

Big Tex is standing tall again

Associated Press

DALLAS — Big Tex, a 38-foot metal cowboy brought to his knees by high winds earlier this year, is again standing tall over the liquor store he promotes after workmen completed a new version of the red, white and blue figure.

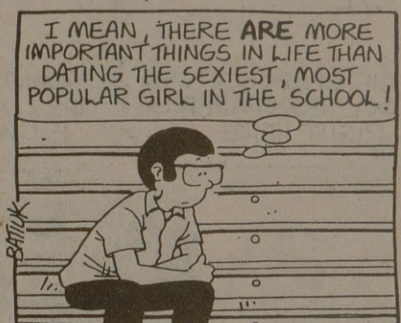
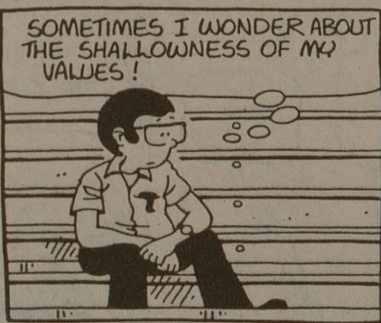
Winds of more than 50 mph whipped the \$55,000 sign to the ground at the store alongside north Central Expressway in March. The new sign was erected Wednesday at the Centennial Liquor Store.

The old Big Tex was designated a city landmark in 1982, and the new figure will get the same designation even though it too is bigger than city ordinances allow, said Dallas Development Planning Manager Tom Niederauer.

Bob Honeycutt, president of Centennial Liquor Stores, said Big Tex, whose inflatable cousin stands guard over the Texas State Fair every year, is happy to be out of the sign hospital and get back on his feet.

Funky Winkerbean

by Tom Batiuk



Farm workers: contractors use unjust recruiting system

Associated Press

EL PASO — A local farm workers union, arguing that unjust labor recruitment practices resulted in a fatal bus accident in this border city, has called for an investigation by the U.S. Labor Department.

Carlos Marentes, a member of La Union Trabajadores Agricolas Fronterizos — a border agricultural workers union — said Wednesday that under the labor recruitment system used in the area, "farm labor contractors, as well as the farmers, place profit-making above the safety and well-being of the workers."

Marentes said he blamed that system for a Tuesday night bus accident that left two migrant workers dead and at least six others injured.

He said the labor department should investigate the accident and the recruitment practices of farm labor contractors. Labor department officials were not immediately available for comment Thursday.

Police said Tuesday's accident occurred when the bus, returning the workers to El Paso from southern New Mexico fields, collided with a car and slammed into a guardrail.

Jose Rodriguez, an attorney in the farmworker's division of Texas Rural Legal Aid Inc., said a labor department safety regulation requires farm labor transportation vehicles to have seats for workers, but the bus had none.

Mexican economy

Mexico slashing oil prices, devaluing peso for tourists

Associated Press

MEXICO CITY — Mexico, slashing oil prices and lowering the value of the peso on the tourist market, is administering vitally needed medicine to its still shaky economy, private analysts said Thursday.

But the analysts said the government didn't go far enough and should devalue the rest of the peso market, which is used for 80 percent of commercial transactions.

The partial devaluation, though, should be a plus for American tourists traveling in Mexico, giving them more pesos for their dollars.

"The government is taking the right steps given the situation," said Ignacio Triqueros, director of economic research at the Mexican Autonomous Institute of Technology in Mexico City. "The situation is not a good one."

Some analysts said the government was reimposing austerity measures in an effort to keep the economy from slipping into the doldrums of a few years ago.

Don Shuffstall, vice president of international banking for MBank in El Paso, Texas, worried, though, that lower oil prices would mean less revenues to pay the interest costs on Mexico's \$96 billion foreign debt.

"That just makes it more difficult for them to meet the requirements"

"The government is taking the right steps given the situation. The situation is not a good one." — Ignacio Triqueros, director of economic research at the Mexican Autonomous Institute of Technology in Mexico City.

for paying their debts, he said. In recent months, Mexico has been struggling with an array of economic problems.

The turbulence and glut in the world oil market has sharply lowered demand for its oil, the No. 1 source of foreign revenues to help meet its debt payments.

Speculation in the currency markets, apparently sparked by Mexicans' worries about the economy, has driven the currency to record levels against the dollar.

Moreover, the economy has been growing at a faster pace than some consider healthy. Inflation has remained high as have government expenditures.

With the twin moves announced late Wednesday, analysts, some of whom would speak only on condition of anonymity, said the economy should slow from the pace of about 6 percent in the first half of the year.

Such a slowdown, they said, would relieve pressure on inflation. But other analysts said some of the inflation relief could be wiped out by a further currency devaluation, a move that tends to boost prices in the long run.

Analysts predicted an inflation rate for 1985 of 50 percent to 55 percent, under the 59.2 percent of 1984.

In its announcement, the Energy and Mines Department said it was cutting the export price of the light-weight Isthmus crude by an average of \$1.24 a barrel, from \$27.75. The price of the heavy Maya brand was trimmed by an average of 77 cents, from \$24 a barrel.

The price reductions, retroactive to July 1, vary depending on where the oil is sent. Oil shipped to Europe was reduced more than that bound for the United States.

About half of Mexico's oil exports go to the United States, making it the largest supplier to its northern neighbor.

The ministry statement said sales of oil to foreign countries had fallen

off sharply, to 800,000 barrels a day in June from its target of 1.5 million barrels.

Mexico is not a member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries but in the past has followed its pricing strategy. The new pricing announcement, however, indicated Mexico intends to act on its own.

In addition to sluggish oil demand, sales of exports of non-petroleum goods have been weak, slipping about 15 percent in the first part of the year.

Analysts have recommended that Mexico trim the value of its currency so that its exports would cost less and be more competitive in foreign markets.

The government in recent weeks has been toying with a currency devaluation.

Late last month, nationalized banks were given permission to buy and sell pesos on the open market, which had the effect of devaluing part of the tourist market for pesos.

The Mexican government still fixes the rate for most commercial transactions. On Thursday, that controlled rate was 230 pesos to the dollar. The rate is devalued by 21 centavos a day. There are 100 centavos in a peso.

What's up

Friday

STUDENT GOVERNMENT: is sponsoring a book exchange in 214 Pavilion through Tuesday.

MSC GROVE 85: presents "Last American Virgin" at 8:30 p.m. at The Grove. Admission is \$1 with a student ID and \$1.50 for non-students.

TAMU CHESS CLUB: is meeting at 7 p.m. in 410 Rudder.

Saturday

CO-OP ASSOCIATION: is taking a rafting and tubing trip to New Braunfels.

Sunday

MSC GROVE 85: presents "Wizards" at 8:30 p.m. at The Grove. Admission is \$1 with a student ID and \$1.50 for non-students.

Monday

MSC GROVE 85: presents "Casablanca" at 8:30 p.m. at The Grove. Admission is \$1 with a student ID and \$1.50 for non-students.

Items for What's Up should be submitted to The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald, no less than three days prior to desired publication date.

Opponents: HL&P hid report critical of nuclear project

Associated Press

BAY CITY — Opponents of the South Texas Nuclear Project, now under construction in Matagorda County, argued Thursday before the Atomic Safety and Licensing Board that Houston Lighting & Power Co. conspired to hide a report critical of the project.

The Houston utility is manager of the \$5.5 billion plant, which it co-owns with Central Power & Light Co., City Public Service of San Antonio and the city of Austin.

The three utilities recently agreed to a \$750 million settlement of a suit they filed against Brown & Root Inc., accusing the engineering firm of mismanagement of the project.

Lanny Sinkin, representing the San Antonio-based Citizens Concerned About Nuclear Power, told the three-member licensing board on Thursday that executives of the Houston utility conspired to hide a critical report prepared in 1981 by a consulting firm, Quadrex Corp. of California.

"Everybody who sees the Quadrex report reacts with shock, outrage and indignation," Sinkin said. "Did they hide the report and does that reflect on the character and competence of HL&P?" he asked the board.

The 500-page report, which outlined defects in design engineering by Brown & Root, was not turned over to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission until five months after the utility received it. In addition, the report was delivered to the utility just days before a licensing board hearing, but never was brought to

the attention of the board at that hearing.

Utility attorney Jack R. Newman said, "The error — if there was an error — was committed in good faith. It was treated by the company like any other consultant's report. It was not hidden from the NRC."

Newman said any allegation that a conspiracy existed was "bizarre." Any premature release of the report would have "disrupted the project and disrupted the lives of thousands of people who might have acted under the assumption the project would continue."

The round of hearings that began Thursday is the second in a series intended to lead to the granting of an operating license for the plant, which first was announced in 1971 with a price tag of less than \$1 billion. The first unit of the plant is about 80 percent complete and should begin producing electricity in 1987. The second unit is about 50 percent finished and is due to go on line in 1989.

Edwin Reis, assistant chief hearing counsel for the NRC staff, contended the findings of the Quadrex report were already on the record and that the hearing was "to see if HL&P should get a license."

Sinkin said the report upheld his position that "for 10 years it (the plant) ran like a train out of control. I know that plant is not safe."

Utility attorneys said Sinkin was on a fishing expedition, hoping to find something to support his allegations. Licensing Board Chairman Charles Bechhoefer also said he wanted to "see something to show a conspiracy" instead of acting merely on assumptions of a conspiracy.

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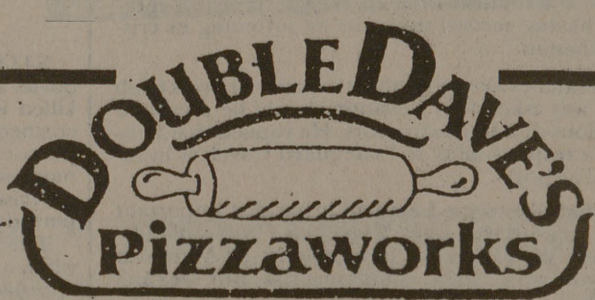
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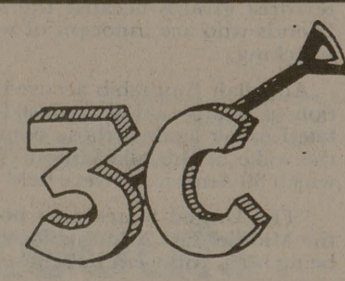
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