

THE BATTALION

106 YEARS AT TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

Tuesday • September 21, 1999

College Station, Texas

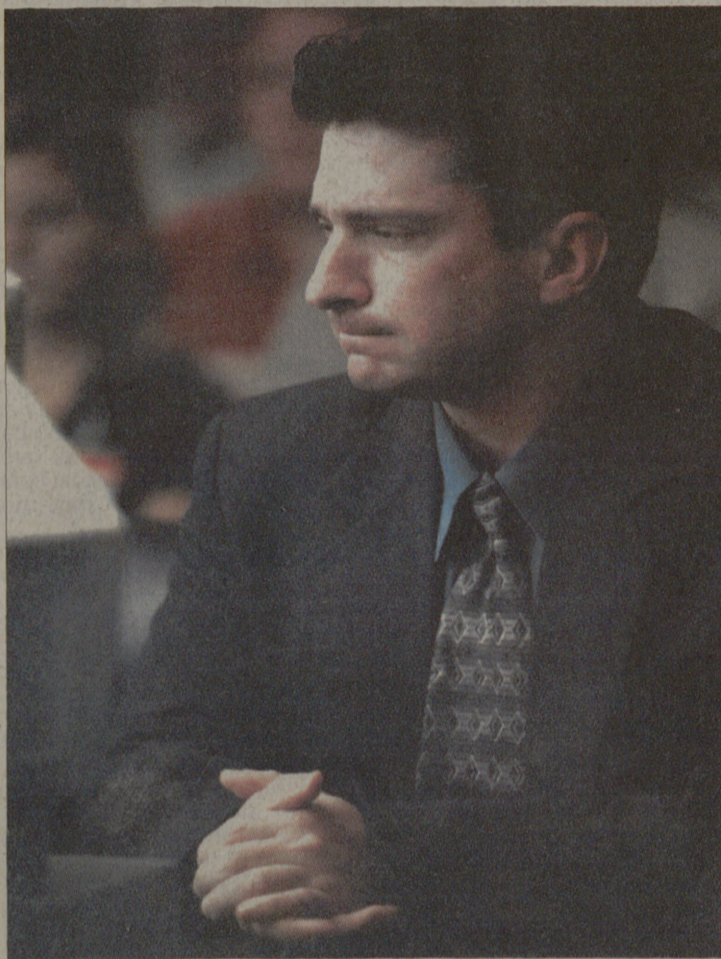
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GUILTY



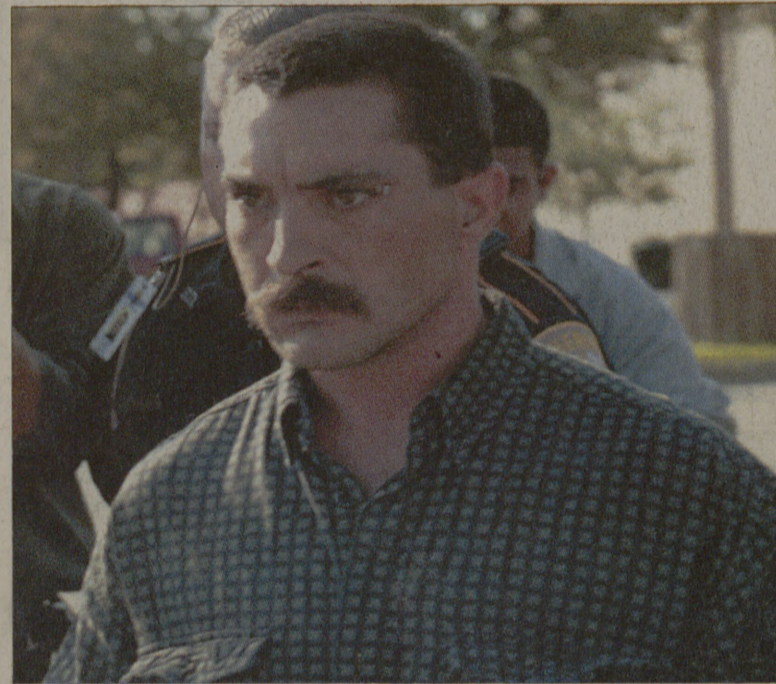
SALLIE TURNER/THE BATTALION

Mary Verrett, sister of James A. Byrd Jr., speaks after the guilty verdict was announced. She said she put faith in the 12 jurors' verdict.



SPECIAL TO THE BATTALION

Lawrence Russell Brewer, now awaits sentencing for the murder.



SALLIE TURNER/THE BATTALION

John Brewer, brother of Lawrence Russell Brewer, carries his brother's belongings to a vehicle after the verdict was announced.

Brewer faces sentence of life in prison or death

BY RYAN WEST
The Battalion

Lawrence Russell Brewer faces either death or life in prison following the conviction of capital murder for the dragging death of James A. Byrd, Jr., which was announced after four hours of jury deliberation Monday.

Mary Verrett, one of Byrd's six sisters, said she put faith in the 12 jurors' verdict.

"We were a little anxious because the deliberation was longer this time [compared to the conviction of William King]," Verrett said.

Verrett said there is little difference between Brewer's case and King's case.

"I want to see the ultimate penalty," she said. "I know the jury will make the right decision."

Guy James Gray, Jasper County District Attorney, said the defense will now attempt to convince jurors that if Brewer is locked-up for life he will not hurt anyone else, which is a typical defense of a capital murder charge.

"This verdict sends a message that is long past — racial relations have improved in Texas and we don't want to slide back," Gray said.

He said the all-white jury was never a worry because it does not matter who the victim is; murder is murder.

The punishment phase began today following the verdict.

Closing arguments took an hour and a half to complete, the defense used the majority of the time.

The defense attempted to persuade the jury that Byrd's throat was slashed by Shawn Berry before he was dragged; therefore, the crime was not as heinous and Brewer did not deserve to be convicted. The prosecution emphasized the fact that Brewer has a long history of being a criminal

and in every case he blames someone else.

During the presentation of evidence relating to appropriate punishment, the prosecution pointed to Brewer's time in the Texas Department of Correction Institute for two counts of burglary, possession of a controlled substance and revocation of his parole.

Prosecuting attorneys also presented a "kite," or prison letter written by Brewer, in which he referred to "tire rolling."

Robert Strickland, Houston deputy sheriff who has investigated gang-related crimes, said a "tire" is slang for an African American and to "roll a tire" means to bring harm or death to that person.

"Well, I did it and am no longer a virgin!" Brewer's letter said. "It was a rush and [I] am still lickin[g] my lips for more."

SEE BREWER ON PAGE 2.

Churches offer support to Byrds throughout trial

BY RYAN WEST
The Battalion

Members of Grace Bible Church in College Station and Shiloh Baptist Church in Bryan are offering their prayers and preparing food in support of the family of James A. Byrd Jr., the Jasper man dragged to death in June 1998.

Throughout the capital murder trial in Bryan, the two churches have provided both lunch and dinner in the breakfast room of the Byrd family's hotel.

Mylinda Washington, one of Byrd's sisters, said the family is grateful for all of the fellowship and support the local churches have provided.

"We've had more church support down here than we had in Jasper," Washington said. "It's been a blessing; we just can't say enough."

Mel Pruitt, coordinator of the

effort and a member of Shiloh Baptist Church, said they could not have prayed for more success.

Pruitt said everyday the meal is set up "like a party for distinguished people," with table cloths, center pieces and candy on each table.

"The Byrds are such gracious people, meeting them has been spiritually rewarding," she said.

Pruitt said it was encouraging to see the members of Grace Bible Church take such a positive, sharing attitude.

"I've never met a more Christian group of women [like those from Grace Bible Church] who want to share something spiritual," she said. "It's been the most blessed experience I've ever had."

Grace Bible Church pastor Dwight Edwards said they wanted to express the love of Jesus Christ in a tangible medium for the family.

"With as much media atten-

tion and harassment as the [Byrd] family faces during the trial, we wanted to provide an oasis during the day — a time they could get away and enjoy themselves," Edwards said.

He said the trial is an opportunity for members of Grace Bible Church, predominantly Caucasian, to work with Shiloh Baptist Church, predominantly African-American, to show that Christ is the only hope for racial reconciliation.

Shiloh Baptist Church reverend Larry Hall said members of both churches have stepped forward and opened their arms to show hospitality.

"We have people fasting and praying everyday from both churches," Hall said.

"They call each other, work together and get to know each other."

SEE CHURCHES ON PAGE 2.

INSIDE

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• Making her mark

A&M's multi-talented soccer player Alison Peters shines on the field.



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Band celebrates release of new album, *A Day Waiting*.

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• How much is that rifle in the window?

Clinton's gun buy-back program does not address the real problem.



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Batt radio

Listen to KAMU-FM 90.9 at 1:57 p.m. for details on College Station's environmental awards.

138 students take part in CARPOOL

BY BROOKE HODGES
The Battalion

Caring Aggies "R" Protecting Over Our Lives (CARPOOL) gave 138 students a ride home from parties, clubs and bars this weekend.

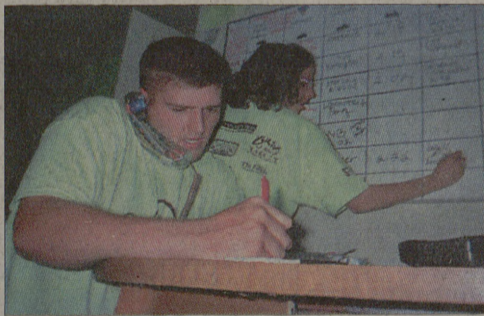
Jeff Shiefelbein, founder and chair of CARPOOL and a senior management major, said the number of people who used the service was more than expected.

After being bombarded with business cards and lime green t-shirts all week, Roger Dowling, a senior management information system major, used CARPOOL to get home after an evening at The Tap Friday night.

Dowling said the experience was fast and helpful and he would definitely use the CARPOOL service again.

"There were no problems at all," he said. "They didn't ask any questions, they just drove you right home."

Shiefelbein said 36 people used the service Thursday, 54 Friday and 48 people on Saturday.



KIMBER HUFF/THE BATTALION

Kevin Boehn, a junior biomedical science major, and Amber Giles, a junior elementary education major, keep track of outgoing cars for CARPOOL Friday night.

Each night there was a particular place where the majority of the calls came from. He said on Thursday calls mainly came from clubs and bars; on Friday calls came from parties, bars and Yell Practice; Saturday pick-ups were almost entirely from parties.

"A lot of people called and told us where they were having a party, if we wanted to come and sit," Shiefelbein said.

"They were trying to be responsible and looking out for their friends."

Erik Haywood, a CARPOOL volunteer and a senior sports management major, said he could not believe the number of students who helped the program.

SEE CARPOOL ON PAGE 2.

Historian speaks on sexuality

BY BRADY CREEL
The Battalion

The technology of the female orgasm was discussed last night at a lecture given by Dr. Rachel Maines, a historian from New York, to a standing-room only audience of Texas A&M University students and faculty.

She said its early uses included the treatment of a disease called "hysteria" by early medical practitioners. In the past, doctors prescribed horseback riding to produce orgasm as treatment for medical problems.

"My hypothesis is that most of them were suffering from chronic frustration," Maines said.

The lecture included a comprehensive explanation of the development of the vibrator. Maines said the vibrator is the fifth household appliance developed. It was introduced subsequent to the sewing machine, electric fan, tea kettle, and toaster.

"A woman does not live on toast alone," Maines said.



BRADLEY ATCHISON/THE BATTALION

Dr. Rachel Maines speaks Monday on sexuality.

Maines said the purchase of vibrators are illegal in Texas if it is indicated that they will be used for purposes other than a back massage.

Maines presented a slide show with examples of advertisements from catalogs, pictures of devices used for sexual pleasure such as vibrators and "mounting devices" from the mid-1800s to the present.

She said the introduction of the electromechanical vibrator coincided with the introduction of electricity into the home.

She said intercourse does not always lead a woman to orgasm and according to men, sex doesn't always include women having an orgasm.

"Perhaps what we need is a new definition of what real sex is and I don't think we are going to use the Bill Clinton one," she said.

The lecture was only recently planned, but Maines' trip to Texas has been scheduled since March. Maines said she thought all along that she would be speaking at the University of Texas in Austin, but they were unwilling to let her speak because of a lack of initial interest in the subject.

She was later invited to speak at A&M when she met Jonathan Coopersmith, associate professor of history. When officials in the Women's Studies department at UT-Austin found out that she would be speaking at A&M, she was immediately offered a chance to speak there.

"They [UT] weren't going to have Aggies ahead of them in the vibrator race," Maines said.