

**SOUTHWEST JOURNAL;**  
**A PASSION IN TRUFFLES FOR TEXAS**

The New York Times

July 16, 1984, Monday, Late City Final Edition

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**Section:** Section A; Page 18, Column 1; National Desk

**Length:** 869 words

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**Dateline:** HOUSTON, July 15

## **Body**

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"It used to be said," Francois Picard observed with a Gallic flair for metaphor, "that the truffle was the daughter of earth and thunder. In the old days they noticed that after a thunderstorm, the truffle bore fruit."

Mr. Picard grew up in the heart of truffle country in southern France and has been involved with the black, spongelike fungus since he was a child tracking the lusty pigs that rooted for it under the oaks around his hometown of Perigord.

He now lives in Dripping Springs, 200 miles west of here in the Texas Hill Country. But he still harbors a passion for the truffle, which, at a heady \$40 or so an ounce retail, he likes to call "the black diamond" of haute cuisine. What took him to Dripping Springs was limestone, which laces the soil of the Hill Country in abundance. The normally diffident truffles, it develops, is ardent for limestone. And so Mr. Picard hopes to make Dripping Springs the truffle capital of the world.

Article (Southwest Journal) focuses on efforts of Francois Picard to successfully grow truffles in Dripping Springs, Texas; notes US Border Patrol, which switched to cars, vans, spotter planes, helicopters and dirt bikes to track illegal aliens in 1920, has recently started experiment using men on horseback; notes decline in contributions has forced Oral Roberts's City of Faith Medical Center, Tulsa, Okla, to dismiss 204 or 907 employees (M)

Since the summer of 1982, when a French testing laboratory deemed the Hill Country soil a superb habitat for growing truffles, Mr. Picard has grown and transplanted 20,000 oak seedlings and inoculated their roots with the mycelia, or thallus, or vegetative part, of the tuber melanosporum, the name the black truffle answers to in scientific circles. For reasons best known to truffles and trees, the fungus hugs the roots of oak and filbert trees. The trees like it.

Mr. Picard has already committed about 3,000 truffle-kissed seedlings to the Hill Country earth. With the passage of time, five to 10 years, and the beneficent advent of a thunderstorm or two, each planting will yield a few ounces to four pounds of truffles a year. He is looking forward to harvest time.

Truffle hunters seldom use pigs anymore to root up the fungus. The pigs tend to get nasty when someone snatches away their nosh. So Mr. Picard has two truffle-snuffling dogs trained to do it. He is also working on a device that will detect the morsels' earthy odor electronically. Formidable!

Before it took on modern dress and a new name in the 1920's, the United States Border Patrol was the Mounted Patrol, and it guarded the nation's borders against illegal entry primarily on horseback.

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It first mechanized with Model T's. Today its 3,000-member force works from cars, vans, spotter planes, helicopters and even dirt motorbikes.

Last week, according to Larry Teverbaugh, chief agent of the busy Laredo sector, the patrol "came full circle." Three experienced agents there gave up their green vans and mounted cow ponies, starting a 30-day experiment to see if men on horses could do more to stem illegal- alien traffic than men in machines.

"They're working out extremely well," Mr. Teverbaugh said Friday. A night horseback patrol the night before resulted in a score of apprehensions, he said, and assisted in some 80 others by men in a supporting van and on foot. "They kept a lot of people from running," he said of the 80 "assists" in which the actual capture was made by someone other than the rider. "They know they can't outrun a horse."

The horses can handle terrain too tough for vans or even the knobby- tired motorcycles, he said, and the extra height of a man on horseback provides a better view over the scrub.

The horses seemed to warm to the job. "One of them spotted some aliens before our agent did," Mr. Teverbaugh said. "He alerted, pricked up his ears - obviously something out in the brush. He put the agent right on them, like a bird dog."

But even with men, machines and horses, Mr. Teverbaugh concedes, the flow of aliens is increasing. Arrests in the last month were up 38 percent over the like period of last year, and that has been the pattern for 10 years.

When Oral Roberts opened his City of Faith Medical Center, a clinic, hospital and research center in Tulsa, nearly three years ago, he asked Oklahoma health officials to authorize 777 beds. The state, noting studies indicating that the city already had more hospital beds planned than were needed, reluctantly approved a maximum of 294.

Now much of the hospital is empty, with only 81 beds occupied. That, with declining contributions from the evangelists's worldwide ministries, has meant a budget shortage of \$1 million dollars a month. As a result, 244 of the medical center's 907 employees have been dismissed. The decline in contributions has also put employees of Oral Roberts University, which Mr. Roberts founded in Tulsa in the 1960's, on a short work week for the summer, and eliminated athletic scholarships for incoming freshmen in some sports.

The university has also closed its downtown public relations office, and 90 employees of the Oral Roberts Evangelical Association have been dismissed, in addition to 40 eliminated earlier through attrition.

In February Mr. Roberts wrote his Prayer Partners, as his supporters are called, appealing for increased donations, but the budgetary problems continued. Tim Colwell, Mr. Roberts's public relations director, said the decline in contributions was affecting similar ministries. "Donations have fallen off drastically," he said, and that could "affect the future of all ministries."

## Classification

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**Language:** ENGLISH

**Subject:** MAMMALS (89%); TERRITORIAL & NATIONAL BORDERS (87%); BORDER CONTROL (87%); LAW ENFORCEMENT (87%); ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS (66%); DOGS (50%)

**Company:** ;CITY OF FAITH HOSPITAL (TULSA, OKLA) US CUSTOMS & BORDER PROTECTION (59%); CITY OF FAITH HOSPITAL (TULSA, OKLA) US CUSTOMS & BORDER PROTECTION (59%); US CUSTOMS & BORDER PROTECTION (59%)

**Organization:** US CUSTOMS & BORDER PROTECTION (59%); US CUSTOMS & BORDER PROTECTION

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**Industry:** FRUITS & VEGETABLES (77%); MOTOR VEHICLES (71%); HELICOPTERS (66%); TEST LABORATORIES (65%)

**Geographic:** TULSA, OK, USA (79%); **TEXAS**, USA (92%); OKLAHOMA, USA (79%); UNITED STATES (92%); NORTH AMERICA (79%); FRANCE (72%)

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