

WEST TEXAS Country Trader

The West Texas Country Trader is a Supplement of:

Abernathy
Weekly Review
The Canyon News

The Castro County News
The Clarendon News

The Lorenzo
STANDARD
HEREFORD BRAND

Plainview Daily Herald
Ralls Reporter-News

Thursday, June 2, 1994

The Slatonite
The Tulia Herald

Getaway Ideas

National Trails Day...

QUITAUQUE — The second annual National Trails Day celebration will take place in Quitauque on Saturday, June 4.

Last year more than 2,500 people gathered for the official opening of the Caprock Canyons State Park Trailway and the day of festivities, and another large crowd is expected again this year.

A full day and night of events is planned and there should be something for everyone. There will be a mountain bicycle race along a portion of the Trailway, hot air balloon demonstrations,

**Caprock
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Trailway to
celebrate
national trail
event
Saturday...**

AgReview

See GETAWAY, Page 7



Photo of Palo Duro Canyon courtesy the musical "TEXAS"

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AgReview



South Plains

Calendar

JUNE 4

CIRCLE DOT CHUCKWAGON SUPPER — Another chuckwagon ranch dinner at 6 p.m. in connection with National Trails Day celebration.

JUNE 6

HEREFORD SOIL NUTRI- TION AWARENESS — He Southern Plains Study Club will sponsor a Soil Nutrition Awareness seminar at 7:30 p.m. in the Hereford Community Center. Dr. P.I. Ittycheriah, owner of National Agrimate Biolabs in Clovis, will present a program entitled Understanding Soil Nutrition Beyond N, P and K, exploring the need for soil nutrients such as secondary ingredients like sulfur and trace elements including zinc and boron to produce quality yields. The meeting, open to the public, is part of the study club's year long focus on soil. The year will culminate Jan. 14, 1995, with the sixth annual Southern Plains Conference at the Amarillo Civic Center.

ARMSTRONG FARM TRAC- TOR PLAYDAY — Paul and Jackie Armstrong of Hart will host their annual tractor show on their farm 3 1/2 miles west of Hart on FM 145, then three miles south. A slow race, parade and plowing contest will be held.

JULY 9

LEVELLAND CELEBRATION AND TRACTOR PARADE — Parade and celebration including old tractors. For information contact Preston Reeves.

SEAGRAVES REUNION — Day of fun and displays of old tractors as part of Seagraves Day events.

TULIA'S SWISHER COUNTY PICNIC — Traditional picnic celebration features noon barbecue meal.

JULY 28

OKLAHOMA STATE TWO- CYLINDER SHOW — One of the major tractor shows in the Southwest, to be held in Fairview, Okla.

Bulls afoot in cotton market

The latest supply/demand estimates by USDA are bullish for the remaining months of the 1993-94 crop and friendly for the 1994-95 season.

Although the U.S. outlook is for increased production, strong domestic and export demand will likely hold stocks fairly tight. The 1994-95 crop is projected at 17.7 million bales, up 10 percent from last season. The total use, however, is expected to increase slightly to 17.5 million with ending stocks barely gaining to 3.9 million. The 1994 crop estimate is the first by USDA and is based on trend yields and average expectations. The first field survey of crop prospects will be released on Aug. 11.

Foreign production is expected to rise 11 percent to 66.3 million for the new crop. With usage at 75.0 million aies, ending stocks are likely to decrease to 24.7 million from 26.7 in 1993-94. The result is that foreign stocks-to-use (s/u) declines to 33 percent, the lowest since 1990-91 season. That compares with 36 percent in 1993-94 and 45 percent two years ago. Because foreign stocks are expected to remain tight for another year, prospects for U.S. exports are good.

As a result, estimated exports increased 300,000 bales to 7.0 million for 1993-94 and were also projected at 7 million for the 1994-95 season. In 1992-93, exports were only 5.2 million, and they totaled 6.65 from the 1991-92 season. Domestic use, at 10.3 million, advanced 100,000 bales for a total 1993-94 offtake of 17.3 million bales. Ending stocks dropped 400,000 bales to 3.6 million, somewhat lower than expected.

It is interesting to note that U.S. exports have increased when the "A" Index is over 80 cents and decreased when the price is about 20 cents/lb. lower. The reason is that when foreign stocks are plentiful, buyers are scarce even though prices are depressed. Besides, cotton production in China is the driving force behind U.S. exports. If production is high, they export. If low, China imports cotton to keep mills running. In other words, regardless of price, the U.S. is largely a residual supplier to the international market.

Crop prospects, whether good or poor, will be the key behind price movements for the next several months. The West Texas cotton area has received encouraging rainfall in recent weeks. The Rolling Plains area of Texas now has good planting moisture. Cotton planting across the U.S. is ahead of schedule and progressing well. An 18 million bale crop is possible and would provide ample supply for a 17.5 million offtake.

With the "A" Index around 85 cents and the AWP above 70 cents,



COTTON MARKET UPDATE

Dr. Carl Anderson

the U.S. price received is averaging in the mid-60 cent level. This suggests the 1994 deficiency payment may be substantially less than the 12.9 cents projected. However, it may be slightly above the 6.45 cent advance payment.

This means producer income will largely depend on market prices. But, cotton program costs will drop considerably. Therefore, marketing strategies selected should consider risk of lower prices yet allow benefits from higher prices if production falls below average. The next two months are critical for the market to size up potential supply to demand, and respond accordingly.

Cotton Market Indicators: ARP, U.S. and Foreign Stocks-to-Use Percentages, and Selected Prices, 1990/91 - 1994/95.

Season Pmt	ARP	Stocks - To - Use		Price			
		U.S.	Foreign	Memphis Spot	"A" Index	Def. AWP	
		Percent		Cents/Lb.			
1990/91	12.5	14	34	74.84	82.93	65.80	7.30
1991/92	5.0	23	49	56.17	63.16	47.07	10.10
1992/93	10.0	30	45	55.02	57.51	43.90	20.30
1993/94	7.5	21	36	73.29 1/	79.24 1/	???	18.60
1994/95 2/	11.0	22	33	???	???	???	12.90

1/ 1993/94 estimated from 1/3/94 through 5/10/94

2/ 1994/95 projected

Note: Memphis Spot Quote is now called North Delta

Source: USDA

Assessing first quarter's cattle activity

Despite higher feedgrain prices and lower fed cattle prices, calf prices have remained strong during the first quarter of 1994.

In fact, the 400-500 and the 500-600 pound steer calf prices have averaged, in some Texas markets, higher than they did a year ago. In other Texas markets, the prices for the steer calves have only dropped about \$2 per hundred-weight (cwt.) from year ago prices. In a word, calf prices have remained strong thus far into 1994.

Probably the most contributing factors for continuing strong calf prices has been the slow growth in cow numbers during this cattle cycle that began in 1989 and the smaller than expected 1993 calf crop. The U.S. cow herd numbered 43.78 million head on January 1, 1989, with 33.62 million of those being beef cows. By January 1, 1994, the U.S. cow herd numbered only 44.53 million head of which 34.89 million head were beef cows. That represents only a 1.7 percent growth in the U.S. cow herd in 5 years . . . very slow, deliberate growth! Of course the growth in the beef cow herd has been at a greater rate, 3.8 percent over the same period. This, however, is still relatively slow growth given the price strength for cattle and calves since mid-1987.

Where economic losses on fed cattle and higher feedgrains prices have had their effects has been on the heavy weight feeder cattle prices, i.e., those feeder cattle weighing 700 pounds and over. Prices for 700 pound plus feeder cattle have been \$3 to \$5 cwt. less than a year ago, but have still averaged some \$9 to \$11 cwt. above fed cattle prices during the first quarter of 1994.

The final estimate of the 1993 U.S. calf crop was nearly one-half million head below the original mid-year estimate or 39.64 million head. This too has added strength to the calf prices during 1994 and should provide price strength into the summer and fall runs of the 1994 calf crop.

March Cattle on Feed

Currentness of fed cattle marketings looms as the question of most concern as fed cattle prices begin to rise back to the high \$70 cwt. levels. Given all the red ink in the cattle feeding sector since July 1993, it is amazing how well feedlots have remained current in marketings of cattle. Once again, the March Cattle on Feed report reported the largest number of cattle on feed for March 1 since 1974. February placements were 7 percent above the relatively low placements rates of February 1993, but were 7 percent below the 5-year



LIVESTOCK MARKET UPDATE

Dr. Ernie Davis

average February placement rates. Even while sustaining losses on nearly every head marketed, cattle feeders marketed 4 percent more cattle during February than they did for the same month in 1993. The February feedlot marketings were 2.5 percent above the 5-year average.

Fed cattle prices should peak seasonally sometime in April or May before experiencing their seasonal summer decline. That decline probably will not be the 12 percent decline experienced during 1993 when fed cattle prices dropped from \$82 cwt. levels to \$72 cwt. levels. Expect fed cattle prices to peak at around \$78 cwt. this spring and, unless cattle feeders get bullish, summer fed cattle prices should not drop below the \$72 cwt. level . . . please no lower.

Texas Panhandle 1100-1300 Lb. Fed Steers, Cash Market Prices, 1992-1994 Dollars per Hundredweight

CATTLE FEEDING STATISTICS

On Feed: Cattle and calves on feed March 1 in the 7 monthly reporting states totaled 8.91 million head, up 2 percent from year ago counts and 9 percent above 1992. Texas feedlots had 2.54 million head of cattle and calves on feed, 9 percent above year ago numbers.

Placements: Cattle and calves placed on feed in the 7 States during February totaled 1.34 million head, up 7 percent from last year, but down 10 percent from February 1992. Texas feedlots placed 320,000 cattle and calves on feed during February. This was 7 percent above February 1993 placements.

(Dr. Ernie Davis, Extension Cattle Marketing Specialist for the Texas A&M Extension Service, is an authority on the cattle markets)

Watermelons in Georgia threatened by blight

By RON SMOTHERS
c. 1994 N.Y. Times

CORDELE, Ga. — The Fourth of July and watermelon.

Both are probably rivaled only by mom and apple pie in evoking a tableau of Americana. And each year in late June, rail cars, tractor trailers and dusty pickup trucks laden with watermelons rumble out of this town of 10,000 people in south-central Georgia, their cargoes headed for picnics, family outings and holiday celebrations throughout the eastern United States.

But growers like Oren Childers are nervous. They are walking their sandy fields, eyeing their half-grown fruit for early signs of a new, stealthy scourge: watermelon bacterial fruit blotch.

The blight, discovered in scattered watermelon patches in Florida and Indiana in 1989, first appeared in Georgia and South Carolina in 1992. It turned up again this year in some Georgia greenhouses that were nurturing seedlings.

The seedlings were destroyed before they reached the fields, said Ken Lewis, an agent for the State Agriculture Department in Tifton, Ga. But their discovery has prompted anxious watermelon growers in Georgia to sue seed companies.

Georgia's \$68 million crop makes the state the nation's fourth-largest watermelon-producer after Florida, California and Texas.

The bacteria, which scar the melons with brownish scabs and eventually sour the melons' sweet meat, can spread rapidly and quickly render whole fields unharvestable if the blotch is undetected. That is what happened to Childers's farm two years ago.

"I thought that I had the prettiest crop you could have," Childers said. "Then four or five days before it was time to harvest them, this blotch started showing up, and all I had left was

a field of ugly melons." He lost a third of his crop.

Growers and the National Watermelon Promotion Board maintain that any diseased melons are so ugly that they never reach consumers.

When the disease first appeared, scientists were puzzled, and a sort of mythology began to arise among farmers. The story was that the fermentation that takes place in infected melons caused them to explode without warning. Those things that go splat in the night, farmers feared, were their livelihoods self-destructing.

To separate fact from fable, growers and seed companies financed four studies last year. Dr. Don Hopkins, a plant pathologist at the University of Florida and chairman of the National Watermelon Fruit Blotch Research Project, said the infected fruit did not explode so much as crack and ooze a bubbly liquid.

The research has yet to resolve whether lia-

bility for the disease can be traced to the seeds, to farming practices or to the environment.

Plant pathologists have tentatively concluded that the disease is seed-borne. But they also say that later outbreaks may have been caused by the dispersal of bacteria by wind or farm equipment, by the bacteria's dormancy or by their ability to survive in other plants until more scientists have also been examining newer farming techniques. The disease's emergence coincides with growers' increased use of hybrid seeds developed by the seed companies through costly hand pollination.

Several growers have sued seed companies; a settlement has been reached in a least one case, and another has been dismissed. Lawyers for the companies note that naturally pollinated seeds have also been infested.

"This is not a seed company problem, but a watermelon industry problem," said Wayne Weibe, a plant patholo-

gist with the Peto Seed Co. of Woodland, Calif. "Seed is not the only way that this can grow."

Whatever way the disease spreads, growers have increasingly used greenhouses to develop seedlings for transplanting. But the hothouse atmosphere is just that, a place where scores of living things can thrive and spread, including bacteria.

"You can have one seed with the bacteria and it can grow in a greenhouse setting and develop a tiny lesion on the leaf that houses the bacteria," said Hopkins, the plant pathologist. "The droplets of water splashing on the lesions when you water the seedlings, or any wind, can broadcast the microscopic bacteria."

When the seedlings are transplanted to the field, the lesions are even harder to spot until the fruit ripens.

Plant pathologists say they are confident that all the infected seedlings

were destroyed this year; nevertheless, Childers is examining his crop carefully. He is also regularly spraying with copper sulfide, a chemical believed to retard the bacteria's growth.

Childers, 50, has about 300 acres of watermelon this year on his 1,000-acre Cedar Creek Melon Farms. As he stood in a field listening to the hum of bees he had brought in to pollinate his watermelon vines, he talked of the fruit blotch as something as devastating as hail, coyotes or crows.

He has planted wheat in the fields that were affected by the bacteria two years ago, and is following the experts' suggestions that he avoid replanting those fields with watermelon until next year at the earliest.

"We spray and watch daily because we don't know what else to do," Childers said. "And we plow under the infected crop, grow grain in those fields for three years because that's all that the scientists can recommend. But we really don't know the long-term effect of this thing."

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Texas fishing heats up as summer vacations begin

AUSTIN (AP) — Here is the weekly fishing report as compiled by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for last week:

WHITE RIVER: Water muddy, 70 degrees, 7 feet low; black bass are good to 10 pounds on motor oil colored worms and white/chartreuse spinners; crappie are slow; catfish are fairly good to 50 pounds; walleye are fairly good to 10 1/4 pounds in 12 feet of water.

MACKENZIE: Water clear, 68 degrees, 30 feet low; black bass are slow; crappie are good on minnows, jigs and small Rat-L-Traps; white bass are excellent to 2 pounds trolling cranks; catfish are fairly good to 5 1/2 pounds on jug lines and trotlines baited with chicken liver.

MEREDITH: Water clear at the upper end, muddy in the lower lake, 65 degrees, 6 feet low; black bass are fairly good on topwaters in the shallows; smallmouth are good to 5 pounds on jigs in the shallows off the rocky points; white bass are good trolling and using Thunder Sticks, minnows and jigs; catfish are fair and

improving; walleye are excellent to 10 pounds with numerous fish in the 5-7 pound range on bottom bouncers with leeches or night crawlers attached.

GREENBELT: Water clear, 66 degrees, 4 feet low; black bass are good to 4 1/2 pounds on cranks in the shallows; white bass are good on minnows and jigs in 12-20 feet of water; crappie are good at the same depths over brush; catfish are good to 14 pounds on rod and reel on minnows; walleye are fair to 4 pounds.

POSSUM KINGDOM: Water clear, 10 feet high; black bass are good; striper are very good to 15 pounds on live bait; crappie are good on minnows; catfish are slow.

KEMP: Water off color, 70 degrees, 1 foot low; black bass are slow; white bass are good in the shallow end of the lake off the islands and off the points; catfish are fairly good off the rocks near Rattle Snake Island.

O.H.I.VIE: Water muddy in the main lake, clear at the upper end, 70 degrees; largemouth bass are excellent to 9 3/4 pounds caught May

21 for a possible new lake record caught on topwaters early and late along shorelines and dark worms during the day off points, ridges and brush in 10-20 feet of water; smallmouth bass are good on cranks, jigs and worms along ridges and rocky ledges in 10-25 feet of water; white bass are fair on cranks or trolling near the sandy areas or points in 8-20 feet of water; crappie are slow on minnows in 30-40 feet of water near brushy points and ridges; channel catfish are fair up river on rod and reel and cut baited trotlines; yellow catfish are slow; walleye are fair with a possible new lake record of 41 1/4 pounds on jigs, cranks and minnows in 10-20 feet of water early and late or on cloudy days.

AMISTAD: Water clear, 76 degrees, 20 feet low; black bass are good to 7 1/2 pounds on all colored worms, lizards and cranks in 5-15 feet of water; striper are good with most fish too small to keep; white bass are fairly good running with the striper and at night under the lights on minnows; crappie are slow; catfish are good.



Woody Williams/The Canyon News

Good cattle feeding conditions

A native pasture used for cow/calf operations south of Conner Park in Canyon shows a healthy calf crop and good grass afforded Spring calves.

Petersburg Day plans made

PETERSBURG — Plans for Petersburg Day are moving ahead in southeast Hale County.

The third Saturday in August (August 20) is the date on the calendar for the celebration and things are beginning to take shape.

A theme has not yet been chosen as the Chamber is still waiting for suggestions from you, the people who attend. As of this date only one idea has been submitted. The deadline for entering is May 27. Theme suggestions should be mailed to Jo Carole Mayo, Chamber of Commerce, PO Box 285, Petersburg, TX 79250 or drop them off at Mayo Agency. A \$25 cash prize will be awarded to the one whose theme is chosen.

Several committees were set up during the meeting. Jo Carole Mayo will

again be in charge of all outside booths and any group or organization planning on setting up a booth needs to contact her at 667-3593 or 667-3496.

Chris Pierson will be handling the arts and crafts booths. These booths have been avoided the last few years, but several have shown an interest and hopes are of having several booths available. If anyone is interested in having an arts and crafts booth contact Chris at 667-3841 or 667-3630.

Outside musical entertainment will be handled by Pauline Sdl.

Making up the parade committee are Larry Paula Martin and Kaylene Noe.

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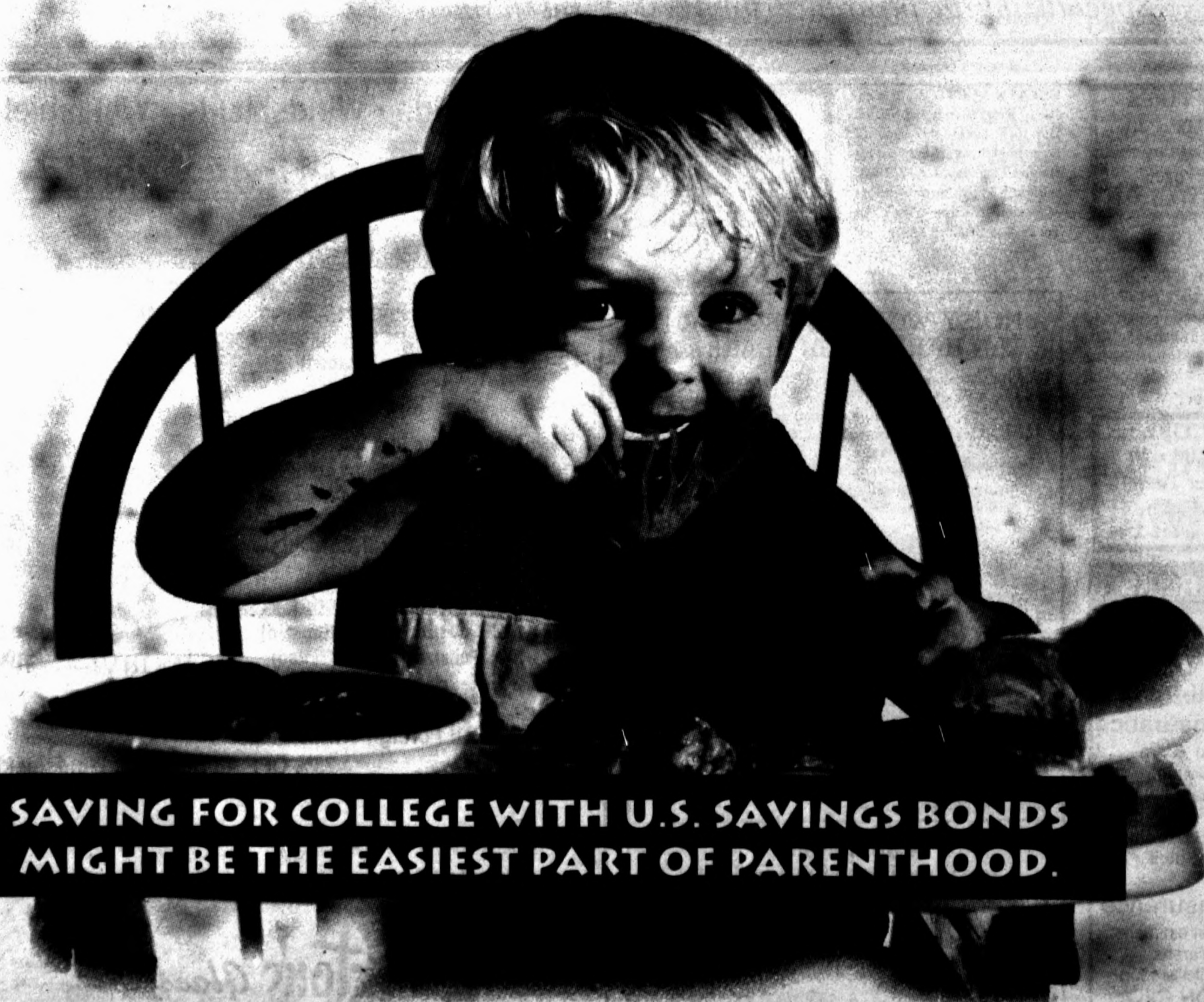
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GETAWAY, Pg 1

an antique car show, Mountain Men exhibits, the world's largest windsock, arts and crafts, street music all day, a noon barbecue, motorized Trailway tours, and many, many more interesting programs and events.

The new Caprock Canyons State Park Trailway continues to stir the imagination of

travel writers all across the country and in recent weeks there has been some excellent coverage in newspapers and magazines that have the combined circulation of over 3,375,000 households.

The March issue of Texas Highways had an eight-page article entitled "Rails to Trails" and the back cover of the magazine had an overhead color photograph of the Trailway

that showed the Los Lingos bridge and the beautiful fall foliage along the creek. In April The Dallas Morning News covered the Trailway in two editions of its Sunday Travel Section. The most extensive coverage was in the April 10 issue, when it was featured on the first page of the 16-page travel section. Then in May, Southern Living magazine came out with a

splendid article entitled "Rail Trails—After the Trains are Gone," and to kick off the article was a brilliant two-page color photograph that should make anyone who loves the great outdoors want to come and view first-hand the beauties of this Caprock area.

More than 100 residents from the Panhandle of Texas visited the Quitaque area on April 16, when the

Panhandle Plains Historical Museum in Canyon and the Square House Museum in Panhandle sponsored a field trip to Caprock Canyons State Park in observance of Texas Archeology Awareness Week. During the day Eddie Guffee of the Llano Estacado Museum in Plainview presented an informative program on the excavation of the

Comanchero dugouts on the Merrell Ranch south of Quitaque. After a fajita lunch, Billy Harrison, who is a retired curator of the museum at Canyon, explained the discovery and excavation of the Folsom Age Butchering Site on Lake Theo. Following his presentation, Wayne Lambert of WTA&M explained the geology and ecology of the Park.

Palo Duro's TEXAS kicks off 29th crowd pleasing season Wednesday

By KATHIE GREER
TEXAS publicist

CANYON — The mere mention of the Lone Star State conjures up thoughts of friendliness, wide-open expanses of earth and sky, cowboys, horses and an indomitable spirit.

The single best way to capture all that emotion and history is to attend one of the performances of the musical drama TEXAS — which kicks off its 29th consecutive season Wednesday, June 8.

TEXAS brings and rough and tumble myth of the state to life in the bold and beautiful setting of Palo Duro Canyon State Park.

The show begins with the plaintive cry of a bugle echoing between the panoramic walls of Palo Duro Canyon. The appearance high atop the 600-foot cliff of a

horseman bearing the Texas flag silences the audience.

As the last notes of the bugle begin to fade an the rider races along the canyon rim, dancers splash across the stage in a burst of energy and excitement. The fast-paced music soon has spectators tapping their toes and clapping their hands.

TEXAS is a timeless tale with an appeal as broad as the Lone Star State itself.

The story was written by Pulitzer Prize winning author Paul Green. It uses dramatic dialogue, song and dance to tell the stirring saga of the late 1880s.

The pioneering men and women who faced hardship and heartache to settle the Texas Panhandle come to life on the amphitheater stage.

Theirs was an intensely personal

struggle as they battled the land, the weather and, sometimes, each other.

Farmers fought cattlemen for dominance of the land and together they fought the elements.

The story also focuses on the age-old battles of human nature as men and women sought romance and lasting love. Adventure and adversity were an integral part of individual conquests to carve out a place called home.

The play has been said to rival the best Broadway productions, with its creative choreography, colorful costumes, remarkable musical score and superlative outdoor setting.

The result is a dazzling display of special effects that punctuate and highlight the action on stage. Lightning from a summer thun-

derstorm sometimes dances a delicate duet along the canyon rim with its natural counterpart. The threatening thunder is so realistic it often prompts the audience to "pop" umbrellas.

Internationally acknowledged for its excellence TEXAS is recognized by the National Institute of Outdoor Drama in Chapel Hill, N.C., as the best-attended outdoor drama in the nation.

More than 2.4 million

people have seen the show during its 28 year history. Last summer, 97,000 spectators from every state and 96 foreign countries saw the show. During the last five years, the 1,724-seat amphitheater has been filled to a nightly average of more than 90 percent of its capacity.

Ticketholders are admitted free to the state park after 5:30 p.m.

A barbecue dinner,

served adjacent to the theater, is available from 6 to 8 p.m. for an additional \$6.50. A gift shop offers memorabilia and souvenirs. Pre-show entertainment is provided on the main patio prior to each performance.

Reservations are recommended. For more information, call 655-2181 or write P.O. Box 268, Canyon, Texas, 79015.

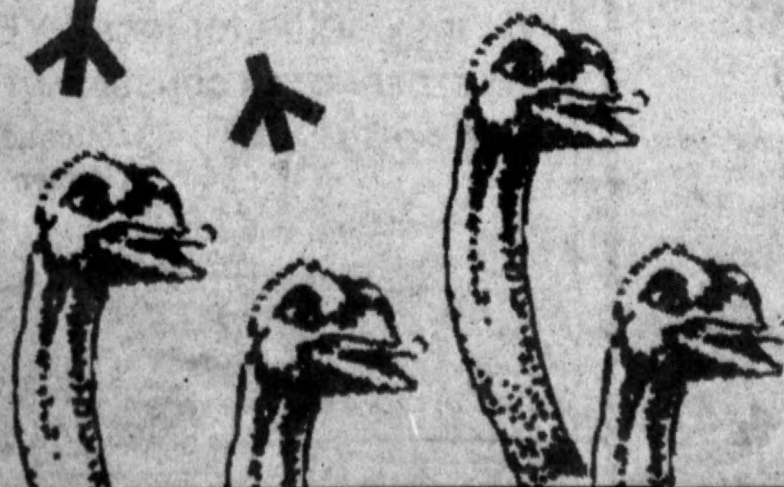
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Alamodome may draw politicians, tourism to Texas

By S. HOWE VERHOVEK
c. 1994 N.Y. Times

SAN ANTONIO — With four skyward-soaring towers and brightly colored suspension cables, San Antonio's Alamodome has been hailed as an architectural inspiration.

The less reverent call it the Armadillodome, pointing out that the concrete towers and the dome's curved steel roof inspire images of an animal often seen on Texas highways, upside down and in rigor mortis.

But since opening one year ago, the \$189 million Alamodome, home to the NBA Spurs, has lured big crowds: 48,000 people for a Paul McCartney concert; 54,000 for a boxing match involving Julio Cesar Chavez, a Mexican sports hero and heartthrob; 63,500 for a Dallas Cowboys-Houston Oilers football game.

Now San Antonio, with the Alamodome as the prospective venue, has launched a furious bid for what one city official calls "the grand prize": a national political convention in the summer of 1996.

The city, which has positioned itself as a hub for the North American Free Trade Agreement

and a place to showcase appeals to Hispanic voters, is a finalist site for both parties. It joins New York City, Chicago, New Orleans and, in the case of the Republicans only, San Diego.

San Antonio's chances of snaring a convention may be better for the year 2000. Chicago clearly remains the odds-on favorite for the Democrats in 1996, in no small part because it is the hometown of the party chairman, David Wilhelm, who is expected to announce a selection next month. Republicans, who will not choose a site until next January, say the contest is wide open.

But a senior Democratic official said San Antonio had done a remarkable job of transforming itself in the selection process from a city whose bid was not taken seriously to the clear challenger to Chicago.

"The only criticism I've heard from anybody on the committee was that we'd been putting too much salt in his Margaritas," said Jose Villarreal, a lawyer and chairman of the city's bid to host a Democratic convention.

Villarreal was referring to the party's site-selection advisory committee which, in

between boat trips along the San Antonio River and a ranch barbecue, toured the Alamodome during a visit last month. A Republican committee will visit next month and be greeted by former Rep. Tom Loeffler, who is leading the city's GOP effort.

At the heart of the effort is the Alamodome, which was almost single-handedly sold to voters in 1989 by the city's then mayor, Henry G. Cisneros, now President Clinton's housing secretary, who said in an interview that the dome allowed his native city "to play in the big leagues, literally and figuratively."

In its quest for big-time attention, the city has long found that its relaxed small-town grace can be something of a mixed blessing.

San Antonio is certainly a favored tourist destination, but it is also the 10th-largest city in the country. San Antonio may indeed be a wonderful place for lovers but Houston and Dallas, its bigger Texas cousins, are often viewed as a more substantial place for corporate executives or conventioners.

The Alamodome, before whose opening it would have been impossible to hold a major political convention

here, could well change all that.

The design allows for an unobstructed view from every seat and maximum flexibility — a mammoth gathering for 45,000 screaming loyalists and attendant media if a political party wants that, or a more intimate arena-in-the-round for 20,000 of its nearest and dearest.

San Antonio already has a commitment for the 1998 NCAA basketball tournament and the 1996 National Square Dance Convention.

City leaders say a political convention would bring immeasurable prestige.

"We're talking about days and days of solid national attention," said Alexander E. Briseno, the city manager. "If we can pull this off, what this says to the world is, San Antonio is in the big leagues now. We can do

anything."

San Antonio has hired Charles Howell, who worked on New York City's successful bid for the 1992 Democratic convention and who managed both the 1984 and 1992 party conventions, as a consultant in the effort here to attract either party.

Mayor Nelson Wolff concedes that the decision about where to hold a convention is based as much or more on politics than on technical logistics. Texas is certainly due a Democratic convention — the last one was 1928, in Houston — but then again, Bill Clinton lost the state in 1992.

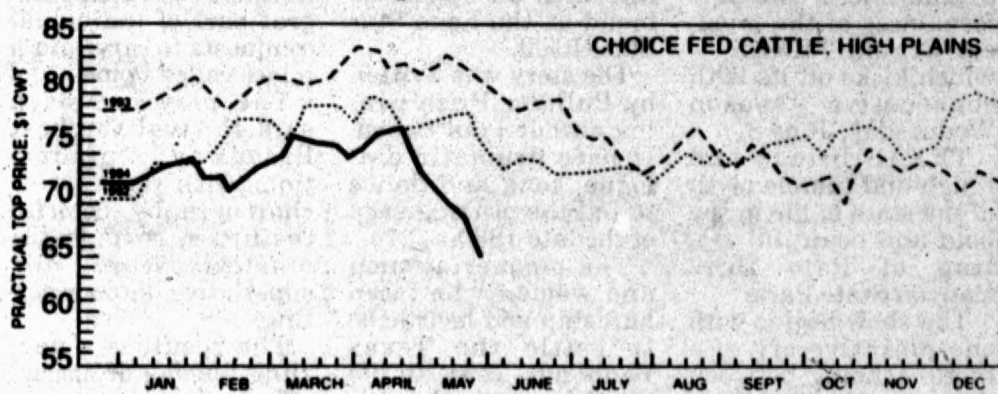
"He did carry Bexar County," where San Antonio is located, said Wolff. "We want the president to know that."

For the Republicans, hoping to attract Hispanic voters, the

fastest-growing ethnic segment of the electorate, and to keep the country's second-biggest state in the GOP column, the appeal of a San Antonio convention is obvious. On the other hand, two of the last three Republican conventions were in Texas — Dallas in 1984 and Houston in 1992 — and San Diego could represent an important way to woo the California vote.

But all this political calculation can get confusing, so Joseph R. Krier, president of the Greater San Antonio Chamber of Commerce, brightly suggested that party officials simply use another criteria for their selection.

"Come on, let's face it," Krier said in an interview. "They'd have a better time here. They know they'd have a better time."



Courtesy Texas Cattle Feeders Association, Amarillo

Choice fed cattle, High Plains

The above report reflects market activity through May 27.



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