

NEWS BRIEFS

Meteor shower to make appearance

The annual Perseid meteor shower is scheduled to peak Monday night and Tuesday morning, according to an Aug. 9 Houston Chronicle article. The best time to watch the meteors is within two hours after the moon sets. The shower appears to come from the direction of the constellation Perseus, which will lie in the northern sky Tuesday morning.

Commencement set for Friday, Saturday

Texas A&M will hold summer commencement ceremonies Aug. 15 at 8 p.m. and Aug. 16 at 9 a.m. Friday's ceremony will be for degree candidates from the Colleges of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Communication, Science, Veterinary Medicine and the Dwight Look College of Engineering. James R. Williams, chair of Texas Instruments, will be the speaker.

Saturday's ceremony will be for degree candidates from the Colleges of Architecture, Geosciences and Marine Studies, Liberal Arts, Medicine and the Lowry Mays College and Graduate School of Business. Robert Goodwin, president and CEO of the Phillips of Light Foundation in Washington, D.C., will be the speaker. Members of the Corps of Cadets entering the military will be commissioned at Saturday's ceremony, also.

JFK Jr. criticizes relatives in article

NEW YORK (AP) — The Kennedy family, whose marital and extramarital activities have filled tabloid headlines for years, are being pilloried by one of their own — none other than JFK Jr.

In the September issue of *Rolling Stone*, the magazine he founded, Edits, John F. Kennedy Jr. calls some of his cousins "poster boys for behavior."

Both Rep. Joseph P. Kennedy II, Mass., accused by his ex-wife of trying to have their marriage annulled for political expediency, and Michael Kennedy, accused of an affair with an underage baby sitter, "chased an idealized alternative to their life," JFK Jr. says in a signed article.

Of the ensuing notoriety, he writes: "Perhaps they deserved it. Perhaps they should have known better."

To whom much is given, much is expected, right? The interesting part was the ferocious condemnation of their excursions beyond the bounds of acceptable behavior. "I've heard a lot about temptation recently, but that doesn't make me feel any less."

## El Niño may cause Texas drought

Warmer temperatures help keep tropical storms from forming

By JOEY JEANETTE SCHLUETER  
THE BATTALION



PHOTOGRAPH: Tim Moog

El Niño is causing a drought in Texas this year, withering corn and other crops in the dry heat.

A hurricane has not hit the Texas Gulf Coast since 1991, and the U.S. Weather Service's National center for Atmospheric Research says this is because of a strong El Niño.

El Niño is the period of warmer water temperatures in the Eastern Pacific Ocean along the equator. The rise in water temperature causes strong winds that typically shear off developing hurricanes. The strength of El Niño varies every year.

But El Niño also may cause droughts in some parts of the United States and flood other parts of the nation.

Dr. Kwang Kim, a Texas A&M meteorologist, said El Niño is strong this year, and the effects of the period are beginning to appear.

"El Niño changes each season," Kim said. "But this year El Niño will have a dramatic effect on Texas weather."

Ping Cheng, an A&M climatology professor, said warm El Niño temperatures may lead to fewer tropical storms in the Atlantic Ocean.

Although Gulf Coast residents may not have had to board up windows or evacuate their homes this year, Texas A&M Agriculture Specialist John Wards said agriculture is suffering from the effects of El Niño.

In early August, the Atmospheric Research Center in Oklahoma said that El Niño has the potential to cause billions of dollars in damage to key agriculture regions worldwide, including the Southern United States.

Wards said that in the fall, Texas may experience an increase in temperatures, making it feel like summer, and rain shortages may be common because of El Niño also.

"El Niño not only has an impact on the weather," Wards said, "but it greatly affects agriculture income-based families as well. Some years crops go dry because of a lack of rain and high temperatures."

Donna Kent, public relations officer for Brazos County Farm Bureau, said more than 13 percent of families in the Brazos Valley rely on farming for income. This year, she said, some are worried about losing crops.

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## Gov. Bush: Tax battle not over yet

AUSTIN (AP) — Texas voters have given homeowners a slight tax break, but they need to speak up if they want to keep property tax rates and values from continuing their steady rise, Gov. George W. Bush said.

"This is definitely a step," Bush said, celebrating the overwhelming victory Saturday of a \$1 billion property-tax cut for homeowners.

In unofficial results, 690,678 Texans, about 94 percent of those who cast ballots, voted in favor of the measure that triples the homestead exemption from \$5,000 a year to \$15,000; 41,338 voted against it. The tax break will save the average homeowner about \$140 a year.

Bush, who for two years has pushed an effort to lower and cap school property tax rates, said the issue is hardly resolved.

"Hopefully during the course of this campaign, Texans will make their sentiments known to those of us who are seeking office," said the governor, who is seeking re-election next year.

Lawmakers tried to limit the number of times a home's value can be assessed and limit the increase in appraised property values.

In November, voters will be asked whether hikes in property value should be capped at 10 percent a year. Voters also would be allowed to defer property tax payments if values rose more than 5 percent, but would pay 8 percent interest to do so.

Since 1995, Bush has said rising property tax rates and values pose a looming threat to home ownership in Texas. He said the state's healthy economy, the newly approved tax cut and increased state funding for education could take the pressure off of rising local school tax bills.

But he added that if Texans want more to be done, they will have to make that known to elected officials.

The constitutional amendment approved Saturday raises the minimum homestead property tax exemption by \$10,000, giving most homeowners a roughly \$12 a month tax cut. Renters and business property owners were left out of the savings.

## Cycling shop owner killed in accident

Wayne Bryan, owner of Aggieland Cycling and Fitness and 41-year-old Bryan resident, was killed at 8 a.m. Sunday two miles east of College Station on Texas Highway 30, the Department of Public Safety said.

Bryan was riding a bicycle on the westbound shoulder of Hwy 30, the DPS said, when a 1992 two-door Honda traveling westbound in the outside lane crossed the line and struck the bicycle on the shoulder of the road.

The DPS said four other people were bicycling with Bryan, but they were not injured.



PHOTOGRAPH: Rony Angkriwan

**Killing Time** Ilesha Camper, a 2-year-old, buys a gumball while waiting for her mother to do laundry Sunday afternoon at Wash-n-Go.

## A&M changes overassignment policy

Students will be able to accept or reject the room at an earlier date than previous years

By JOEY JEANETTE SCHLUETER  
THE BATTALION

In the next few weeks, Texas A&M students will be busy meeting their roommates for the fall semester and scrambling to find furnishings for their dorm rooms.

On-campus residence hall assignments have been given to students, and the number of overassignments will be known during the first week of school.

The Texas A&M Department of Residence Life said it expects the same number of overassignments for the fall as last year.

In Fall 1996, 80 percent of housing applicants received room assignments, and 20 percent were overassigned.

Residence Life began mailing letters to students who received on-campus housing last month. The letters inform students of their room numbers, roommates and if

they have been overassigned.

Dan Mizer, assistant director of facilities and planning for Residence Life, said overassignment is under control and should not be a problem this year because of revisions to the overassignment process.

"Memos have been sent out [to students] which show revisions to overassignment," Mizer said. "We shouldn't have problems as we did in the past."

The revisions require that overassigned students either accept or reject the room assignment at an earlier date than previous years.

This year four A&M students will live in an apartment-style room on the first floor of McFadden Hall. Three modular rooms were combined and designed with a living room, a kitchen, two bedrooms and two bathrooms.

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PHOTOGRAPH: Tim Moog

Four students will live in an apartment-style room on the first floor of McFadden Hall this fall. The suite has a living room, kitchen, two bedrooms and two bathrooms.

## U.S. peace envoy says mission goal is security cooperation

JERUSALEM (AP) — President Clinton's Mideast envoy focused on Israel's security demands Sunday, shuttling between Israeli and Palestinian leaders in a drive to salvage the battered peace process.

Dennis Ross' task is delicate and difficult: Trust is at a low point after a five-month crisis, with Israelis bitter about bombings in their cities and Palestinians livid Israel is building settlements and imposing travel bans.

Ross said his orders from Clinton were to restore the "security underpinning" of the peace process and resume security cooperation between Israeli and Palestinian security forces.

The strategy appeared to make some head-

“The political issues that divide the parties are going to have to be addressed and resolved.”

Dennis Ross  
Mediator

way: Ross succeeded in bringing Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and his security officials

together with Israeli Shin Bet security chief Ami Ayalon and other Israeli officials for a meeting, Israel Radio said.

The meeting began around midnight in the autonomous West Bank city of Ramallah and continued into Monday. U.S. officials also were participating in the meeting.

David Bar-Illan, a top adviser to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, said such meetings alone "are not going to be enough. ... The question will be, 'Did we get the intelligence that we need and that we know they have?'"

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TODAY IN BATTALION

LAST ISSUE

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OPINION

Affin: People learn the most valuable lessons from the greatest heroes: parents.

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ONLINE

http://bat-web.tamu.edu

Check out the Wire, the 24-hour online news service.

