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Aggie Orientation Leaders will have a Bonfire Tree filled with things that Camp For All needs in the MSC November 15-19. Please stop by and grab a flame from the Bonfire, purchase the flame item, and bring your spirit gift to Room 314 YMCA for donation to Camp For All by Monday, November 22.

Any questions about Camp For All or the Bonfire Tree may be directed to Jason Word, Jenny Barratt, or David Kessler at 862-2746.

Aggie Orientation Leader Program | Student Life | Department of Student Life Student Life Orientation

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# African-American friends testify on behalf of Berry in Jasper trial

JASPER (AP) — Several black friends testified yesterday on behalf of a white East Texan accused of dragging a black man to death behind a pickup truck, saying they did not believe he was a racist.

Joseph Glenn, Larry Don Buford and Ann-Marie Norman all testified they have no reason to believe former movie theater manager Shawn Allen Berry is a bigot.

"Shawn [Berry] had black friends," Buford said. "Sometimes if a [black customer] at the theater didn't have enough for a ticket, he'd give them money out of his pocket or give them a ticket."

Glenn, who once worked with Berry at a tire store, said he had never heard Berry make racist statements and that Berry was close to John Jefferson, a black man who is now deceased. Berry cried at Jefferson's funeral, Glenn said.

The three were among a parade of more than a dozen witnesses who told jurors that they had never known Berry to be a racist. Some also testified that Berry did not like confrontation and backed down from fights.

Berry's brother, Louis Berry, said they were not raised to hate blacks or anyone else.

"I know people would expect me to say that because he's my brother, but it's the truth," he said.

Prosecutors in the capital murder case have not tried to prove that Berry, 24, harbored long-standing racial prejudices. They do charge that he participated in the June 7, 1998, dragging death of James Byrd Jr., making him as culpable as his two former roommates, who already have been convicted and sentenced to death.

Berry and the roommates picked up an inebriated Byrd, 49, along a Jasper road. Byrd was taken outside of town, beaten, chained to the back of Berry's pickup and dragged three miles along a

rural road. Byrd's decapitated corpse was left beside the road.

John William King, 25, and Lawrence Russell Brewer, 32, were portrayed at their trials as avowed white supremacists covered in racist tattoos.

Berry could join King and Brewer on death row if jurors decide he was more than the frightened bystander he claims to have been.

Dr. Edward Gripon, whose testimony helped put King and Brewer on death row, said yesterday that Berry did not share the racial hatred of his friends.

"I did not find him to espouse any white supremacist dogma or doctrine, and there's no prior history to indicate that," Gripon said under questioning from Berry's attorney, Joseph C. "Lum" Hawthorn. Gripon conceded that Berry

showed "relatively poor judgment in picking up Byrd when about his friends' alleged racist prison gang."

Prosecutors asked witnesses why Berry moved to Jasper, Texas, where his girlfriend, explained that her grandfather evicted him from his house about 15 miles from town because he did not have a vehicle to transport to work. He borrowed a vehicle from her grandfather's name.

"If my grandfather would let him stay at the house, he never would have moved to Jasper," Marcontell said.

When asked about a letter she once filed claiming that Berry abused her during a domestic dispute, Marcontell said she did not recall the events.

Dr. Lynn Pearson, an orthopedic surgeon who examined Byrd's hand before the killing, testified that a broken bone in Byrd's hand would have made it difficult to struggle with Byrd or to break a heavy chain.

**"I did not find him to espouse any white supremacist dogma or doctrine, ..."**

— Dr. Edward Gripon  
 Witness

# Supreme Court hears debate over prayer before public high-school football games

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court re-entered the emotional debate over school prayer yesterday, agreeing to decide whether public schools can let students lead group invocations at high school football games.

A Galveston County, Texas, school board is asking the justices to overturn a lower court ruling said student-led prayers over the public-address system at football games violate the constitutionally required separation of church and state.

"The school district is not causing prayer or endorsing prayer if it leaves to the student the choice of what to say," school district lawyer Lisa A. Brown said after the nation's highest court granted review. "There's a long tradition in many states of having this pre-game ceremony of having a moment of reflection before the game begins."

But the Rev. Barry Lynn of Americans United for Separation of Church and State contended such prayers at officially sponsored school events violate the Constitution.

"The school's giving you the microphone; it will sound like an officially sanctioned religious statement, and that's what has no place at a high school football game," Lynn said.

The Supreme Court's decision, expected by late June, could help clarify the jumbled state of the law surrounding school prayer.

The justices' last major school-prayer ruling, in 1992, barred clergy-led prayers at public school graduation ceremonies.

"The Constitution forbids the state to exact religious conformity from a student as the price of attending her own high school graduation," the court said then.

The ruling was viewed by many as a strong reaffirmation of the highest court's 1962 decision banning organized, officially sponsored prayers from public schools.

But in 1993, the justices let stand a federal appeals court ruling in a Texas case that allowed student-led prayers at graduations. That ruling, which also applies to Louisiana and Mississippi, conflicts with another federal appeals court decision barring student-led graduation prayers in nine Western states.

Yesterday's case comes from an area of the country where some people joke that football is almost a religion.

Four students and their parents sued the Santa Fe Independent School District in 1995, seeking to end student-led prayers over the public-address system at home football games in the Houston suburb. The district's policy allows students to give an "invocation" or "message."

The students also challenged the district's policy of allowing student-led prayers at graduations, but the Supreme Court said its review will be limited to the issue of prayers at football games.

A federal judge allowed student-led prayers at football games if students were told to keep them "nonsectarian and non-proselytizing." The case does not involve prayers in team locker rooms.

A three-judge panel of the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals reversed the decision and said student-led prayers at high school football games are always out of bounds.

Football games are "hardly the sober type of annual event that can be appropriately solemnized with prayer," the appeals court said with a 2-1 vote.

The school district's appeal to the Supreme

- Some past school-prayer rulings by Supreme Court:**
- Public school officials cannot require students to begin each school day with organized prayers by saying a state-composed prayer. *Engel vs. Vitale* in 1962.
  - Public school officials cannot require students to recite the Lord's Prayer from the Bible as part of a devotional exercise. *School District of Abington Township vs. Schempp* in 1963.
  - Public schools generally must allow student prayer groups to meet and hold worship if other student clubs are permitted to meet on school property. *Westside Board of Education vs. Weir* in 1990.
  - Clergy-led prayers — invocations, benedictions — at public school graduations violate the constitutional requirement of separation of church and state. *Lewis & Clark College vs. Weisman* in 1992.

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Questions call 845-1515

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 From 6:00-8:00 enjoy FREE food and pitch your tent. Beginning at 8:00 with Dr. Southerland, Yell Leaders, Date Auction, music by 24/7 & Black Bird, and a late night movie.

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 tickets: \$3.00

**MSC E.L. Miller**  
 Science and Technology Committee

**Science and Technology Tour and Professional Development Trip - Austin**

**Institute for Advanced Technology**

**Friday, November 19th**

MSC E.L. Miller presents its first tour and professional development trip to the Institute for Advanced Technology, a research lab for the U.S. Military. Information about internships, co-ops, and permanent positions will be made available, and resumes will be accepted. Cost for the trip will be \$3.50. We may possibly be visiting other sites in Austin as well.

**For more information, please call 845-7625 by noon on Tuesday, November 15th.**