

Dallas symphony center gets budget complaints

DALLAS (AP) — The I.M. Pei-designed Dallas symphony center is getting a crescendo of complaints now that it is three years behind schedule and at least \$30 million over budget.

The Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center is expected to open in September 1989, seven years after voters approved spending \$28.6 million for the city's share of the public-private facility originally scheduled to open in 1986.

But some city officials are beginning to question whether all the costs are justified and whether the center's upkeep — estimated at \$1.5 million per year — will drain city aid to other arts groups.

Later this month, City Council will consider spending \$2.5 million more for the center, primarily for improvements in lighting and sound

equipment and seating. The additions will raise the price tag of the 2,100-seat center from an original estimate of \$49.5 million to \$81.5 million.

"Everyone is wondering how much it's really going to cost," Councilman Jerry Bartos said. "It's like there's always a reason to keep spending. I think the council is ready for it to get back in line. It's a legend already for its costs and complexity."

When the center opens next year, it will be the most expensive contemporary concert hall built in this country, The Dallas Morning News reported Monday.

"It's a gold-plated building — that's obvious," said Charles Tandy, chairman of the council's arts committee. "Sometimes function can be had for a lot less."

The concerns come as Dallas faces a \$38.2 million budget shortfall next fiscal year and the prospect of layoffs and a tax increase.

The center has strong supporters. "Once it opens, people will not be concerned really about how long it took or how much it cost," said Leonard Stone, executive director of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra. "It's being built in a very careful way for the long haul. Personally, I'm expecting it to be one of the great acoustical rooms in the world."

The center will be opulent, including brass railings, onyx lamps, a limestone exterior and unusual wooden canopies above the stage that can be raised or lowered to enhance sound quality.

Stone noted that nearly all of the center's cost increases are funded by private donations.

Businessmen discuss trade of U.S., Arabs

HOUSTON (AP) — American and Arab businessmen on Monday began three days of meetings here in a bid to deepen mutual understanding, hopefully leading to broader trade ties.

"When you meet your counterparts here, speak your mind," former Texas governor John Connally urged Arab participants in a welcoming speech. "Don't expect a perfect world from us, we don't expect one from you."

The conference, called GULF-AMERICA, is intended to provide a forum for discussion of U.S.-Arab trade issues, and an opportunity for businessmen to meet each other.

Sheikh Ismail Abu-Dawood, vice president of the Saudi Combined Chambers of Commerce and Industry, said in another welcoming speech that improving ties are a priority.

"We want to strengthen our relations, especially on the commercial, industrial, investment business," he said. "And it is good time for the United States to do business, right now, since the dollar is competitive."

A previous conference held in Atlanta in 1983 resulted in an estimated \$200 million worth of business for both U.S. and Arab companies, Michael Saba, conference organizer said.

Connally said the Arab world is mostly a mystery to Americans, who know little about the region beyond brief television images.

"You are dealing with a people who are basically provincial by nature, in their knowledge," Connally told Arab participants. "The American people are not familiar with your countries, your customs. So you have to tell us."

In turn, Connally said Arabs should understand the American distaste for cartels such as OPEC, and said American criticism of Arab countries are often part of the broader debate of American politics.

Following the greeting remarks, participants listened to a panel on U.S.-Gulf trade.

San Antonio officer seeks to eliminate myths about police

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — Detective Mel Graf wants teen-agers to know that police officers like baseball and rock music, too.

The department's new public affairs officer is out to change some commonly held misconceptions of San Antonio's police.

"We're not ogres," said Graf, 40, a 20-year veteran of the force. "We want them to know that police officers are like everyone else."

He is studying the idea of starting a Police Athletic League and police rock band here.

In Houston, he said, police organize basketball, baseball and soccer leagues, and in Dallas they concentrate on organizing boxing programs for boys.

"The idea is to get kids involved that would not normally be involved," Graf said. "It's so kids can build up their self-esteem and character."

He has mounted a search for police musicians to form a rock band with an anti-drug message for middle school students.

The project would be patterned after an Ohio police band featuring the music of Michael Jackson and Billy Idol.

"We want greater interaction (with youths)," Graf said. "We want them to see officers in a different light."

The department's public affairs office was set up Feb. 1 at the direction of Police Chief William O. Gibson.

Graf works out of the department's Planning and Research Unit in a third-floor office at downtown police headquarters.

The only cost of the program is his detective's salary.

"We were one of the few departments in the country without a public affairs officer," Graf said. "Gibson thought there was a need for one."

"I'm a liaison between the community and the Police Department. I'm covering a void that hadn't been addressed."

"I'm dealing with community

groups, service groups and your school districts, and I'm talking about all of them. My job description changes on a daily basis."

Graf said his interest in community work evolved.

"You do one little project and it will hook you," he said. "It's a domino effect."

Graf's first project was arranging a free country-western concert for 225 senior citizens through the San Antonio Police Officers Association.

"It's like opening a book that you can't put down," he said.

Now, he says, local businessmen have expressed an interest in helping get some of these programs on line.

"It's been very positive," he said. "(City) money is tight. Money is always tight."

Thanks to Santikos Theaters, 1,300 disadvantaged youths got to see the inspirational movie "Stand and Deliver," about an East Los Angeles calculus teacher who helped turn around underprivileged children, motivating them to reap high national test scores.

"It illustrates that kids can get ahead," he said of the movie. "We wanted to make sure it was watched by kids so they could get the message."

Graf said he initially was drawn to police work because of the excitement of the job and the chance to contribute to the community.

"There are a lot of things as a policeman that makes your heart move," he said. "If you walk into a dark room with a burglar and your heart isn't pumping, you're not human."

"I was looking forward to police work as a career. I was looking to make an impact on the community."

Graf sees his new job as a chance to let teen-agers know that police are on their side.

"We're here to help," he said.

Briton sets altitude record in hot-air balloon escapade

LAREDO (AP) — A British balloonist set a world altitude record Monday after tenacious sandbags freed him to crawl outside his pressurized gondola at 22,000 feet and held a Swiss Army knife to lighten his load.

Per Lindstrand, 39, floated his bungee- and solar-powered "Stratoquest" hot-air balloon to an unofficial record 59,700 feet, well beyond the 55,134-foot record set in 1980, ordinator Peter Mason said.

After repeated bad-weather days that had postponed liftoff for several days, the 12-story-high craft took off in spotless South Texas skies shortly after dawn. But then the first problem developed: two 10-kilo sandbags that were supposed to release automatically did not.

"There was no way I could make the altitude record while carrying it," Lindstrand said. "So I had to climb out of the capsule and it them."

The first was no problem because was near the hatch, but the second as on the other side of the craft beyond the reach of his oxygen line.

"I had to take a deep breath, run around, cut it off and run back in, all the while clinging on to the inside of the capsule," he said. "That got a bit hairy."

"It was a fairly average day, I think," Lindstrand added jokingly. "We had a particular problem with the sandbags, but nothing my trusty

Swiss Army knife couldn't handle." Descending turned out to be difficult, too, because solar panels used to heat the air to buoy the craft worked almost too well.

"The balloon was more solar than I thought," Lindstrand said. "But it was almost too much. I had a problem getting down. There was a vent at the top of the balloon that I had to open and hold open during the descent."

When he had dropped to 12,000 feet, Lindstrand slowed his descent by relighting the butane burners he'd turned off earlier when the oxygen became too thin. At that point, he was falling at 500 feet per minute.

Lindstrand had hoped the \$200,000 flight would break the 60,000-foot barrier, considered to be technically impossible because of a lack of oxygen in the atmosphere needed for the balloon's burners.

But the two sandbags cost him that goal by draining fuel and forcing him to begin descending just before 60,000 feet. After a 3½-hour flight, he landed in mid-morning in a field about 60 miles from his launch site on the Callaghan Ranch north of Laredo.

"I managed to land in probably the only grassy field between Mexico and Houston," Lindstrand quipped. "We were very fortunate. We landed without any damage to the balloon or the capsule."

While the ballooning feat is a personal achievement for Lindstrand, it

also represents a step for science, he said.

"The great gain is to ballooning, but there are other gains," he said. "We showed what we set out to: That a half a ton of payload with no input except the sun can be transported."

"The use of the sun is a primary technology for industry. We used the same type of film that is used in solar collectors on the outside of the balloon to propel it."

Lindstrand, who heads the British firm of Thunder & Colt Balloons, had his team build the 600,000-cubic-foot balloon of a special ICI Films' polyester material, Melinex. ICI Films sponsored the Stratoquest project.

"Our business is to find ways of conserving fuel," Lindstrand said. "This is a way to try technology to limit."

Lindstrand topped the old altitude record set in 1980 by Julian Nott, Mason said. Two sealed cameras that filmed the craft's altimeter readings will be shipped to Denver for verification of the record.

Last year, Lindstrand and British millionaire Richard Brandson set another record when they became the first ever to cross the Atlantic in a hot air balloon.

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