

# South Plains grape harvest complete, but yields small

LUBBOCK (AP) — Workers on Tuesday filled tubs with bunches of South Plains Cabernet Sauvignon grapes that won't be seen on store shelves until 1991.

The grape harvest on the South Plains, the center of the state's fledgling wine industry, is almost complete, but growers say a late March freeze has cut yields.

The white grapes, including Chardonnay, from grower Bob Stites' 40-acre vineyard south of Lubbock, have already been harvested and crushed by Llano Estacado winery. Stites, who has another 70-acre vineyard, sells all his grapes to Llano Estacado.

Showing a vine left devoid of leaves by the late freeze, Stites said his yield on Cabernet Sauvignon was at almost by two-thirds by the weather. Normally he would have harvested 3-4 tons of fruit per acre.

"Ordinarily, these vines would be black with grapes," he said.

However, the quality of the grapes cultivated in his 6-year-old vineyard and on the approximately 2,000 acres of grapes on the South Plains is excellent, said Llano Estacado president and chief executive officer John Lowey.

"This would be about our top of the line, so we would pay \$1,100 to \$1,200 a ton" for Stites' Cabernet Sauvignon fruit, he said. Fine Chardonnay grapes will bring as much as \$1,300 a ton, while the more common Johannisberg Riesling ranges from \$500 to \$700 a ton.

Those prices are comparable to prices paid in California's Napa Valley, Lowey said.

The winery, which in 1987 was the state's second-largest wine producer with 112,000 gallons, expects to harvest about 250 tons of red grapes and 750 tons of white, said winemaker Don Brady.

Brady also praised the crop's quality, but said the quantity could be better.

"The grapes are coming in with some of the best chemistry we've ever seen," he said.

Yields suffered from a dry autumn followed by a quick drop in temperature in December, coupled with the March freeze, which came when buds were first starting to form, said Bob Reed, a retired Texas

Tech University professor of horticulture who now acts as Llano Estacado's liaison with South Plains grape growers.

"We went through weather that was ideal for cotton and then we went to about three degrees and these plants weren't ready for that," he said. "The December weakened these plants although you couldn't see it."

The Lubbock County harvest has been moderately good, said Reed, and vineyards southeast of the area appear undamaged by the weather.

"You go southeast of here about 10 miles in the Wilson area and there's no damage — beautiful vineyards, fantastic vineyards," he said.

Reed predicts that this year's harvest may indicate that viticulture on the South Plains may be better suited to Lubbock and points south than further north, where the freeze killed entire vines.

"Those guys are always 10 days behind us in harvesting," Reed said of growers in the Panhandle. "We're still waiting for somebody out in the Plainview area to bring in grapes and we're done down here."

# Texans: Dukakis not soft on crime

AUSTIN (AP) — Texas supporters of Massachusetts Gov. Michael Dukakis on Tuesday decried Republican charges that the Democratic presidential hopeful is soft on crime, saying America is losing the "war on drugs" that Vice President George Bush was leading.

"If George Bush was a real Texan, we'd say he was all hat and no cattle," said Travis County Attorney Ken Oden, one of more than 130 lawmakers and prosecutors who announced their endorsements of Dukakis.

Bush, who calls Houston his adopted home, has been at the helm of the nation's anti-narcotics efforts in recent years, but Oden and the others charged that during his tenure problems with illegal drugs have gotten worse.

"Bush is supposedly the general in the anti-drug effort, but while he has been on duty cocaine imports have tripled, drug-related deaths have doubled and heroin imports have risen by 50 percent," Cameron County Sheriff Alex Perez said.

"We can't afford any more of this phony Reagan-Bush war on drugs," Perez said. "We need a real war on drugs."

Tom Loeffler, co-chairman of Bush's Texas campaign, continued GOP criticism of Dukakis' record as governor Tuesday, saying Dukakis is more than soft on crime.

"He's at the point of meltdown," Loeffler, a former congressman,

echoed Bush criticism of a Massachusetts program granting weekend furloughs to prison inmates.

"Meltdown Mike has a wonderful way of punishing criminals in his state — he gives them weekend passes and asks them to be good little boys for eight hours," Loeffler said. "He thinks punishment is a four-letter word."

But the Dukakis backers, including district attorneys, county attorneys, county sheriffs and the Combined Law Enforcement Associations of Texas, charged that Republicans have distorted Dukakis' record.

Attorney General Jim Mattox said Dukakis' record is solid and that Republicans such as Loeffler are ignoring the facts.

"We do not want to have four more years of gag lines," he said. "Mike Dukakis understands how to combat crime. He is tough on crime."

Mattox and others, including state Sen. John Montford, D-Lubbock, said that crime in Massachusetts has dropped 13.4 percent and the homicide rate is the lowest for any industrial state.

Besides that, Mattox said, 40 states have similar inmate furlough programs.



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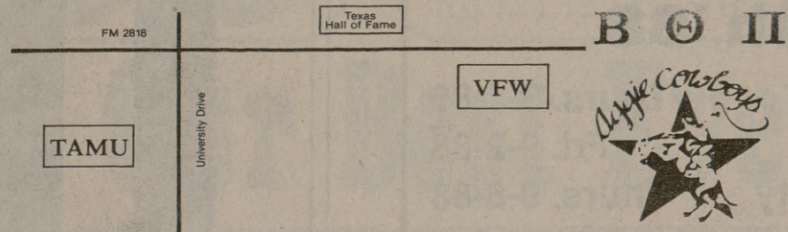
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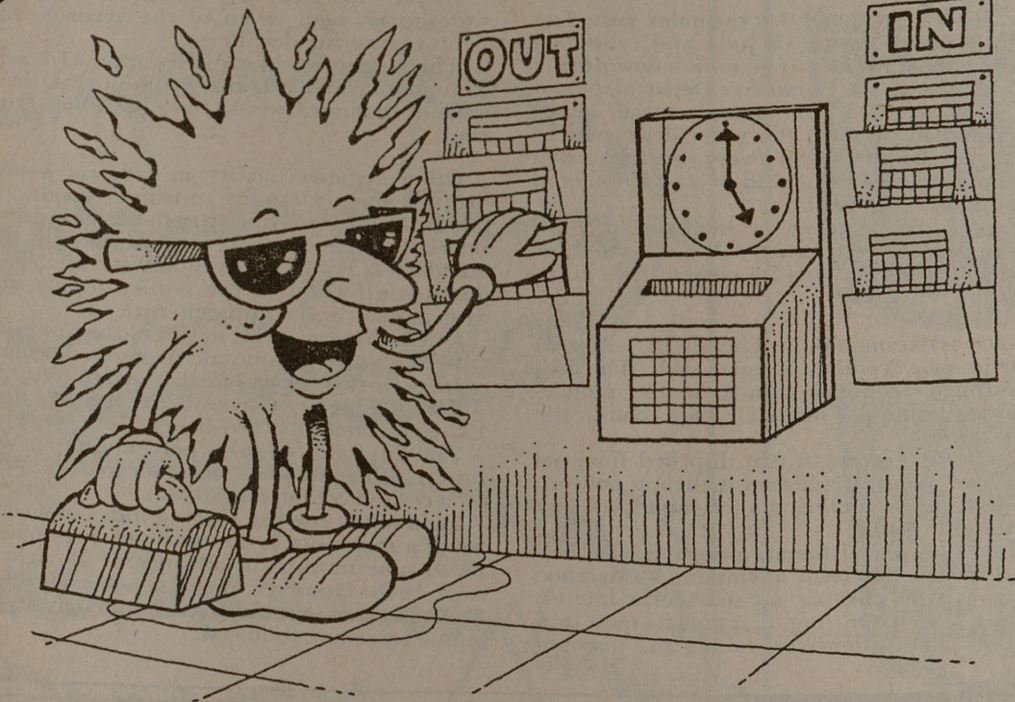
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