TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS TODAY
A Talk by
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It is a genuine pleasure to meet with you today. I would like to touch upon just three points in my talk this morning: education in tourism, the role of attractions in tourism, and tourism and the environment.

I

First, as one who has a Yankee origin from Michigan, I want to say that I am very happy to be in Texas and to be a part of what is probably the largest and most active tourism and recreation educational program in this country. While other schools specialize in park administration, resource development, or hotel management, we at Texas A&M are attempting, through our diversity in faculty and courses, to provide elements of all of these. And, we are carrying it out through all three programs normally found in a land grant university: teaching, research and extension.

In six short years we have grown from a one-man department to one of 12 full-time and 5 part-time highly qualified and uniquely specialized faculty. In the beginning, we optimistically thought we would have about 50 undergraduates and maybe 5 graduate students. Now we have about 150 undergraduates and over 70 masters and doctoral students. In fact, we now worry about maintaining the quality standards we believe are so critical at the same time as we accept growth. All this has happened with practically no promotion or recruitment.

As you can see, the graduate program has become very strong and we are finding that not only are we continuing to have requests from prospects all over the country and Canada (we now have an applicant from France) we are encountering
no difficulty in placing our students when they leave us. In fact, one of our concerns as advisors is their being snapped up by some employer before they have completed their thesis or dissertation.

We would like to think that our success is of our own doing. However, we must admit that we have attracted an unusually high caliber of student and that the timing for establishing our type of program was just right. We see leisure as one of the most powerful economic and social forces of our time. We believe that it is essential to study it and to teach as many of the fundamentals as we can find.

All of our faculty were attracted by the educational philosophy of just one man--our chairman, Dr. Leslie Reid--who wanted to overcome many of the educational deficiencies found in other institutions. Such policies as student creative freedom, close faculty-student relationship, vigorous faculty research and extension as well as teaching, and faculty attention to real-life issues are gladly carried out by all of us who have joined with him. We not only enjoy the academic climate of Texas A&M University but collaborate fully with other educational programs both inside and outside the state.

Much of our research is supported by agencies and organizations actively engaged in tourism or recreation development. At the present time, one of our students is working with the Texas Tourist Development Agency on a special advertising study. Others have worked with such groups as the Corps of Engineers, several park departments from local to national levels, and the river and reservoir authorities in Texas.

Whenever we travel, we encourage our students to go along to meet people in the field and to observe other areas and interests off campus. Three of our graduate students were interested enough in your program to rearrange their schedules to be with us today. I hope that you will be able to meet them personally.
Speaking of education, I wish to commend the Discover Texas Association on this Annual Seminar. This is a very important educational function. Personally, I believe that universities have been altogether too slow to accept roles of education in the fields of tourism and recreation. There are only a handful of university programs that even have one course in tourism. Certainly, if we are to have knowledgeable people in this field, we need at least one university in every state that offers courses of this type. All students who go through a curriculum in management, business, marketing, engineering, planning, landscape architecture, architecture, social science, political science, or law should have the opportunity of taking at least one course in tourism. The challenge is great and we have much to do in the educational field and we seek the advice of people such as yourselves to get this job done.

II

My next point is that our research findings in tourism emphasize what you already know: that attractions are the very lifeblood of tourism. Without attractions, there would be no tourism. Unless people are lured to things to see and do, they do not travel for pleasure. But, in addition to this fundamental, we also see many changes taking place in the role of attractions. For the next few minutes, I would like to review some of the trends as we see them.

Today, we see a trend from single-purpose attractions to greater diversity within each attraction. The resort that once boasted only sunny climate now must provide swimming pools, horseback riding, health treatments, and entertainment. With the increased proliferation of markets, it is increasingly difficult for the single-purpose attraction to compete. The amusement park with the roller-coaster has given way to the major complex, such as the Six-Flags-Over-Texas and Astroworld types.
Another trend is from scatter to clustering of attractions. It is increasingly difficult for the isolated individual attraction to obtain the patronage enjoyed by a grouping of attractions. The small historic site, for example, has a fraction of the power it would have if related to a grouping of many other historic sites, artifacts, exhibits, and pageants. The New England Heritage Trail, as an attraction complex, multiplies greatly the impact of each individual attraction such as Mystic Seaport, Connecticut. The old business worry about competition seems to be disproven in the attraction field. The worries of the existing attractions of Florida, for example, prior to the establishment of Disneyworld have proven to be unfounded. the more attractions, it would seem, the better.

These lead to a third trend—that of bigness. The large grouping of attractions that offers great diversity appeals to the public much more than small, single-purpose, scattered attractions. This may be due to changing trends in transportation as well as changes in tourist behavior. Modern express-ways and airports are focusing attention toward certain travel nodes. As more attractions are created, the tourist would rather select the node that promises the greatest satisfaction for his travel time, money, and effort.

I see another very important trend today—that is, mixed ownership and management. The trends toward diversity and bigness seem to demand greater mixes of land ownership and control of development. This is especially true between government and private enterprise. Many examples are appearing. An excellent one here in Texas is that of the San Antonio River Walk. Over the last two years, we have learned much about this unique and very important attraction. With support from the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station and the Texas Water Resources Institute, we analyzed the environmental characteristics, learned about the activities and attitudes of the many visitors, surveyed the voters, and questioned the controllers of the River Walk. From this we
concluded, among other things, that the present delicate balance of business and
park is very important to its appeal to visitors.

Another trend that has been emerging for a number of years is the shift
from dominantly outdoor attractions to a mix of indoor and outdoor types. A
vivid demonstration of this has occurred over the last ten years in winter
sports. In the earlier years, skiing was the dominant appeal of winter resorts.
Now, if the food, drinks, and entertainment are not outstanding, it is difficult
to survive in the winter sports business. Texas, with its generous use of air
conditioning of indoor attractions has demonstrated the importance of bringing
people inside.

Finally, all these trends combine toward more and more dependence upon
created development. The dominance of the older natural attractions, such as
Yellowstone and Yosemite National Parks, is giving way to man-made development.
This is not to say that large parks are any less popular—quite the contrary.
But, along with such parks throughout the country have arisen a very important
battery of created attractions.

Now, what does all this add up to?

For one thing, these trends demand more massive decision-making. Larger
corporate groups are required for decision-making, certainly for financing,
if for no other reason. Second, they demand greater managerial diversity.
There is no place, it would seem, for single-minded management policy. The
market trends won't allow this today as they did in the past. Third, along
with all this, obviously comes greater risk. The larger the investment and
the greater the innovation, the greater are the chances for failing.

Therefore, we can conclude that these trends demand greater and greater
research of not only existing markets but also the interrelationship between
new attraction concepts and potential markets. This requires much greater
sophistication than we now generally possess.
Finally, these trends demand new and better approaches to planning and design. The design and planning professions have been very slow to provide the kinds of talent and inputs needed for investors. Those of us in the design fields need to increase greatly our competence in those things important to our design concepts, such as human behavior of recreation and the utilization of the environment without adverse spinoff effects.

III

This brings me to the third point I wanted to emphasize with you today—the development of tourist attractions and their environmental impact.

How can we increase our provision of worthwhile and profitable attractions in the state of Texas? More than this, how can we do it without eroding the very environmental resources upon which attractions depend? These are the questions those of you responsible for attractions must be answering in the very near future. And I know of no group any more capable of developing solutions. The linkages between tourism and the environment are just now getting attention and, in my opinion, this is long overdue. Individual developers, no matter whether public or private, have been so busy getting on with supplying the demand that the environmental implications have gone unnoticed.

A case in point is the national Tourism Resources Review Commission created by Congress over a year ago. During the last year this commission has addressed itself to many problems of tourism but just a few months ago it discovered that tourism was heavily involved with the environment and that it had not considered such issues. It has been my privilege in recent months to serve on a five-man Tourism-and-the-Environment Panel for the Commission.

Fundamentally, as a panel we said that the discussion of tourism and the environment in reality is one and the same thing. The desire to travel is as much an exponent of the environment as the environment is a factor of man's travel.
On balance, we agreed that tourism is much less detrimental to the environment than many other forms of economic activity. In fact, we argued that in many ways, we can point to environmental enhancement. For a few minutes, let me review what we concluded about tourism and the environment. First, the positive side.

In the tourist transportation field, dramatic improvements have been made in the immediate environment of the traveler. He is free from the mud, dust, dirt, and soot that once plagued the automobile and train traveler. His travel environment certainly is more comfortable and his travel on the new expressways generally is more attractive than in former years.

Tourists of today have much greater opportunities of gaining understandings of their environment than ever before. This has come about through interpretive programs of the National Park Service, historic interpretation tours, and a proliferation of literature about the attractions of the country. Over 6,000 plant tours are now available in this country.

Engineering improvements, especially that of air conditioning here in the South, have dramatically changed the environmental settings for much of tourism. New technology has developed improved life-support systems such as those for back-packing, recreation vehicles, and underwater recreation.

We have learned much about biological management through tourism pressure from more hunters and fishermen. Many streams, lakes, and forests now yield much more game and fish than before. It could be argued that if it were not for the many tourists visiting the Aransas Wildlife Refuge, the Bureau of Sports Fisheries and Wildlife administrators could not defend their budgets to support the management of habitat for the whooping crane.

There are greater opportunities for tourists to experience a wider range of environmental settings than ever before. Thus, the so-called "natural" environment has been developed with thousands of attractions that give man a greater opportunity of discovering the world about him.
As I reflect on my association with tourism for about three decades, I can honestly say that the tourist of today can find much improved environmental design as compared to travelers of the past. The parks, motels, resorts, recreation areas, theme parks, airports, highways, and many other physical land developments of today are of greater beauty and appeal than the crude cabins, play areas, and roads of the past.

Finally, both sanitation and safety have been greatly improved. Major commercial attractions, such as Disneyland and Six Flags demonstrated for the first time on a large scale that buildings and grounds could be kept immaculate. Generally, health and sanitation standards are higher today and the equipment we use is much safer.

Thus, I think that you will agree that much of our environment for tourism is far better than it used to be and that a great part of this improvement is due to tourism itself.

Our study of tourism also showed that those who refer to it as a "smokeless industry" have some justification. Some of the most popularly used aspects of tourism leave the environment virtually unimpaired. For example, when a tourist views a distant forest or photographs a scene, the viewing function of the act in no way has any environmental impact upon the trees, waters, wildlife, or atmosphere in the scene. The acts of viewing sunsets, enjoying children at play, seeing wildlife in native habitat, sketching or painting landscapes, writing poetry or prose—in no way have any direct impact upon the environment. However, the environmental impact of his standing room, his throwing discarded photo wrappers or other litter on the ground, or parking his car may be of considerable consequence.

At the same time that we can support these facts about the positive impact of tourism upon the environment, we must look to the other side—environmental degradation—because it does exist.
We cannot deny that in some instances, massive touristic development is causing pollution of both air and water. Some remote resort developments pour raw sewage directly into nearby recreational waters. The large volumes of tourists who travel by automobile certainly must contribute to air pollution. Personally, I experienced for the first time carbon monoxide poisoning during my trip this summer through about 15 states in the East. Insecticides, fertilizers, and herbicides used in vacation home subdivisions are producing serious pollution of adjacent waters in some parts of the country.

We cannot deny that in some settings, the wear-and-tear of the natural setting is increasingly serious. Picnicking, camping, and hiking on fragile dune and grassy areas can erode natural ground covers, exposing the soil to serious wind and water erosion. The wear-and-tear that massive tourist use exerts upon historic sites is a problem of some attractions. The removal of rare plants and artifacts is a destructive influence of some tourism.

Perhaps the most serious and yet most widespread negative environmental aspect of tourism is damage to scenic assets. For example, the construction of tourist facilities at key beauty spots, such as Waikiki Beach and Miami Beach have eroded (unnecessarily in my opinion) the scenic appeal for many persons these businesses sought to obtain. In fact, a non-touristic group in Hawaii, the Outdoor Circle, is responsible for protecting much of the tourist's reason for visiting Hawaii. Some would say that the creation of ugliness is tourism's greatest contribution to the environment. Precious and limited resource assets are sometimes unwittingly destroyed in our haste to develop tourist attractions and facilities.

The additional drain upon community services is a very real environmental problem, seldom recognized in tourist developing areas. Even though individual sites may be well planned and managed, the added electrical power, natural gas,
and fuel oil must be provided by someone who in turn extracts more resource assets from the earth. The added governmental services, such as police, fire protection, health service, and schools are an added drain upon a region's human and material environments.

Increasingly, especially along waterfronts, environmental conflicts result from tourist development. It is impossible for water skiers, scuba divers, swimmers, surfers and boaters to use the same water in great numbers at the same time.

These are just a few of the environmental problems inherent in present tourism development. Personally, however, I am very optimistic about their solution. Contrary to many of the gloom-and-doom environmentalists I am confident that whenever we wish we can find the expertise and can search out the methods whereby we can create even more tourist attractions with no appreciable damage to the physical environment. This, as some of you already know, is the subject of the book I just completed.

But, in order to do this, a degree of responsibility and leadership is needed that does not now seem to be evident. When leaders of transportation collaborate and cooperate with the services-and-facilities interests as well as the attractions interests—especially on environmental issues—there can be progress. When the commercial attractions decision-makers collaborate and cooperate with public agency leaders, new and high quality environments can be made available for tourism. When all developers request, instead of deny, the services of environmental designers, tourism can be expressed with much greater environmental sensitivity.

The present attitude of polarization of each segment against other segments of tourism is the breeding ground for greater and greater environmental control by someone outside—probably state or federal governments. Instead of waiting
for the Nader's Raiders to tell us how to respect our environmental foundations, why can't those of us who depend upon the environment for tourism take the lead in putting our own house in order?

The big environmental lesson for tourism today--it seems to me--is that no one business or location can make decisions that do not affect many other people and many other parts of the environment. I predict that Texas could double its tourism potential with even an enhancement of the environment--but only if we reverse our policies of going our separate ways and abusing the environmental assets that are so abundant in this state.