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August 1983

**VISITS TO THE ORANGE BUREAU** were up 7.8% in July over the number of visitors served that same month last year – in spite of nearby construction. Supervisor **Bill Nalvar** said during the July 1-4 holiday weekend, 8,178 tourists were served. And, he added, it's possible an all-time record was set July 2 when counselors assisted 2,376 people on that day alone. A complete bureau-by-bureau tabulation follows the last item of the *Texas Travel Log*.

**"DOWN BUT NOT OUT . . . Watch Galveston Grow!"** reads the marquee above Gaido's seafood restaurant. It's a phrase typical of the attitude there after Galveston suffered an estimated \$230 million in damage when Hurricane Alicia hit this month. Hotels, motor inns and condominiums along Seawall Boulevard were the hardest hit, with most rooms now occupied by emergency crews and island residents. And area parks have been closed, with Galveston Island State Park suffering the most damage. Texas Parks & Wildlife Department officials said state parks further inland served more than 1,900 evacuees – free of charge. **Judy Schiebel**, president of the Galveston Attractions Assn. and administrator of historic Ashton Villa said, "Our spirit was shaken but the people here really pulled together. Folks who usually depend on volunteers were volunteering." **Schiebel** said attractions fared much better than the hotels. "Ashton Villa stayed watertight . . . It's business as usual for us!" But an 80-year-old magnolia tree was lost, falling in such a way that, **Schiebel** said, may have helped save Ashton Villa. **Ralph McPheeters**, Sea-Arama Marineworld, said that park is open, adding, "All our star performers took the storm in stride. Our performing dolphins and sea lions are ready to get back to work." And, new protective piling installed two days before the storm helped bring the historic bark *Elissa* through unscathed. "We're down but not out," said **Schiebel**. "Tell 'em Galveston tourism is alive and well."

**NEW BRAUNFELS' CONVENTION & TOURISM** Committee approved a \$20,738 budget for advertising this year's Fall Escape campaign in newspapers and magazines across the state. Hotels and motels will offer three nights for the price of two with 25-50% discounts available at some area restaurants, attractions, and recreational facilities. The Sept. 7-Oct. 31 Fall Escape is designed to boost tourism during an otherwise slow period for accommodations. For a list of participating hotels, call the New Braunfels chamber at 512/625-2385.

**AFTER TWO YEARS OF NEGOTIATIONS**, Arlington officials have reached an agreement with a Dallas-based development firm that eventually will relieve the city of a \$1.2-million annual debt on the Seven Seas property. Construction will begin this December on a 320-room Sheraton Hotel and office complex on the amusement park site. Starting in October, the development consortium, CentrePoint Joint Venture, will lease 25 of the 33 acres. The \$400-per-acre annual rent will be paid on the undeveloped portions to encourage quick development of the property. When the \$25-million hotel and other structures are complete, the city will receive 1-1.75% of the gross revenues which include sales of food, beverages and gifts. This agreement also will allow the city to proceed with construction of a \$10-million convention center this February. Arlington Mayor **Harold Patterson** said, "We look forward to the new quality this venture will bring to the area and to the new sources of revenue that will be injected into the city." The hotel is expected to open in the summer of 1985.

**THE RV INDUSTRY** is on the upswing, with sales up 43% the first three months in 1983 over that same period last year. With availability of gasoline and low-interest financing, the industry is projecting sales of 350,000 motor homes, travel and pop-up trailers, truck campers and convertible vans by the end of the year. But **Gary LaBella**, representing the Recreation Vehicle Industry Assn., said the market has a way to go before reaching its 1972 sales high of 582,000. "At one point, back in the mid-70's, we had about 200 manufacturer-members; now we have 110," said **LaBella**. After several problem years due to the oil embargo, the gasoline crunch, and the recession, the market finally began recovering in '81, with sales at 239,000. "It has been a gradual comeback, but we seem to be coming out of the recession much earlier than a lot of other industries," said **LaBella**. "What we are seeing now is the release of a lot of pent-up demand; people who had put off their purchases have come back to the market." There are approximately six million recreational vehicles on the road today.

**A WILD FLOWER BELT** has been proposed for Loop 289 around Lubbock. **Pat Taylor**, representing a group promoting the beautification efforts in the city, estimates \$100,000 will be needed to begin the wild flower program. He is hoping for support from the state, city, private business and individuals. The city parks & recreation department already has expressed interest in the project. "They'll definitely have a lot of cooperation from us," said **Mary Pryjomski**, city program development coordinator. "We're really excited about this. They've picked the major thoroughfares for visibility's sake, and we agree with that." But because of tight public funds, **Taylor** said, "This is going to take a massive commitment from the private sector." The first donation in the amount of \$250 has been accepted from the Lubbock Board of Realtors. **Taylor** hopes other businesses will follow suit. Wild flowers being considered for Lubbock highways are the Mexican hat, black-eyed Susan, gaillardia, gayfeather and flax. "We're trying to get the least expensive, most productive way to go," said **Taylor**. And the beautification group intends to plant varieties that will show color throughout spring, summer, and fall.

**PRAIRIE DELL LAKE AMUSEMENT PARK** opened this month. Located 45 miles north of Austin on I-35, the park now operates 25 rides including a ferris wheel, bumper and paddle boats, and a small roller coaster.

Owner **Phillip Fry** plans for Prairie Dell some day to become another large-scale amusement park similar to Six Flags. The park will be open Fri.-Sun., and Labor Day, plus daily operation during the Christmas holidays. Park officials said visitors will be offered the option of a one-time-fee or ticket purchases for individual rides. Prairie Dell Lake Amusement Park is on the 75-acre site that housed the Matterhorn Restaurant.

**PROJECT 150** was approved by the Sesquicentennial Commission as a major event for the 1986 celebration. Five major Texas libraries and museums, all housing unique collections of Texas history, will create a comprehensive traveling exhibit. Dr. **Ron Tyler**, assistant director for History and Publications at the Amon Carter Museum, will supervise the design and write the exhibitions catalog. **Tyler** has published many books and catalogs on Texas and the American West. Institutions involved in the project are the San Jacinto Museum of History, well known for its artifacts, paintings, imprints, and manuscripts; the Dallas Historical Society, the primary depository for collections during the 1936 Centennial; the Special Collections Division of UT Arlington, which contains the Jenkins Garrett library, documenting the Mexican-American War; the Barker Texas History Center, with extensive sources on the exploration/development of Texas by the Spaniards and Anglos, and the Texas Memorial Museum at UT Austin, with collections of anthropological materials documenting the Indians' arrival in Texas centuries before the Spaniards. **Randy Lee**, Executive Director of the Sesquicentennial Commission, said, "This newest addition to the list of official projects for the Sesquicentennial promises to be one of the most visible and exciting, and definitely ranks as one of the major statewide events for the celebration."

**\$4 MILLION** will be spent to restore the east wing of the Texas Capitol that suffered heavy damage during a fire early this year. Texas Historical Commission spokesman **Stan Groves** said repairs will be "very close to a pure restoration." \$1.5 million will be spent on repairs not related to the fire damage. Austin architect **Joe Lackey** said the renovation will include fire-retardant materials, a smoke detection system and an air-conditioning system designed to vent smoke. The February 6 fire apparently was started by a faulty television in the lieutenant governor's Capitol apartment.

**AROUND THE BUREAUS** - Orange bureau Supervisor **Bill Naivar** reports the installation of a weather phone - just two days before Hurricane Alicia hit the Texas coast. On the day of the disaster, counselors were unable to explain to a man who spoke only Spanish why he could not go to Galveston. They called the Laredo bureau where a counselor there was able to explain the situation to the man over the phone - in Spanish. When a tourist visiting the Laredo bureau asked Supervisor **Leo Garza** if Texas had a bubonic plague outbreak, he answered "Heavens no! Texas has only the good kind - the 'bluebonnet plague' each spring." A local event in Denison, the fall grape tasting and vineyard open house at the Munson Grape Vineyards, was canceled this year. Supervisor **Eddie Mathews** said it was not due to lack of interest, but rather to an abundance of grape-loving mockingbirds. Vineyard officials and grape-growing experts tried various nonviolent methods to get rid of this state-protected bird - from firing frequent cannon charges to hanging noisy metal reflectors. But nothing they tried frightened the birds away. Next year, said **Mathews**, there will be specially made nets to protect the valuable grape crop.

**BOX SCORE** - The Laredo and Anthony tourist bureaus continue to show strong gains, with 22.4% and 16.2% more visitors served last month over July '82. Services provided at the Gainesville bureau plunged 20.9% below last year's totals due to heavy construction just north of that bureau. In spite of the legislature not being in session during July, the Capitol visitor center received 50,673 visits, +55% over last year.

Bureau	Month Total Visitors	Variation*	Year Total Visitors	Variation*	Bureau	Month Total Visitors	Variation*	Year Total Visitors	Variation*
Amarillo	22,773	+ 9.1%	95,355	+ 1.9%	Orange	52,581	+ 7.8%	259,383	- 4.8%
Anthony	23,496	+16.2%	168,327	+21.7%	Texarkana	36,822	+ 6.3%	183,903	+ 3.0%
Denison	18,141	- 6.9%	99,204	+ 2.7%	Valley	22,530	+ 0.9%	226,176	+16.5%
Gainesville	23,988	-20.9%	142,452	- 7.1%	Waskom	34,959	- 4.6%	186,531	+ 2.4%
Langtry	8,607	- 8.7%	63,690	+ 1.6%	Wichita Falls	19,827	+ 0.2%	98,247	+ 1.9%
Laredo	17,166	+22.4%	122,874	+40.2%	<b>Bureau Totals</b>	280,890	+ 1.6%	1,646,142	+ 5.8%
Capitol	50,673		265,596		Austin Office (mail, phone, walk-ins)	4,705	-26.4%	70,296	-28.2%

\*Compared to last year



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