

# Battalion Classifieds

# '88 federal budget authorizes unnecessary airport, FAA says

WASHINGTON (AP) — Deep in the heart of the 1988 federal budget are two paragraphs authorizing the Federal Aviation Administration to spend \$25 million on a new "industrial" airport near Fort Worth that the agency says isn't needed.

House Speaker Jim Wright, D-Fort Worth, requested the recommendations to fund the North Fort Worth Airport in a conference report accompanying last month's \$603.9 billion spending bill.

Wright, who has represented the Fort Worth area in Congress since 1954, contends the airport, which is less than 20 miles from Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport, represents a new and innovative way of using federal dollars to spur economic development.

"This will be the first industrial airport, the first airport from the beginning designed to cater to manufacturing rather than strictly passenger movement," Marshall Lynam, Wright's chief of staff, said.

"The large number of aerospace and high-tech companies in Fort Worth and Dallas make this an ideal location," Lynam said.

Under the plan, thousands of acres of Tarrant County pastureland would be turned into an industrial park with the new airport — capable of handling 747 jumbo jets and huge military transports — as its centerpiece and magnet.

The 350-acre airport site would be donated to the city of Fort Worth by H. Ross Perot Jr., aeronautical enthusiast and son of the Dallas electronics billionaire, whose investment group owns 16,300 acres surrounding the proposed site.

"(The FAA) had studied the need for a general aviation airport, but the city and we felt that just a straight general aviation airport would not be an economic boost for the area, would not bring in new jobs to the city," said Rick Salwen, counsel for the Perot Group in Dallas.

"The city went to the speaker and said, 'Here is a way to counter some of the problems Texas has encountered in the past few years,'" Salwen said.

But to get the FAA to move on the project, legislation was needed to

broaden the criteria under which the agency can commit federal funds to building an airport.

Hugh Lyon, assistant manager of the FAA's airports division in the southwest region, said in an interview earlier this week that there is no aeronautical need for such an airport.

"Until now, we have been limited to do that which has been documented as necessary for aeronautical purposes," Lyon said. "This would require us to build an airport based on the economic stimulus it would provide instead."

Lyon said the FAA had been searching for 10 years to find a site for a general aviation reliever airport in northeast Tarrant County, which he said would cost the government around \$4 million to \$5 million.

"What they elected to do was seek special legislation to change the criteria FAA follows to allow for construction of a demonstration project based on economic development rather than aeronautical reasons," Lyon said.

Under the Perot plan, the city of Fort Worth would bear all the operational costs of the airport and would provide services. The state of Texas doesn't have any specific responsibilities.

Perot would donate the land, which Salwen said is worth between \$7 million and \$10 million, and the federal government would provide the funds to build the airport, including runways, terminal buildings and access roads.

"We'll be asking industry entities for a commitment at the time the FAA gives final approval for the project," Salwen said. "We are hoping that final approval comes in the March-April time frame."

The congressional report directed the FAA to "place high priority" on providing \$25 million from the Federal Aviation Trust Fund for construction of the airport.

The multibillion-dollar trust fund is made up of federal taxes levied on the airline industry, including a tax on airline tickets, and is intended to be used to build and maintain the nation's aeronautical network.

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## Scientists attempt to reveal mysteries of distant planet

AUSTIN (AP) — Astronomers are mounting a major effort to unlock the secrets of Pluto, a mysterious distant planet that is shrouded by methane snow and chilled by summertime temperatures of minus 378 degrees.

Astronomers said Tuesday that Pluto remains the least understood of the sun's planets, although its mysteries may yield in the coming months as the small, distant planet makes its closest approach to the telescopes of Earth in more than two centuries.

Pluto, the most distant of the sun's planets, swings to within 2.8 billion miles of Earth during 1988 and 1989, its closest visit since 1740.

During that time the planet and Charon, its only known moon, will eclipse each other while astronomers watch.

"This is one case where Nature was kind to us in that we didn't have to wait more than a century for the eclipses," Richard P. Binzel of the Planetary Science Institute in Tucson said.

Binzel, speaking at a meeting of the American Astronomical Society, said that during the eclipses astronomers should be able to confirm the size of Pluto and Charon, learn something about their composition and even gather hints about the surface features of the small planet.

"We know Pluto and Charon are very different from each other," he said. "Charon is a much darker body and Pluto has a reddish tint."

Pluto was discovered in 1930, but

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— Richard P. Binzel of the Planetary Science Institute in Tucson.

the planet is so far away and so small that little was learned about it for decades.

Pluto studies intensified while its 248-year orbit carried it closer to Earth.

Astronomers didn't discover Charon, which orbits the planet every 6 days, until 1978.

Since then, astronomers have discovered that Pluto appears to be covered with a methane snow that is now melting and evaporating slightly as the planet slowly approaches its closest point to the sun.

"The methane atmosphere is expanding now and is very extensive," Laurence Trafton of the University of Texas said.

Trafton said Pluto is so small that its gravity is not strong enough to hold the methane vapor and molecules of the gas are shooting out into space.

Some of the gas is smashing into Charon at speeds of more than 700 mph.

## Federal agents capture suspect wanted on counterfeit charges

DALLAS (AP) — Federal agents nabbed a man wanted from Arizona to Florida on charges ranging from theft to counterfeiting in a sting operation involving 500,000 credit card accounts.

"It's good we caught him," said Lee Parker, special agent in charge of the Secret Service office in Dallas. "He could have played havoc and done unlimited damage to the credit card industry if he had used 500,000 cards for fraudulent purposes."

James Albert Lawhorne Jr., 26, was held in Dallas County jail Tuesday without bond. U.S. Secret Service agents said they arrested him Friday

after he gave undercover officers a \$25,000 check to buy 180 computer discs containing information on the credit card accounts.

Lawhorne appeared before U.S. Magistrate William F. Sanderson on fraud and counterfeiting charges, Parker said. Sanderson ordered Lawhorne held pending a hearing Thursday.

Lawhorne was arrested after the transaction at a restaurant near downtown, officials said. The cashier's check he gave agents later was determined to be counterfeit.

Lawhorne was believed to have

had at least 25 aliases and used other counterfeit checks to buy everything from a Porsche to a yacht, agents said.

The Secret Service had set up a sting to catch a man named Jim Andrews who was willing to pay for credit card names and numbers.

But an agent said the man called Andrews looked familiar and a computer search of crime records confirmed Lawhorne's true identity, Parker said.

"We knew who we had after we checked the research photo file," Parker said.

## State economy shows firm can't cut the mustard

DALLAS (AP) — A company hoping to cash in on a Texas tradition with 500 corny dog franchises in five years has been bitten by a depressed state economy, prompting it to seek federal court protection from its creditors.

Visitors to the State Fair of Texas had enjoyed the weiner on a stick, dipped in cornbread batter and fried, since its initial appearance in 1942.

Fletcher's Industries Inc. (which began a major corny dog franchise operation four years ago, founded when the Texas economy went bust in 1985.

"Had all this happened another time or if the economy had got just a little better, we wouldn't be doing this," said Jack Brennan, Fletcher's vice president of operations. "We were caught a little overextended this time out."

The company filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in Dallas Friday.

The filing, which allows Fletcher to continue operating while working out a plan to pay its creditors, shouldn't affect the family's original corny dog stands at the State Fair, officials said.

Fletcher's Industries, franchiser of 40 corny dog outlets statewide and six in the Dallas area, claimed \$190,000 in losses in a two-month period.

Debts from two recent lawsuits strong competition and decline in sales ended dreams of a nationwide franchise network, company officials said.

"We had everything geared up for a rapid expansion that we felt was justified by the successes of the early stores," Brennan said. "Then the bottom fell out. Our sales started plunging and they wouldn't respond to any efforts to help them."

Sales continued to drop and operating costs cut profits dangerously thin, Brennan said. Sales were beginning to rebound in the first half of 1987 but never reached projected levels, he said.

"We thought we were seeing the end of the dark clouds for sure," Brennan said. "But we were wrong. Everything went the wrong direction."

Fletcher's recently closed four of its corporate stores. The remaining stores — including 10 franchises in Texas — are profitable and there are no plans to cut back their operations, Brennan said.

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