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Texas A&M University has a strong institutional commitment to the principle of diversity in all areas. In that spirit, admission to Texas A&M University and any of its sponsored programs is open to all qualified individuals without regard to any subgroup, class or stereotype.

Tort reform members involved in lawsuits

Members of two lawsuit abuse groups have been involved in more than 250 suits.

HOUSTON (AP) — Board members of two tort-reform groups lobbying the Legislature have been involved in more than 250 civil lawsuits in Harris County since 1978, The Houston Post reported Wednesday.

Texas For Lawsuit Reform and Citizens Against Lawsuit Abuse want the laws rewritten to reduce lawsuits, protect businesses and lower awards, members say.

On Tuesday, state lawmakers limited punitive damages to twice actual damages up to \$750,000. A half-dozen other bills that would affect medical malpractice suits,

change the Deceptive Trade Practices Act, cut back on venue shopping and limit "deep-pocket" awards await final votes.

But C. Sterling Cornelius, CALA's sometime chairman of the board, doesn't regard his own \$100 million lawsuit as an example of the kind of frivolous suits he's fighting.

The owner of Cornelius Nurseries Inc. and Turkey Creek Farms Inc. in Houston filed suit in 1993 against E.I. du Pont de Nemours & Co., claiming that its fungicide damaged the 1991 poinsettia crop and the entire nursery. The fungicide, Benlate, was removed from the market in March 1991.

Cornelius' companies also are suing four distributor companies in the case.

The suit asks \$25.1 million in actual damages, including costs to

rebuild the nursery and the farm, which continue to do business.

Cornelius also asked for punitive damages of \$75.3 million under the Deceptive Trade Practices Act as well as additional punitive damages, according to court records.

"I think the claims are without merit," said Du Pont lawyer Gerald Bracht.

Under the newly enacted reforms, most of what Cornelius is seeking would be ruled out. But, because his suit was filed before passage of the bill Tuesday, Cornelius is not subject to the new limits.

"I'm not against lawsuits, I'm against unreasonable verdicts," said Cornelius, whose group has released business-owner surveys that suggest fear of lawsuits is prompting owners to hire fewer people.

Bad blood in Simpson trial

A criminalist admits that blood evidence wasn't refrigerated properly.

LOS ANGELES (AP) — On a hot June day, crucial blood samples in the O.J. Simpson murder investigation sat in plastic bags inside an evidence truck for seven hours because the truck's refrigerator didn't work, an evidence collector admitted Wednesday.

Criminalist Dennis Fung's testimony, which gave the defense yet another opening to make its case that blood evidence was tainted, proceeded with jurors presumably unaware of an escalating investigation into a dismissed panelist's claims of jury problems.

Superior Court Judge Lance Ito scheduled a private session Wednesday with the ousted juror, Jeanette Harris, and indicated he would question the 12 jurors and six remaining alternates about an alleged incident of kicking in the jury box.

According to the transcript of a sidebar conference Tuesday, the judge told attorneys he thought the kick seemed more like a stumble and amounted to "something so trivial to be unbelievable."

Ito prodded defense attorney Barry Scheck on Wednesday to conclude his questioning of Fung but failed to derail Scheck's exceedingly detailed cross-examination of his actions after Nicole Brown Simpson and Ronald Goldman were killed June 12, 1994.

In his fifth day on the stand, Fung said he began putting blood swatches in plastic bags at 11:30 a.m. on the sunny day after the slayings and stored the samples in his crime-scene truck.

"And it was hot in that truck?" Scheck asked.

"It was getting warm," Fung conceded.

"And you did not begin to take those blood stains out of the plastic bags until 6:30 that evening?" Scheck asked.

"Yes," Fung replied.

Asked if the truck had a refrigerator, Fung said it did but he didn't use it. "The refrigerator stops working after several hours," he explained.

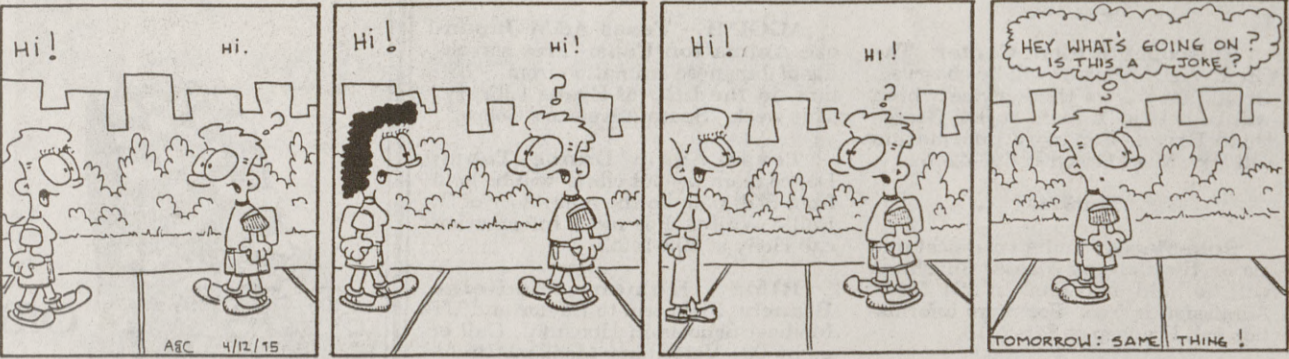
Meanwhile, the transcript of Tuesday's sidebar showed the defense continued to press for action on jury issues Harris raised in her interviews with reporters last week.

"I think you should not underestimate this," defense attorney Johnnie Cochran Jr. warned Ito. "If people have the perception that you are not interested in doing anything about it, I'm telling you that I believe it will result in further problems."

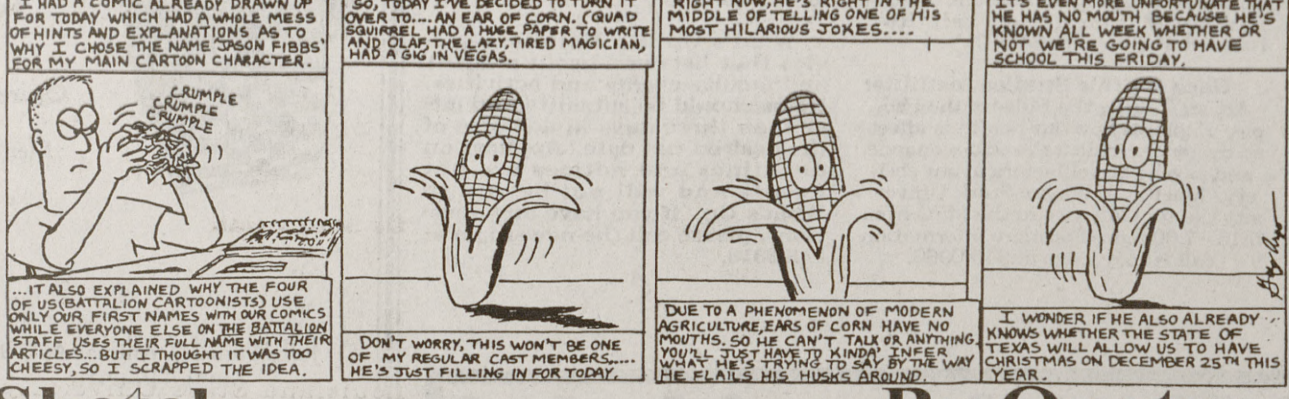
The judge seemed unimpressed by the incident described by Harris, who is black, in which she said a white juror purposely kicked her and stomped on the foot of another another black juror while getting into the jury box.

"I must tell you ... that people being outraged and offended by somebody perhaps crossing over them and inadvertently hitting them — I mean, this initially struck me as something so trivial to be unbelievable," Ito said.

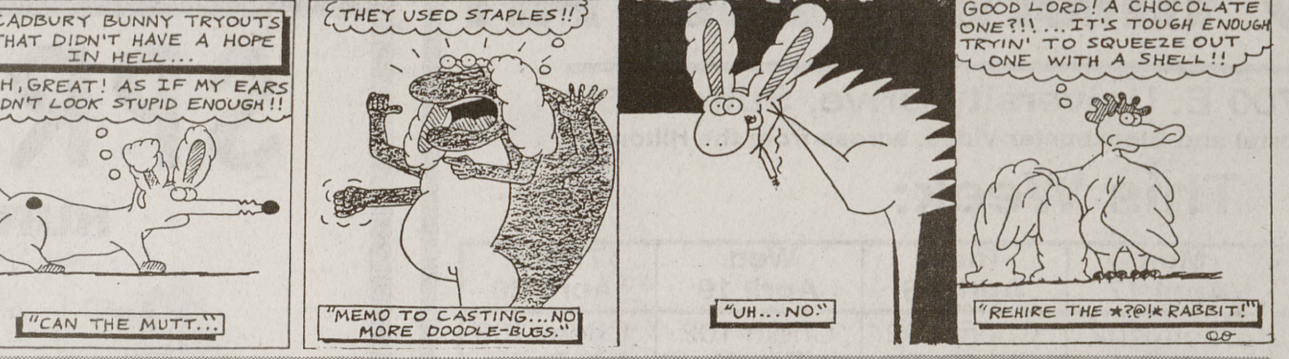
Stick



ADVENTURES IN AGGIELAND BY GREG



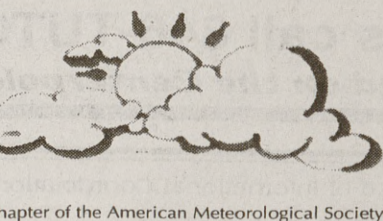


Sketch



WEATHER

Today Sunny with a high near 82. E wind 5-10 mph.	Friday Sunny with a high near 83. SE wind 5-10 mph.	Saturday Partly cloudy with a high near 82.
Tonight Clear with a low near 57. Light SE wind.	Friday Night Partly cloudy with a low near 61.	

Source - A&M Chapter of the American Meteorological Society

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