

Griffiths Appointed State Climatologist

In his best British accent, Prof. John F. Griffiths emphatically declines any claim of being the super weatherman for Texas.

The A&M meteorologist, however, has acquired the title of state climatologist with the blessings of Gov. Dolph Briscoe and the National Weather Service.

"Weathermen tell you what the weather is and probably will be," Griffiths pointed out, "whereas climatologists tell you what the

weather has been, historically speaking."

"To a certain extent, we're engaged in forecasting, too," the TAMU professor continued. "While weathermen check their charts and issue probabilities for certain types of weather on a short-term basis, we can study our records and give the odds for a certain condition occurring during a particular span of time, but we could quite easily be off a

year or two." Climatologists keep detailed tabs on such facets as drouths, precipitation recurrence intervals, temperatures, hailstorms, high winds, tornadoes and hurricanes — and now air pollution. The data is compiled on both a statewide and sectional basis. Capsule versions of such information are regular features of almanacs, and Griffiths will do the honors for the "Texas Almanac."

Griffiths and A&M took on the climatological responsibilities following announcement by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration that its National Weather Service would discontinue all state climatology programs. The Texas Office of Climatology had been in Austin. All the records have since been moved to College Station, and Griffiths hopes to have the new office in full swing by September.

Even prior to that, he and an associate, Michael S. Flynn, plan to travel across the state and meet as many people as possible who have need for climatological information. This includes individuals and groups, with most probably being involved in industry, agriculture or some level of government.

"We could sit up here in a vacuum on the 10th floor of our new oceanography-meteorology building and tell people how many days we had 12 years ago with temperatures above 80 degrees," Dr. Griffiths quipped, "but we want to get out and determine

what Texans need now in the way of historical data concerning the atmospheric environment."

The Texas Office of Climatology will have a larger staff at TAMU than it did in Austin, and Griffiths envisions a broader based service.

"Most important, we will put more emphasis on research," he explained. "Utilizing meteorology graduate students specializing in climatology, we will analyze data with a constant eye for practical application."

"In addition to providing useful and possibly valuable information to citizens of the state, this endeavor also will give our graduate students an opportunity to work on practical problems," the TAMU professor emphasized.

Flynn, for example, is studying precipitation patterns and characteristics during drouth periods.

The research project is part of his requirements for a Ph.D.

"If we follow this overall philosophy of research as an integral part of climatology, it should lead to a better understanding of the vagaries of Texas weather," Prof. Griffiths concluded.

Although English born and educated and having come to TAMU by way of Africa, Griffiths has now observed, recorded and written about Texas weather for more than a decade. Like all other Texans, native or otherwise, he knows the most predictable thing about Texas weather is that it is unpredictable.

Texas Airlines Passengers Grow

AUSTIN—Passenger boardings of Texas intrastate airlines for the first quarter of the year increased almost 35 percent over the previous three-month period, according to figures released today by the Texas Aeronautics Commission.

The six commuter airlines regulated by the TAC reported combined boardings of 191,171 for the period January 1 through March 31, 1973, compared to 141,647 boardings during October 1 through December 31, 1972.

The six carriers are Amistad Airlines of Del Rio; Davis Airlines of Bryan/College Station; MAC Helicopters and Houston Metro Airlines of Houston; Rio Airways of Killean; and Southwest Airlines of Dallas.

The new traffic figures also

represented a 61 percent increase in passenger boardings from the same first quarter period a year ago. From January 1-March 31, 1972, the airlines carried 118,402 passengers.

In making the announcement, Aeronautics Commission Chairman Rex C. Cauble of Denton stated that this substantial growth in passenger traffic was indicative of the strong development of intrastate service in Texas and the healthy economy of the state.

During the first quarter, two of the carriers also initiated service into new markets in the state. Houston Metro began service between Victoria and Houston Intercontinental Airport on February 15 and Rio Airways began carrying passengers between Temple and Dallas on March 7.

Big Or Little Thicket

The Nixon administration, through its Office of Management and the Budget, (OMB) has refused to endorse the idea of a Big Thicket National Biological Reserve of more than 68,000 acres.

The Big Thicket is a unique area in East Texas of extraordinary biological diversity. Its annual 60 inches of rain fall on a forest floor of more than 100 different soil types, thereby enabling plant life from widely separated climatic zones to thrive. Tropical palms grow with the yucca of the Southwestern deserts, New England's sugar maples with the magnolias of the South.

At one time, the Big Thicket covered an area of 3,500,000 acres, larger than the state of Connecticut. It has now shrunk to around 300,000.

There are seven proposals before the House, ranging from a plan for a reserve of 100,000 acres to a plan of 68,000 acres. The 100,000 acre plan consist of several units linked together by ecological corridors along the stream beds. The small plan calls for several units completely isolated from each other, thereby rendering it defenseless against pollution from development along the stream.

By opting for the 68,000 acre plan, the OMB goes against the recommendations of the Department of the Interior and the industrial forces responsible for the destruction in the first place. Both favor reserves of 75,000 acres and both have corridors.

According to an Interior Department source, the OMB couldn't justify the corridors in terms of recreational values, refusing to even consider the scientific values.

The damage that has been done can't be undone but neither can we expect to undo the damage to come. Our only course is to assure that we guard against the total destruction of the Big Thicket.

With the administration's present stand, our guard is down.

The Battalion

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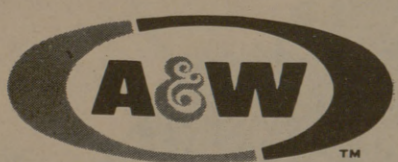
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