

Small town postmaster lives 'Happy'-ly

United Press International
HAPPY—Gary Reckling fits right in with the 672 residents of Happy, The Town Without a Frown.
Reckling, the town's 45-year-old postmaster, is a native of Centralia, Ill., and he came to this Panhandle community two years ago after beating four local applicants for the job.
A deeply religious man, Reckling worried for a time that he might be rejected as an outsider by the folks in Happy, but that's no longer the case.
"I think I've overcome all the obstacles," he said.

Letters from throughout the nation arrive regularly at the tiny, buff-colored brick building located just west of the railroad tracks.
Correspondents curious about the origin of Happy's name direct their inquiries to the quiet Swisher County town's post office, where locals exercise the building's front double doors scores of times every day.
Reckling handles each inquiry carefully, often tucking a pen-and-ink Happy postcard and a page of town history he typed himself into the return letters.

"I try to respond just as quick as I can," he said, "because it's important to them."
Some people say Happy got its name before the Anglos populated the area in the late 19th century. In those days, the story goes, it was known as the "Happy Hunting Ground" of Plains Indians.

Others say cowboys who drove their cattle to market called it "Happy Draw," because it was a refreshing oasis, replete with water and grass, for their tired stock.
The Hugh Currie family settled just east of the present site of Happy in 1891. Currie became the town's first postmaster and a roadside historical marker says the Curries built their home—known as "Happy Hollow"—nearby.
In 1906, the railroad pushed

through and a well was drilled to supply trains with water. Not long afterward, the post office was moved alongside.

Some local historians claim the little community, 33 miles south of Amarillo, was named for the emotion a man and his son, lost in a blizzard, felt when they spotted the Currie home.

Chavae Mooney wrote Reckling on March 10, asking for some details of Happy's heritage.

"My name is Chavae and I am in the second grade in Greenwood, Missouri. We are learning about letter writing and the postal service. I like the name of your town since I like to be happy. Would you please send me something with your postmark on it? I will be watching the mail."

The same day, hundreds of miles away in the Houston suburb of Pearland, Gina Lambeth printed her letter to Reckling.

"Dear Postmaster,
I am in the second grade. We are learning to write letters," she wrote. "I like the name of your town. Could you please send me something with your postmark on it?"

Reckling also receives mail from adults, including a man in Margaretville, N.Y., and a Fort Worth woman who suffers from rheumatoid arthritis.

"She wanted me to mail some

wedding invitations to Fort Worth," Reckling recalled. "So I fixed 'em up to give her a Happy postmark. It just thrilled her to death. I enjoy helping someone if I can."

Reckling plans to visit her on his next trip to Fort Worth, where he once lived with his wife and attended Southwestern Theological Seminary.

Last year Reckling served as chaplain for the state association of postmasters and has spent 13 years with the postal service as a carrier, letter clerk and now postmaster.

Along the way, he found time to earn a degree in psychology from West Texas State University at Canyon, 15 miles up U.S. 87.

Anderson GOP bid may suffer

United Press International
AUSTIN—Democrats will be fair game but John Anderson, R-Ill., will have to be careful about soliciting Republicans for the 40,719 signatures he needs to get on the ballot in Texas as an independent candidate for president.

A quirk in Texas law resulting from last year's celebrated "Killer Bee" episode makes any Democratic voter eligible to sign a ballot petition for an independent presidential candidate but bars Republicans from signing if they vote in the May 3 GOP presidential primary.

Anderson must collect the 40,719 required signatures between May 4 and July 14 to win a spot on the Nov. 4 general election ballot.

Gov. Bill Clements said he doubts Anderson's candidacy will have much impact even if he is on the ballot.

"I don't think that Mr. Anderson would draw much water in Texas," the Republican governor said. "I do not think his candidacy in Texas will have any substantial effect on our Texas election process."
Anderson's difficulties in getting on the ballot were considerably lessened by the secretary of state's discovery of the quirk in provisions of the election code intended to prevent primary election voters from signing petitions to nominate independent candidates.

Democrats' signatures will count even if they vote in their May 3 primary, Strake said, because the Democratic Party is not holding a presidential primary, but only a "beauty contest" between President Carter and Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass.

"We discovered this fluke the

other day," said Austin Bray, an attorney in the secretary of state's office. "We had been telling people the petitions had to be signed by qualified voters who did not vote in the primary election of either party. But the law says any qualified voter can sign who did not vote in the general primary election of any political party that held a presidential primary."

The celebrated flight of the "Killer Bees"—12 senators who eluded a statewide manhunt by Texas Rangers for five days last year to block approval of a presidential primary bill—may thus have given Anderson's campaign a big boost in Texas.

Strake said Anderson's Washington lawyers contacted his office last week about the requirements for getting on the Texas ballot as an independent.

In addition to the petition, Anderson will have to submit before July 14 a formal application to be on the ballot, designate his vice presidential running mate and file a list of his electors for the Nov. 3 election.

The secretary of state's office—headed by a Republican for the first time in 100 years—declined to speculate publicly on how Anderson's campaign would affect the GOP nominee's prospects.

Strake said he has not heard many Republicans complaining about the prospect of an independent bid by Anderson, however.

GOP strategists predict Anderson's independent bid would hurt Carter much more than Reagan in Texas.

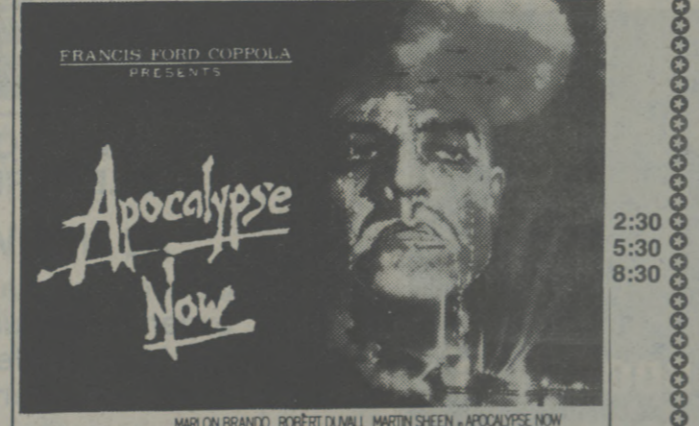
"In Texas it'll be a critical factor," one insider said.

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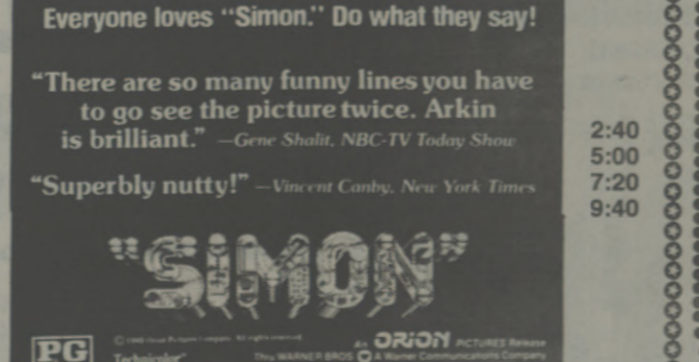
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Houston port cargo increases in '79

United Press International
HOUSTON—Cargo moved through the Port of Houston increased 12 percent in 1979, officials said Thursday, although imports of foreign oil and autos declined.

Ship channel refiners received 31.02 million tons of foreign oil in 1979 compared to 33.04 million tons in 1978. Oil is the port's top commodity. The 6 percent decrease was the first after years of steady increases.

Auto imports, also up steadily during the 1970s, fell 8.7 percent, from 219,472 units to 200,441.

All cargo moved through the port totaled 122.3 million tons and port officials said the figure should assure Houston was again the second busiest U.S. port in foreign trade and third in total tonnage behind New York and New Orleans.

Despite the reduction in oil and autos, the port's overall foreign trade tonnage, including exports, increased almost 4 percent to 64.8 million tons. Container freight jumped more than 30 percent.

Officials said more than 5,500 ships from 66 countries called at the port during the year.

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