

T E X A S Travel Log

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE TEXAS TRAVEL INDUSTRY

ADIÓS, MY FRIEND

Travel and Information Division director **Don Clark** bids his farewell March 31, to take advantage of the state employees' early retirement incentive program. Since Don took the reins in 1986, all sorts of great things have gone on, not only for the division but for the Texas tourist industry, as well. One of the first things Don did was to bring back the full-color, 272-page *Texas State Travel Guide*. A closer relationship with the private sector resulted in the *Texas Accommodations Guide*, a cooperative effort between the Texas Hotel & Motel Association and TxDOT, and distribution of TxDOT's travel literature at city information centers throughout the state. He's played a major role in antilitter efforts on both the state and national levels, managing the Don't Mess With Texas campaign from its inception, and chairing an AASHTO task force, which resulted in an Adopt-A-Highway program nationwide. He fought hard for the TRAX and TIDE systems, and TourTex 2000, and even put the Panhandle back on top of the Texas map where it belonged. Renovation and reconstruction of all Texas Travel Information Centers began under his charge. And it was Don's idea to start a 1-800 number to provide better customer service. In fact, "better customer service" is behind all Don's ideas. So adiós, my friend. Can't wait to see where you'll pop up next. Because we know you're just as hooked on the travel industry as the rest of us.

TEXAS HOWDY

Motor coaches crossing into Texas can now begin their tour with a big Texas "howdy." TxDOT's Texas Travel Information Centers recently introduced a **Texas Howdy Service**, where a professional travel counselor steps on board with an official Texas welcome and a free information packet for every passenger. The information centers offer a park atmosphere with plenty of motor coach parking, clean rest rooms, and a special Texas video. Tour operators can schedule a stop at the information centers just by calling ahead. Travel and Information Division director **Don Clark** said, "TxDOT has been a major partner in tourism for 58 years. Offering easy access to travel information is part of our philosophy of providing good customer service." For more information, call Travel Services director **Milton Meharg** at 512/467-3716.

COMING UP

Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones has proposed a \$200-million improvement project

for **Texas Stadium** in **Irving**, according to *The Dallas Morning News*. City officials said Jones wants to expand the stadium to 104,000 seats, and add a retractable roof, air conditioning, and a grass field by the year 2000. Additional improvements include a NFL theme park, Dallas Cowboys hall of fame, restaurants, and more parking. One question surrounding the project is financing. Although there is no financial plan, Mayor **Bobby Joe Raper** said taxpayers will not pay for improvements.

The city of **Fredericksburg** turns 150 years old in May 1996. And, as usual, folks there plan to celebrate in a big way. A giant-sized birthday party will honor the community's German, Hispanic, and Native American heritage with ten days of music and dancing, fireworks, pageants, and parades. C&VB director **Penny Reeh** said they already have a long list of community volunteers. Festivities include seven fest nights, German entertainment, demonstrations by Native Americans, a Cinco de Mayo celebration, a trail ride, cowboy cookout, fiddlers contest, and an original

historical play. Make plans now for May 3-12, 1996.

The **American Airpower Heritage Museum** and Midland College in **Midland** will host an international symposium, slated for March 2-4, 1995, which will commemorate the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II. "**Pilots and Poster Girls**" will include sessions presented by more than 30 authors and historians. Featured entertainment will be an evening with actor Van Johnson, including a formal dinner, Mr. Johnson's review of Hollywood during the WWII years, and a '40s big band dance. Call 915/567-3010 for more details.

O O P S !

Last month, in the November issue of *Texas Travel Log*, we told you that the **Star of Texas** cruise ship was back, offering day trips, and five-day cruises to Cozumel from the **Port of Galveston**. It's back alright, but not in Texas. Evidently, the ship hooked a sharp left and ended up in Miami, Florida.



EVEN COWGIRLS GET THE MOVE The National Cowgirl Hall of Fame will move from Hereford to the Stockyards National Historic District in Fort Worth. The collection will be housed in a restored mule barn. Renovation should be complete by the end of 1996. In the meantime, the cowgirl memorabilia will remain available to the public in its current location for the next five or six months, before packing begins. For more information, call 806/364-5252.

And then, of course, it had to change its name to *Lucky Star*. A spokeswoman said the floating casino will return to Galveston in May. In the meantime, if you've booked a cruise thinking you'll leave from Texas, you might want to call 1-800-978-2783 for more details.

P L A C E S

Three major additions to **San Antonio's River Walk** are now in the works, reports **Wayne Aldaco**, assistant manager of the C&VB's Visitor Information Center. Soon visitors can whoop it up at the Hard Rock Cafe, sink their teeth into mouth-watering barbecue at a new County Line, or savor Old World flavor at a restaurant specializing in Italian cuisine. The new establishments join a multitude of other restaurants and sidewalk cafes, popular hotels, art and gift shops, boutiques, and cabarets. To learn more about this premier vacation experience, stop by the visitor center at 317 Alamo Plaza. Or call 1-800-447-3372.

Round Top was named as one of 100 best small art towns in America, in a forthcoming book by **John Villani**. Villani is a national arts columnist based in Santa Fe, New Mexico, whose

TEXAS TRAVEL LOG

is published monthly by the Texas Department of Transportation, Travel and Information 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) 483-3727, FAX (512) 483-3793. Deadline for each newsletter is the 20th of the month preceding the issue date.

Ann Kelton, Editor

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T R A V E L T A L E S O V E R H E A R D

DENISON TIC Manager Anne Newsome and veteran counselors Devon Armstrong and Betty Reynolds welcomed two new employees to their new center. Cindy Straka began as a full-time counselor, while retired school teacher Frances Cameron will work part-time. "Cindy and Frances are both doing a great job," said Anne. "It's like we've been working together for years."

1-800 PHONE TIC Counselor Joe Slocum, better known as Detective Joe, received a frantic

call from a woman who thought she'd left her purse in a highway rest area near Abilene. She offhandedly mentioned she could have left it on an earlier stop at a Dairy Queen, but had no idea which towns she'd stopped in or been through. The old-time traveling salesman gone detective knew I-20 well, and began tracing every Dairy Queen east of Abilene starting with Baird, Cisco, and Eastland, finally tracking the purse down in Ranger. "The woman couldn't believe it when I called her back with the

good news," said Joe. "Several hundred dollars were still in her purse. It's good to know there're still honest people around."

WASKOM TIC Marshall sponsored a bed and breakfast tour, where manager Melissa Heard and counselor Donna Watson visited five bed and breakfast homes. "The homes were beautiful, the hostesses gracious," said Donna. "Now it'll be easier to help visitors heading toward Marshall looking for a place to stay."

work has appeared in numerous national publications.

The *Austin American-Statesman* reports the **Elisabet Ney Museum in Austin** closed for a \$40,000 Capital Improvements Project, beginning last month. Renovation includes a complete restoration of the building's original wood floors. The museum reopens in February with a new addition to its permanent exhibition. The National Historic Site was the studio of the famed German sculptress who immigrated to Texas in the 1870s. At 304 East 44th Street.

an additional four days to spectacular Copper Canyon in northern Mexico. The next train trip to West Texas departs from Fort Worth on January 21. Call 1-800-659-7602 for details.

W I L D L I F E

We just discovered a wonderful sanctuary for wildlife in **Kirbyville**. Nestled in the piney woods of far East Texas is the **Exotic Cat Refuge & Wildlife Orphanage**, where owner **Monique Jackson** offers refuge and rehabilitation to

endangered cats and other exotic animals. The state and federally licensed orphanage welcomes all sorts of wildlife who have been abandoned or mistreated. A lifetime of love and nourishment awaits lions, tigers, leopards, cougars, bears, wolves, and other incredible creatures at this haven in the woods. The nonprofit facility is normally open Tuesday through Sunday afternoons, but it's best to call ahead. For reservations and information, call 409/423-4847.

Fossil Rim Wildlife Center will host the **Texas**

A L L A B O A R D

DRC Rail Tours of Houston recently began offering trips to **West Texas** aboard a restored South Orient Express train with observation parlor cars dating from the 1940s and '50s. The *San Antonio Express-News* reports the four-day tour follows the original South Orient tracks from Fort Worth to Presidio, and includes stops in San Angelo, home of historic Fort Concho, the McDonald Observatory in the Davis Mountains, and a side trip by bus to Big Bend National Park. Guests can then extend their trip

MAKING A SPLASH Sky Tubin'

is the latest addition to **Sea World of Texas in San Antonio**. It will tower five stories high and allow groups of up to four to interlock inflated tubes and experience a wild, exciting ride. Also new in '95 are a thrill-packed water-ski show and superstar concert series. Weekend spring schedule begins March 11. For ticket information and other details, call 1-800-527-4757.



Endangered Species

Symposium at the Somervell County Exposition Center in **Glen Rose**, January 28-29. Six outstanding speakers will cover topics ranging from Texas endangered mammals and birds, to aquatic species and ecosystems. In addition, exhibitors, including Sea World of Texas, Mexican Wolf Coalition, Horned Lizard Conservation Society, Wildlife Rescue Inc., and many others, will sponsor information booths. Cost for the two-day event is \$95; deadline for reservations is January 14. For more info, call Fossil Rim at 817/897-2960.

STATE PARKS

Texas Parks & Wildlife Department began taking **reservations for 1995** on December 1 for most state park campsites, group facilities, and cabins. The big change this year is an 11-month rolling reservation window, which means reservations, as long as they are made three days in advance, can be for any date in the following 11 months. The automated system allows customers to book almost any park with one phone call, get referrals to other nearby parks if their first choice is full, pay deposits by credit card, and get faster service. Reservations are accepted for all state parks, except Indian Lodge in Davis Mountains State Park, and the Texas State Railroad. For reservations, call 512/389-8900. To cancel reservations, call 512/389-8910. Happy camping!

HISTORY

The **San Jacinto Monument** near **Houston**, in San Jacinto Battleground State Historic Park, "is falling apart," reports *The Dallas Morning News*. The giant structure, which is the tallest monumental column in the world,

stands at the site of the decisive battle where Texas won independence from Mexico on April 21, 1836. Experts say a half century of rain, wind, and pollution has taken its toll, and it could take as much as \$9 million to restore it. The monument draws 450,000 visitors each year, making it and the surrounding 1,002-acre park one of Texas' most popular historic sites.

MAILBOX

Leo Garza, manager of the Texas Travel Information Center in Laredo, reports that the **Laredo Chamber of Commerce** ceased operation of the convention and visitors bureau, after the city decided to create their own C&VB. All requests for information should be directed to **The City of Laredo Convention & Visitors Bureau**, P. O. Box 579, Laredo 78040; phone 210/712-1230 or 1-800-361-3368. The chamber of commerce continues to direct normal chamber functions.

TEXAS TRIVIA
Who was the first woman in Texas to head a department in state government?

In 1918, Elizabeth H. West was appointed to head a government department. She started Texas' first state library service to the blind, and later served as librarian at Texas Technological College (now Texas Tech University) in Lubbock.



IT'S A FRAME-UP The Old Jail Art Center in Albany became the subject of two television programs. Last month, Bob Phillips of "Texas Country Reporter"

highlighted the museum located in the historical 1877 jail. An upcoming story for "CBS News Sunday Morning," hosted by Charles Osgood, includes insight into how a city of less than 2,000 people was able to create and support such a successful museum. The eight-minute segment is tentatively scheduled to air January 15.

The **Uvalde C&VB** merged with the **Uvalde Area Chamber of Commerce**. **Kim Laning** was named director of both operations. Address travel inquiries to 300 E. Main Street, Uvalde 78801. Or call 210/278-4115.

of the former First City Bank building. Call 512/458-8191 for more info.

Houston Museum of Natural Science's Wortham IMAX Theatre presentation of the film "Yellowstone" takes viewers on a breathtaking journey through the natural wonders of America's oldest, largest and most popular national park. It includes an account of native residents, escapades of explorers, and close-up scenes with area wildlife. Shown daily through April 20, 1995. Call 713/639-IMAX for show times and reservations.

MUSEUMS

Laguna Gloria Art Museum in **Austin** presents *The Holocaust Project: From Darkness Into Light* through January 15. The exhibition is the culmination of eight years of labor and many additional years of study for Judy Chicago and husband-photographer Donald Woodman, and examines the Nazi genocide of six million Jews during WWII. The 3,000-square-foot installation features 16 major works of painting, manipulated photography, stained glass, and tapestry, based, in part, on historic photographs from the era and contemporary photographs taken at Treblinka, Auschwitz and other concentration camps and Jewish cemeteries in Europe. On view downtown at 823 Congress Avenue, in the lobby

EVENTS

The **Texas Hill Country Regional Christmas Lighting Tour** showcases brilliantly lit county courthouses, storefronts, homes, and churches along with a variety of special events in Blanco, Boerne, Bulverde, Burnet, Fredericksburg, Johnson City, Lampasas, Llano, Marble Falls, Mason, and Round Mountain. For a complete schedule of events, call 210/997-8515.

TRAVEL CENTER	Month Visitors	Percent Variation*	Visitors Year-to-date	Percent Variation*
Amarillo	9,585	+11.99	161,682	+10.13
Anthony	14,055	-20.21	192,081	+1.25
Denison	20,172	**	61,500	**
Gainesville	26,016	-31.08	404,016	-11.40
Langtry	7,458	-11.56	99,165	+12.16
Laredo	8,292	-27.34	139,944	+2.21
Orange	37,071	-2.82	536,889	+8.16
Texarkana	54,972	+29.45	565,890	+24.58
Valley	24,117	-5.75	295,614	+11.18
Waskom	48,819	+10.60	522,069	+9.05
Wichita Falls	13,002	-7.53	198,729	+11.47
Capitol Complex	9,834	-14.37	136,353	-1.87
1-800 Phone Center	13,404	+76.11	173,601	+28.23
CENTER TOTALS	286,797	+7.17	3,487,533	+8.85

Data as of November 30, 1994

*Compared to last year

** The Denison TIC was temporarily closed in 1990 due to highway construction; resumed operation September 13, 1994.

MAIL SERVICES	This Mo.	Y-T-D
	30,900	1,086,140
SERVICES TO THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY		
TxDOT TRAX System	This Mo.	Y-T-D
Subscriber inquiries	58	
Addresses offered	48,633	
Addresses transmitted	13,185	
Addresses transmitted		683,137
OFFICIAL STATE TRAVEL MAGAZINE		
Texas Highways print run		
This month		388,366
This month last year		439,988
This year-to-date		4,509,672
Last year-to-date		4,918,349

Dial toll-free 1-800-452-9292 for travel assistance from TxDOT's Texas Travel Information Centers (8 a.m.-9 p.m. daily)

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