

Animal-Port plans to give furry friends smoother traveling

GRAPEVINE (AP) — Aside from gorillas, who some say can wait any place they like, animals have had their difficulties at airports.

But a Houston man is looking to remedy that, with his soon-to-be-built Animal-Port.

Thomas C. Schooler is about to open an airport VIP lounge for animals starting, ending or stopping over at Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport — everything from aardvarks to zebras.

Right now, Schooler is preparing for his first arrivals, a party of 10 rare black rhinos scheduled to depart at DFW Airport on June 16.

The hulking visitors will arrive via Lufthansa German Airlines, then shower and dine on a vegetarian meal.

While waiting, the rhinos will be fed into large pens where they will be washed and sprayed for parasites that could be harmful to domestic animals.

"It's like a big carwash," Schooler told the *Dallas Morning News*. "I think only in Texas could you find something like this."

For three years, Schooler has operated a similar facility in Houston to assist animal travelers there. He has helped an entire rodeo make a worldwide tour and recently shipped a circus.

Although construction on the DFW facility won't start until next month, Schooler already is doing business in North Texas.

"I bring truckloads of animals up here to make connections with Japan Airlines or American," he said.

"Last night, 2,000 chickens came in and are going out this morning."

The DFW Animal-Port eventually will use up to three acres at the north end of the airport. The initial phase is expected to be about 22,000 square feet with about 11,000 square feet of buildings.

"This one is going to be a cross-country and international port for large exotics and, of course, small animals," he said.

Schooler already has learned some peculiarities of a peculiar business.

For instance, he says cats and small dogs most often take trips in early spring, and not because that's when resort rates are cheapest. It seems that is when larger corporations tend to transfer employees and the humans bring their pets along.

Larger animals most frequently will transfer in early summer, at the end of school, Schooler said. "People go on vacation and take Great Danes and Irish wolfhounds. We also get people who are moving their horses from one country to another."

Harry Tension, president of Fort Worth-based Game Conservation International that is bringing in the rhinos in conjunction with zoos in Dallas, Fort Worth, San Diego and Milwaukee, said the new facility will be a godsend.

"We're just delighted that it will be built at the DFW Airport," Tension said, "with so many animals coming in and out — traveling horses and cattle. Plus, it will be a great aid to our zoological people all over this part of the world."

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Mini-town reminds man of town that once was

DANBURY (AP) — The wind picks up speed in the wide open pastures surrounding Emil Prihoda's frame house, whistling through the trees and carrying the sound of loneliness.

Prihoda, 70, has lived in the house more than 40 years, the last five of them alone except for his dog.

"At first, the tall, bearded man found it difficult to sleep in the too-quiet house, but he soon realized sleeping pills were no answer.

"I said, 'Old man, you're gonna have to wake up and do something for pastime,'" Prihoda says, his Czech ancestry evident in his speech. He got to thinking about days gone by, remembering how he loved the sound of a steam locomotive blowing its whistle.

He remembered how towns used to be the main street and all a town's businesses within walking distance of the railroad tracks and Prihoda decided to build his own replica of a 1928 town.

When he couldn't sleep, he would go out to his workshop to rebuild his memories with scraps of wood and metal.

The result is a miniature town Prihoda calls "Emilville," built in the grassy area in the middle of his circular, shell-paved driveway.

Signs advise those entering Emilville that the population is seven, the elevation is 6 inches and the speed limit is 1 mph.

Another sign says, "Not responsible for accident," and still another urges guests to sign a tablet Prihoda keeps in the Emilville mailbox.

"I've got over 300 people been here, from all over the world — even Canada," he says, his thick fingers turning the tablet's weathered pages. "Some people sign their names when I'm not at home."

The tablet is a source of both entertainment and worry for Prihoda. "A man from New Mexico came up here, and he asked me could his dog sign his name in the book," Prihoda says. "I say, 'Sure, I never seen that before.'"

"Then the man said, 'Oh no, he has a sore foot, and he can't write today.' So the man wrote the dog's name, and it was 'Bear.'"

A visiting couple took the tablet to the hood of their car to write their names, then drove off with the tablet still on the hood.

"It took me four days to get my book back," Prihoda says. "You know, it don't mean nothing to nobody but me."

Emilville was a well-kept secret until Prihoda had a garage sale, he

says. "People were more interested in Emilville than they were in my garage sale," he says. "I only sold one thing at the whole sale."

Prihoda, a former county employee who retired in 1982, can play the accordion "a little," used to be a clown and sometimes works as Santa Claus during the season.

"I'm the only Santa who comes with his own beard and belly," he laughs.

Emilville is a town with a story as colorful as its namesake, and Prihoda will share the tale with anyone who visits. Here's how it goes:

"Emil he built an oil well and struck it rich, so he build a town with seven people. They elected him the mayor and from then on they call him Wooly Bugger."

"That's where old Wooly Bugger lives, right in that house," says Prihoda, whose own nickname happens to be Wooly Bugger.

The town's physician, Dr. Wooly Bugger, advertises a cure for hangovers. The Lone Star Service Station has a hand pump for gasoline, and the motel rents rooms for \$1 a night.

Emil's Cafe features beer, dominoes, whiskey and happy hour 24 hours a day, but a competitor, Wooly Bugger's Diner, specializes in horse meat. The diner's slogan? "The Best Horse House in Texas."

The town has a bank and a general merchandise store, and at the "Real Pit BBQ" stand, Prihoda says an old woman used to be inside asking, "Where is the beef? Where is the beef?"

Next door is the barber shop, "one place old Wooly Bugger don't go," Prihoda says, stroking his long white beard.

The post office stands near the funeral home, where two bodies are lying in state. At one end of town is a pond where a man is fishing not far from an alligator.

A sign says "No swimming," and it's easy to see why.

Prihoda built a miniature forest at one edge of town, and visitors with sharp eyes will spot a monkey in a tire swing dangling from a tiny tree.

Following a highway of shingles, visitors see an airstrip with a crop dusting plane Prihoda says the town uses to keep mosquitoes away. The pilot has a bottle of booze. "They all believe in bottles," Prihoda says and winks.

Emilville has a courthouse and a jail, where the sheriff is keeping an eye on a wino. A wishing well is not far from the fire department, but the highlight of the village is a miniature oil well Prihoda operates with ease.

Citing limited space, he has no plans to expand the village.

"I cannot add on no more because is inside a cul-de-sac and people will run over it if it's bigger," he explains.

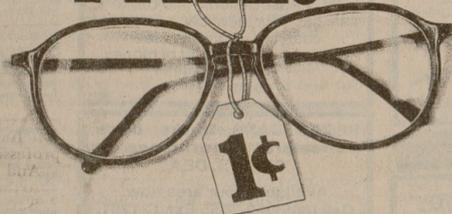
Prihoda never set out to build a tourist attraction, and his little town isn't polished and new. When the scraps of wood rot, as some have over time, he has replaced them with whatever he has at hand.

"I just started building because I couldn't sleep," he says. "The young generation, they don't know what it's all about. I just build what old people remember."

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