

Wednesday, August 2, 1989

## Texas groups seek racing license

### Hearing may award permit for pari-mutuel tracks in Houston

AUSTIN (AP) — A Sept. 8 hearing on two applications for a Class 1 pari-mutuel horse racing license for Harris County could award the permit many experts say could become the crown jewel of Texas thoroughbred racing.

Two Houston investor groups, Houston Downs and the Houston Turf Club, are seeking the license, but there is no guarantee that the Texas Racing Commission will grant it to either.

A big question, experts say, is whether either proposal is economically feasible. Many horsemen complain the 5 percent state tax share on each dollar bet is too high to make a big track profitable.

Although the state's racing law allows Kentucky Derby-style, Class 1 horse tracks in the Houston, Dallas-Fort Worth and San Antonio areas, the only applications received by the Racing Commission were for the Houston area.

Both Houston groups are optimistic about their proposals, one of which would cost about \$56 million and another about \$72 million.

Four years before voters approved pari-mutuel wagering, John Bannerman formed the company called Houston Downs with the goal of someday building a horse racing track in the state's largest city.

Bannerman has long been associated with efforts to bring pari-mutuel racing to the state. His

primary goal was to find an accessible site with plenty of land.

"We felt that we needed to be within the city of Houston, the Houston Independent School District and Harris County and also within proxim-

**"We felt that we needed to be within proximity to the other sports and entertainment facilities in Houston."**

**—John Bannerman, License applicant**

ity to the other sports and entertainment facilities in Houston," Bannerman told the *Houston Chronicle*.

The site chosen was 361 acres of pasture land located a few minutes' drive from the Astro-

dome. "We're easily accessible. We're within 20 minutes of many major hotels, restaurants, bars and Hobby Airport. We're 10 minutes from the (George R. Brown) Convention Center, 15 minutes from the Galleria and five minutes from the Astro-dome," Bannerman said.

Under the proposal, Houston Downs would be a \$72 million facility with seating for 8,000 patrons in a four-level, air-conditioned, glass-sided grandstand. Exterior bench seating for several thousand more is planned.

In all, the track could accommodate 30,000 people, including some who would stand.

In addition to the standard dirt race track, which would have a turf track inside, Bannerman plans to build a separate training track and more than 1,200 fireproof stalls.

Bannerman said Houston Downs would employ 834 people — most local residents. Target date for opening day would be Oct. 5, 1991, with 100 racing days during the first season.

Unlike a lot of Texas horse racing enthusiasts, Kirwin Drouet, organizer of the Houston Turf Club proposal, didn't grow up with horse manure on his boots.

But he is betting that his experience in putting together oil and gas deals will ensure that the Turf Club doesn't turn out to be the equine equivalent of a dry hole.

"I am not a horseman," says Drouet, a certified public accountant who was graduated from Rice University. "But I will also say this: I bet I know more about track ownership than just about anybody in Texas."

## GOP 'straw poll': Rains leads race for governor

FROM STAFF & WIRE REPORTS

Former Secretary of State Jack Rains, Class of '60 and a Republican gubernatorial hopeful, was a happy camper after a straw poll taken at the 11th annual Camp Wannameetagop retreat.

In the unscientific straw poll of GOP elected officials and party activists, Rains received 14 votes, gaining the lead in the four-man pack of Republican gubernatorial contenders, Rains' campaign announced Tuesday.

Texas Railroad Commission chairman Kent Hance was second with 12 votes; businessman Clayton Williams, Class of '54 and alumni center namesake, was third with 4 votes; and businessman and corporate raider T. Boone Pickens received 2 votes. Two voters were undecided.

The poll, conducted by secret

ballot, also asked the GOP insiders whom they considered the most likely 1990 Democratic Party nominee.

Texas Attorney General Jim Mattox received 22 votes; Texas Treasurer Ann Richards, 8 votes and former Gov. Mark White, 4 votes.

The informal gathering took place at a retreat between Navasota and Brenham.

In another political development, state Sen. Hugh Parmer's July 31 campaign contribution and expenditure report shows that he raised more than \$330,000 between March 8 and June 30 for a race against U.S. Sen. Phil Gramm, R-Texas.

"Phil Gramm will obviously outspend us, but his Gramstanding and our fundraising will be enough to overcome his attempts to buy the election," Parmer said.

## Senator calls spending on Texas Legislature by lobbyists 'obscene'

AUSTIN (AP) — Calling lobbyist spending on the Texas Legislature "obscene," a state senator Tuesday proposed new restrictions to dam a flow of cash so large he said it could have bought lawmakers 5,120 martinis a day.

"It's time to send lobbyists a message and send it loud and clear: the party's over," Sen. Chet Edwards, D-Duncanville, said. "It's clear that something's wrong. You can't make laws at Mardi Gras."

According to reports filed with the secretary of state, lobbyists spent more than \$1.86 million on entertainment and gifts for lawmakers during the 140-day regular legislative session, which ended May 29.

Lobbyists wined and dined lawmakers, took them to Mexico, and gave them gifts such as ski vacations, hunting trips, fishing excursions and golf games at exclusive private clubs.

Edwards calculated that the \$1.86 million spent was enough to purchase lawmakers 62,000 games of golf, 2,066 weekend trips to Acapulco, or the 5,120 daily martinis.

"The cumulative effect of all these freebies is to compromise the integrity of the Texas Legislature," Edwards, who is seeking Democratic nomination for lieutenant governor, said. "This should be the state Capitol, not the entertainment capital of Texas."

The senator predicted rejection by voters in November of a proposed 300 percent legislator pay raise unless lawmakers move quickly to squelch lobbyist largesse.

"The legislative pay raise is absolutely dead in the water until we show we're willing to clean our own house," he said.

Edwards urged Gov. Bill Clements to add lobby reform to the agenda of this autumn's planned special session.

Edwards suggested five changes in current lobbying laws, which he described as "absolutely a joke." His proposals:

- Require full disclosure of all spending over \$25 by both the lobbyist who pays and the lawmaker who takes.
- Ban pleasure junkets, such as trips lawmakers took to Mexico, a Utah ski resort and a Las Vegas, Nev., boxing match.
- Expand disclosure requirements to all statewide elected officials.

**"This should be the state Capitol, not the entertainment capital of Texas."**

**—Chet Edwards, Texas senator**

and top state employees, such as agency administrators and a governor's aides.

- Strip a lobbyist of his right to lobby after repeatedly violating the rules.

A full disclosure of gift giving would stop much of the excess, Edwards predicted, because lawmakers are concerned about public opinion.

"Realistically, full disclosure will stop the extravaganzas dead in their tracks," he said. "Legislators aren't going to want to go on luxurious trips when they know the public and their voters are going to find out about it in (news) reports."

## House expands Texas board investigation to include consultants paid to win parole

AUSTIN (AP) — A legislative investigation of the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles has been expanded to consider whether paid consultants may be violating state law by working to win paroles for convicted criminals.

Members of the House General Investigating Committee said Monday they want to determine whether the so-called parole advocates — who include two former agency officials — may be practicing law without a license or using improper influence at the board.

"We have been told by an informant that there are two or three instances where a (prison inmate) was turned down eight or nine times for parole and was then paroled less than a month after he hired one of these consultants," DeWitt Hale, committee general counsel, said.

"The implication here is that these people have influence within the agency and can get a

parole," he said. "That's a very serious matter, if true."

Henry Keene, chairman of the parole board, said among the advocates are former board member Antonio Morales of Austin and Paul Mansmann of Fort Worth, former parole commissioner.

Neither Morales nor Mansmann is a lawyer, Keene said.

Rep. Doyle Willis, D-Fort Worth, said he has instructed Hale to contact the State Bar of Texas to determine whether such consultants must be licensed attorneys. Willis is chairman of the House committee.

"I can't see anything wrong with them — consultants or lobbyists, whatever you call them," Keene told the committee.

## Bush's son forgoes bid for Texas gubernatorial seat

DALLAS (AP) — Oilman and baseball team owner George W. Bush, the president's oldest son, said Tuesday night he would not run for governor of Texas next year.

"I have had time to think and sort things out, and at this time, I am not a candidate for governor in 1990," Bush said during a speech to the lawyers division of the Dallas Jewish Federation.

Bush added he has learned to "never say never" in politics, but said he could think of few circumstances that would lead him to change his mind.

"I think that's a very honest and forthright statement," Fred Meyer, state GOP chairman said. "I do believe at some point he's going to be a factor on the political scene because I think he handles himself very well."

Bush, 43, was widely viewed as a likely candidate for governor since returning to Texas last year after helping his father's presidential campaign.

He said family considerations and business opportunities, which include his role as managing partner of the Texas Rangers baseball team,

prevent him from entering the race.

Bush's mother during a visit to Dallas several weeks ago reportedly told him not to run. But Bush said her opposition was not the main reason he decided not to run, the *Dallas Times Herald* reported.

He said when he told his parents of his decision, his mother, Barbara, replied, "Good. Next subject."

His speech Tuesday was his first public declaration that he would not enter the GOP primary for the seat

Republican Bill Clements said he will vacate.

"I urge any of my friends who feel so compelled to pick a candidate, get off the sidelines and get involved in the race for governor," Bush said.

Former secretary of state Jack Rains, Class of '60, and Midland businessman Clayton Williams, Class of '54 and alumni center namesake, have said they will run for governor in the Republican primary. Other

Republicans considering a run include Kent Hance, a member of the Texas Railroad Commission, and T. Boone Pickens, the well-known corporate takeover artist who recently moved part of his business from Amarillo to Dallas.

Three Democrats have announced their candidacy for governor: Texas Attorney General Jim Mattox, Texas Treasurer Ann Richards and former Gov. Mark White.

## Former sheriff's deputy shoots woman, kills self

FORT WORTH, Texas (AP) — A former Tarrant County Sheriff's deputy killed himself and shot his former girlfriend Tuesday night, ending a nearly seven-hour standoff that began when the man took the woman hostage in a courtroom.

Authorities told a TV station they believe the suspect may have seized the woman because she filed an assault charge against him Monday.

The woman, Juanita Hermasilla, was taken hostage when the man entered Justice of the Peace Bob Ashmore's first-floor courtroom at the Tarrant County Courthouse in downtown Fort Worth.

Police special weapons and tactics units were dis-

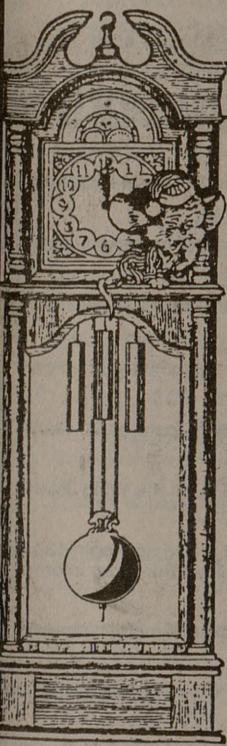
patched to the scene but left about 5 p.m., when the Sheriff's Department said they would take over, Fort Worth police spokesman Doug Clarke said.

"Judge Ashmore said he worked with the man and knew him," Clarke said. "The sheriff said he worked with him and knew him."

A sheriff's department dispatcher who did not wish to be identified said the suspect "worked here as a deputy years and years ago. He then became a bail bondsman until he went bankrupt about a year ago."

She said the standoff continued past 7:30 p.m. with "no end in sight."

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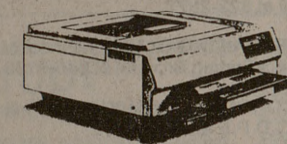


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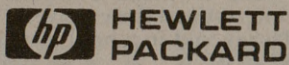
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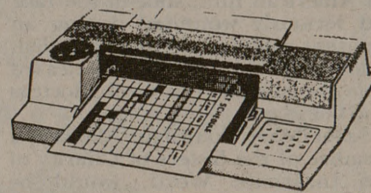


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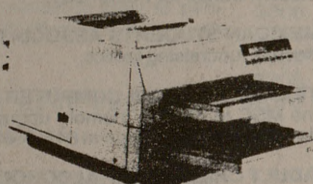


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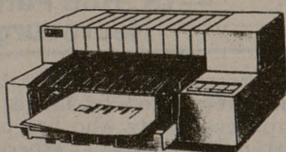
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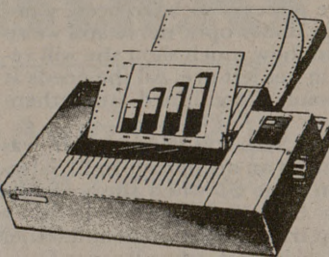
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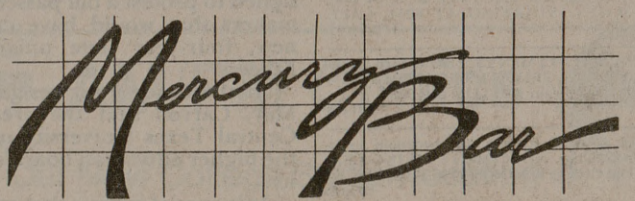
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