

# Growth in population found in Texas counties

WASHINGTON (AP) — Ten Texas counties have registered a jump in population of more than 40 percent since 1980, reflecting a general growth trend during the first half of the decade, according to government figures released Monday.

Preliminary Census Bureau estimates show that between April 1, 1980 and July 1, 1986, only 58 of the state's 254 counties lost population.

The largest single percentage increase was recorded by Rockwall County in East Texas near Dallas, where the number of residents climbed from 14,528 to 23,200 for a 59.7 percent rise.

Harris County gained 388,800, making it the third-largest gainer behind Los Angeles and Maricopa, Ariz.

Dallas County ranked fifth nationally, with a 276,700 increase. Tarrant was seventh with 240,700.

At number 10 was Bexar County with a 181,100 population increase, while Travis County was number 13 nationwide with a 131,400 boost.

Counties registering 40 percent or more population rises were Hood, up 58.1 percent to 28,000; Williamson, up 49.8 percent to 114,600; Hays, up 49.8 percent to 60,800;

Fort Bend, up 48.7 percent to 194,700.

Bastrop, up 47.5 percent to 36,500; Collin, up 45.7 percent to 210,000; Denton, up 42.7 percent to 204,300; Irion, up 42.2 percent to 27,200; and Grimes, up 41.2 percent to 19,200.

Total population for the state increased by 17.3 percent during the period, climbing from 14,225,517 to 16,682,000 for an increase of about 2,456,000 residents.

The most significant drop was reported in Loving County, along the Pecos River in far West Texas.

# Man finds pleasure hunting for 'treasures' to keep, sell

TOGA (AP) — Earl Secrest's secret is simple and wise: treasure is everywhere.

Maybe not the kind of treasure you take to the bank, no.

But treasure it is, nonetheless.

Treasure-hunter Secrest's home looks a little like a castle gone to seed. The steep-roofed Victorian house has melted with age, settling back to the earth one board at a time.

Secrest, 86, helped the house resist, to a point. When a column rotted and the front porch sagged, he went to the woods for a replacement.

And it's the cedar tree trunk crutch, limbs still in place, that catches a visitor's eye as he drives down U.S. 377.

"Used to hang stuff from the limbs," Secrest says. "Pottery and such. Most of it finally rotted off."

Only a few monuments to one man's whimsy now hang from the tree-turned timber: a foam, head-shaped wig stand; some pots, a light fixture. The house is crowded with little treasures he has found, walking the woods these 86 years.

Abandoned orioles' nests, lovingly gathered and preserved, compete for space on the kitchen walls with dozens of tree knot holes he's cut and polished and "prettied up."

On the walls, too, are his finest treasures, his pictures. Dozens and dozens of snapshots. Photographs of friends and family.

Many show his wife, Opal, who died in 1974, after they were married more than 50 years.

Secrest takes down a picture of himself on a bike. And a picture of a friendly black dog.

The schnauzer's name, he explains, was Whiskers.

"That dog had a little more sense than I do," he says. "And a whole more than some people. Fell in love with that dog. Hated like hell to see him go."

Whiskers learned to sit on a chunk of foam in the wire basket of Secrest's three-speed bike. Together, they would tour the town and ride well into the countryside, sometimes camping all night beside a pond under an oak tree.

In the woods, Whiskers searched for rabbit holes while Secrest scouted for odd bits of wood, rocks with a past and signs of Indians long vanished.

No more. Whiskers was killed by a car three years ago.

And, a year ago, Secrest was also struck by an automobile while he bicycled, which left him badly injured.

Recovered now, he must use a

cane. Secrest misses the dog. But not the bicycle.

"Never had another dog," he says quietly. "And I stay the hell off a bikes."

He travels by pickup and by foot. Two walking circuits of the town square a day keep him fit, along with the walks in the woods.

He finds rocks and wood and animal bones on the walks. He takes some of the treasures home and works his alchemy on the best.

See this limb? It's a snake, its snarling face carved by knife into the wood.

This limb? A walking cane. Complete with a thumb-like branch that serves as hook so Secrest can hang the cane to his belt when he pays for groceries at the store.

Outside, his old barn brims with branches awaiting transformation into hat racks and what have you.

Secrest sells some of his creations, keeps a few and gives most away.

Take the treasures, he says. He can find more. Plenty more are out there to find, if you take the time.

"I see things in the woods that no one else sees," Secrest confides at the end of the visit. "That's because I've spent so much time out here. I know how to look."

That's the secret, he says. It's not the finding that matters. "It's the looking," he says.

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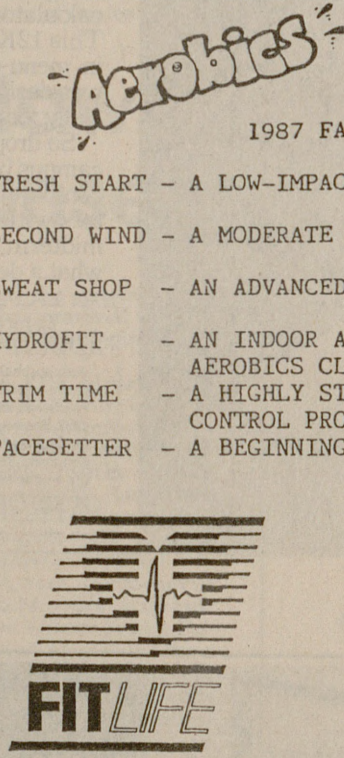
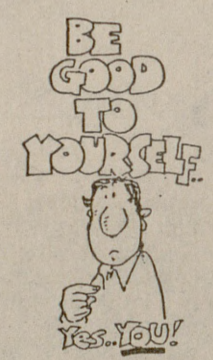
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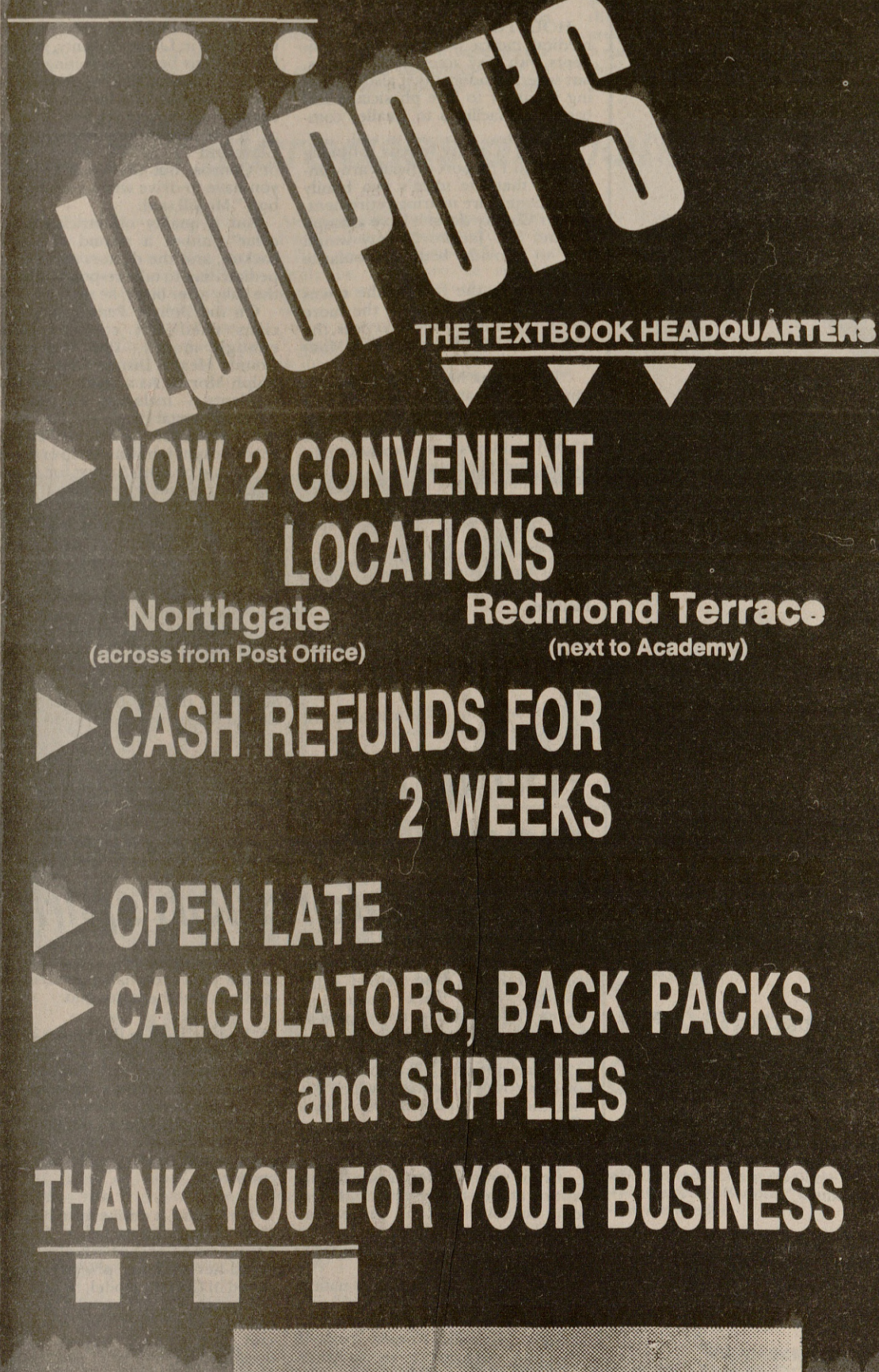



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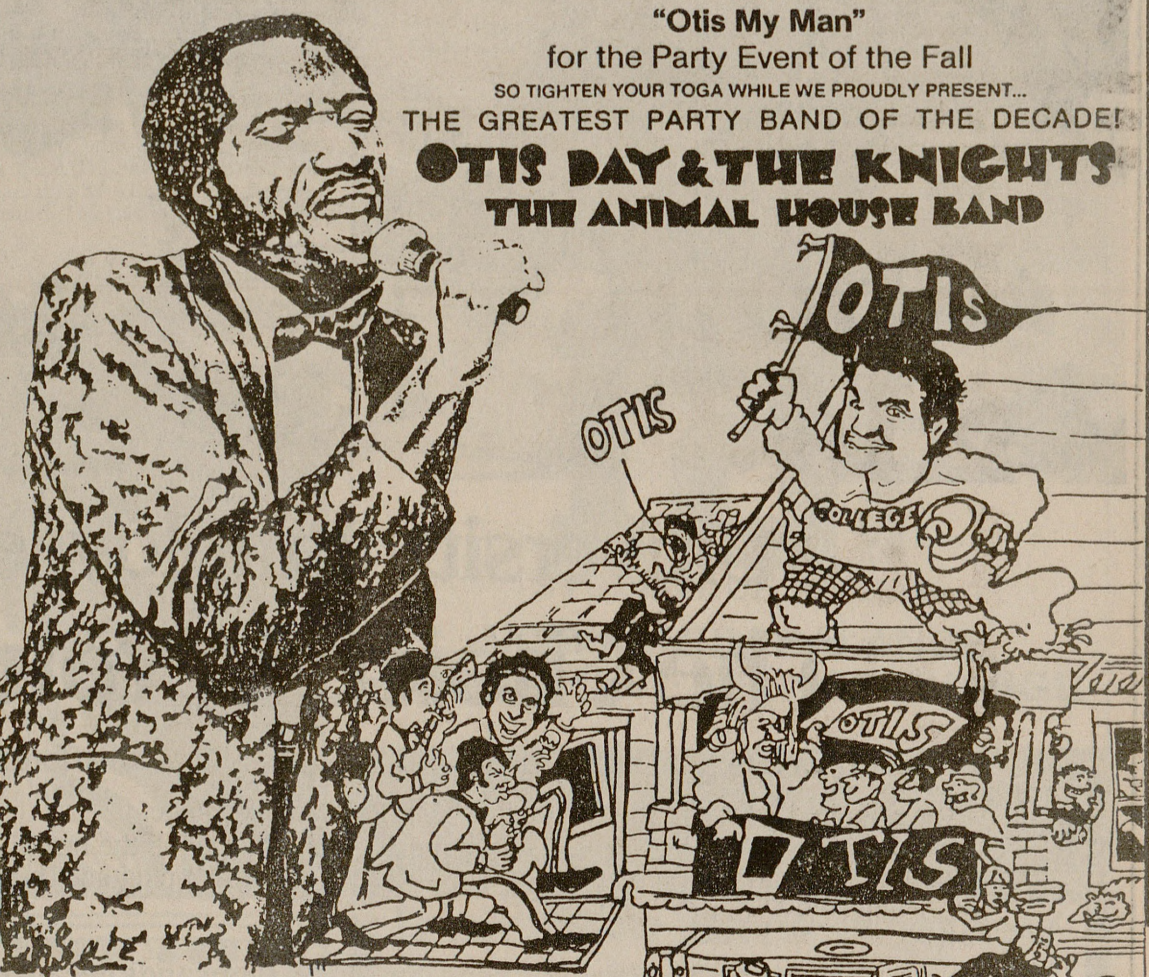
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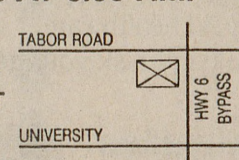
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