

The Vanishing Thicket

By ED HOLDER
Port Arthur News Writer
(Written for the AP)
The Big Thicket of Texas is a place where a man can hide forever, or get lost and die, or run a moonshine still. But this vast jungle-like section of the state is disappearing at a rapid rate. A move is under way to preserve parts of what remain with the establishment of several state parks in this Southeast Texas section. The parks would be chosen to preserve different types of terrain and vegetation found in the

Thicket. The plan, sponsored by the Big Thicket Association, had been endorsed by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission. Sponsors of the plan say someone must take quick action if the rugged, wild sections are to be preserved. The Thicket, they contend, is disappearing at the rate of 50 acres a day, falling to the saws of timber companies and the bulldozers of subdivision developers. The Thicket contains a tremendously varied terrain and a wide variety of dense vegetation. It also is the home of the

state's only Indian tribe. It begins on the south at a point near Highway 90, between Livingston and Woodville. At the southern limits the land is low, flat and covered by a dense palmetto and hardwood forest. Farther north, between the Trinity River and Silsbee, the terrain changes. It becomes higher with more pines. The palmettos of the low area disappear and give way to briars, vines and a multitude of bushes with hardwoods and pines overhead. The northern reaches of the Thicket form typical Piney Woods country, crossed by many small spring-fed creeks that flow between hardwood and pine-dotted hills. In the early 1900's, when most of Texas had taken on the semblance of civilization, the Big Thicket still resembled in many ways the rugged and wild appearance that gave it its name. It already had become a place of many legends — of men who disappeared behind the curtain of green and never were seen again, of ghost of these men walking at night in the form of eerie lights, and of draft dodgers who escaped military service by fleeing into the dense Thicket. At that time, the Thicket remained the home of black bears, mountain lions, herds of deer and many other forms of wildlife. The bear and the lion have all but disappeared today, although there is an occasional report that one has been seen. Deer population has suffered, too, primarily as a result of illegal night hunting. But the Thicket is still home

for many squirrels, wood ducks, quail, alligators and other wildlife. Perhaps the greatest change has come to the very thing that made the Big Thicket — its dense stands of gaint hardwoods and huge pine trees. Many of these have been cut by the timber companies which own most of the Thicket. Very few stands of virgin timber remain. In spite of the inroads of civilization, there are still parts of the Thicket where even experienced woodsmen must take care to avoid becoming lost. One of the wildest areas remaining is along Pine Island Bayou, south of Saratoga, about 45 miles northwest of Port Arthur. This is low, flat land where the floor of the forest is covered with immense palmettos as much as six feet high. The palmettos and the overhead canopy of hardwoods give the area a jungle-like appearance. Wild hogs roam throughout this area. Farther north, another wild area exists along Menard Creek, between Highway 105 and Segno. This spring-fed creek sends its clear water rippling over a sandy bottom beneath the dense shade of tall oak, pine, cypress, beech, and magnolia trees. Part of both these wild areas would become state parks under proposed plans. Demsey Henley, mayor of Liberty and President of the Big Thicket Association, said current plans call for a 5,000-acre park along Menard Creek and a 1,000-acre park along upper Pine Island Bayou. These areas would make up part of 15,000 acres which Henley's organization believes will be required to create enough parks to preserve important parts of the Thicket. Other areas would be chosen near the Coushatta-Alabama Indian Reservation west of Woodville, the woods around Votaw and other points. "We want to pick areas like these which are unique," Henley said. "We want to include different types of terrain, such as baygalls (small swampy areas) and prairies (openings in the forest mysteriously void of trees.) "By doing so, we can create several park areas that would form a 'chain of pearls' across the Thicket, giving visitors the opportunity to see many of the things that have made the area famous." Henley said much of the land needed to form the parks will be

Ag Information Receives Top Awards In Contest

Texas A&M's Agricultural Information Department has won two blue and four red ribbons in an international communications contest. The event was the 1966 American Association of Agricultural College Editors Communications Contest held during the association's 50th anniversary conference. Areas covered in competition were publications, radio, television, press, photographs, slides, exhibits and motion pictures. Hal R. Taylor, editor and head of the A&M Agricultural Infor-

mation Department, said blue ribbons were won in the press service and large exhibits categories. He said judges' comments on press service stories included, "An excellent entry of well-written articles for use by press, radio, television and other media. The Texas A&M agricultural information staff is to be congratulated on doing an outstanding job in providing such an excellent variety of interesting stories relating to general agricultural, homemaking and home and community improvement."

Used By Ex-Presidents

NSF Operates Luxury Yacht

A luxury yacht once used by Presidents Truman and Eisenhower is now being operated by biological oceanographers in a National Science Foundation program.

Given to the NSF in 1962 by President Kennedy, the Williamsburg was converted into an ocean-going biological research ship and re-named the Anton Bruun in honor of Professor Anton Bruun of Denmark, an oceanography pioneer.

Since November, operations of the ship have been directed from Texas A&M's Marine Laboratory at Galveston by Dr. Edward Chin, coordinator for the program.

Chin reports the Anton Bruun may be mothballed late this fall due to lack of funds. He estimates operational costs for the ship at \$1.5 million annually.

The Anton Bruun is scheduled to sail Aug. 3 from Valparaiso, Chile on the last of eight cruises. Scientists will conduct studies on the continental shelf and upper continental slope from Chile to Columbia before docking Sept. 26 at Guayaquil, Ecuador.

Chin, who transferred to A&M's Marine Lab from Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution in Massachusetts, offers a verbal tour of the Anton Bruun: "It weighs 4,000 tons and is

One of the longest stretches of undeveloped beach remaining on the Atlantic seaboard has been turned into Cape Lookout National Seashore.

240 feet long. Four laboratories, with facilities for isolating and raising cultures and bacteria, are available to the maximum 19 scientists. A crew of 30 is required.

"The Anton Bruun is equipped with incubators autoclaves, darkrooms, spectrophotometers and salinometers in addition to the usual laboratory equipment."

Chin, on recommendation of the advisory committee, selects programs, plans the schedule of work, assigns a chief scientist and delegates responsibility for research.

Scientists interested in participating in the program submit proposals to the A&M Marine Lab. They are selected on scientific merit of proposed work, competence and experience, and feasibility of work with the cruise program.

The Anton Bruun was first used in the International Indian Ocean Expedition as official research vessel of the U. S. program in biology. During the next two years, the ship traveled 72,000 miles as researchers checked 400 standard hydrographic stations, collected samples and conducted research on board.

Chin was associate director of the U. S. biological program.

Since October, 1965, the ship has cruised the Southeastern Pacific Ocean as researchers probed the Humboldt Current and adjacent waters.

Future of the Anton Bruun is undecided. Chin and scientists throughout the world are anxiously awaiting a higher level decision.

Doyle Reappointed To C Of C Position

Maj. Gen. John P. Doyle, USAF (Ret.), of Texas A&M has been reappointed to the United States Chamber of Commerce Transportation and Communication Committee for the fourth straight year. Doyle, professor of the Macdonald Chair of Transportation, first served on the committee in 1963. His appointment was announced by M. A. Wright, president of the U. S. Chamber. The Texas Transportation Institute official chaired the Waterway Evaluation Sub-committee in 1964. He recently was named chairman of a Governors' Transportation Committee's subgroup for research of industrial site shifting.

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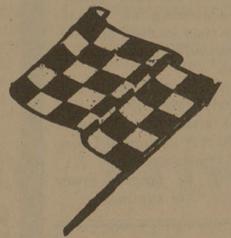
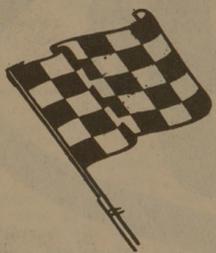
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