

Opinion

Columnist Chris Cobb says the U.S. has become a country of sound bites.

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A&M hires new coach

Candi Harvey from Tulane takes over as head coach of the Lady Aggie basketball team.

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Weather

Wednesday and Thursday will be fair to partly cloudy, highs in the middle to upper 90s.

National Weather Service

THE BATTALION

TUESDAY

July 5, 1994

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"Serving Texas A&M since 1893"

NEWS BRIEFS

Carelessness blamed for wrecks

More than 60 die on highways during July 4th weekend

Task force to investigate professor

Texas A&M has asked a task force to consider whether personnel action should be taken against distinguished chemistry professor John Bockris...

DALLAS (AP) — Carelessness, not alcohol, caused three accidents that killed 31 people Sunday, authorities said.

"If there's a common denominator, it looks like a matter of driver alertness more than anything else," Mike Cox, a spokesman for the Texas Department of Public Safety, said Monday.

The DPS had estimated that 31 people would die on the long holiday weekend on Texas highways. By Monday afternoon, the count had reached 61, with 43 people killed on Sunday alone.

The elements were tragically similar in three accidents that killed 31 people. Vehicles crowded with families were making hours-long trips without using seat belts.

In one accident, 12 children were piled into the open bed of a pickup truck, a violation of Texas law.

A collision between a family van and a tractor-trailer truck on Interstate 20 just west of

Weatherford claimed 14 lives. Two other accidents killed 11 people near Snyder, 70 miles northwest of Abilene, and six people near Ballinger, 50 miles south of Abilene.

In the Weatherford accident, the van driver pulled from the side of the highway into the truck's lane, apparently not seeing an oncoming 18-wheeler, Cox said.

The driver of a pickup truck that crashed near Snyder failed to yield the right of way to one truck-tractor towing another.

And in Ballinger, the driver of a 1981 Lincoln Town Car that slammed into an overturned semitrailer told authorities he had fallen asleep at the wheel and did not see or hear the flashing lights and siren of a trooper's car already at the scene.

"On holiday weekends, it seems people attempt to get the most bang for their buck and try to get where they're going in a way that is almost as dan-

gerous as drinking and driving," Cox said.

"Once you're fatigued," he said, "your mental alertness has dropped and you're more likely to make mistakes, overlook something or fall asleep at the wheel."

But disregard for simple safety precautions added to the carnage, Cox said.

All of the vehicles were crammed with passengers. The 1977 Dodge van had 18 people inside. The Lincoln Town Car carried eight passengers, and the pickup truck involved in the accident near Snyder had three adults in the cab and 12 children crowded into its open bed.

None of the passengers of the Lincoln Town Car nor the three adults in the pickup truck cab were wearing seat belts, authorities said.

"I saw several accidents yesterday where victims could have survived if they'd been wearing safety belts," Cox said.

All three adults and eight of

the 12 children piled into the bed of the pickup truck died in the crash near Snyder, renewing attention to a Texas law that forbids children from riding in the back of pickups.

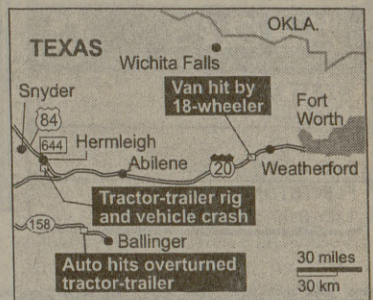
State Sen. Steven Carriker, who supported final passage of the bill in 1989, said the law is largely ignored in rural areas. His district includes the area where the accident occurred.

"It's quite common to see large families traveling in this manner," Carriker, D-Roby, told The Dallas Morning News.

Cox, noting that more than 20 of those killed Sunday were children, warned that parents must take responsibility for their children's safety.

"There's nothing more precious than a child. You need to have them buckled up," he said. "As a parent myself, I can't conceive doing something that would risk the life of my little daughter. What can be more important than a person's child?"

Texas traffic tragedies



AP/Carl Fox

Transportation grant awarded to A&M

Texas A&M University's Southwest Regional University Transportation Center has been awarded a grant of \$1 million by the U.S. Department of Transportation. Funds from the grant will be used to conduct transportation research on regional needs and national priorities.

Economists say no raise in interest rates

WASHINGTON (AP) — Despite the dollar's troubles, many economists believe that top policymakers at the Federal Reserve will not raise interest rates this week to defend the greenback, deciding instead to put the domestic economy ahead of global currency concerns.

This view, however, is not universal. There are some analysts who think the central bank will boost rates, but wait until the unemployment report is released Friday so that it will look like the central bank is responding to the domestic economy and not the whims of international currency traders.

Whatever happens, financial markets will be closely watching as the central bank's top policy-making group, the Federal Open Market Committee, meets behind closed doors Tuesday and Wednesday to review the economy and decide its next interest rate moves.

Bloody evidence not needed against O.J.

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Prosecutors could still make a case against O.J. Simpson without bloody evidence taken from his property and Ford Bronco, but would have to rely more on scientific tests, experts' testimony and crime-scene clues, attorneys say.

"It's clear they're developing other evidence, but certainly a major gaffe by the police which would result in the loss of the evidence at Mr. Simpson's home is something that the prosecution can ill afford," said Myrna Raeder, a professor of trial advocacy and evidence at Southwestern School of Law.

Today's BATT

Table with 2 columns: Category and Page Number. Classified: 4, Comics: 6, Opinion: 5, Police Beat: 2, What's up: 6



Bart Mitchell/The Battalion

'Bombs bursting in air...'

Last night at Wolf Pen Creek Amphitheater, spectators celebrated Independence Day with a free concert and fireworks display. Approximately 5,000 people took part in the festivities that began at 8 p.m. and ended 10:30 p.m. The fireworks could be seen from many areas of College Station.

Three Texans survive crash

(AP) — Dorian Doucette had just completed basic training and was headed home to Baytown for the first time since enlisting in the Army.

Stanley Williams of Dallas flying home with his wife, Lori, to be by the side of his mother, who is dying of cancer.

All three Texans narrowly escaped death when USAir Flight 1016 slammed into a field in Charlotte, N.C., Saturday night.

At least 37 people were killed when the plane crashed while making its second approach for a landing at Charlotte-Douglas International Airport. Doucette and Williams were among just 20 survivors.

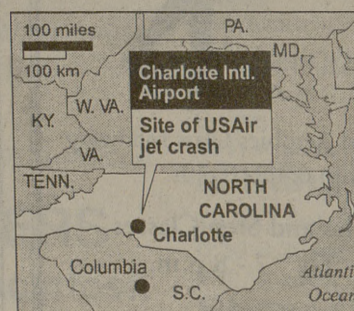
Doucette, 20, was in critical condition Sunday at the burn center at the University of North Carolina Hospitals in Chapel Hill.

He is suffering with burns to more than 60 percent of his body, mostly below the waist and on his back, said his sister, Renita Doucette.

"He's a fighter," she told the Houston Chronicle. "They tell us he's coherent and answering questions, so we think he's going to be OK."

Williams, 29, was in fair condition at Carolinas Medical Center in Charlotte, where he

Stanley and Lori Williams of Dallas and Dorian Doucette of Baytown escaped USAir Flight 1016 Saturday night. Only 20 people survived while 37 died in the crash.



AP

was admitted with severe cuts and bruises. His wife, Lori Williams, 23, was in good condition with a mild concussion and a broken foot.

"I'm real sore, and I have a lot of stitches," he said. Doucette is an Army communications specialist who had

just finished basic training at Fort Jackson in Columbia, S.C., and was attending school at Fort Gordon in Augusta, Ga. Doucette was en route home to Baytown for the Independence Day weekend when the plane crashed, his sister said.

This was to be his first visit home since enlisting, and he was excited about seeing his 5-month old son, Daunte, his sister said.

Williams, 29, an Army air traffic controller stationed in German, was flying with his wife just behind the wing of the DC-9-30 when he became concerned about what he was seeing outside his window.

The plane "popped out of a cloud and began descending at a 45-degree angle," he said.

The next thing he remembered was paramedics unstrapping him from his seat.

"The people seated behind us didn't make it," Williams told The Dallas Morning News in a telephone interview.

His mother has been given about two weeks to live, said Williams' brother, Glenn Williams of Jacksonville, Ark.

"We're going to be cutting it really close getting them home to Dallas," the brother said. "Stanley is pretty banged up."

Money pyramids Officials warn B/CS residents

By Jan Higginbotham THE BATTALION

Pyramid schemes, similar to one which plagued Texas A&M University last spring, are becoming common throughout the Brazos Valley and the country.

Larry Lightfoot, executive director of the Better Business Bureau of the Brazos Valley, released a statement last week warning businesses and consumers of the dangers of getting involved in the schemes.

"These so-called giving networks are blanketing the country with their false promises," Lightfoot said. In April, Texas A&M officials began investigating a pyramid scheme involving A&M students.

In the scheme, students were asked to invest \$100 in hopes of earning a \$900 return as they recruit other investors and move up the pyramid.

Lightfoot said the latest version of the scheme asks individuals to fill 15 pyramid slots. A \$1500 contribution goes to the person on top of the pyramid.

When all of the slots are filled, the pyramid splits and a new person moves to the top. Investors are expected to recruit other individuals to improve their own chances of moving up through the pyramid and collecting money.

Lightfoot said the scheme is dangerous because it is so easy to lose money. "As the pyramid grows rapidly,

the early recruits may make some money," he said. "But as the pool grows, those at the bottom are left holding the bag—having given their money, but having no one left to recruit."

James Lindholm, an officer for the University Police Department, said in a previous interview with The Battalion that such endless chain schemes are illegal.

Individuals involved in the schemes can be charged with a Class B misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1500 and/or a jail term of up to 180 days.

One student, who refused to give his name because of his involvement in the scheme on campus, said it would be difficult to catch anyone involved.

"You can catch them, but how will you prove anything?" he said. The student said the amount of money involved in pyramid schemes is overwhelming.

"In one night, I had lots of money go through my hands," he said. "When it hit here, it was new, so everybody wanted to get in on it."

Lightfoot said individuals need to be careful of getting involved in the chains. "People want to believe their friends or relatives, but most of all they want to believe they are getting something for nothing," he said. "Of course they end up getting nothing when the pyramid breaks down and their hard-earned money is long gone."

"These so-called giving networks are blanketing the country with their false promises."

Larry Lightfoot, executive director of BBB of Brazos Valley

A FIERY FOURTH

Heat, high winds keep firefighters busy in W. Texas

DALLAS (AP) — The Fourth of July time was hardly a time for firefighters to relax, particularly in West Texas, where thousands of acres in brush fires were burning.

Hot weather, high winds and low humidity made Independence Day 1994 the equivalent of Christmas at the post office for firefighters in the Amarillo area.

In the Panhandle, temperatures reached only 98 degrees Monday, but the humidity dropped to 17 percent, with steady winds of 25 to 35 mph and gusts up to 40 mph, the National Weather Service said.

All three factors contributed

to grass fires. In Armstrong County, just southeast of Amarillo, a fire that began during a lightning storm Saturday continued to burn, consuming more than 13,000 acres of grassland and forcing officials to declare a state of emergency Monday.

Fire officials set up a command post near Goodnight, about 40 miles southeast of Amarillo.

The Texas Forest Service's fire control department joined forces with fire crews from surrounding counties and cities to help control the blaze, summoning an Army helicopter to douse inaccessible areas of the countryside, the spokesman said.

In Amarillo itself, fireworks sparked blazes across the city and in both Potter and Randall counties, officials said.