fatality was the project's death knell," he said.

Dana said if the U.S. is serious about a future mission to Mars, it is considerably short

on research into the long-term affects of zero-gravity.

He said the results of an approximate 400-day trip in such a medium are unstudied, and the space station, which would be an ideal setting for research, is not likely to find funding.

"Negative research is as important as positive research," he said, "and many things fall into the category of 'nice try.'"

Dana shared other stories with the audience, recalling Germany's early research into a rocket that would alternately dip in and out of the atmosphere before ultimately bombing New York City.

"I give them high marks for originality, and maybe even a B-plus for wanting to 'bomb New York,'" he said.

Dana was awarded NASA's Exceptional Service Medal and in 1976 received the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics Haley Space Flight Award for his work on M2-F3 control systems research.

Jury indicts 3 cult members on murder, firearm charges

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WACO — Grand jurors indicted three members of the Branch Davidian cult Tuesday on charges of conspiracy to murder federal agents and possession of a firearm.

The indictment named cultists Brad Branch, Kevin Whitecliff and Kathryn Schroeder. All three recently left the compound where a federal raid Feb. 28 turned into a 45-minute shootout that left four agents dead.

Richard Ferguson, Branch's attorney, said the indictment is the latest "tactic" by prosecutors to keep the cult members in jail.

"They are losing the battle on

material witnesses — they had to come up with another strategy," he said.

"The indictment speaks for itself," U.S. Attorney Ron Ederer responded.

Ms. Schroeder, 30, last week was ordered released on her own recognizance. But federal attorneys kept her in jail by issuing an arrest warrant accusing Ms. Schroeder with conspiring to kill federal agents.

Meanwhile, U.S. Magistrate Dennis Green on Tuesday ordered that cult member Livingston Fagan continue to be held in the McLennan County Jail as a material witness. Fagan, 33, has been in custody since March 23.

Student body elections today; I.D. required

Students can vote Wednesday and Thursday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. in the MSC, Sterling C. Evans Library, Blocker Building, Kleburg Center and Zachry Engineering Center.

Voting is open to all students including graduating seniors. Students need to bring their student I.D. with them to vote.

The election results will be announced at midnight Thursday in front of the Lawrence Sullivan Ross statue.

Zaeske mocks Barton at press conference

By JASON COX

The Battalion

Independent U.S. Senate candidate Lou Zaeske called Rep. senate candidate Joe Barton the "Lena Guerrero of the U.S. Senate race" in a press conference Tuesday at Texas A&M University in the Zachary Engineering Building.

A banner hanging in the atrium of Zachry which proclaimed Barton as the only Aggie engineer in the race motivated



Zaeske

Zaeske to hold the conference. Zaeske said he wanted "to correct Barton's blatant misrepresentation of himself" and to bring to the public's attention other "indiscretions" in Barton's political career.

"I became a professional engineer before he was even a graduate, and he has the audacity to call himself the only engineer," said Zaeske who earned a mechanical engineering degree from A&M in 1964.

Craig Murphy, a spokesman for Barton's office, called the Zaeske press conference "a humorous sidebar to a serious election."

"The people that painted that banner are probably as surprised as anyone," he said. "I think it should be amended to say 'The only Aggie that is a serious candidate.'"

Zaeske said Barton continued to call himself an engineer even after the state board of engineers requested that he no longer refer to himself as one in campaign literature or in public.

"Here's a man running for public office saying he will not comply with the law," Zaeske said. "Misrepresenting yourself and refusing to comply are cut from the same bolt of cloth."

Murphy said the issue of Barton misrepresenting himself as an engineer was laid to rest in 1984 when he was elected to Congress.

Zaeske also criticized Barton for claiming he was a deputy to the Secretary of Energy and a member of the Grace Commission. Barton was, in reality, a White House fellow, Zaeske said.

"Barton has the propensity to

stretch the truth and incline facts in his favor to a fault," he said.

Murphy said it makes sense for a candidate who isn't well known to associate himself with one who is more popular.

"It's an age-old custom," he said. "He's like the man who put his name on the ballot as 'none of the above.'"

Barton didn't get re-elected by trying to find technicalities on a banner, Murphy said, but by working as a liaison to the Grace Commission and helping Congress cut budget costs.

"Lou Zaeske is a candidate known by about one-tenth of 1 percent of the state of Texas and he's trying to double that," he said. "If I could sum up this incident in two words it would be 'Lou who?'"

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