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• King takes court

A&M basketball player Bernard King travels overseas to play with Big 12 All-Star team

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Weather: Partly cloudy with a high of 98 and a low of 75.

THE BATTALION

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106 YEARS AT TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

Sun and sand



Nathan Handberry, a junior information and operations management major, bumps the volleyball back to his opponent Sunday afternoon at the Student Recreation Center.

ANDY HANCOCK/THE BATTALION

Southerland denies threats for participation

STUART HUTSON

The Battalion

"I never issued any threats during the meeting," Dr. J. Malon Southerland said in response to a press letter written by Keep the Fire Burning, a student group attempting to organize an off-campus bonfire for Fall 2000, alleging that Southerland issued threats to prevent the off-campus bonfire during a July 31 meeting.

"As a matter of fact, I thought the entire meeting went well, and I thought it ended very amicably," Southerland said. "You know, I didn't even know what they were going to want to talk about when I met with them. We began with topics such as how the progress of the bonfire memorial was doing and we just drifted off to the subject of the off-campus bonfire."

Southerland said he told the student group that the University will not in any way condone or support any representation of the University in an official capacity at the event.

"This won't be the real Aggie Bonfire," he said. "But should anything go wrong during this process, that may be a fact that the nationwide media and public may have difficulty understanding — and that may have negative effects on our efforts to produce a safe bonfire."

Southerland also said the University would press charges against any licensing violations, such as using the image of bonfire or any licensed A&M logo to advertise the event.

Joe Dyson, a board member of Keep the Fire Burning and a sophomore general studies major, said that while his group is not attempting to represent the student body, the group feels as if Southerland's warnings may still cause problems.

"I can't speak for the student body," Dyson said. "I can only speak for the 12,000 who compose our group. But that number is growing every day. Southerland used the expression that 'if it looks like a skunk, it might just be a skunk.' He meant that if a couple hundred people from the same dorm show up, then that dorm might be con-

sidered as being there in official school capacity. But, if those people are all card-carrying members of Keep the Fire Burning, I don't see how there would technically be a problem."

Southerland said that the unauthorized bonfire may hinder the reconstructive efforts currently underway to pro-

duce a safe Aggie Bonfire in 2002.

"It is technically possible that this could very much halt the development of all the attributes that need to be addressed before bonfire can continue in a safe and beneficial way," he said. "I think that with this loss of life, it is right to stand back and give two years moratorium out of respect."

Student organization examining designs for off-campus bonfire

Keep the Fire Burning, an organization of students and former students who are currently examining the possibilities of having an off-campus bonfire, says that no final decision has been reached for the bonfire design or concerning whether a 2000 bonfire is possible.

"We are still working hard to come up with a design that can be proven to be safe both to burn and to be built by students," said Joe Dyson. "Right now, it would be ignorant to say that we will definitely have a bonfire for Fall 2000 when we haven't even determined what design to use. But, if all else fails, and there isn't a bonfire, at least we can say that we have been putting in 150 percent to make it a possibility."

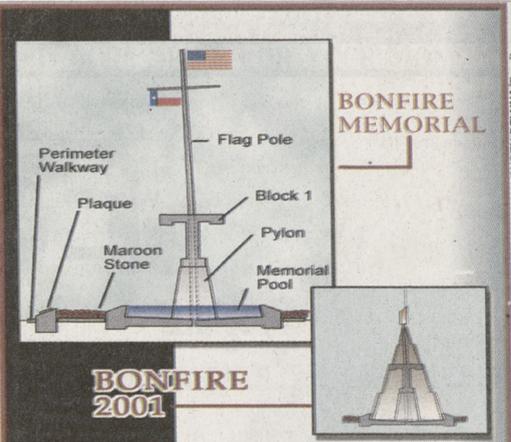
Dyson said that the non-A&M-affiliated organization has received a multitude of design plans and offers of help from former students who are now engineers and lawyers.

"We have gotten quite a few designs, some of which are more realistic than others," Dyson said. "But everything we get we examine and pass by several engineers. Everybody deserves to be heard. And we right now have something like eight lawyers ... and more than one engineer on retainer."

Among the designs submitted to the organization was a proposed bonfire memorial structure that would serve as a framework for the actual bonfire stack. Keep the Fire Burning forwarded the design by former student Gary von Rosenberg to A&M student government and administration for consideration.

"It's a pretty good idea that at least deserves to be looked at," Dyson said. "It is one of the more realistic proposals we have gotten, but it and all the other realistic proposals would still need a lot of work before they would ever have a chance to become reality."

Vice President for Student Affairs Dr. J. Malon Southerland and Student Body President Forrest Lane could not be immediately contacted to comment on the design.



This structure is proposed to fulfill the dual purpose and function of being a monument to the 12 who died in the 1999 Aggie Bonfire collapse, and it would serve as the base for which the structure would be built.

RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

President discourages UT sickout

AUSTIN (AP) — University of Texas President Larry Faulkner has warned staff members that participating in a sickout later this year could cost them their jobs.

Employees in June threatened a "burnt orange flu" that could keep 6,000 university employees home Sept. 6 through Sept. 8 — the university's busiest time — if officials did not meet a list of demands regarding wages, benefits and working conditions.

In an email sent Friday to UT-Austin employees on the advice of UT System lawyers, Faulkner cited a state law that prohibits public employees from participating in an organized work stoppage. He warned employees of the consequences of joining the walkout planned by the University Staff Association.

The group, which represents about 200 of about 12,000 non-teaching employees, says the planned protest is not a strike. Peg Kramer, association president, said the email warning was intended "to threaten, intimidate, control and disempower workers" and is already having an impact.

"It's making some people more angry ... and some people have allowed the message to intimidate and scare them," she said.

The group is protesting higher health insurance premiums, the elimination of paid dental insurance and other issues.

Labor lawyer Rick Levy, who represents the Texas AFL-CIO, said the planned demonstration reflects the dilemma for university employees who continue to lag behind the private sector in pay and benefits.

In May, about 300 workers temporarily walked off their jobs to protest changes that will take effect Sept. 1. Average out-of-pocket employee premiums are expected to increase to \$66 a month, according to the University Staff Association. Employees with dependents could pay as much as \$80 a month for coverage.

A&M prof gives two factors for high temps

CHRIS CUNICO

The Battalion

With summer in full swing, Texas A&M students are exposed to dangerously high temperatures with no sign of relief in the near future. The cruel summer heat appears to be taking its toll.

The scorching heat of a South Texas summer makes the simple task of going to class a painful ordeal. With temperatures consistently breaking the 100-degree mark, Colin Blankenship, a junior civil engineering major, said that August and early September weather does little to motivate students to attend class.

"I've had days when I was forced to haul all of my calculus and physics books from Zachry all of the way out to West Campus where I had parked my car," Blankenship said. "I dread having to walk to class in unbearable heat. November weather is more suited for my likings."

The lack of rain has caused drought in much of the western United States, and it is responsible for the Texas heat, said John Nielson-Gammon, Texas state climatologist and professor of meteorology at A&M. Nielson-Gammon also said the two most important causes of the recent heat are the lack of rain and subsidence. Subsidence, the downward movement of

air that results in warming of the air, causes clouds to evaporate. By removing the clouds from the atmosphere, subsidence allows more sunlight to come into contact with the Earth's surface.

"We have warm days in Texas every year at this time," Nielson-Gammon said, "but it takes two ingredients to make it really hot: subsidence and lack of rain."

Nielson-Gammon said subsidence, which increases temperatures, also plays a role in making the atmosphere unfavorable for rain. Warming the atmosphere increases its stability, reducing the chances for thunderstorms to form.

"Sunlight passes through the atmosphere to heat up the Earth and other solid objects on its surface," said Nielson-Gammon. "So, the ground gets hot and heats up the air — our environment gets hot from the bottom up."

Having air conditioners on full blast while sprinkling the lawn costs Bryan-College Station residents extra money in the summer.

Jason Dannatt, a junior business major, said the cost of cooling his house has definitely emptied his wallet.

"My cooling bill has almost literally doubled since March," Dannatt said. "I'm so glad that we're almost through with this summer. I don't think I would be able to stand the heat for another three months."

"I dread having to walk to class in unbearable heat. November weather is more suitable for my likings."

— Colin Blankenship
junior civil engineering major

Clinton vetoes Republican-sponsored, married-couple tax cut

EDGARTOWN, Mass. (AP) — President Clinton vetoed a Republican-sponsored tax cut for married couples Saturday, describing it as "the first installment of a fiscally reckless tax strategy" that would erase projected budget surpluses.

He said the tax break package amounted to little more than a gift to the wealthy.

The legislation passed both the House and the Senate by less than the two-thirds majorities needed to override Clinton's veto, but a House leader said an override attempt will be a top priority after Congress' current summer recess.

GOP presidential nominee George W. Bush, on a campaign train tour through the Midwest with running mate Dick Cheney, criticized the veto. The legislation, Bush said at a rally in Pontiac, Mich., "was the right thing to do. What kind of tax code is it that penalizes marriage? It's a bad tax code."

Vice President Al Gore, the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee, said he agreed with the veto but would sign a different tax cut for married couples.

"I'm for repealing the marriage tax, but not going beyond working families and not giving tax relief to people who are in the upper brackets and people who are not even married who are benefited by the version that

was passed," said Gore, speaking from Westhampton, N.Y. "So I do support the veto. I also support the right kind of repeal of the marriage tax."

Clinton vetoed the \$292 billion, 10-year tax cut before his morning round of golf on the Massachusetts resort island of Martha's Vineyard, where the first family is vacationing this weekend.

He returned the legislation to Congress with a letter in which he said the tax plan was regressive.

"It provides little relief to families that need it most, while devoting a large fraction of its benefits to families with higher incomes," Clinton's letter said.

The veto, which Clinton announced on his weekly radio address, is the opening salvo of a complicated political skirmish as the November presidential election looms. Clinton and the Democrats are trying to offer their own tax-cut package while arguing that Republicans are giving away the store.

Many Republicans believe Clinton's veto gives them a winning political issue by demonstrating that with a GOP-controlled Congress, a Democratic president is the only obstacle to sweeping tax reductions.

"I support tax cuts, but tax cuts we can afford. We can't afford a \$2 trillion U-turn on the path of fiscal discipline and economic progress," Clinton said in the radio address.



CLINTON