

I'll fly away

Continental Airlines makes flight changes at Love Field

DALLAS (AP) — At approximately 6:30 a.m. Thursday, a Continental Airlines jet will pull away from a terminal at Love Field and end an era.

The flight to Houston's George Bush Intercontinental Airport will mean the end of two decades when Southwest Airlines held an effective monopoly at Love.

A federal judge on Tuesday thwarted Southwest's attempt to end a legal challenge to expanded flights at Dallas' in-town airport.

Three weeks from now, another era will go by the wayside when Continental starts flights to Cleveland — the first long-distance commercial flights from Love in years.

Continental's flights actually will be on 50-seat regional jets belonging to the feeder airline Continental Express to get around the so-called Wright Amendment.

That legislation, pushed through by former U.S. Rep. Jim Wright to foster growth at then-new Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport, restricts flights out of Love to airports in New Mexico, Oklahoma, Arkansas and Louisiana.

But it applies only to jets with more than 56 seats. The loophole cleared the way for upstart Legend Airlines to announce last year its plans to set up operations at Love Field and fly to any destination using modified jets.

Continental has maintained gates at Love Field since 1994 and recently spent \$3 million upgrading the area.

At a news conference last month, Continental chief executive Gordon Bethune said his airline's regional jets were purchased with the Wright Amendment in mind.

Continental will continue its 19 daily round trips out of DFW Airport — 12 to Houston, five to Newark, N.J., and two to Cleveland.

"The flights out of DFW won't be affected at all," spokeswoman Sarah Anthony said.

Continental's flights on Thursday will mark the first time since the opening of DFW Airport in the 1970s that a major commercial airline other than Southwest has offered flights out of Love.

American Airlines and the city of Fort Worth are suing Dallas to stop flights by other airlines out of Love Field, saying it is violating a 30-year agreement to build, promote and protect DFW Airport. American recently added Continental to its lawsuit.

Those lawsuits survived a key challenge on Tuesday, when a federal judge refused to block them.

Southwest Airlines tried to stop Fort Worth's lawsuits against Dallas, Legend Airlines, DFW Airport and others, saying they were prohibited by a 1982 federal court injunction. Southwest said Fort Worth's new lawsuits threaten the airline's operations at Love Field.

But United States District Judge Jerry Buchmeyer of Dallas said he would not block Fort Worth's lawsuits because the city is not suing Southwest. The 1982 injunction prohibited the city from suing Southwest over access to Love Field.

American has said it too will begin flying from Love if the other carriers are allowed to do so. It has asked Dallas for two gates for flights to Austin this summer.

Bethune said Continental's decision to begin service now was because of American's request. Continental feared it would lose its unused gates to American.

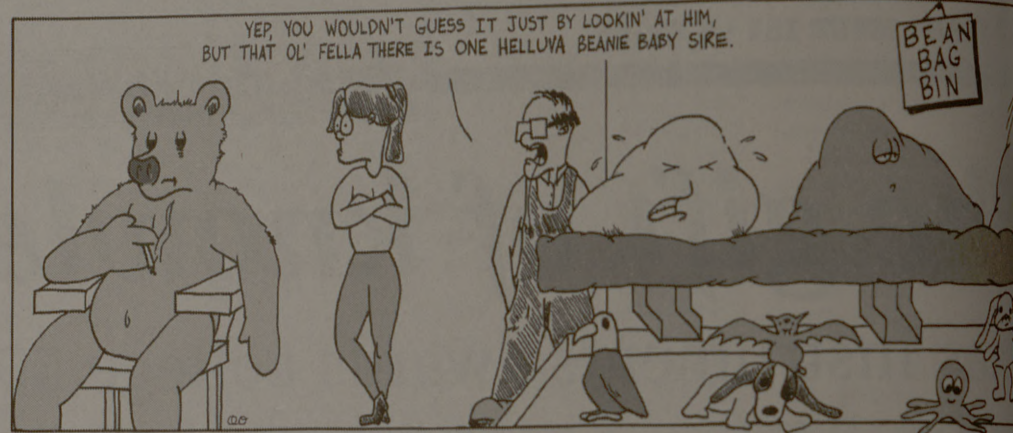
"We moved up our timetable," Bethune said. "We are being kind of pushed into it on someone else's timetable."

Southwest also says it will not give up gates to American, so it is not certain where the carrier will fit in.

American's parent company, AMR Corp., owns office space at Love Field that could be reconfigured for use as gates, but spokesperson Al Comeaux said that would take months.

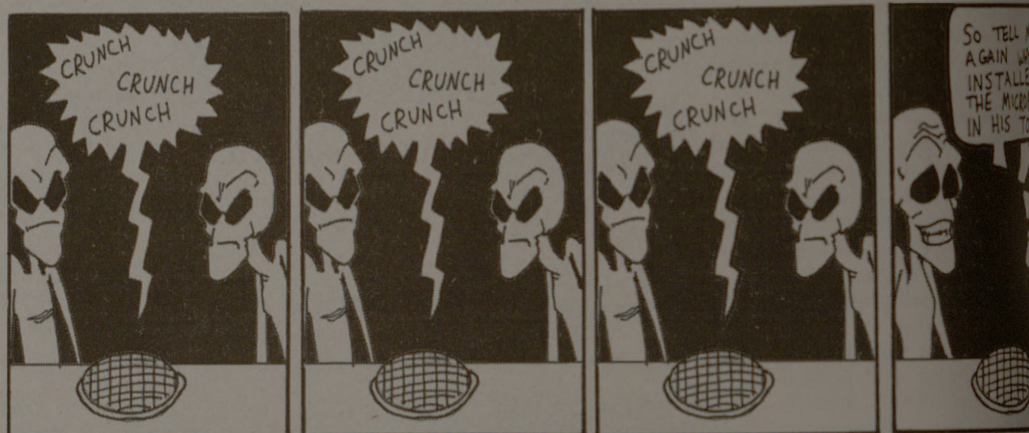
Sketch

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The Greys

By Gabb



Tax revenue aids baseball stadium

ROUND ROCK, Texas (AP) — Tax revenue in this central Texas city will increase enough in the near future to help finance a stadium for a minor-league baseball team recently acquired by Nolan Ryan.

Reid Ryan, the pitching legend's son and team president, will present the tax news to the city council Thursday, along with financing plans for the \$13 million stadium complex, lease terms and the architectural contract.

Citing access to Interstate 35 and strong growth in population, tourism and the economy, a new report on city tax revenues said hotel-motel tax revenue should increase from \$421,281 this year to nearly \$1.3 million by 2005.

The Ryans and their business partner Don Sanders of Houston said they would initially invest \$4 million in the project. The team also has agreed to structure its lease payments so the city, which would own the stadium on U.S. 79, would get \$1.5 million in the first five years, starting in 2000.

After that, for the last 15 years of the lease the team would pay just \$15,000 a year in rent.

Round Rock is just north of Austin.

Counties place bans on outdoor burning

AUSTIN (AP) — Travis County is the latest to ban outdoor burning as hot, dry weather continues to grip the state.

More than 50 counties already have taken such action.

Gov. George W. Bush this week asked President Clinton for federal help to place fire-fighting equipment and personnel in advance in areas with the greatest risk of fire.

In joining those counties, Travis County Judge Bill Aleshire said Wednesday he also was notifying the mayors of the county's 15 cities of his action.

"While it is always foolish to start uncontrolled fires, the dangerously dry and windy conditions, with no relief in sight, increases the potential for merely foolish behavior to result in a big disaster," Aleshire said.

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