

THE BATTALION

106 YEARS AT TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

Friday • September 17, 1999

College Station, Texas

Volume 106 • Issue 15 • 12 Pages

FBI testifies in Jasper trial Floyd hits coast

BY EMILY R. SNOOKS
The Battalion

State prosecutors finished presenting evidence and testimony yesterday in the capital murder trial of Lawrence Russell Brewer. The defense begins testimony today.

JASPER TRIAL

The prosecution concluded its witness testimony with four FBI forensic specialists, one of Brewer's prisonmates and the forensic pathologist who performed the autopsy of James Byrd Jr.

Dr. Tommy J. Brown, the contracted forensic pathologist for Jasper, produced evidence that Byrd was alive when he was dragged 3.08 miles until his arm, shoulder and head were severed from his body.

"I pray he wasn't conscious, but he was alive," Brown said.

Forensic specialist also concluded Byrd's tailbone, knees, elbows and a

side of his face were completely ground down as he was dragged across concrete along Huff Creek Road in Jasper with his ankles chained to the back of a moving vehicle.

The genetics and DNA specialist concluded blood detected on Brewer's running shoes, several places on the exterior of Shawn Berry's pickup truck, the third man accused in the murder and in several places along Huff Creek Road belonged to Byrd.

DNA evidence also proved a cigarette butt and a bottle of beer found on the logging road where Byrd was chained to the back of Berry's truck, were consumed by Brewer.

Hair and fiber forensic specialists concluded the victim was in Brewer's truck at one time because fibers from the interior upholstery were found on Byrd's clothing.

Mechanic Curtis Lee Johnson served time in June and July 1998 in Jasper County for a parole violation.

During this time, he came in contact with John William King, the first man convicted of Byrd's murder and Brewer.

While in prison, King asked Johnson to take Brewer letters, known in prison as "kites," King had written.

Before delivering the "kites," Johnson said he took the letters to prison officials, who made copies of them.

The prosecution presented letters authored by Brewer that included derogatory racial remarks and evidence pointing toward his guiltiness.

"Look at O.J. he beat his trial," Brewer said in a letter.

"I do believe we are bigger stars, or hero of the day, than would ever be expected."

Brewer's letters also included references to the chain allegedly used to drag Byrd.

Johnson said he gave the letters to prison officials because he did not approve of the crime King and Brewer were accused of committing.

At the close of the session, the defense asked for an acquittal because of a lack of sufficient and factual evidence from the prosecution.

The court denied the request.

MONTAUK, N.Y. (AP) — Creating havoc even at half-strength, Tropical Storm Floyd raced into the Northeast with gusty winds and torrential rain yesterday, grounding hundreds of flights, closing school for 3 million students, and even postponing a U.N. meeting on war.

Drenching much of the East Coast, Floyd raced across Long Island and into New England after rolling through the Carolinas in the morning. By 11 p.m., its winds had fallen below hurricane force to 60 mph.

At least 12 deaths were blamed on Floyd, eight from traffic accidents in the Carolinas and Virginia. Two girls in Delaware drowned after a storm-swollen creek swept them into a sewage pipe, a woman was killed in Virginia when a tree fell on her mobile home, and one man was presumed drowned in the Bahamas.

The storm swept away portions of a bridge in North East, Md., forcing 100 families downstream to abandon their homes. Four oil tanks holding 80,000 gallons collapsed, though officials were un-

sure if the oil contaminated nearby Chesapeake Bay.

While still a hurricane, Floyd drilled ashore at Cape Fear, N.C., knocking out power to more than 1.4 million people in the Carolinas and dumping more than a foot of rain that flooded hundreds of North Carolina homes. But the overall damage was considered modest.

"We're most fortunate," said George Lemons, a National Weather Service forecaster in Raleigh, N.C.

From there, Floyd's winds weakened steadily to less than half its fearsome peak of 155 mph. The minimum wind speed for a hurricane is 74 mph.

At 11 p.m. EDT, the storm's center was 25 miles east of Hartford, Conn., and moving quickly northeast at 35 mph. Forecasters said it would continue to weaken today.

Even the gentler Floyd was threat enough for New York and New Jersey authorities, who declared states of emer-

SEE FLOYD ON PAGE 2.

Well worth the wait



Alex Heartfield Elizabeth O'Neal senior agricultural economics major picks up his Aggie Ring Thursday afternoon in the Clayton Williams Alumni Center.

Part of Zone seating to open

BY CHRIS MENCZER
The Battalion

More than 70,000 football-starved Aggie fans will get their first look at the highly anticipated \$34.8 million end-zone expansion project this Saturday at the Texas A&M Football Team's first home game against The University of Tulsa.

The Zone, when completed, will add 22,720 seats to last year's 60,800 capacity for a total of 83,520.

Blume said the new first-level "Goal-Line Stands" and second-tier "The Zone Club," an armchair-seat section, will be open for Saturday's game with a total of 9,200 new seats.

Although the project has received criticism for not being completed for the start of the 1999 football

season, Blume said construction has followed University timetables since he joined the project.

"We've had about \$3 million in additional change orders," Blume said. "The total revised amount is about \$34.8 million."

"We made an agreement with the University to have [a certain number of] seats by the first home game and then so many more by the first Big 12 game," Blume said.

He said the third and fourth levels will be completed in time for the Aggie's Big 12 opener against Baylor University on Oct. 9. This will leave only 20 private boxes under construction, with their completion plans set for next year.

Shay Scruggs, director of development for the 12th Man Foundation, said alco-



Part of The Zone's seating will be open for Saturday's game.

hol concessions added to the expansion area will be restricted to a private enclosure beneath the stands called The Zone Club.

"There will be no drinking in seating areas," Scruggs said.

With new construction nearly complete, the team now will enter the stadium

through the northwest corner, and seniors now will form the halftime "boot line" at the northeast corner.

Stadium improvements have also reached into pre-existing area. Because of heavy student demand, concession stands at Kyle Field will accept Aggie Bucks beginning Saturday.

'First Yell' festivities to begin

BY JULIE ZUCKER
The Battalion

Texas A&M University's "First Yell," hosted by the yell leaders, will kick off the 1999 home football schedule today with a barbecue, games and live performances.

Jeff Bailey, head yell leader and a senior agricultural systems management major, said the yell leaders have been working on the event since Fall 1998 and have been finalizing the details since last April.

He said yell leaders in the past talked about adding festivities to First Yell, but there were problems getting funding so this is the first year for this kind of production.

"The whole idea is continuous excitement until the game," Bailey said.

The festivities begin with "Weekend Warmup," including a barbecue, carnival games and free performances by Last Free Exit, Granger and Sly Letter at 3:30 p.m. on O.R. Simpson Drill Field.

Opening for comedian Bill Engvall will be the Singing Cadets, Chi Omega Productions, Aggie Wranglers and Freudian Slip at 8:30 p.m. in Rudder Auditorium.

Engvall, known for his "Here's Your Sign" routine, will perform at 9:40 p.m.

Midnight Yell Practice will be at Kyle Field following the performances.

Payton Campbell, a junior finance major, said First Yell is a good chance for students to come together and get motivated for the first home game. Campbell encourages first-year Aggies to get involved with the weekend.

"This is a great way [for new Aggies] to make their first yell and first game as Aggies memorable," Campbell said. "Every new Aggie should take advantage of First Yell."

Bailey said the goal of the weekend is not for this event to become a new tradition, but he said he hopes for positive feedback and more participation in the years to come.

"This is a way to bring former, current and future Aggies together," Bailey said. "We want First Yell to be on every Aggie's calendar in the years ahead."

The festivities continue Saturday with a barbecue cook off at 2 p.m. on Simpson Drill Field. Eleven teams will compete for best brisket, sausage, chicken, specialty item, presentation and overall talent. Judges include former A&M football players, faculty members and student leaders. Mark David Manders will perform at 2 p.m., and Roger Creager goes on at 4 p.m. Tickets will be sold for \$7 in the MSC hallway.

At 6 p.m., people will head to Kyle Field for the game.

First Yell is sponsored by the 12th Man Foundation, the Association of Former Students, the Athletic Department and the A&M Foundation.



JEFF SMITH/THE BATTALION

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Neighbors call shooter eccentric

FORT WORTH (AP) — Police found few hints of a motive Thursday in the trashed home and old journals of Larry Gene Ashbrook, who opened fire in a Baptist church during a service for teen-agers, killing seven people and himself.

Ashbrook, 47, described as an eccentric loner feared by some neighbors, left no message explaining his rampage.

Investigators were left to determine what they could from the journals and damage to Ashbrook's home — holes punched in walls, toilets destroyed and family photographs shredded.

"This has the appearance of being a very troubled man who ... sought to quiet whatever demons that bothered him," said FBI special agent in charge Robert Garrity. "I don't know that we'll ever

know the answer to the question of why it happened."

Ashbrook, dressed in blue jeans, a black jacket and smoking a cigarette, entered Wedgwood Baptist Church Wednesday evening as teen-agers listened to a Christian rock band in the sanctuary.

In the church lobby, Ashbrook confronted his first victims with a question: "What's the program?" Then he shot a janitor who approached him and killed two other people before walking into the crowded sanctuary.

Some 150 teen-agers gathered inside initially thought the killer was part of a skit as he began cursing and spouting anti-Baptist rhetoric. They scrambled for cover as Ashbrook opened fire, pausing at least twice to reload.

"The guy pointed at me

SEE SHOOTER ON PAGE 2.

INSIDE

aggielife

•Between the sheets

Students share embarrassing tales of sex on campus.



Page 3

sports

•Ready for the storm

The Texas A&M Football Team to take on Tulsa University.

Page 7

opinion

•Hullabaloo, a wreck, a wreck

Pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles engage in battle daily on A&M campus.



Page 11

Batt radio

Listen to KAMU-FM 90.9 at 1:57 p.m. for details on the city of Crockett's celebration of Frontier Days.