

# State and Local

## Motorists enjoy 'license to express'

### Reduced fees give new life to personalized plates in '87

By Vickie Faour  
Reporter

Hey SEXEE, would you like to BUZME sometime? I'd like to get INKIE with you. O-HECK, just GETIT!

These are just a few messages from the 312 Brazos County motorists who created to personalize their license plates for 1987.

Beginning Jan. 1, 1987, it will cost \$5 less to tell other motorists "DOK\*E, AAARGH, BAAAAH or HHH. The annual fee for personalized license plates will drop from \$5 to \$40.

The reduction was approved during one of the recent special sessions of the Texas Legislature in an effort to attract some of the nearly 100,000 motorists who canceled their special plates after the fee was raised from \$5 to \$75 during the 1985 regular session, says Dian Neill, director of the Division of Motor Vehicles with the highway department.

"There were about 154,000 personalized plates registered in the state before the fee was increased," Neill says. "Obviously we're not serving all Texans who want such plates. We hope the fee reduction will help serve them better as well as regenerate the lost dollars to the state."

The State Department of Highways and Public Transportation receives \$1.25 from the sale of each special plate, Neill says. She says the remainder of the revenue goes into the state's general funds.

Personalized plates were offered in Texas first in 1965. More than 200,000 were issued that first year.

Neill says names, phrases and words relating to the driver's alma mater are among the more popular choices in individualized plates.

In Bryan-College Station some motorists express their Aggie spirit — 12TH MN, GIG M AG, AG-MOM and N AGGIE. And there are others who are perhaps doctors, R TANK, DR DIRT, K-9 DR or an air conditioner repair man — RKOOL.

Then there are those who wish to be doctors, TO BE MD, ATM MD and AG DVM, or even someone who



Photo by Nancy Conces

A&M junior Dale Westbrook has owned this personalized license plate for two years.

might need a doctor — AH CHOO. "Personalized plates are fun for both the vehicle's owner and for other motorists," Neill says.

Former student King Hammock, owner of a 1984 Porsche with a license plate reading SURF IT, says the plates are an extension of the person who creates them. "Not only have I personalized my car with special touches, like personalized rims and paint," he says, "but to complete the package, I had to have the personal plates."

Hammock says he kept his personalized plates even after the price increase. "I kept my plates because I didn't want to lose my identity," he says.

Hammock says that early one morning on the way to the beach, his plates got him out of a speeding ticket because the officer who pulled him over was a surfer, too.

Another A&M student says he gets a lot of attention with his license plates. Junior Dale Westbrook, owner of a 1983 Toyota Celica with license plates ABUZME, says "Driving down the highway in Houston, there are always girls who stick their heads out of their windows and ask me to pull over."

Westbrook says he and a friend saw a car with the plates AMUZME, and that's where he got his unusual idea. "He says he wouldn't have kept his plates when the price was increased, but he had the money at the time. Neill says up to six letters and two spaces can be used in personalizing a license plate. She says requests are screened to see that they don't duplicate an existing plate and that they meet basic good taste requirements. Neill says once the plates are ap-

proved, they are issued in about four weeks. And the plates are registered to the individual rather than the vehicle, she says.

"We've had some plates issued to the same motorist for 20 years," Neill says. "They may change vehicles, but the plate goes with them."

But Neill says many names and phrases previously taken now may be available because of the drop in demand after the fee increase.

"With about 100,000 plates canceled, I'd encourage interested motorists to inquire whether their choices are now available," she says. "A few of the hard-to-obtain names and words are now free."

So BIG-TEX, you might be KRUZIN in your XKALBR, drinking your CUTTY-S, but if GOD-C-U he won't be saying CHEERS!

## Two oilmen favor a 10 percent cut in oil production

AUSTIN (AP) — Two Dallas oil producers said Wednesday that Texas, along with Louisiana and Oklahoma, could help stabilize petroleum prices by lowering oil production by at least 10 percent.

But major producers, joined by many of the state's independents, told the Texas Railroad Commission that such a move would cost oil producers and the state millions of dollars. Everett Hutchinson, spokesman for Exxon Corp., said, "A 10 percent reduction in the state will not in any way strengthen our domestic energy industry and will have a significant negative impact on Texas."

R.J. Swaggert, speaking for Mobil Production of Texas and New Mexico, said, "If this 10 percent reduction went into effect, Mobil would have to shut down 300 wells in Texas."

The few supporters of a reduction claimed it would stabilize Texas industry and bring back better oil prices.

The Wednesday hearing was held on a request by Dallas independent oil producers William Burrow and H.S. Bennett that oil production be cut by three to five days a month.

"We're amending our original petition of 10 percent to include a five-day reduction because that has been recommended by T. Boone Pickens (prominent Amarillo oil operator)," Burrow told the commission.

"T. Boone said a 25-day production schedule would firm oil prices, and I think he's right," Burrow said.

Susan Cory, the commission's chief legal counsel, said the three-member panel would decide

Monday whether to schedule a decision on the proposal for Nov. 17. The commission also could ask her to make a report and a recommendation on the idea, she said.

Supporting Burrow's request was W.R. Edwards, a Houston energy consultant, who said the commission's current method of using estimates of market demand from refiners produced surpluses.

"Low prices are obtained by surplus supplies," Edwards said. "Nominations now exceed the market demand. The Railroad Commission should have reduced allowances by 30 percent during the last 10 months to meet market demand."

"The curtailment of production and reduction of the surplus will result in a rapid recovery of prices to oil producers."

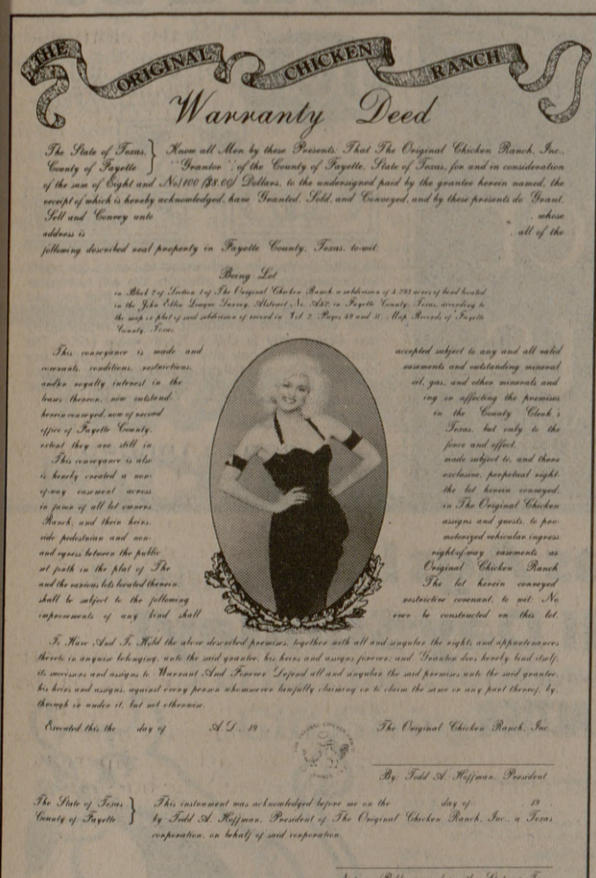
Burrow said the governors of Louisiana and Oklahoma already had indicated they would reduce production in their states. He also proposed that any major company that increases its imports next year be penalized by reducing its domestic production the same amount.

Bennett said he was not backing the import penalty.

Hutchinson said the reduction would result in other countries merely producing additional oil to replace Texas' lost production. In addition, the state would lose about \$27 million in oil and gas taxes, he said.

Mid-Continent Oil & Gas Association said a 10 percent reduction would be equal to a daily severance tax loss to the state on crude oil of \$59 million annually.

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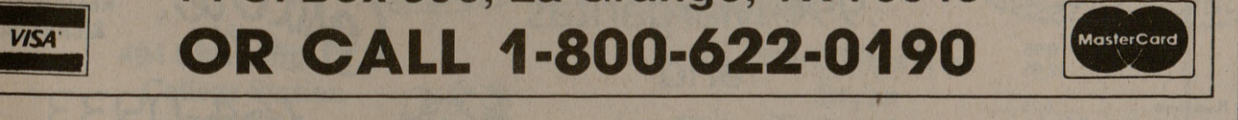
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