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LOUISIANA OFFICE OF TOURISM
WORLD'S FAIR ACTIVITIES, 1980-1984

BY

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ABSTRACT

Mr. Rintz, former Assistant Secretary of the Office of Tourism, states that advanced preparation is important in marketing and sales. Consistent follow-up is necessary for success. The other important element is positive image from the press.

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INTRODUCTION

The State Tourism Office (the Louisiana Office of Tourism, a component of the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism) began as early as 1980 using the 1984 Louisiana World Exposition as a focal point for planning. Leadership in this effort was provided by Mrs. Lawrence H. Fox, Secretary of the Department.

The process of coordination and communication developed into 1981. An increased effort was made to increase communication between the Office of Tourism (Louisiana World Exposition "LWE") and the private sector of the Louisiana Visitor Industry. The Assistant Secretary, Director of the Office of Tourism, became a member of the Executive Committee of LWE. At the various travel and trade shows and conferences the World's Fair was a part of discussion and presentation by state representatives. The then Governor Dave Treen was very supportive of the Fair. In April 1981, the Office of Tourism participated in the process to obtain BIE approval of Louisiana World Exposition for 1984. At the ASTA Convention, 1981, Honolulu, Hawaii, World's Fair stickers, printed by the Office of Tourism, were distributed.

A significant step was taken at the Louisiana Governor's Conference on Tourism in the summer of 1981, where the new multimedia ad campaign, "Louisiana, A Dream State," was introduced. The campaign had, in

addition to its tourism promotion objective the goal of upgrading the image of Louisiana internally and creating within the state an awareness of the potential of the hospitality industry.

A planned program to unify all areas of the state behind the concept of using the World's Fair as a promotional tool was developing. Part of this program involved promoting the idea that the rest of the state could benefit economically, especially through increased tourism, from the Exposition to be held in New Orleans. In each of the eight economic planning districts of the state, the local leadership of the hospitality industry and other interested citizens were organized into "Impact Committees" to study the impact of the Fair on their area.

PREPARATION

In the 1981-82 budget, the Legislature appropriated \$300,000 for promotion of collateral attractions (that is attractions in all areas of the state) during the World's Fair period.

The \$300,000 legislative appropriation was used in three (3) ways:

1. Grants directly to the Impact Committees in the amount of \$12,500 each. Each committee designed its own effort to promote its district and awareness of the potential benefits because of the Fair in its district.
2. \$100,000 for a signage program to identify attractions statewide and to put "World's Fair Attractions" signs on travel routes throughout the state.
3. Special promotion projects and administration.

In early 1982, the Deputy Secretary of the Department of CRT was assigned to work with the Impact Committees. He met frequently with these groups for speeches, slide shows, update, etc. The Deputy Secretary spoke at many civic clubs throughout the state in 1981 and 1982. Lt. Gov. Jimmy Fitzmorris not only spoke with the Impact Committees but was also traveling the state advocating the benefits of the Fair to many civic groups.

Another of the early projects of the Office of Tourism was printing of a World's Fair fact card to satisfy the inquiries that the Office was receiving. These were first given out at the ITB travel show in Berlin in March, 1982. In 1982 the Office of Tourism began using the World's Fair logo in printed advertisements.

The Governor's Conference on Tourism in July, 1982, had as its focal point the Louisiana World Exposition, 1984. LWE was a major promotion message at trade shows, on fam tours and consumer shows. By now limited promotional material from LWE became available and was being distributed through state channels.

In December 1982, I was appointed Assistant Secretary of the Office of Tourism. Concurrently, Barbara Lachenmaier, a long time associate,

became Director of Tour and Travel for the World's Fair. Close cooperation with LWE continued through Fair opening day when my tenure ended.

I felt that only with full statewide Visitor Industry cooperation could any effort to take advantage of the tourism opportunities offered by LWE be realized. A first step was an industry wide meeting to form the Travel Industry Management Council of Louisiana. A second was the publication in March 1983 of a Master Plan.

TIMCOLA (Travel Industry Management Council of Louisiana) brought together all representatives of the travel industry in Louisiana, public and private, to discuss how to take maximum advantage of all opportunities and potential of LWE. A coordinated schedule of show attendance was established between LWE, Greater New Orleans Tourist and Convention Commission and the Office of Tourism to maximize impact at important shows and to insure, by sharing the load, attendance and promotion of the World's Fair at virtually all travel industry activities from early 1983 through Fair opening.

The Master Plan established marketing objectives for 1984:

1. To insure that the greatest number of people attend the 1984 Louisiana World Exposition.

2. To insure that the maximum number of these visitors extend their stay and remain as long as possible within Louisiana.

3. To insure that the stay of all visitors is so satisfying and enjoyable that they return again and, in addition, encourage their friends and relatives to visit.

4. To insure that those business people who visit because of the exposition are identified and provided with a positive view of Louisiana both to increase tourism business in Louisiana and to encourage the establishing or relocating of business in Louisiana.

A coordination objective was to insure that every public and private sector agency participated as fully as possible in positive programs in response to the opportunity offered by the 1984 Louisiana World Exposition.

The World's Fair Impact Committees were the primary means by which information concerning potential opportunities were disseminated to those not directly involved with the visitor industry and the general public. The Deputy Secretary and I continued an extensive program of public meetings to acquaint as many communities as possible with the opportunities for the tourism which the Fair offered.

An intergovernmental task force was established, chaired by Lt. Gov. Fitzmorris, to provide the framework for coordination between state agencies. Periodic meetings of this group were supplimented on a one-to-one basis by those agencies with reasons to work together.

IMPLEMENTATION

Two major promotional programs of the Office of Tourism were introduced for 1983-84: the "Louisiana - a State of Excitement" slogan and the "Fairways" concept of transportation/sightseeing routes through Louisiana to New Orleans. Nineteen eighty-four was to be an exciting year for Louisiana, and the new campaign slogan, which continued to use the distinctive red Louisiana script logo, captured that mood. The "Fairways" concept, developed by Office of Tourism staff, used route maps to showcase the diversity of attractions throughout Louisiana which travelers could enjoy on their way through the state to New Orleans, and on their way home, on the designated "Fairways".

The activities of the Office of Tourism in 1983-84 in preparation for the Fair were extensive, especially considering the limited budget and time available. In 1984 the Office of Tourism was organized into four divisions: Travel Industry Sales; Consumer Services; Advertising and Publicity; and Development.

The Office of Tourism provided the travel trade, domestically and internationally with personalized service and information on Louisiana, through membership in various organizations, sales missions, familiarization tours, a toll-free hotline information number and attendance at major travel/trade shows and marketplaces.

The Office of Tourism represented the state and the World's Fair at 19 travel trade shows and marketplaces including events in Brussels, Paris, London, Buenos Aires, Tokyo, Toronto and Berlin. More than 280 travel planners and tour operators participated in the ten familiarization tours offered in 1983. More than 15 training seminars were conducted in Houston, TX, Dayton, OH, New Orleans, and ten other locations, where on-site escort seminars were offered for tour operators with departures in 1984 going to the Exposition.

A travel trade hotline (800 number) was introduced in September 1983 and was extensively publicized in trade publications. Louisiana is one of few states offering this service aimed at supplying information to tour operators and travel agents.

There was a first-time effort of the Office in travel industry trade advertising and promotion beginning at mid-1983. More than 30 ad placements were involved, including Travel Weekly, Travel Agent, Hotel and Travel Index, ASTA Travel News and AAA Travel Scope. There were two major fam trips for Food writers in March, during Mardi Gras and Travel Writers in April prior to the Fair opening day. The trade advertising of the 800 industry hotline was very effective in increasing trade inquiries.

Because of the success of Knoxville in drawing motorcoach tours this segment became one of the major emphasis of the Office. In 1983 two motorcoach marketplaces were conducted by Louisiana Travel Promotion Association (LTPA) and supported by the Office of Tourism. The first, held in Baton Rouge in March and the second in New Orleans in September

brought together more than 360 tour operators and Louisiana suppliers.

A "Motorcoach Manual" had been published by the LTPA since 1981 and proved to be an excellent itinerary planning guide for tour operators and planners. The 1984 edition was designed to compliment the "Fairways" concept. The Office of Tourism published a booklet of Tour Escort Notes for motorcoach operators. The 50-page booklet featured ten tours following the basic scenic routes across the state. Louisiana's history, culture, geography, economy and many attractions were highlighted. A glossary of indigenous terms helps the newcomer to understand Louisiana's unique terms and sayings. This information was passed on to the operators and escorts at on-site training in their home bases and at 10 New Orleans training sessions prior to the Fair.

In preparation for the Exposition, a national AAA Travel School was held in New Orleans in September. The Exposition, the New Orleans area and all of Louisiana were detailed for the participants, many of whom followed the three-day session by taking a familiarization tour offered by the Office of Tourism for AAA Travel managers and tour planners.

Visitor Information and Promotion (VIP) centers are maintained by the Office of Tourism at eleven locations alongside nine major transportation routes into Louisiana, at the State Capitol in Baton Rouge, and in the French Quarter in New Orleans.

Improvements for 1983-84 included an upgrading of performance standards and training. Access for handicapped visitors was assured through new construction at each center. The introduction of an innovative computerized information system for visitors known as TOUCH & GO greatly enhanced the VIP Centers and their effectiveness. Visitation at VIP Centers grew dramatically in 1984.

As part of the VIP Center program, plans were made during 1983 to implement an information center in the Louisiana Pavilion of the Exposition. This center operated during the Fair with a staff of travel counselors and a dozen TOUCH & GO computers.

The Inquiry Section answered more than 48,000 calls in 1983 and welcomed 7,200 walk-in customers. More than 14,400 posters were distributed and the section experienced an 8.7% increase in requests over 1982. By cooperating with LWE and the private sector the limited budget of the Office of Tourism was used most effectively, especially in responding to inquiries. A co-op effort with LTPA and LWE resulted in the Exposition Visitor's Information Guide, the primary response piece for all Exposition inquiries. More than 1,000,000 copies of this Visitor's Information Guide were distributed before and during the Fair, 600,000 through the Fair information response program. This booklet had information on the Fair as well as attractions throughout the state and was considered to have provided excellent sales results to attractions statewide. This cooperative effort freed Office of Tourism funds for other promotional efforts.

The Office was represented in 1983 at fifteen consumer travel shows where 85,000 information packets on Louisiana were distributed.

In early 1983 more than 5,000 packets of materials about the

Exposition and Louisiana were sent to libraries throughout the United States and the world. This was accomplished in cooperation with the State Library.

The Governor's Conference on Tourism for 1983 was held in New Orleans in August with a 12% increase in attendance over the previous year. The conference was highlighted by an address by Governor Treen where he announced the \$6,000,000 pre-sale of World's Fair Tickets. The theme of the conference was the World's Fair and in addition to an extensive update on the Fair, communities in Louisiana presented their programs for taking advantage of the Fair.

Another co-op effort with LWE installed 18 painted billboards promoting Louisiana and the Exposition in Alabama, Mississippi and Texas. In 1983 the legislature appropriated an additional \$500,000 consumer budget aimed at Exposition enticement and visitation awareness for the rest of Louisiana. This was used in consumer advertising stressing enjoying Louisiana while visiting the Fair in May-June 1984.

A special brochure was produced for the Louisiana participation in the Great River Road Exhibit, a cooperative effort of 10 states in an exhibit at the Fair. A new state parks and commemorative areas brochure was produced as well as a brochure produced cooperatively with the State Museum to promote the "Sun King" exhibition presented during the Fair period. The State Library, State Parks and the State Museum are all components of the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism.

A special Exposition-related travel map was conceived for issue in 1984 with a "Fairways" guide and the official state highway map included. This brochure/map was extensively distributed on the Fair site and at the highway centers.

During 1983, 65 projects were recipients of \$200,000 in ACT 455, a Matching Funds Program, funds. An additional \$200,000 was distributed in late 1983 as a special cooperative support program for those areas who combined their efforts to take advantage of the Fair. This funding was responsible for the creation of new promotional efforts in both the northern and southern areas of the state. In this and other ways the Exposition was used as a impetus for innovative programming in budgeting and increasing cooperative ventures within the tourism and hospitality industry.

CONCLUSION

The results of the Fair--its impacts--we are still, in many ways, to close to see, but in my opinion they were significant. It is estimated that more than 200,000 visitors came by motorcoach; in addition, travel industry sold tickets accounted for more than 400,000 additional visitor days. Not as much as we hoped for, but enough to increase occupancy rates in New Orleans hotels from mid-50s to mid-70s occupancy rate in the slow summer months. Attractions near New Orleans, especially those who did their preparatory work, experienced sizable increases.

For the best report on the tourism results of the Fair, let me

extract from a speech given by Michael Valentino, President of the New Orleans Hotel/Motel Association, to the membership of National Tour Association at a breakfast sponsored by Louisiana.

"The Fair welcomed just over 7 million visitors in 184 days. The gates closed on a Fair site that was imaginative, informative, colorful, and fanciful. Our Fair was spectacular. Every visitor who visited was enthralled with the architecture, the food, the pavilions, the entertainment and the festive spirit that permeated the site.

"Unfortunately, the Fair gates closed on our event which fell 2 million visitors short of projection. They closed on a bankrupt Fair unable to pay over 100 million dollars of outstanding debt. They closed on an event which was billed to be the premier travel destination of 1984 but which without proper marketing and advertising, fell miserably short of the mark. And finally the gates closed on an event so maligned by the media of our country, that it could never recover. The press continued to cover fiscal management problems from the board room rather than consumer satisfaction stories from the fair site. Had the latter story been told, the American public would have embraced a much different perspective of our fair. Truly, in 1984, ours was the 'greatest story never told.'

"Looking at all facets of the Fair in retrospect--dramatic success stories can be found alongside of pitifully tragic ones. One thing is certain--that world's fairs are political/economic events, not tourism events. In the eyes of those who plan and execute world's fairs, tourism is merely a by-product. There were countless times when we, your travel suppliers, were unable to change the course of some issues . . .

" But knowing all of this and speaking of all of this, we in Louisiana are still proud of our fair--and especially of the manner in which we conducted our business during the fair--of the way we helped you to prepare for the fair--and of the ways in which we protected your interests during the fair.

" . Exactly two years ago today, in the Sheraton Centre Hotel in Toronto, at our 1982 convention, the State of Louisiana along with the greater New Orleans Tourist and Convention Commission sponsored a luncheon. Let me share with you a few lines of the presentation that I made that day":

"The excitement over our upcoming World's Fair extravaganza has permeated the state like nothing else before it. People are gathered in every town and city--residents and tourism entities alike--culling through the vast opportunities presented by the fair enabling them to showcase their areas for fair visitors.

"Our state is poised and ready to receive you with open arms, a cordial welcome, with quality service, and with fair treatment."

"The travel suppliers and residents of Louisiana delivered on all of those promises--in spades--and even embellished and added to those promises. Internally--statewide--we conducted two educational seminars to instruct our people about how to package, how to price, and how to handle your clients professionally. We also conducted two extremely successful marketplaces--each attended by over 125 motorcoach tour

operators. This helped immensely to familiarize operators with the products available in Louisiana. We printed detailed tour escort notes for all routings all throughout state and even sent staff members to your offices to train and to educate your own personnel on-site. Yes, your programs to the World's Fair in 1984 were no doubt more thoroughly researched, more competitively priced, and more interestingly routed due to the efforts of our state's suppliers, resident and tourism entities.

"There are few states in our country that can boast of better educated, more professional team of tourism suppliers than does Louisiana. To close my comments on the fair and on our personnel--no one is sorrier than is each of us for the lack of interest and therefore lack of attendance at the 1984 Louisiana World Exposition. But, no one is prouder than is each of us for the event we created, and for the manner in which we conducted our business. The results of the Fair--renovation and new construction has occurred at a pace which seemed incredible. New hotels, restaurants, attractions, and services abound. The steet, sidewalk, lighting and landscaping improvements in the central business district and particularly in the French Quarter have to be seen to be believed. Our "Riverwalk" Rouse Development is already under way and will be completed in late 1985."