

# Renovations of Astrodome cost more than original

United Press International  
HOUSTON — When it was built 17 years ago, the Astrodome was one of a kind, at the cutting edge of sports arena technology. Now it is just the oldest of several domed stadiums in America and its age is beginning to show.

For example, the Astrodome is not one of the many stadiums in the country, domed or undomed, that have some sort of permanent giant-screen television replay for the fans. It is dirty. It has traffic problems. It has too few restrooms for women.

But the Houston Sports Association and Harris County officials plan to spend \$50 million over the next three years to change some of that.

Some of the money will be spent on the adjacent Astrohall — convention and exhibit center

— and separate Astroarena, home for the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo.

The total cost, to be financed with hotel tax revenues and with hotel tax revenues and bonds, is significant. The Astrodome cost only \$45.3 million to build from scratch on the south Houston flats in 1965.

"Since that time, there've been quite a number of improvements made in technology that goes into operation of stadiums," Astrodome spokesman Ben Gillespie said.

"There has been just normal wear and tear on the facility over the years. And while there has been maintenance done, there are some other things we can do to restore some of its former glory.

"We feel there are things that can be done to make coming to

the Dome a more pleasant experience."

New graphics are planned outside the stadium, Gillespie said. Inside, bids will be taken for a new giant-screen television replay for the Houston Astros, Houston Oilers, University of Houston Cougars and other events.

New signs will be erected outside, he said, along with new lights to help traffic flow and new patterns for traffic flow.

"We'll be doing a lot of things that aren't too visible, things like emergency power systems in Astrohall, and improve the sound system in the hall," Gillespie said.

"We will be re-upholstering every seat — 50,000 for football and 43,000 for baseball — in the Dome, and replacing those that need replacing. We will also be

improving signage in the Dome."

And then there are the restrooms. The designers of the Astrodome thought women only needed as many restrooms as men. There are 66 total, 33 for men and 33 for women. But over the last 17 years, Astrodome officials have learned something.

"I don't know quite how to say this, but women apparently take a little longer in the restroom than men do," Gillespie said. "So the amount of people women's rooms can handle is not the same as men's."

The first step, expansion of the Astroarena from 154,000 square feet to 271,000 square, is underway, but Astrodome managers face some juggling in getting the work done over the next three years.

# Needy get damaged food

United Press International  
CHATTANOOGA, Tenn. — A food bank founded by an Episcopal minister has provided meals to 10,000 jobless and elderly people with damaged boxes of biscuits and oatmeal that normally would have been fed to farm animals.

"These people are devastated. Their dignity is gone. There was a guy last week who took food and put it in his pocket to take and feed his kids," the Rev. Jim Bills said.

Judy Carscaddon, who helps hand out meals at Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic Church, said a family with four children came two days last week.

"We gave out lemonade and

the mother poured it into her baby's bottle. We got milk for them the next day. The husband said he couldn't find a job," Carscaddon said.

Bills said many more would have flocked to the food lines but only 23 of the city's 550 churches have agreed to distribute the meals in the four-month-old program.

"It's immoral that there are so many people hungry with so much food out there," Bills said Wednesday. "But many churches are so concerned with keeping their own shops in order in this economy, they really don't seem interested in reaching out. People are apathetic."

Bills founded the free food

program in June in Chattanooga, an industrial city of 175,000 where 2,400 people have lost their jobs this year.

The Chattanooga Food Bank collects a truckload of damaged boxes of oatmeal, biscuit and pancake mix from local Quaker Oats and Pillsbury factories three times a week. The meals are distributed at 23 churches and about 75 social service agencies.

Grocery stores refuse to accept the damaged boxes, so the companies had been selling the food to farmers for a nickel a pound. The firms began giving it away when Food Bank organizers pointed out donors receive federal tax breaks, Bills

said.

So far about 200,000 pounds of food have been given to 10,000 needy people. Bills said the people receiving food are not transients, but unemployed.

Scores of the jobless and elderly line up each morning for meals at Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic Church. More than 100 people a day are served in a gray brick building that once was a convent.

Food Bank Executive Director Bill Johnson said the program used \$50,000 in government grants to get started. Churches and agencies that distribute the meals pay the Food Bank 10 cents a pound to keep the program going.

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