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DECEMBER 1977



THE DHT COMMISSIONERS HEARD from a *Lower Rio Grande Valley* delegation Nov. 17.....asking that a tourist information bureau be placed in that area.....in a later session, the commissioners considered the matter.....and Nov. 30, *Engineer-Director Luther DeBerry* directed the staff to begin preliminary engineering and studies.....to be presented to the commissioners at their December meeting.....at that time, authority **COULD** be granted for initial planning.....preliminary plans then could be returned to the commission for consideration of construction funding.

"WE'RE MOVING INTO THE NEW tourist information center now and expect to be fully operational no later than mid-December," said *Brownsville CofC Executive VP Steve Bosio*.....final paving of the parking area is underway and the sidewalks to the facility still are to be completed. **Bosio** anticipates that appeals and hearings of the court suit concerning the facility's location may drag out over a year.....he also said the furnishings are in the new building.....including the special effects such as the giant map display and the instant communications system with area hotels and motels.

PORT ARANSAS IS GETTING READY for an "invasion" of *Canadians*.....according to an active CofC member, **J.C. Barr**.....*"Our fall season is up considerably from last year and starting in January the Canadians on bus tours will start arriving."* **Barr**, who owns two condominiums with 250 living units, estimates the 1977-78 winter business will be 30% better than a year earlier..... *"The group that brought us six two-week tour groups last year have scheduled seven two-week groups and nine 28-day tours. Since one group leaves just as a new group arrives, there will be nearly triple the number of people here at all times."*

PORT ARANSAS VISITORS WILL FIND ENLARGED FERRY OPERATIONS IN USE.....in mid-November, DHT officials and local civic leaders welcomed the **Texas First Lady** as the sparkling new *Janey Briscoe* ferry was dedicated and entered service immediately.....and two new ferry slips have also been constructed this year.....there are now six ferries serving the greatly increased traffic that is ferried across the *Corpus Christi Ship Channel* between *Aransas Pass* and *Port Aransas*.....DHT personnel estimate that more than 1.4 million vehicles will cross on the ferries in 1977 — carrying about five million people.....and that number is expected to increase substantially in 1978 with the addition of the new ferry.

UP SIX FLAGS WAY, BRUCE NEAL reports that park attendance in 1977 exceeded 2.5 million — *"An all-time record"*.....and **Neal** predicts that 1978 attendance will surpass the new record. *"Shock Wave,"* the spectacular double-loop roller coaster should be in operation by opening date, *"The good Lord willing and if the creek don't rise."* **Neal** means it about the creek rising since the ride is being built over *Johnson Creek* which has wandered through the *Arlington* area since the days of early *Indians*.....readiness of the ride to meet the Mar. 11 opening date depends on the testing schedule as well as the weather. **Neal** says the foundation work has been done and erection of the steel will begin Dec. 15.....and adds that now that the park has closed for 1977, his busy season starts.....a major slice of his time is spent at press conferences on the new ride — where the eight-foot model *"attracts everybody's attention."*

TEXAS HOUSE SPEAKER BILL CLAYTON has been named to the national *Advisory Committee on Travel and Tourism (ACTT)*.....which consists of three governors and six other officials.....ACTT, which is funded by a \$146,000 contract to the Council of State Governments by USTS, held its organizational meeting in late November.....**Clayton's** office says 10 hearings around the country are scheduled at sites to be determined later.

"THE LONE STAR" OUTDOOR DRAMA IN GALVESTON will open Apr. 15, 1978.....for an expanded season brought on by its success this year.....the 1977 schedule opened June 30 and almost 30,000 attended the 59 performances — one performance was cancelled due to rising tides from *Hurricane Anita*. **Sue Collier** said the 1978 schedule will call for performances on Wednesday through Saturday until May 15 when the nightly except Monday performances start.....it reverts to the Wednesday-through-Saturday schedule again in September.....news director **Collier** says general admission in 1978 will be \$3 (\$2 for those 12 and under).....reserved tickets will be \$4 and \$5 and group rates will be made available for parties of 20 or larger.....get more information from **Sue** at *Lone Star Drama, P.O. Box 5253, Galveston 77551*.

THE LOWER RIO GRANDE VALLEY is looking for about 22% more visitors than last year.....**Richard Pinkerton**, *McAllen CofC* executive VP, says many long-staying visitors were turned away last year for lack of trailer or apartment living spaces.....but 1977 figures reflect a 17.2% increase in the number of trailer spaces and a more than 31% increase in commercial apartment units over last year.....**Pinkerton** said that the CofC is publicizing by newspaper and radio the tourism packets available and that tourists were stopping by for them in record numbers — and registering, which will be used in the new CofC survey.....the CofC, head said they had hoped that 2,000 families might stop in.....*"but we have registered over 1,500 now and we're barely into December."*

AN ITEM ABOUT A TEXAS STEER has found its way into a book by **Patricia Edwards Clyne** — *"Ghostly Animals of America"* includes the story about the *"Murder Maverick of 1891"*.....the story relates the killings which followed an argument over the ownership of the calf and the later sightings of the grown steer after saloon fights in towns near the mountains of *Big Bend*.....DHT's **Richard Pierce** is credited for his assistance.....the hard-bound volume, \$5.95, is published by *Dodd, Mead & Company*.

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SUPERVISOR IKE JONES in the *Anthony* bureau is looking forward to a planned rest area with comfort station that will be constructed next to the bureau.....DHT planning is almost complete and the project is expected to go to contract in February — that will put the completion date in late summer.....**Ike** reports that the counselors there are walking with a spring in their step — new carpeting was installed recently.....and **Ike** says that **Shirley Johnson** is having no trouble giving directions in reverse, sort of — **Shirley** transferred last month to *Anthony* from the *Orange* bureau.

SAN ANGELO HAS PRODUCED a highly professional brochure featuring city scenes and activities with an eye to luring the visitor and conventioneer — part of the total convention packet given those attending future conventions.....“*San Angelo: Convention Capital of West Texas*” was applauded recently by the *San Angelo Times*.....with a special commendation to **Jack Speer**, director of the city’s Tourist and Convention Bureau, and his staff.....for any who doubt the value of literature affecting travelers, we quote from an *Azusa, California*, couple’s recent letter: “...I would like to congratulate you and thank you for the material we were given. Because of it, we stayed on vacation almost three extra weeks on the way home, wandering around from one interesting thing to another. Your book “Texas” is actually dog-eared!...My husband and I feel that you should know that solely because of your outstanding literature we explored and visited parts of your state we never even knew existed — and that we have every intention of going back and taking several of the trails we were not on.”

AMARILLO IS ANOTHER AREA looking for an increase in visitors in 1978 — **Beverly Rast**, executive secretary for the city’s Board of Convention and Visitors Activities, reports that BCVA has hoped for a 5% increase yearly but “next year should better that”.....noting a definite increase in convention business, **Rast** says, “We have eight state conventions in the June 15-24 period next year that we didn’t have in 1977.”

“**TEXAS IS NUMBER ONE**” WAS THE WAY A RECENT HEAD OVER THE **KAY McCRACKEN** column in the *Corpus Christi Caller* read — and the writer wasn’t on the subject of football.....**McCracken** points out that Texas is the number one “bird state,” and that few non-birders realize it.....hottest of the hot spots are the Gulf Coast, Lower Rio Grande Valley and Big Bend and she says that the state is so popular that at least a half-dozen expert Texas birders have set up companies specializing in showing “foreigners” birds.....**McCracken** says that tour groups travel first class and use the finest accommodations available wherever they stop. Adding that many of the very young and very energetic are back-packers and carry their needs, she writes, “...birding is no minor part of tourism in Texas and so long as we take care of our birds it is a part we can continue to enjoy and profit by — all without expensive advertising; the birds do that for us.”

AROUND THE TOURIST BUREAUS — **Bernice Taylor**, new supervisor at the *Laredo* bureau, called after Thanksgiving to report that travelers serviced there over the four-day weekend numbered 33% more than during the 1976 holiday.....and she added that at the end of the Thanksgiving weekend the number of travelers from Mexico stopping at the bureau was more than double the November 1976 total. At a recent meeting of bureau supervisors, **Bernice** displayed her talent for making a quick and appropriate response when one of the old-timers in the previously all-male group needed, “Hey, **Berni**, you’re out of uniform. Where’s your necktie?” — **Berni** shot back without hesitation, “Where’s your skirt?”.....**Dale Sowder** at *Gainesville* said it had been a difficult morning already when he got a call from *Oklahoma City* for a high load permit.....questioning revealed that it was legitimate — the giraffe being transported to the *New Orleans* zoo had its head a foot above the top of the extra tall crate. That was a first for **Dale** despite his years as bureau supervisor.

BOX SCORE — Although eight of the 11 Tourist bureaus, plus the Austin office, reported increases in November over the year-ago figures, the net gain was only 1.4% — a total brought lower by Waskom’s move to temporary quarters.....without the Waskom figures, the November increase would be 7.96%.....and the year-to-date increase would be 4.49%.

Bureau	Visitors	Variation*	Visitors***	Variation**	Bureau	Visitors	Variation*	Visitors***	Variation**	
Amarillo	7,269	+ 5.2%	121,260	+ 3.2%	Laredo	7,455	+13.4%	97,785	- 3.9%	
Anthony	18,273	- 9.3%	256,227	+ 2.2%	Orange	25,128	+16.7%	298,740	- 0.5%	
Capitol	11,661	- 1.0%	191,409	+38.8%	Texarkana	19,983	+13.3%	214,551	- 3.9%	
Denison	9,825	+ 6.4%	114,168	+ 8.2%	Waskom	7,836	-49.5%	213,969	- 8.2%	
Gainesville	13,470	+14.3%	153,729	+ 9.1%	Wichita Falls	10,158	+ 4.2%	142,923	+ 4.5%	
Langtry	6,813	+33.5%	86,382	- 4.2%	Bureau Totals	137,871	+ 1.4%	1,891,143	+ 2.9%	
						Austin Office (mail, phone, walk-ins)	20,627	+15.2%	239,829	+14.3%

* Compared to 1976 month
 ** Compared to 1976
 *** 1977 Total