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April 1986

SOME 35 RIGS in a winter Texas Airstream caravan, en route to Mexico and the middle Rio Grande Valley, recently pulled into the Laredo Civic Center. There, trailmaster **Gerry Hillman** of McAllen called upon **Leo Garza**, manager of our Tourist Bureau at Laredo, to address the group. **Leo** showed our new film "Festival 150" (see March 1986 *Texas Travel Log*) and described the operations and services of the Bureau, points of interest along their planned route, and brief descriptions of the literature he distributed. Members of the caravan ranged in age from 62 to 93, **Leo** said. Our tourist bureau staffers are well suited to provide travel presentations to such special groups.

EIGHT NEW "Certified Professional Travel Counselors" passed the rigorous examination administered last month to earn the coveted title. They will be awarded their certificates at the annual Texas Travel Counselors Conference in Austin later this month. We'll announce their names in the May *Texas Travel Log*!

"THEY COME TO LANGTRY every which way," according to counselor **Lucille White** at our Judge Roy Bean Visitor Center there. "A month or two ago a group of cross-country horseback riders stopped by, then three Airstream caravans visited the center one week in March, and a few days ago the Sesquicentennial Rio Grande Float Trip landed their boats and canoes nearby. Of course, visitors show up mostly in autos and on motorcycles, but we've had our share of bicyclists, too," **Lucille** said.

SIX FLAGS OVER WASKOM? When two college-age couples stopped late one Saturday afternoon at our Tourist Bureau at Waskom, near the Louisiana border, counselor **Melissa Heard** thought it strange when they said they planned to visit Six Flags over Texas—a good four-hour drive away. Seems they were from Tyler but had unwittingly turned east on I-20 instead of west. **Melissa** gently gave them a short course in map reading and pointed them back along the road they'd been driving.

TRAIL BOSSES for the Orange Sesquicentennial Trail Ride were Travel Counselor **Pam Crew** of our Tourist Bureau at Orange, and husband **Walter**. They headed up more than 200 riders who participated in the special trail ride and parade.

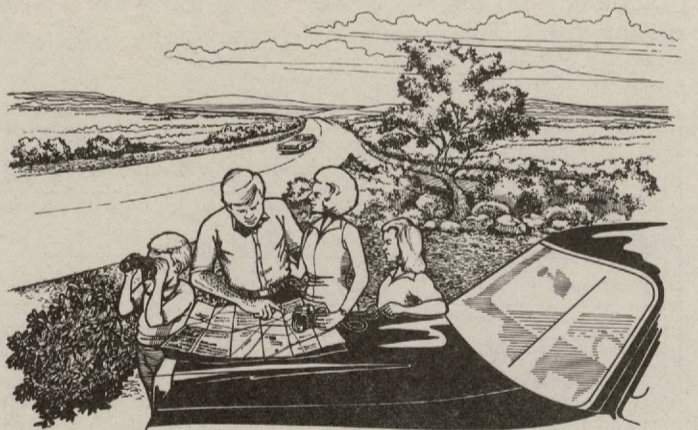
HELPING VISITORS is a fundamental part of the job for our travel counselors, but jump-starting their autos isn't exactly covered in their training manual. So it came as something of a surprise to **Roel Romero** of our Valley Bureau when he was called upon to get out the ol' jumper cables and rescue not one, not two, but six visitor vehicles in the Bureau parking lot—and all within five days. "What I can't figure out," said **Roel**, "is why they all happened on sunny, mild days!"

A GROUP OF KENTUCKY BLACK-POWDER LONGRIFLEMEN, headed by a Kentucky district judge, recently participated in the reenactment of the Battle of the Alamo. On the way home, they were captivated by our colorful Sesquicentennial InfoBord in a highway rest area. The judge wrote our Austin office to ask for a copy for their club house. (Sorry, we've only enough of the 3 x 3-ft. metal posters for highway rest areas. But after 1986, they'll be available on a salvage basis.)

ODDS 'N ENDS AROUND THE BUREAUS... A Canadian planter from Central America dropped off a huge stalk of new experimental bananas for the staff of our Tourist Bureau at Laredo. "I don't know how good they are," said Bureau manager **Leo Garza**, "they're still green!"... Counselors **Betty Reynolds** of our Bureau at Denison, **Estelle Reaves** of our Bureau at Texarkana, and **Cindy Walker** at our Gainesville Bureau all report all report hordes of spring break students headed for the Gulf Coast—particularly South Padre Island... Meanwhile, our Capitol Visitor Center was overrun twice last month as folks flocked to the Capitol grounds for the Sesquicentennial ceremonies on March 2, and for the "Capital 10,000" run on Palm Sunday. "We were really flooded," said Center manager **Anne Newsome**.

BOBSLEDDING IN TEXAS—IN SUMMER? A hair-raising new bobsled ride, the "Avalanche Express," is part of a multimillion dollar improvement to Six Flags Over Texas. Opening late this month in the Spanish section of the park, the ride features free-wheeling sleds that reach speeds to 32 miles per hour over a steeply banked, curving quarter-mile course. Also under way is expansion of the Music Mill Amphitheatre and related facilities. It'll all be part of Six Flags' silver anniversary season.

TEXAS TRIVIA: What is the world's tallest masonry monument?



MORE BITS AND PIECES... Both our Tourist Bureaus in the Valley and at Laredo report a noticeable increase in visitors from Mexico. **Sam Martinez**, manager of our Valley Bureau at Harlingen, and **Becky Gutierrez** at our Bureau at Laredo deduce that the stabilized peso and falling gasoline prices contribute to the influx... The Dallas/Fort Worth Tourism Council visited our Bureau at Waskom last month and lunched with the staffers, reports counselor **Darlene Jones**... Our Tourist Bureau grounds at Orange now sport a new birdhouse for purple martins, thanks to **Mrs. James Quigley**, who installed the nesting home in memory of her late husband, **Jimmy**, former publisher of the *Orange Leader* and long-time enthusiastic supporter of Texas tourism... **Debbie Maples** has replaced **Lisa Ledbetter** behind the counter at our Tourist Bureau at Wichita Falls, reports Bureau manager **Jack Conley**... and **Ms Eddie McKinsey** has taken the spot vacated by **Doris White** at our Capitol Visitor Center in Austin.



STATE DEPARTMENT OF HIGHWAYS AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

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A TOURIST INFORMATION CENTER operated by the Arlington C&VB is open for weekend operation at 1908 E. Randol Mill Road, just east of Arlington Stadium. Information on Texas Rangers baseball, Six Flags Over Texas, Wet 'n Wild water park, other area attractions, hotels, restaurants and shopping is available. Free maps and brochures. Open 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturday and noon-4 p.m. Sunday.

THE "NEW" SOUTHWEST AEROSPACE MUSEUM is open in Fort Worth at 30 Grant's Lane (N. Spur 341) off IH-30. Displays include military aircraft ranging from the B-36 to a T-33 T-bird, plus a host of fascinating small exhibits. Near Carswell AFB. Call **Dave Chiocchi** for more information (817) 735-4143. Open Thu. thru Sun. 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Free.

A SPECIAL SESQUICENTENNIAL EXHIBIT continues at the Texas State Library during April. "The Texas Revolution" depicts political and military events of the period with displays of private papers, government records and other printed works. Other historic items on permanent display include the Texas Declaration of Independence, and Travis' famous letter from the Alamo. Souvenir certificates documenting visits to the State Library during the Sesquicentennial Year are available.

SAN ANTONIO NOT ONLY SAYS "WELCOME," but also *bienvenidos, willkommen, bienvenue,* and even *irashai masu!* It's all in a slick, colorful new booklet in 5 - count 'em, 5 - languages, put out by the ever-innovative San Antonio Convention and Visitors Bureau. Clear, inviting photos are enhanced by crisp, provocative copy in English, Spanish, German, French and Japanese. A neat piece, indeed. Or *muy bueno, wunderbar, tres bien,* or even *ichi ban!*

A BRAND-NEW ARENA will greet rodeo fans for the opening of the 1986 season on April 4 at the Mesquite Championship Rodeo. Now in its 28th year, the rodeo runs every Friday and Saturday night through September. The bigger, better facility is adjacent to the old arena, LBJ Freeway (IH-635) at Military Drive exit.

THE NEW CHOKE CANYON STATE PARK and reservoir is now open off SH 72 between Three Rivers and Tilden, about midway between San Antonio and Corpus Christi. Three multilane boat ramps are included, while shoreline units offer picnic sites, rest rooms and fish-cleaning shelters. Currently, only the park unit located below the dam has available campsites. Excellent populations of largemouth bass, crappie, sunfish and both channel and blue catfish. Check with Park Headquarters for slot/possession limits. Admission. (512) 786-3538.

JUST IN CASE READERS DIDN'T get enough wild flowers in the April *Texas Highways*, the May issue presents an even broader variety. Features highlight Austin and the LBJ Country, historian Joe Frantz' final chapter on Texas' beginnings, and "The Betsy Ross of Texas." A 50th birthday salute to our tourist bureaus that annually send millions of travelers happily on their way through Texas wraps up another outstanding issue. Get it on your newsstands in mid-April, or, for only \$10, order 12 monthly issues by subscription. Just send a check and your mailing address to *Texas Highways* Circulation, Box 5016, Austin 78763-5016.

TRIVIA ANSWER: _____

The San Jacinto Monument near Houston. Completed in 1939 to commemorate the Battle of San Jacinto, it is 570 feet tall. It's topped by a single star 34 feet tall that weighs 220 tons!

MARCH BOX SCORE - With the first quarter of the year behind, our 12 Texas Tourist Bureaus are closing in on the 1 million visitors mark, with a respectable increase of + 25.3 percent over March 1985. The increase in the number of visitors from Mexico is reflected in totals for our Valley and Laredo Tourist Bureaus, both of which registered sizeable gains. Here is a complete bureau-by-bureau tabulation for the month of March:

Bureau	Month Total Visitors	Percent Variation*	Year Total Visitors	Percent Variation*	Bureau	Month Total Visitors	Percent Variation*	Year Total Visitors	Percent Variation*
Amarillo	11,346	+15.7	25,734	+ 5.0	Orange	40,140	+20.6	105,141	+ 18.4
Anthony	21,987	- 3.1	54,564	- 10.3	Texarkana	33,216	+27.5	83,088	+ 24.9
Denison	23,232	+19.9	54,780	+ 20.9	Valley	50,169	+47.4	189,777	+ 42.9
Gainesville	23,721	+ 2.5	59,127	+ 6.1	Waskom	29,619	+ 3.6	71,652	+ 8.3
Langtry	15,471	+23.6	29,886	+ 21.9	Wichita Falls	14,145	- 0.2	35,976	+ 10.3
Laredo	27,783	+63.1	63,954	+ 40.7	Bureau Totals	364,860	+25.3	920,142	+ 21.3
Capitol	74,031	+46.9	146,463	+ 27.0	Austin Office (mail, phone, walk-ins)	34,185	+32.7	67,107	+ 31.7

*Compared to last year



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