



## FOCUS ON NATURE TOURISM

BY DR. PETER E. TARLOW  
Tourism & More Inc.

### RURAL TOURISM: A STATE TREASURE

Midway between two grand historical cities is a small southern community with a population of just over 10,000 souls. Having neither the grandeur of one of the South's great cities nor a famous battlefield, this poor rural county symbolizes the soul of the common man.

Here history lives on a human scale. Its church spirals seek heaven, while its people seek to earn a living by the sweat of their brow.

This community is rich in the attractions of the ordinary made unique: a turn of the last century house of worship saved by a devoted gentleman, a simple country home graced by an honor guard of eucalyptus trees and turned into a general's headquarters and an abandoned pre-Civil War village living in the shadow of a major power plant.

This community offers its visitors a glimpse into the soul of America. Like its geographic position, it reminds the visitor that as long as we are alive, we are only midway along our life's journey and is a good example of the challenges and opportunities faced by rural tourism.

★ Rural tourism provides each of us with the chance to touch our roots. At the same time, it offers local communities an opportunity to maintain a special American way of life in an ever increasingly homogenized world.

★ **Challenges facing rural tourism**  
Rural tourism presents our state

with many opportunities to turn the mundane into the unique. Nevertheless, to be successful it must overcome a number of challenges including:

*Weather dependency.* Too few rural communities offer indoor activities, and when they do, these activities are often closed at night and on weekends.

*Geographic challenges.* Rural tourism communities often lack "attraction clusters." In almost all cases, few attractions are in

close proximity of each other. Nevertheless, rural does not necessarily mean that distances between attractions must be great. For example, in Custer, SD, a number of the community's attractions have been placed in such a way that there is only a short walk separating them.

*Population dispersal.* Because rural communities have low population density

they often offer only limited service and at very limited times.

For example, Boulder City, Nevada's merchants open their stores at the owner's convenience. This irregularity of service means not only lost current business, but reinforces numerous stereotypes that many urban dwellers have about rural America.

*Conflicting messages as to welcome.* The U.S. media offers a schizophrenic message about life in the heartland. On one hand, there is the perception that small towns are safe and hospitable. I have had store owners in Marble

Falls, Texas give me gifts for my children without asking and show incredible patience while I was making a selection in their store.

On the other hand, movies such as *My Cousin Vinny* portray the urban landscape as a xenophobic place where the locals seek to take advantage of outsiders. Ironically, while most Americans believe that their chance of being robbed or receiving bodily harm is lower in a rural community, they often trust rural police officers and judges less than their urban counterparts. Speed traps in rural communities, dishonest judges and poorly trained police departments in tourism-oriented policing can destroy a nascent rural tourism community.

*Marketing challenges.* Because rural communities cannot afford expensive advertising, they must often depend on word-of-mouth, guide books or regional advertising. Numerous states around the U.S. have full departments for rural tourism. For example, Oregon's rural tourism department runs statewide seminars teaching people how to network, create regional groups and share personnel and equipment.

Other communities around the nation have found ways to free up staffs through tourism volunteer hospitality programs.

*Political Fragmentitis.* Many small towns suffer from the disease of political fragmentitis. Political Fragmentitis sets in when local issues become so important that the community never able develops a community-wide visitor-friendly cooperative effort. Local football rivalries can also be disastrous for rural communities. Often high school rivalries are so great that communities would rather lose visitors to their

# FOCUS ON NATURE TOURISM

"Rural Tourism: A State Treasure" continued from previous page.

region rather than help their rival football community.

## Some of the opportunities facing rural tourism.

Despite the difficulties, rural communities have many advantages and reasons to develop a tourism program. Some of these reasons include:

**Safety.** This perception of safety permits communities to develop late-night walks, and it offers visitors freedom of movement. A hotel manager in rural eastern Oregon brags that he does not even remember where he left the key to the front door! The town's mayor boasts that in his community: "all news is old news" because nothing happens.

## Relaxed

**ambiance.** That sense of safety also spills over into the perceived relaxed atmosphere that many visitors believe rural communities offer. The idea that one will not be rushed to check out of the hotel, finish breakfast or need

to speed down the road may not always be true, but places that can offer such a world are sure to be a success.

An example of this laid-back rural tourism can be found in many of the non-traditional bed and breakfasts of Johnson City, Texas. A trip through many of Texas' backroads allows us to experience not only slow eating and quiet living, but the rustling of leaves, the sound of the waves breaking along the shore and the rooster's crow.

**Authenticity.** Rural communities make a mistake when they try to compete with places such as Las Vegas. For example, no one travels to Kalispell, Montana to gamble but rather to see real glaci-

ers. The more authentic a place is the more unique it becomes in a "postmodern" world where reality often blends with fiction.

**E**ast Texas is a place where authenticity reigns. The visitor knows that what he/she sees is a piece of real life and not a movie set. Places such as downtown Navasota, Texas look real because they are real.

**Inexpensive price.** In reality this may or may not be true. Many bed and breakfasts are far from inexpensive, and many rural antique stores can be hazardous to one's wallet.

Rural communities do well to tell visitors where to find food along the backroads and where inter-

esting and unique "objets d'art" are for sale. Often the best bargains are from local crafts-people and artisans.

**Good places for family vacations.** A farm may be seen as something that is boring

to a person who lives on one, but often urban dwellers are fascinated by the chance to pay to work on a farm. In the U.S., dude ranches reach out to urban dwellers who have always wanted to see the real West and ride a horse.

Israel's kibbutz tourism has proven that people from around the world will pay to work if they perceive the manual work to be an authentic experience.

Below are a few questions that rural communities may want to ask themselves as they develop their travel product.

*• does your community have an overall long range tourism plan?*

*• are the businesses you are seeking to attract compatible with the culture of your community?*

*• Is your population trained to receive guests?*

*• what are your key attractions in your community and how do they affect your community's general ambiance?*

*• how many of your attractions are designed for multiple visits?*

*• does your promotional literature create problems of false expectations?*

*• how much will an increase in tourism cost in providing city services such as additional police, ambulance, and fire?*

*• how can your community benefit by entering into "linked-tourism" with other communities or states?*

*• what is the attitude of the local population toward tourism related economic development?*

**I**t is no easy task to develop the infrastructure needed for a viable and sustainable tourism industry. Nevertheless, the labor needed in developing rural tourism is offset not only by its economic gain but by the "can do" attitude it fosters in a community.

Rural tourism is more than being hospitable to others; it is taking pride in one's community and celebrating one's heritage. This pride is best summed up by the words of a long-time resident of a community that chose to develop rural tourism. This resident noted, "At one time walking down Main Street we would see a downcast mouth and droopy shoulders - Now we see smiles and straight shoulders..."

Hopefully, many Texans who live in our rural communities can say the same.

*Inside - Things Related  
to downtown hotels and  
preferences of diners  
average American*

**Subject:** November 22, 1999 Industry Update  
**Date:** Mon, 15 Nov 1999 08:48:36 -0600  
**From:** Robin Clinker <rclinker@texaslodging.com>  
**To:** christab@wt.net.com

**November 22, 1999**

**Dear Members:**

I just realized that I only have three more issues of the *Industry Update* before my 18 months as your President comes to an end. Boy. What a run.

Before I begin reminiscing, I'd like to thank the scores of TH&MA members who have been so helpful to our association in providing accommodations to our staff and friends of our industry. Most recently, Dennis Miller of San Antonio's Holiday Inn Riverwalk, Connie Bennett of Tyler's La Quinta Inn, Paul Cherrett of Austin's Four Seasons, and David Lature of Houston's Hilton Hobby. You and so many others always help TH&MA, and I appreciate it very much.

Now this is great. As you know, we've moved our annual Short Course from July to January. I've just received the brochure and registration packet for the first Short Course of the new millennium. It's January 10-14, 2000, at the Hilton College at the University of Houston. I've already told my top management team to begin selecting candidates to attend. I hope you have, too. If for some reason you haven't received your brochure, call Robin at TH&MA at 1-800-856-4328. I think we'll sell this out earlier than ever before. Don't get left out.

I just returned from the annual Fall Conference of the American Hotel & Motel Association. Since I've been active with TH&MA, I've seen the way AH&MA is getting better and better in so many ways. If I have a concern, it's that the level of communications between AH&MA and TH&MA is not what it should be. I think both associations bear some responsibility for this. Accordingly, I have formed a committee of TH&MA leaders who will be charged with the task of face to face meetings with AH&MA leaders to see how we can overcome some of these problems. The following TH&MA leaders are serving on this committee: Bill Kirk, of Temple's Best Western at Scott & White, Theresa Elliott of Galveston's Casa del Mar, Doug Horn of Wyndham Hotels and Resorts, and Jack Rush of Port Aransas' Port Royal Ocean Resort. I know these committee members would love to hear from you if you have any ideas how we can make TH&MA and AH&MA work better together. Let them know.

Last but certainly not least, I hope the members of the Golden Triangle Hotel & Motel Association will forgive me for being unable to attend their meeting on November 11, 1999. For those of you who don't know, the Golden Triangle is that part of Texas which includes Beaumont, Orange, Port Arthur, and all of the territory on the Gulf bordering Louisiana. Don Hansen said it was the largest attendance at a Golden Triangle meeting he can remember. The Golden Triangle does such great things. It presented HEAT member Debbie Stager with a check for \$250 to buy uniform shirts for her students. It presented a \$1,000 scholarship check to Lamar University. Another check in the amount of \$1,000 to the Hughen School represented the association's support of the school's annual Christmas party. And finally, Gordon Rostvold, General Manager of the Holiday Inn Beaumont Plaza presented Don with checks for \$500 to HotelPAC and \$500 for our scholarship fund.

On behalf of TH&MA, thanks very much to the Golden Triangle Hotel & Motel

Association for its terrific support of our work.

Joseph N. DePalma, Sr./President, DePalma Hotel Corporation  
1999 TH&MA President

## GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Alabama-Coushatta Indian tribe near Livingston, Texas **has voted to bring gaming to its reservation in East Texas.** Texas Attorney General's office warned the tribe faces a battle with the state if it proceeds with its plan. . . Washington State launches **new consumer marketing campaign aimed at Washington residents.** The Tourism Division's latest research shows that half of all tourism dollars comes from its own residents. . . New head of Georgia tourism office **plans to raise the state's profile, particularly in Europe.** Their first goal is to increase the current \$2 million advertising budget to \$7.5 million. . . Several Corpus Christi City Council members are questioning **the traditional use of hotel occupancy taxes to support arts grants for the Corpus Christi Symphony and fifteen other arts organizations.** . . Internal Revenue Service announces changes in the **Tip Reporting Alternative Commitment (TRAC)** agreement. New program emphasizes education of employees rather than employee audits. For information on the new rules, call Robin at TH&MA. . . Galveston's Park Board spent public money to run advertising which subliminally supported the increase in hotel occupancy taxes for the expansion of the Galveston Convention Center. **District Attorney is having second thoughts.** . . Election results: **Houston denied** extension of hotel occupancy taxes for a new basketball arena for the Houston Rockets. **St. Paul, Minnesota voted no** on a new professional sports arena. **Scottsdale, Arizona voted yes** on a new sports stadium. The San Antonio citizens **voted to increase hotel occupancy taxes** to build an arena for the San Antonio Spurs. Citizens in Galveston voted no on an increase in hotel occupancy taxes to expand the convention center. Citizens in Grand Prairie voted to **increase hotel occupancy tax to build a conference center**, but **rejected an increase in other taxes** to expand the drag strip racing facility. . . The battle continues on the **lawsuit between Fort Worth and Dallas** over Love Field. For an excellent chronology of this dispute, call Tandi at TH&MA. . . The Texas Department of Economic Development Tourism Division announces the completion of its 2000 marketing plan which includes the new **Cooperative Advertising Program.** The new co-op plan has opportunities in national and international publications starting at under \$500. You may access the plan on-line at <http://research.travel.state.tx.us> or call Andrew Leeper at TDED at 512/936-0201. . . Living Wage initiatives to **increase minimum wages are growing like topsy throughout the country.** In Santa Monica, the city council is preparing to study a proposal that would raise hourly wages for 2,300 employees at eight hotels to \$10.69 per hour and guarantee them employer-paid health benefits. California's minimum wage in \$5.75 per hour. Similar legislation failed to pass in the last Texas Legislative Session, and TH&MA was part of a coalition to defeat such an election in Houston several years ago. Stay tuned.

## LEGISLATIVE NEWS

United States Senate passes legislation by Senator Pete Domenici (R-NM) to **increase the minimum wage by \$1.00 over three years beginning in March of 2000.** The bill also contains provisions of importance to our industry such as: An increase in the

business meal deduction from 50% to 80% for small businesses and the self-employed; a permanent reauthorization of the Work Opportunity Tax Credit; a reduction of the FUTA tax from .8 percent to .6 percent; and the Bonus Incentive Act, which allows employers to pay performance bonuses to hourly employees without having to retroactively recalculate their hourly pay. Expect Clinton to veto. He doesn't like the credits.

## MISCELLANEOUS

Pat Fussell plans 50 bed, \$2 million **Super 8 Motel** in Somerville. . . Robert Goodrich of Amarillo, owner of the **Herrington Hotel**, is once again considering reopening the hotel. . . **Amarillo Civic Center** expansion begins. . . **Amarillo Holiday Inn** at I-40 completes \$2.5 million hotel renovation. . . 52 unit **Hawthorn Suites** opens in Lubbock. . . 65 room **Hawthorn Suites** opens in Wichita Falls. . . 54 room **Comfort Inn** breaks ground in Cleburne. . . **Whispering Pines Motel and RV Park** begins construction east of Newton on U.S. 190. . . 69 room **Hampton Inn** opens in Sherman. . . *USA Today* reports that **frequent flyers really want more elbow room** than anything else. . . **54 upscale hotels are being built around the country** in old historic buildings, on top of retail centers, and in entertainment complexes in many downtown areas. . . The Cypress Group, a private New York equity firm, **invests \$300 million in Dallas-based ClubCorp. Inc.** . . Hoteliers in Farmers Branch have formed a new **Farmers Branch Hotel/Motel Association**. Mohamed Elmougy, General Manager of the Omni Park West Hotel, is the Chairman. . . The **Accor Economy Lodging Group** adds 563 new hotels and 61,000 rooms during the first eight months of 1999. In addition, Accor will be building new Motel 6's in the Canadian market. . . Wyndham Hotels & Resorts is offering **free replacements to guests whose vacation is affected by severe weather**. . . Bass Hotels & Resorts announces it has entered into a multiple franchise agreement with **Houston-based Westmont Hospitality** that will result in up to 20 hotels converting to the Holiday Inn brand before the end of 2000. All of these hotels will be in Europe. . . **DePalma Hotel Corporation** assumes management control of Best Western Hotel in Pekin, Illinois, and two Wingate Inns in Dallas and Arlington. DePalma's President & CEO is President of TH&MA. . . Dallas-based **Foresthills Hotels & Resorts** contracts to manage new luxury hotels and resort properties in Europe, the Middle East, and United States. Atef Mankarios, a former Rosewood Hotel top officer, is the mover and shaker in this project. . . Wyndham Hotels Resorts becomes the **official hotel company for Business and Professional Women/USA**. . . San Francisco CVB survey studies the **dining preference of the average American**. There are fascinating results. For a copy, call Valery at TH&MA. . . More hotel guests are bypassing the front desk for check-in. **81% of business travelers say express check-in and express check-out services are extremely or very desirable**. Look for Hilton Hotels to use new technology to provide curbside check-in at hotels in Honolulu, New York, and Anaheim. . . Cendant Corporation to offer high-speed web access in over **700,000 hotel rooms within their organization**. . . Holiday Inn Express surveys 1,000 executives to find out about the **"Secret Life of Road Warriors."** The study says that 58% do not travel with a laptop computers, 54% file their expense reports within one week after a trip, and 70% bring home souvenirs from their trips. For more from this survey, call Valery at TH&MA. . . *Convene* magazine has wonderful article on the **value of networking**. It talks about the ten essentials in making networking more successful. For a copy, call Robin at TH&MA. . . San Antonio's downtown **Radisson Hotel** incorporates videoconferencing capabilities. . . **"Diversity in the Lodging Industry by Management Job Title,"** a study

conducted for AHF by Purdue University, shows that nine of every ten general managers are white, and more than eight in ten are males. . . **Fewer Americans traveled to Canada in August.** There was a decline of 7.1% from the record high of 2.4 million quick visits in July. . . Banc of America Securities analyst argues that many travel and leisure companies are poised **to fare well in 2000 due to a steady growth economy,** high consumer confidence, and favorable demographic trends. . . Go figure! The nation's **airlines have begun cutting back on the number of flights scheduled on December 31,** the last New Year's Eve of the millennium. . . Not only does Houston get a new NFL team, but **they will be hosting the Super Bowl in 2004.** . . *Saint Paul Pioneer Press* has articles about airlines **beefing up their in-flight food.** For a copy, call Tandi at TH&MA. . . Richey International surveys and finds that **46% of hotel bills are incorrect.** . . After long talks, Disneyland will build **a facility in Hong Kong.** . . Look for **offshore gambling** to return to Galveston. . . Corpus Christi's **Columbus Fleet Association** ceases operation. . . Amarillo's Tri-State Fairgrounds and special events center will be named "**Amarillo National Bank Center**". . . Dallas restaurateur offers a **\$500 signing bonus to any waiter or waitress hired** for its new restaurant. . . Heller Financial, Inc. announces that its business group is renewing its **commitment to financing hotel projects** and has launched a new program focusing on middle-market hotel lending. . . Did you know there are **seven new hotels being built** near the new Austin airport?. . . Irving CVB **studying a new convention center** which would include 125,000 square feet of exhibit space, a 300,000 square-foot ballroom, and 25,000 square-feet of breakout space. . . Winter Texans pumped **\$329 million into the economy during their residency** in the Rio Grande Valley last year. . . Holiday Inn Express under construction in Galveston **destroyed by fire.** . . Maritz, Wolff & Co., a St. Louis-based private investment fund, purchases the **Ritz-Carlton Kansas City** for \$61 million.

## PEOPLE

**D.J. Utterback** named Assistant General Manager at Laredo's La Posada. . . Newly appointed General Managers include: **James Barela** at Dallas' Stoneleigh Hotel and **Oscar Barrela** at the Holiday Inn Arlington. . . **Burt Cabanas**, Chairman and CEO of Benchmark Hospitality, named one of the 25 most influential people in the meetings industry by *Meeting News* magazine. . . **Juergen Bartels** abruptly resigns as CEO of Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide. . . Former Texan **Colin Ankersen** named VP and GM of Hamilton Park Conference Center in New Jersey. . . **Paul Dietzler** named Vice President of Finance for hotel operations for Omni Hotels. . . **Michael Deitemeyer** named COO for Omni Hotels. . . **Jay Witzel**, who resigned last month as President of Extended Stay America Management, will return to Radisson Hotels Worldwide as President/COO. . . **Tom Latin** joins PricewaterhouseCoopers as global-leadernew services for the hospitality and leisure practice.



## FOCUS ON... TEXAS TOURISM

BY TRACYE MCDANIEL, DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR TOURISM  
TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - TOURISM DIVISION

### Texas tourism faces new technology, opportunity

According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), tourism is an industry still "truly in its infancy." It is an industry that has \$423 billion in annual revenues and shows no signs of slowing in the 21st century. The WTO predicts the worldwide tourism industry will expand so fast between now and 2020, that it will not only be the world's biggest industry, but it will be one of the most lucrative.

International tourism, in particular, still has much potential to explore. In the year 2020, nearly 1.6 billion international tourist arrivals are forecast, which is almost triple the current number. Visitor spending is also predicted to be more than \$2 trillion.

Travel is the third largest revenue-generating industry in the Lone Star State, pumping \$29.3 billion into the Texas economy in 1997. Texas ranks second as a pleasure travel destination for U.S. residents and is a leading destination for international travelers, with more than 4.3 million international visitors in 1997.

Travel in 1997 also generated over \$2 billion in taxes for local and state governments. Without the tax revenue generated by state tourism, each Texan would have to pay an additional \$805 in taxes to maintain existing governmental services.

More than 487,000 Texans credit their jobs to the travel industry with a combined payroll of \$9.73 billion. Texas leads all states in net job creation this decade. Tourism brings opportunity to both cities and rural areas. Tourism jobs and businesses created in rural areas help to equalize economic opportunities throughout an area.

Tourism also provides an incentive for residents to remain in rural areas rather than move to larger cities. The same may be said at the state level. Encouraging

rural areas in Texas to invest in tourism development will not only expand their economic bases, but give citizens job opportunities locally.

Travel and tourism also has the potential to stimulate investments in the area's infrastructure, which helps both local residents and tourists. These projects may include updating airports, roads, water treatment plants, restoration of cultural monuments, museums and nature centers.

The future of tourism can grow as quickly as technology does. The Internet will continue to play a key role in tourism. In the 21st century, all aspects of life will be penetrated by this technology.

This technology includes allowing the consumer to have easier access to information and purchase travel products and services.

Now is the time for the Texas tourism industry to gear up for the future and benefit when online access reaches a mass level in the United States and international households.

An estimated 22 million U.S. households are online at present, and by the year 2002, that number of households will more than double. Better content and a growing selection of access devices to the Internet will be contributing factors to the increase.

Actually using the Internet or an online service to make travel plans (e.g., reservations) has remained stable throughout the last year, however, personal computer owners' use of the Internet or online

services to make reservations or to obtain travel information has increased from last year.

Revenues from online travel, which consist of airline, hotel, car and cruise bookings as well as advertising revenues from travel sites, are expected to grow to \$8.9 billion by 2002, according to research performed by Jupiter Communications.

Cruise line companies, tour operators and entertainment parks, which typically require time consuming consultation prior to purchase, are also going to turn to the Internet. Developing technology for better consultative booking engines for these high ticket purchases via the Internet are already underway.

At the state level, plans are being made to bring booking capabilities to

the TravelTex web site (<http://www.travelctex.com>), specifically, making the site more interactive by allowing users to book trips to Texas.

Having a web site that merely informs is no longer enough. Interactivity is the key to moving the traveler down the purchasing path, and ultimately, that is our goal.

Technology and tourism can continue to help each other grow. Technology can bring destinations to more people through targeted web sites, while tourism can continue to drive technology to new levels with a challenge to meet the needs of the travel industry and its consumers.

**"The future of tourism can grow as quickly as technology does. The Internet will continue to play a key role in tourism."**





## FOCUS ON...TEXAS TOURISM

# TTIA INTRODUCES MORE MEMBER BENEFITS!

## 1999 Brochure File Folder Nets Over 20,000 Individual Responses To Date ...Program Expanding Next Year!

TTIA'S 1999 Brochure File Folder Program promises to have an even higher response level than last year's program. Over 550 travel agents, wholesalers and AAA offices have responded so far this month, and there is still almost a week to go. These response cards have generated over 20,000 individual requests for brochures for 171 TTIA members who participated in the 1999 program. At this rate we will exceed last year's responses by a considerable amount.

We are in the process of developing and expanding the program for the Millennium 2000 Brochure File Folder. With the data we collect, we will look closely at each segment of the program and re-evaluate our mailing lists. This year, we expanded into quite a few new states as well as to Canadian Tour and Motor Coach Operators. In 2000, we will probably add the Canadian offices of the American Automobile Association and mail to test markets in the Eastern United States. The program will also offer space in the mailing packet for additional pieces of literature for members that wish to have additional exposure to travel agents.

## Texas Travel Passport in Sixth Year...Members Soon to Receive Two Complimentary Passports

1999 is the sixth year for the *Texas Travel Passport*. Working in conjunction with *Texas Highways Magazine*, we have developed this statewide discount travel card program that benefits the entire Texas tourism industry. As a Texas Travel Industry Association member, you will soon receive two complimentary *Texas Travel Passports* and information about how you can participate in this program in the year 2000.

The *Texas Travel Passport* provides travelers savings throughout Texas all year long for only \$19.95. The purchaser of a passport receives a plastic I.D. card plus a colorful program directory. The directory provides cardholders an alphabetical listing by city of all the participating travel related businesses along with their discount offers. Cardholders simply present their I.D. card at participating locations to receive their discounts.

The program was well received this year, with over 530 attractions, hotels, bed & breakfasts, campgrounds and gulf coast condominiums in over 200 Texas cities participating. Discounts in the program range from 10% to 50% off regular rates. The annual listing fee for the year 2000 program will be \$75.00 for a 75-word listing in the *Texas Travel Passport* directory. Participants listings are also featured in the *Texas Highways Magazine* version of the program that is distributed to over 400,000 paid subscribers of the magazine annually.

The *Texas Travel Passport* is a win-win program that:

- 1) Promotes travel within Texas, which is good for the local and state economy.
- 2) Provides cardholders year-long savings on their business and leisure travel.
- 3) And, most importantly, it gives you an opportunity to be a part of a statewide promotional program designed to generate incremental traffic for your business.

The Texas Travel Industry Association would like to encourage you to participate in this program by making sure that your community is well represented in the year 2000. Contact local attractions, hotels, bed & breakfast, campgrounds and other travel related businesses in your area and make them aware of the *Texas Travel Passport*. To learn more about this exciting program and to receive a participation packet, simply call 512-396-8060 or fax your request to 512-754-0147 to be included in the year 2000 mailing list. We have many exciting promotions planned for the *Texas Travel Passport* during the year 2000. Don't delay! Call 512-396-8060 or fax your request to 512-754-0147 today and have your name put on the list to receive a participation packet in June.

## ORDER YOUR OFFICIAL TTIA DENIM SHIRT TODAY - WHILE THEY LAST!



These long sleeved, double-stitched shirts "debuted" at the 1999 Texas Travel Fair and are available to TTIA members. Blue and red TTIA logo says "Texas 'TTIA." Sizes: Small, Medium, Large and Extra Large. Price: \$32 plus \$3 shipping and handling. Order by check or credit card (Visa, Mastercard and American Express). Call Deb Webb at 512/476-4472. Supplies ARE LIMITED, so order yours today!





## FOCUS ON NATURE TOURISM

LINDA CAMPBELL, NATURE TOURISM COORDINATOR

WILDLIFE DIVISION, WILDLIFE DIVERSITY PROGRAM - TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT

### BIRDING GIVES TEXAS NATURE TOURISM A BOOST

**"Nature-based tourism is good for Texas, providing economic opportunity for our people and communities, conserving the natural resources we hold dear, and building pride in our natural heritage."**

Interest in nature tourism is growing in Texas as it is across the United States. Our state is the number one bird-watching destination in the country, with four of the top 12 birding sites in North America. Texas has tremendous wildlife resources - resources that contribute considerable dollars to the economy of the state.

The 1996 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation found that 4.7 million Texans participated in wildlife-related recreation in 1996, and 3.6 million (25% of the population) watched wildlife. There is no doubt that wildlife-related recreation in Texas is big business. For example:

- ♦ **High Island, TX** - \$2.5 million spent to see songbirds.
- ♦ **Rockport, TX** - \$1.2 million spent on whooping crane tours.
- ♦ **Rio Grande Valley** - \$100,000 spent to see yellow-green vireo.
- ♦ **Aransas National Wildlife Refuge** - 75,000-100,000 visitors per year providing a \$5 million boost to the local economy.
- ♦ **Total economic contribution of birdwatchers** to the economy of the Lower Rio Grande Valley was \$103.5 million.
- ♦ **Hunting (\$1.4 billion), fishing (\$2.9 billion), and wildlife watching (\$1.2 billion)** contributed a total of \$5.5 billion to the Texas economy in 1996.

Texas is recognized as a leader in nature tourism in the United States.

This year, Texas will complete the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail, a 500-mile driving trail connecting over 300 wildlife-viewing sites along the Texas coast from the Louisiana border to Brownsville.

The Trail is the first of its kind in the nation and has become the model for other states. Jointly sponsored by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the Texas Department of Transportation, the Trail is being developed to help birders and other wildlife watchers find great wildlife viewing spots along the Texas coast.

Additionally, to ensure that the Texas coastal birding experience is rich and varied, high-way enhancement funds allocated to each state through the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) are providing financial support.

Winding through 41 Texas counties, the Trail is constructed in three sections: Upper, Central and Lower Coast. Private citizens, land managers, conservation groups, businesses, government agencies and communities are working together to build and promote the Trail.

Texas is known for great birding and wildlife watching opportunities, and Texans are known for their hospitality.

Along the Trail, nature tourists and communities benefit from one another.

Texas is also home to the Great Texas Birding Classic, the longest, wildest birding competition in the world, held each year along the Coastal Birding Trail.

The Classic consists of three days of birding competition, one day each along the Upper, Central and Lower portions

of the Texas coast. Special events such as a guided celebrity birding trip, celebrity/sponsor dinner and awards luncheon make the Classic a truly unique opportunity for birders.

**"Tourism is something that all communities can invest in... for it is the differences among communities that attract tourists, not the similarities."**

Through corporate and community sponsorship, the Classic raises \$50,000 each year for habitat conservation projects along the coast. This pro-

vides an enjoyable opportunity for birders from all over Texas and the U.S. to pursue their hobby, while promoting increased appreciation and understanding of Texas birds and their habitats.

Team categories include: the Roughwings (ages 8-13), Gliders (ages 14-18), Adults (ages 19 and up), and Seniors (ages 65 and up). This year's Classic will be held April 17-25.

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## FOCUS ON NATURE TOURISM

"BIRDING GIVES TEXAS NATURE TOURISM A BOOST," CONTINUED...

Host cities for the 1999 Classic include Brazosport-Lake Jackson, Rockport-Fulton, and South Padre Island.

Another first for Texas, is the World Birding Center, a unique facility dedicated to showcasing the diverse birdlife of Texas and Northern Mexico. Located in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, the WBC is expected to be a premier travel destination for birders from around the world.

A Central Visitors Facility with state of the art interpretation and exhibits will launch the WBC experience.

The Center's programming will address the needs and desires of the newly initiated birder as well as the seasoned veteran. Visitors will experience the wonder of Texas birdlife through a series of habitats, viewing facilities and well-interpreted birding adventures.

Why are the Great Coastal Birding Trail, the Great Texas Birding Classic and the World Birding Center important to Texas? Here are some facts to ponder:

- ♦ Nearly 100,000 people have received the Great Coastal Birding Trail Map of the Central Coast since it became available in December 1996.
- ♦ Requests for the Trail maps have come from all 50 states and eight foreign countries.
- ♦ Trail map recipients are scattered throughout the United States, indicating that birding and wildlife watching in Texas is truly national in scope.

We know that interest and participation in the Birding Classic is

growing, both among participants and within communities along the coast.

The level of sponsorship and financial support from communities is increasing. Surveys and research studies are currently underway to get a better understanding of the social, conservation and economic impacts of the Birding Trail, the Birding Classic and the World Birding Center on coastal communities.

**"Nature-based tourism is a 'clean and green' industry, based on resource conservation and education. Thus, providing a mechanism for protecting natural, cultural, and historic sites important to the community."**

Why should rural communities be interested in nature-based tourism? The most obvious answer is economic development. Dollars spent by birders, wildlife watchers and hunters can help diversify local economies.

Nature-based tourism is a "clean and green" industry, based on resource conservation and education. Thus, providing a mechanism for protecting natural, cultural and historic sites important to the community. As well as adding economic value to natural areas, which provides added incentive for private landowners to conserve wildlife habitat.

Once a community assesses its resources and decides that nature tourism is a goal, conservation of those natural resources becomes important.

No tourism attraction will stay in business long without protecting its attrac-

tions, reinvesting and enhancing what nature has provided.

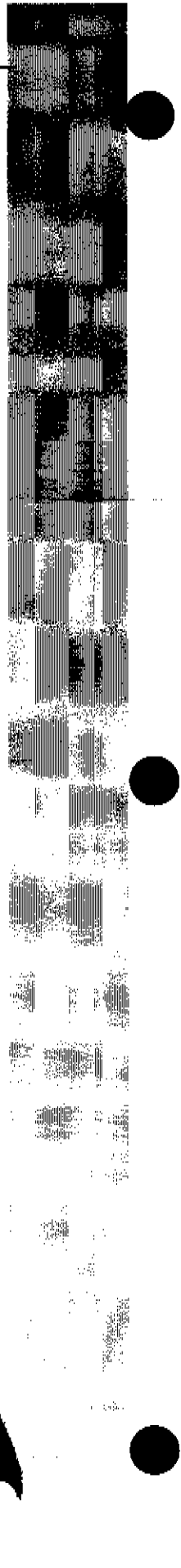
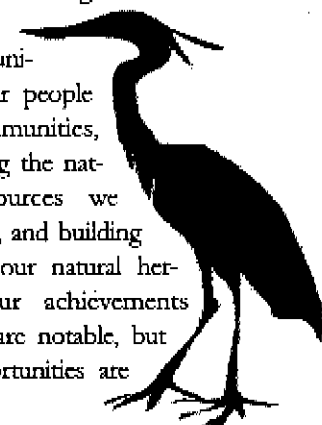
Tourism is something that all communities can invest in. The trick is to assess what is unique and special about your community, for it is the differences among communities that attract tourists, not the similarities.

Many rural communities throughout Texas are rich with natural, historic and cultural resources waiting to be showcased. Development of these resources takes committed community leaders with the desire to share their enthusiasm and local knowledge with visitors.

Communities that have developed successful tourism programs benefit economically, however, they also gain something just as important and enduring - a common purpose and renewed sense of community pride.

There are resources available to help. State agencies, universities and private consultants provide the technical assistance and practical guidance that communities and individual landowners need. However, good ideas and the will to implement them must come from the communities themselves.

Nature-based tourism is good for Texas, providing economic opportunity for our people and communities, conserving the natural resources we hold dear, and building pride in our natural heritage. Our achievements thus far are notable, but our opportunities are endless.



# T E X A S Travel Log

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE TEXAS TRAVEL INDUSTRY

## T X D O T

The **Texas Transportation Commission** approved \$124 million in funding for 126 projects designed to enhance scenic, historical, natural and cultural resources. The **Statewide Transportation Enhancement Program**, initiated through the federal Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) and administered by TxDOT, directs money toward nonhighway-related transportation projects, such as bicycle and pedestrian facilities, landscaping and scenic beautification, and historical preservation. Nominations are submitted by local authorities from throughout the state. The next call for nominations is anticipated for 2001. For details, call program director **Doug Vollette** at 512/416-2783.

Just a reminder that TxDOT's **Texas Travel Information Centers** are just an e-mail away. Following is a list of current addresses:

<b>Amarillo</b>	asotic@dot.state.tx.us
<b>Anthony</b>	aytic@dot.state.tx.us
<b>Denison</b>	dnitic@dot.state.tx.us
<b>Gainesville</b>	getic@dot.state.tx.us
<b>Langtry</b>	lytic@dot.state.tx.us
<b>Laredo</b>	lotic@dot.state.tx.us
<b>Orange</b>	ootic@dot.state.tx.us
<b>Texarkana</b>	tatic@dot.state.tx.us
<b>Valley</b>	vytic@dot.state.tx.us
<b>Waskom</b>	wmtic@dot.state.tx.us
<b>Wichita Falls</b>	wftic@dot.state.tx.us

## T E X A S T R A V E L

**Prices at the pumps** have jumped about 50 percent over the past year. Still, customers continue to fill up big cars and drive far. *The Dallas Morning News* reports

though some motorists are shopping around a little more to save a few pennies, they are still commuting long distances alone, many in gas-guzzling pickups and cars. The price hike seems to have primarily affected those who drive for a living, such as delivery drivers and truckers. The Energy Crisis of the 1970s pushed many toward smaller vehicles, car pools and buses. But according to *The News*, gas is taking a smaller chunk out of the household budget than it did in those days. **Jim Griffin**, economics professor at **Texas A&M University**, said in order for consumers to make the sacrifices of the '70s, they'll have to see the rise in prices as a permanent situation. Prices approaching \$2 a gallon will have to hold for six months or more before people start trading for more fuel-efficient vehicles, he said.

## COMING UP

A group of investors will build a \$30 million, 10,000-seat **Indoor**

**arena** for world-class horse shows and other equestrian events along F.M. 428 north of **Denton**. The 578-acre site will include a multistory hotel and conference center, an 18-hole championship golf course, 104 homes and 58 acres of green space. Work is scheduled to begin early next year.

In 1986, the Hearne Heritage League signed a façade lease with Southern Pacific to paint and reroof the 1901 **Hearne Station Depot**. By mid-summer the depot will be relocated across the highway from its current site on Texas Highway 6 for a half-million-dollar face-lift, inside and out. Restoration should be complete in time for the structure's 100th birthday next year, when the depot will open as a visitor center and museum showcasing railroad and local history. For more info, call the chamber of commerce at 979/279-2351.

Three years ago **Amtrak** officials wanted to ground the financially

weak *Texas Eagle*. Now they have announced they will restore the Chicago-to-San Antonio *Texas Eagle* to daily service this summer, up from its current four runs a week. Plans also include adding a San Antonio-to-Mexico route, establishing Fort Worth as a key rail hub and rerouting its *Sunset Limited* train to include Abilene and Odessa. The downside would be loss of passenger service in Del Rio, Alpine and Sanderson. According to the *Austin American-Statesman* the renewed emphasis on Texas is part of a nationwide strategy to become financially viable by serving new passenger markets and filling a niche in the delivery business.

## P L A C E S

The West Texas town of **Plainview** is bracing itself for a stampede of **wild cows**. More than 40 wildly painted, 8-foot-long fiberglass dairy cattle, Herefords and Texas Longhorns will be grazing parking lots, front lawns,



**THE WEST SHALL RISE AGAIN** Eleven years after the original **Gilley's** burned in Pasadena, country singer **Mickey Gilley** is once again loaning his name. An upscale, \$18 million version of "The World's Greatest Honky-Tonk" will open in South Dallas in 10 months to a year. The entertainment complex will occupy two existing buildings and at least one new one on Lamar Street, south of I-30. A new building will seat 4,000 for concerts. "Gilley's Dallas" will include saloons, live music bars, restaurants, a Wild West show, and a shopping center selling Western wear and Texas novelties.

porches and other high-visibility locations by May 1. It's all part of a community-driven plan to draw attention to the town's second annual **Plainview Cattle Drive**, slated for September. Designs for the cows were solicited by the C&VB from local citizens and schoolchildren, with finalists selected by a "steering committee." The result? A herd of bovines painted with colorful wildflowers, the Lone Star flag, the Alamo, ears of corn and other Texas scenes. The cows will greet visitors through the September festivities, where they'll be auctioned off with a starting bid of \$2,000 each. Proceeds will go toward purchase of replacement cows for the 2001 event. For more info, call 806/296-7431. Or to see for yourself, key in [www.moocows.net](http://www.moocows.net).

**Fiesta Texas in San Antonio** continues its multimillion dollar expansion with this season's addition of the **Superman Krypton Coaster**, the largest steel and only floorless coaster in the Southwest. The 4,025 feet of steel consist of three 32-passenger trains accommodating 1,600 passengers per hour. The Superman Krypton joins an already thrilling lineup of coasters, including the LIM-accelerated Poltergeist, the forward-and-backward Boomerang, the classic wooden Rattler and the

#### TEXAS TRAVEL LOG

is published monthly by the Texas Department of Transportation, Travel Division. Please send news items of interest to the Texas travel industry to Texas Travel Log, P.O. Box 141009, Austin, Texas 78714-1009. (512) 486-5874, FAX (512) 486-5879. Deadline for each newsletter is the 20th of the month preceding the issue date.

Ann Kelton, Editor

Contributing Editors: Jane McNally, John Russell, Mike Talley

Layout: Jane Sharpe/Sharpe Design

#### TRAVEL TALES OVERHEARD

**LAREDO TIC** On a recent Sunday, manager Leo Garza received a frantic call on the 1-800 line from someone who said he was stranded somewhere in the middle of Lake Austin! The man said his boat's outboard motor had shut down and he was floating about with no help in

sight. Leo quickly called Barbara Grove at the Austin C&VB, got the number for the Austin Lake Patrol and relayed the info to the "sailor."

**ORANGE TIC** Florida cowboy Glenn Hammond stopped in on his way to Houston, where he

was slated to compete in the top-ranked rodeo at the Houston Livestock Show. The young bull rider said he was named Rookie of the Year by the Tri-State Rodeo Assn. of Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana, and was in the running for National Rookie of the Year.

Road Runner Express. The rides complement the park's live show productions, cool water attractions and other family entertainment. For information, call 1-800-473-4378.

Life for Austin's 14 million visitors got easier with the launch of the **Austin C&VB's new on-line reservation service**. Internet users can book a hotel room, sorting by price, amenities, location and dates, rent a car, and purchase tickets to events and attractions. To custom design a weekend getaway or a family vacation, key in [www.austintexas.org](http://www.austintexas.org). To speak with a reservation agent, call toll-free 1-888-667-8416.

A new Web site is filling a void for blacks in the Dallas area who are looking for a wide range of things to see and do. *The Dallas Morning News* reports within a little more than a year, **Dallasblack.com** has become a virtual magnet for blacks in search of myriad information and events. The community-based site includes roundups of cultural, heritage and sporting activities, music reviews, church, business and employment listings, financial tips, a literary cafe with columns, editorials and book reviews, and links to related sites.

#### FACES

**John G. Prude** died on February 24 at age 95. In 1921, the Prude family began hosting guests on

their 28,000-acre ranch near Fort Davis. After the stock market crash of 1929, the family had to sell cattle and land, diminishing the ranch to its current 5,000 acres, and forcing them to choose between the guest business or the ranching business. Tourism came out ahead. Since then, five generations of Prudes have operated the guest and working cattle ranch in the Davis Mountains. Today the staff entertains more than 20,000 visitors each year. Up until three years ago, John G. Prude was up in the saddle, working his cattle and helping visitors enjoy their stay.

#### HISTORY

Texas history students in **Victoria** recently traveled back in time using the latest Web site technology. They were the first to experience the Texas Historical Commission's (THC) **on-line video diary** of the excavation of **Fort St. Louis**, the ill-fated stronghold founded in 1685 by French nobleman René Robert Cavelier, Sieur de la Salle. In 1996, THC ended centuries of debate about the location of Fort St. Louis, when the site was found and confirmed outside

#### BUILDING KNOWLEDGE

**We've all done it. Driven through a town and wondered about that charming old building on the side of the road. When was it built? Who built it? Who owns it now? The Texas Historical Commission's Web site can answer all these questions and more. Key in [www.thc.state.tx.us](http://www.thc.state.tx.us) then click on "Texas Historic Sites Atlas" to search for historic structures by county, address or name. The database includes construction dates, history, location, description and the historical significance of more than 200,000 buildings and sites.**



Victoria. The video zooms in on THC archaeologists, who explain the work in progress. The excavation can be followed by students and history buffs from throughout the world. For a firsthand look, key in [www.thc.state.tx.us](http://www.thc.state.tx.us).

**W I L D L I F E**

Back in December, two **South American Antillean manatees** were rescued from the Maracaibo Zoo in Venezuela. After a two-month adjustment in new surroundings, the young sea cows became the newest exhibit at the privately owned **Dallas World Aquarium**, and the only ones on display in the United States. *The Dallas Morning News* reports the sea mammals, who were first rescued from fishermen's nets when they were babies, have been living in drinking troughs with two and-a-half feet of water. Now they bask in 200,000 gallons of water, up to 18 feet deep, and have learned to swim. **Daryl Richardson**, director of the aquarium, said the manatees, who are listed as an endangered species, can grow up to 9 feet long and 1,500 pounds. After about three years, they will be released into the wild. For more info, call 214/720-2224.

**M U S E U M S**

Visitors can now relive the excitement of festival parades, dances and elaborate coronations from one of the state's longest-running events with the opening of the **Washington's Birthday Celebration Museum in Laredo**. The February event is saluted year-round with exhibits of sparkling gowns, old photos and other memorabilia from the past 103 years. Future exhibits will honor the country's first president. Native American culture and the contributions of area leaders. The 2,000 square-foot attrac-

tion is housed in La Posada Hotel/Suites at the corner of Zaragoza Street and San Agustin Avenue. Open by appointment by calling 956/722-0589. Regular operating hours coming soon.

On November 22, 1963, **Abraham Zapruder** perched on a concrete pedestal in downtown Dallas to film the visit of **President John F. Kennedy**. His Bell & Howell home-movie camera captured the entire assassination sequence.



**Which "educated and accomplished lady" was known as the "Bandit Queen"?**

Myra Maybelle Shirley graduated from Carthage Female Academy in Missouri, where she studied grammar, arithmetic, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, music and deportment. But somewhere along the way things went sour for Belle, and she was dealt a hard destiny. After the family moved to near Dallas in 1861, the Younger Gang and outlaw Jesse James used the Shirley home as a hideout. In 1866, Belle married desperado Jim Reed, who was killed by a deputy sheriff in Paris, Texas, in 1874. His obit read: "Soon after the Civil war he married a Miss Shirley, a highly educated and accomplished lady." In 1880, Belle married Sam Starr. The couple was soon charged with horse stealing, the first record of any lawbreaking on Belle's part, and she was dubbed the "Bandit Queen." When Belle was killed in 1889, she was largely unknown. But when a 25¢ novel based loosely on her life was published the year of her death, the legends began. No doubt you've heard she was a crack shot, fearless and other such tales. But no records exist that point to Belle Starr as an accomplice in murder, cattle rustling or the robbery of stagecoaches, banks or trains.



**SIGNS OF LIFE** The **Natural History Museum of El Paso** opened its doors on **January 16** as the city's newest attraction. A **30,000-square-foot facility in Northgate Center mall** presents more than **300 permanent and traveling exhibits** spanning the wonders of the universe, the progression of life on earth, and the dawn of civilization. Included are treasured collections from the **Royal Ontario Museum, the Smithsonian Institution, the American Museum of Natural History, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Egyptian Museum, and the national museums of Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania.** Call **915/545-4257** for more info.

Survivors of Mr. Zapruder gave their last original duplicate of the famous 26-second film and its copyright, along with hundreds of related items, to **The Sixth Floor Museum** at Dealey Plaza in **Dallas**. Officials say it's the most important and most generous gift ever received. **Abraham Zapruder** ordered three first-generation copies of the film when it was processed the day of the shooting. The original film and two copies are stored at the National Archives. The third copy now belongs to **The Sixth Floor**. The donation represents a potential windfall in licensing income, which, in part, will go toward the collection's preservation and research programs. Open daily at 411 Elm Street. Call 214/747-6660.

**E V E N T S**

Around 18 years ago, **George Strait** and his family started a

small roping event in Kingsville. It turned into a world-renowned rodeo competition that infused more than \$1 million a year into the town's economy. *The Austin American Statesman* reports the country music star has announced he is moving the **George Strait Team Roping Classic** to the Rose Palace northwest of **San Antonio**. Strait, who lives in San Antonio, said the Alamo City is easier to reach for competitors and fans. And since he wants to focus attention on the event, he will discontinue the traditional concert held after the rodeo. This year's competition is set for July 7-8. **Joe Cisneros III**, executive director of the **Kingsville Chamber of Commerce**, said losing the event came as a blow, but that the famous ranching town would survive. Plans are already in the works to bring two youth baseball tournaments to the city in July to help offset the loss.

TRAVEL CENTER	Month Visitors	Percent Variation*	Visitors Year-to-date	Percent Variation*
Amarillo	13,956	-7.83	30,975	-1.06
Anthony	14,094	+10.36	34,329	+14.00
Denison	27,714	+20.36	65,616	+19.52
Gainesville	36,660	-4.49	83,862	-5.66
Langtry	11,547	-7.68	27,168	-2.00
Laredo	9,144	-14.53	23,412	-13.01
Orange	48,528	+0.23	117,057	-9.09
Texarkana	31,647	-12.03	78,474	-7.99
Valley	29,421	-39.44	101,145	-39.30
Waskom	48,558	+9.00	101,319	+6.08
Wichita Falls	18,693	-0.62	47,046	+0.33
Capitol Complex	11,052	-30.40	22,827	-30.02
<b>CENTER TOTALS</b>	<b>301,014</b>	<b>-7.30</b>	<b>733,230</b>	<b>-10.41</b>

	This Mo.	Y-T-D
Mail Services	161,615	294,276
Literature Distributed at Trade Shows	0	0
Automated Attendant Road Condition Calls	10,347	82,675

Dial toll-free 1-800-452-9292 for travel assistance from TxDOT's Texas Travel Information Centers (8 a.m. - 6 p.m. daily, Central Time)

Internet address: [www.traveltex.com](http://www.traveltex.com)  
[www.texashighways.com](http://www.texashighways.com)  
[www.dontmesswithtexas.org](http://www.dontmesswithtexas.org)

Data as of March 31, 2000  
\*Compared to last year

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# T E X A S Travel Log

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE TEXAS TRAVEL INDUSTRY

## T X D O T

Each year TxDOT's **Texas Travel Counselors Conference** brings with it the presentation of some of the travel and tourism industry's most **prestigious awards**. Two Travel Division employees, an American Automobile Association (AAA) employee and one long-time industry leader were honored at this year's 45th annual conference, held last month in Amarillo. Read on...

**Marisol Clausen**, a state and nationally certified professional travel counselor at the Anthony Texas Travel Information Center, was handed this year's **TxDOT Roadrunner Award** for her outstanding service and professional dedication to the traveling public, TxDOT and the state. Marisol has grown up in the travel industry, first working at a Travel Information Center when she was still in high school. At age 23, she already has served as an instructor for Achieving Service Excellence, a comprehensive training program, and has trained 30 other travel counselors on using assertive skills for success in the workplace.

**Mike Toussaint**, a travel counselor at the Houston Galleria AAA office, was awarded the **AAA Roadrunner Award** for his superior customer service. Mike, known for his easygoing manner and sense of humor, exemplifies the long-standing tradition of AAA counselors, who work hard to help customers make the most of their travels. And like many of his predecessors, Mike has repeat customers who are willing to wait for his services. Last year, he was the top leader in hotel/car reservations for the Galleria

office, and won a Star Award for his outstanding efforts.

**Lois Johnson**, a programmer/systems analyst with TxDOT's Travel Division, received the **Lone Star Award** for her exceptional contributions to the Texas travel industry. During her 11 years with TxDOT, Lois has custom designed several products crucial to the division and its service to the traveling public. She has won the admiration of her peers and managers by supporting computer users not only with efficiency, but also with kindness, concern and understanding. Lois is known by some as the "silent partner," the one who, behind the scenes, keeps everything running smoothly.

**Sharon Eason**, a well-known leader in the Texas travel and tourism industry, won the **Gene Phillips Hospitality Award** for her contributions to the \$34.6 billion Texas travel industry and for her support of the state's tourism program. For 27 years, Sharon served as director of visitor marketing, sales and service for the San Antonio C&VB, positioning the city as a prime visitor destina-

tion. She currently serves as tourism director with Parker & Wood, a San Antonio-based marketing, advertising and public relations firm. In 1997, Sharon received a tourism award from the Governor of Texas and the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Texas Travel Industry Association.

## COMING UP

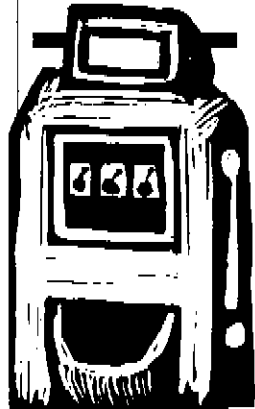
**Southwest Airlines**, known for loading and unloading planes in just 20 minutes, may have found a way to beat its own score. *The Wall Street Journal* reports the Dallas-based carrier has begun testing a Y-shaped jet bridge that will connect to both the front and back doors of a Boeing 737. If it works, Southwest hopes to speed operations and increase its industry-leading, on-time arrival record. The airline will conduct a six-month test of the new design at Love Field in Dallas and at Austin-Bergstrom International Airport before purchasing the jet bridge for its entire system.

Billionaire **Bob McNair** worked for months to edge out Los

Angeles for the privilege of paying \$700 million for a new **National Football League franchise** for the city of **Houston**. On March 9, groundbreaking ceremonies in the Astrodome's west parking lot marked the spot of the 50 yard line for the unnamed team's 69,500 seat stadium. Besides pro football, the \$350 million retractable-roof facility is designed to accommodate soccer, as well as the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. In addition, officials hope the stadium will land Houston a Super Bowl in 2004 and lure the Olympics to town in 2012. Completion is scheduled for August 2002.

## PLACES

The **Houston Astros Baseball Club** opened the season in a plush new \$250 million ballpark in the heart of downtown Houston. The *Austin American-Statesman* reports **Enron Field** exemplifies everything the Astrodome is not. A \$50 million, 6.5-acre retractable roof can remain open to let the sun shine in or close within 12 minutes to keep out the Houston



**FLOAT ME A LOAN** *Casino Padre* opened April 1 as **South Padre Island's** hottest new attraction. Billed as "The Island's Own Floating Casino," the 202-foot vessel offers daytime and evening cruises equipped with a Las Vegas-style casino, full-service bars, a quiet lounge area and two outdoor decks. A boarding fare of \$24.50 includes the 6-hour cruise, a bountiful lunch or dinner buffet, live entertainment and all taxes. Group rates available for parties of fifteen or more; reservations recommended. To book your space, call 1-800-477-1270.

**TRAVEL TALES OVERHEARD**

humidity or even severe hurricane conditions. The brick-and-limestone stadium blends the distinct feel of an old-fashioned ballpark, including natural grass turf, with the latest in modern technology. No doubt some fans will miss the Astrodome's vast parking lot and its cushioned seats. But the smaller Enron Field, promoted as one of baseball's most intimate stadiums, has already attracted a record number of fans. Before the season opener, more than 20,500 season tickets had been sold, a club record that shattered last year's high of 15,500. The Astros will cap sales at 23,000 to allow for single-game ticket-buyers. At the corner of Crawford and Texas streets, adjacent to historic Union Station. For tour information, call 713/259-TOUR. For ticket information, call 713/259-8000.

Commissioners for the **Port of Corpus Christi** approved a five-year lease agreement with Las Vegas-based **Viva Gaming and Resorts** that will bring casino gambling to the central coastal region. By the Fourth of July weekend, **Day Cruise to Nowhere** will cast off from Harbor Island for an hour's journey to international waters. The vessel will anchor for up to four hours, while passengers play 860 slot machines and approximately 50

**CAPITOL COMPLEX TIC**

Would you hand your house keys to a total stranger? You might if the stranger projected the openness and honesty of counselor Joe Slocum. During a quick trip to Dallas, Joe made a pit stop at the Czech Stop in West. As he was leaving, a young man approached him and asked if he was headed

to Dallas. The man explained he and a friend were streaking toward Austin, when his friend remembered he had forgotten to give his wife their only set of house keys. When Joe got to Dallas, he dropped off the keys at a designated service station, and called the number he was given to let the woman know she and

the kids could finally go home.

**JUDGE ROY BEAN TIC** With the first day of spring came romance, and the center's 23rd wedding celebration. Counselors looked on as Rachael Freyman and Bobbie Brown tied the knot on the front steps of the Jersey Lilly Saloon.

table games. Onboard attractions include live music and entertainment, a full-service bar and dining facilities. Initial plans call for the operation of two six-hour cruises that will accommodate a minimum of 1,500 adult passengers each day. For more info, call 361/884-4484.

and leisure destination for Asian visitors. The 96 page marketing tool lists events, attractions and Asian restaurants, Asian trade organizations and embassies, useful Web sites, religious and spiritual groups, educational institutions, and venues offering English lan

guage instruction. For more info, call 512/583-7209.

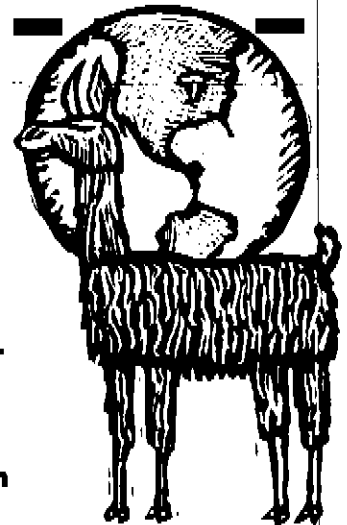
The **Waco C&VB** sent word that both areas of the **Fort Fisher Campground** will close permanently on May 15 to make way for a new chapter in the city's life and

The City of **Fredericksburg** and the Fredericksburg C&VB teamed up to make it easy for motor coach tour operators to bring visitors to their bustling town. Unloading and loading zones were established in front of the National Museum of the Pacific War, in the heart of the shopping district, in front of Marktplatz on Main Street and next to the Pioneer Museum. Other areas in historic downtown were marked for long-term parking for overnight groups. Maps indicating the parking zones are distributed on sales calls to tour operators, at trade shows, and to motor coach groups who contact the C&VB. For more info, call 1-888-997-3600.

Sources indicate Asian Americans lead the nation in travel spending. The approximate 97,700 Japanese nationals who came to Texas in 1998, placed the group third in a long list of international visitors. In response, the **Austin C&VB** partnered with the **Texas Asian Chamber of Commerce** to produce the **Asian Visitor and Resource Guide**. The booklet was designed to raise awareness of Austin as a premier business

**FORCES OF NATURE**

**Fossil Rim Wildlife Center in Glen Rose** joined forces with **Earth Promise**, an organization that fosters support for global and domestic conservation. The merger places **Fossil Rim** under the management of **Earth Promise** and initiates its transition from a privately owned facility to a not-for-profit, tax-exempt organization. **Fossil Rim Wildlife Center** is an accredited breeding facility for endangered species and a respected member of the global conservation movement. **Earth Promise** will continue **Fossil Rim's** mission of preserving ecological heritage, while expanding educational efforts, outreach programs, and alliances with worldwide conservation organizations. Call 254/897-2960 for info.



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Ann Kelton, Editor  
 Contributing Editors: Jane McNally, John Russell, Mike Talley  
 Layout: Jane Sharpe/Sharpe Design



history. The closure was necessary for the future development of the Brazos River Corridor, which includes expansion of the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum (see the February 2000 issue of *Texas Travel Log*). Call 254/750-8696 for more information.

**WINTER TEXANS**

**Winter Texans** traditionally begin making their way from the northern climes in November or December. But this past winter, concern about Y2K glitches prompted many to **delay** their departures until after the first of the year. **Stan Hodge**, director of Travel Research at the Texas Department of Economic Development, Tourism Division, reports the delay cost Texas hundreds of thousands of dollars. For every day our northern guests postpone their trek to Texas, the state's businesses lose \$8 million, he said. And though the effect of the delay probably wasn't that great, since many Winter Texans arrived last fall, the losses will be significant. The total impact will not be known for some time.

**NATURE TOURISM**

When developers proposed building a resort on thousands of acres of fragile ecosystem on **Padre Island**, the **Nature Conservancy of Texas** stepped in. A 10-year effort to buy land for preservation was declared a success with the purchase in March of 24,532 acres for \$7.5 million. The *Austin American-Statesman* reports Padre Island is home to 17 endangered species of statewide or national concern, and is part of a system of barrier islands that protects the mainland Texas coast from hurricanes and other storms. Laguna Madre, between Padre and the mainland, is one of five hyper-

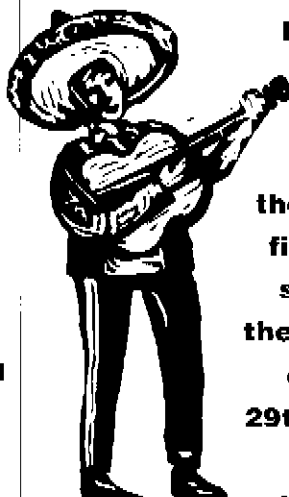
saline lagoons in the world, and provides breeding grounds for a number of shrimp, crab and fin fish. **Robert Potts**, the conservancy's state director, said purchase of the land will not affect the current status of public access to the beach, but will "actually help promote wildlife-related tourism by keeping the beaches and dunes in their naturally beautiful state."

**? TEXAS TRIVIA**

**Which "mom" was the guiding force behind one of Texas' most famous statesmen?**

She was one of three children, whose father served as state legislator and secretary of literature at Baylor University. The University of Texas and Baylor Female College (now the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor). She later taught education and corresponded for several daily newspapers. In 1917, Rebeckah James married Samuel Eddy Johnson Jr., a rancher and state legislator whom she had met as a reporter. They moved to the Johnson farm on the Pedernales River, where Rebeckah continued as a stringer for newspapers in San Antonio, Dallas and Austin, and helped publish the *Johnson City Record Courier*. In 1906, Sam had suffered severe financial losses, which left him deeply in debt. Disappointed in her husband and frustrated by the poverty and isolation of the Ellil County, Rebeckah tried to instill her love of education and culture into her five children. She relentlessly coached her son Lyndon to improve his indifferent schoolwork and encouraged him to be ambitious and idealistic. The strength of her influence on the future senator and both president is evident in his letters and reminiscences, which reveal a persistent desire to fulfill her hopes for his greatness.

**TEXAS TRIVIA**



**KEEPING A COOL HEAD** For the past several years, the **Institute of Texan Cultures at San Antonio** has staged the **Texas Folklife Festival** the first weekend in August, possibly the hottest weekend of the year. Staffers made a cool decision to move this year's 29th annual event to June 1-4. Heat wasn't the only factor that changed the date of the four-day event. With school starting earlier, families found it difficult to work the event into their summer plans. The festival, which celebrates more than 40 cultural groups of Texas, will present the same schedule of "hot" attractions. Call 210/458-2300.

**MUSEUMS**

**Temple's Railroad and Heritage Museum** has temporarily closed, as it makes its move from the Moody Depot at 31st Street and Avenue H to the restored Santa Fe Depot downtown. Curator **Mary Irving** said the museum's new location on a working railroad line will help link railroad history to the present. Interpretive displays and interactive exhibits will incorporate local history with the region's railroad heritage. A traveling exhibit area will bring exciting new displays several times a year. Grand reopening ceremonies are scheduled for July 8. For more information, call 254/298-5172.

**The Frontiers of Flight Museum** will move from a modest 4,000 square feet of space on the second floor of Love Field in

Dallas to a phenomenal 6.3-acre site at Love Field on the corner of Lemmon Avenue and University Boulevard. The expansion was made possible through the overwhelming support of private citizens and government officials, and a \$7.2 million grant received through TxDOT's Transportation Enhancement Program. Phase 1 will include exhibits on aviation history, with emphasis on the history of Love Field and development of aviation in North Texas. A 40,000-square-foot hangar will display 19 full-size aircraft, and provide space for restoring and repairing artifacts and a model-building area for children. An additional 20,000 square feet will include meeting rooms, offices, a theater, an educational wing and a gift shop. An observation deck will enable visitors to experience the excitement of modern-day flight. The target date for the grand opening of Phase 1 is mid-2001. For details, call 214/350-3600.

TRAVEL CENTER	Month Visitors	Percent Variation*	Visitors Year-to-date	Percent Variation*
<b>Amarillo</b>	11,259	-6.13	42,234	-2.47
<b>Anthony</b>	9,456	+8.95	43,785	+5.03
<b>Denison</b>	23,400	+19.32	89,016	+19.47
<b>Gainessville</b>	25,077	-12.41	108,939	-7.30
<b>Langtry</b>	8,541	-9.24	35,709	-3.84
<b>Laredo</b>	10,602	+33.26	34,014	2.45
<b>Orange</b>	34,125	-19.50	151,182	-11.67
<b>Texarkana</b>	32,823	+6.03	111,297	-4.25
<b>Valley</b>	15,804	42.58	116,949	-39.77
<b>Waskom</b>	43,314	+20.60	144,633	+10.05
<b>Wichita Falls</b>	13,089	-23.72	60,135	-6.13
<b>Capitol Complex</b>	8,937	25.82	31,764	-28.89
<b>CENTER TOTALS</b>	236,427	-6.28	969,657	-9.44

	This Mo.	Y-T-D
<b>Mail Services</b>	115,355	409,631
<b>Literature Distributed at Trade Shows</b>	0	0
<b>Automated Attendant Road Condition Calls</b>	5,540	88,215

Dial toll-free 1-800-452-9292 for travel assistance from TxDOT's Texas Travel Information Centers (8 a.m.-6 p.m. daily, Central Time)

Internet address: [www.traveltex.com](http://www.traveltex.com)  
[www.texashighways.com](http://www.texashighways.com)  
[www.dontmesswithtexas.org](http://www.dontmesswithtexas.org)

Data as of April 30, 2000  
 \*Compared to last year



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