

BIG INCH PIPELINE

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BEFORE THE UNITED STATES ENTRY INTO WORLD WAR II FOLLOWING THE BOMBING OF PEARL HARBOR IN DECEMBER 1941, NINETY-FIVE PERCENT OF THE CRUDE OIL DELIVERED TO EAST COAST REFINERIES WAS TRANSPORTED BY TANKER SHIPS. NINETY PERCENT OF THAT OIL ORIGINATED FROM TEXAS OIL FIELDS.

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BEGINNING IN FEBRUARY 1942, MANY U.S. OIL TANKERS EN ROUTE FROM THE GULF OF MEXICO TO THE EAST COAST WERE SUNK BY GERMAN SUBMARINES. RECOGNIZING THE NEED TO TRANSPORT OIL UNDER SAFER CIRCUMSTANCES, SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR HAROLD ICKES DEVELOPED A PLAN FOR A MASSIVE OVERLAND OIL PIPELINE. UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE WAR EMERGENCY PIPELINES, INC., CONSTRUCTION BEGAN ON THE LARGEST PIPELINE IN HISTORY UP TO THAT TIME, MEASURING TWENTY-FOUR INCHES IN DIAMETER. THE BIG INCH PIPELINE EXTENDED FROM LONGVIEW TO NORRIS CITY, ILLINOIS, AND EVENTUALLY TO REFINERIES IN THE EAST. THE BIG INCH PIPELINE'S IMPACT ON THE WAR EFFORT WAS TREMENDOUS, ENABLING THE SAFE AND TIMELY TRANSPORT OF OIL PRODUCTS VITAL TO THE ALLIES. DURING THE HEIGHT OF WARTIME SERVICE, OVER 300,000 BARRELS OF OIL WERE DELIVERED EACH DAY OVER THE 1,476-MILE LINE. WHEN THE WAR ENDED THE BIG INCH CONTINUED IN SERVICE AFTER CONVERSION TO A NATURAL GAS PIPELINE.



THE DEDICATION

of

AN OFFICIAL

TEXAS HISTORICAL MARKER

MARKING THE BEGINNING

of the

BIG INCH PIPELINE

LONGVIEW, TEXAS

MAY 17, 1991,

SPONSORED BY

THE TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

THE GREGG COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

and

TEXAS EASTERN TRANSMISSION CORPORATION

# Marker will be dedicated for pipeline

By Julie Cannon

Staff Writer

The Big Inch Pipeline was built during World War II, but the name does not convey the impact or size of the "engineering miracle."

The Big Inch was the largest pipeline built at that time, 24 inches in diameter and stretching from Longview to Norris City, Ill. — 1,476 miles. The overland route for crude oil is credited with saving countless lives during the war, said Dr. Norman Black, chairman of the Gregg County Historical Commission.

To preserve one of Longview's most important historical events a Texas Historical Marker will be dedicated at the corner of Martin Luther King Boulevard and Pittman Streets at 10 a.m. Friday, he said.

"I have been working for this for about 3 years. We have had many, many delays," Black said.

He has worked for the historical marker because he said the pipeline has the "greatest historical value of anything that ever happened in Longview."



Photo courtesy Gregg County Historical Commission

When the Big Inch Pipeline was built during World War II, it was called an engineering miracle.

In 1942, the United States was losing an average of three oil tankers a day to German submarines, he said. The tankers were the only means of transporting 95 percent of the crude oil to east coast refineries.

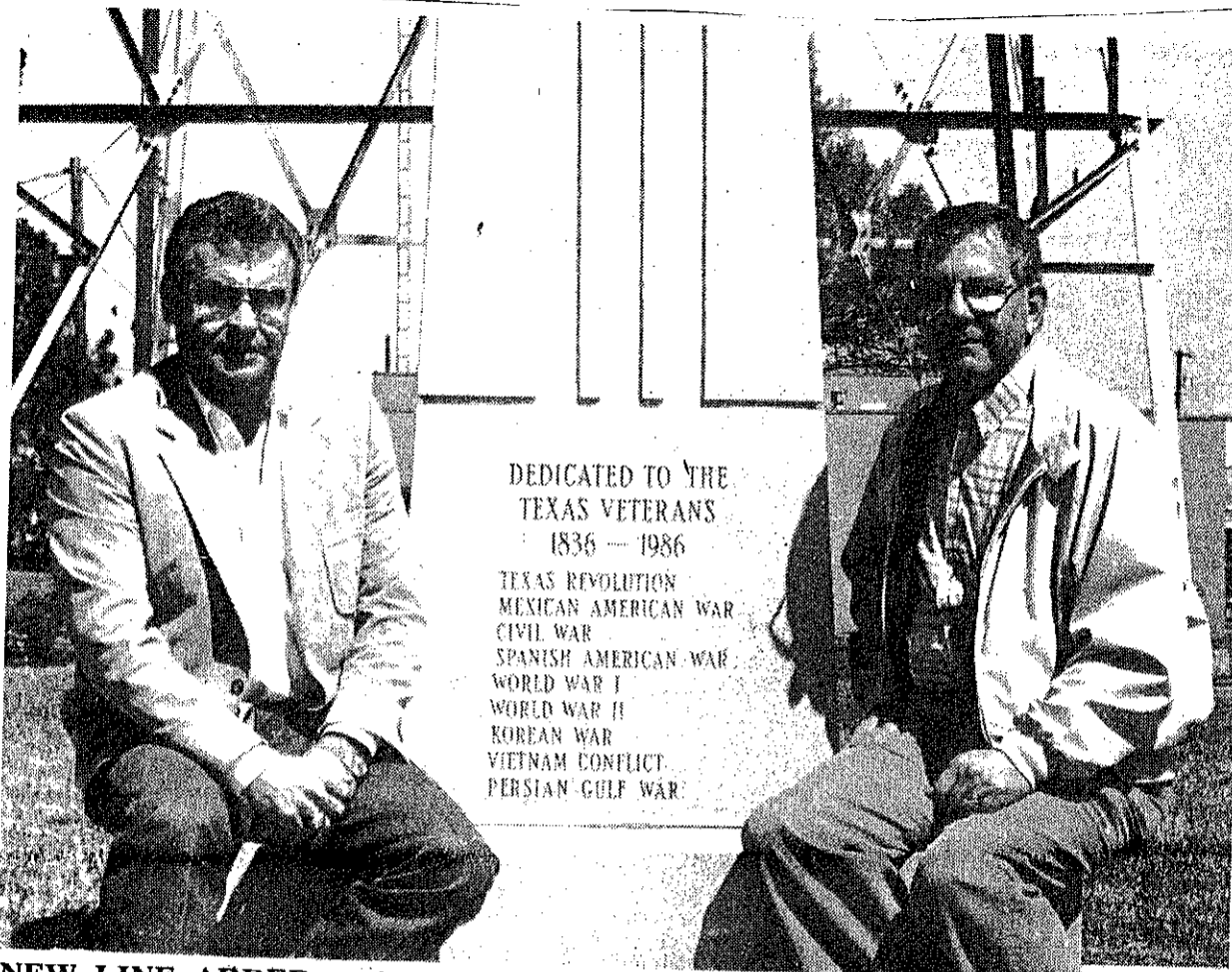
Of that oil, 90 percent originated for the Texas oil fields, Black said.

The Big Inch Pipeline was built in 350 days with crews working around the clock, he said.

"It was a tremendous feat and an engineering miracle," Black said.

The pipeline proved to be a much safer method of transporting the crude oil, and provided the Allies with vital oil products, he said. "Nobody will know how many lives this saved."

The Big Inch is still in operation, carrying natural gas for Texas Eastern.



**NEW LINE ADDED** — James Padgett, right, shows Mayor Bob Barbee a new line, "Persian Gulf War," added to the Veterans Memorial Monument in the city's Sesquicentennial Plaza. Padgett arranged for

the line to be added to the monument. It will be dedicated during Memorial Day services, which will be held in the Sesquicentennial Plaza on May 27.

# Texas Historical Marker honors Big Inch Pipeline

**Heavy rains force ceremonies to move indoors**

**By Julie Cannon**  
Staff Writer

Dedication ceremonies were hastily moved inside Friday for the Big Inch Pipeline, which has weathered almost 50 years of storms.

A Texas Historical Marker was erected at the pipeline's beginning on Martin Luther King Boulevard and Pittman Street. The dedication was sponsored by the Texas Historical Commission, the Gregg County Historical Commission and the Texas Eastern Transmission Corporation that now maintains the line.

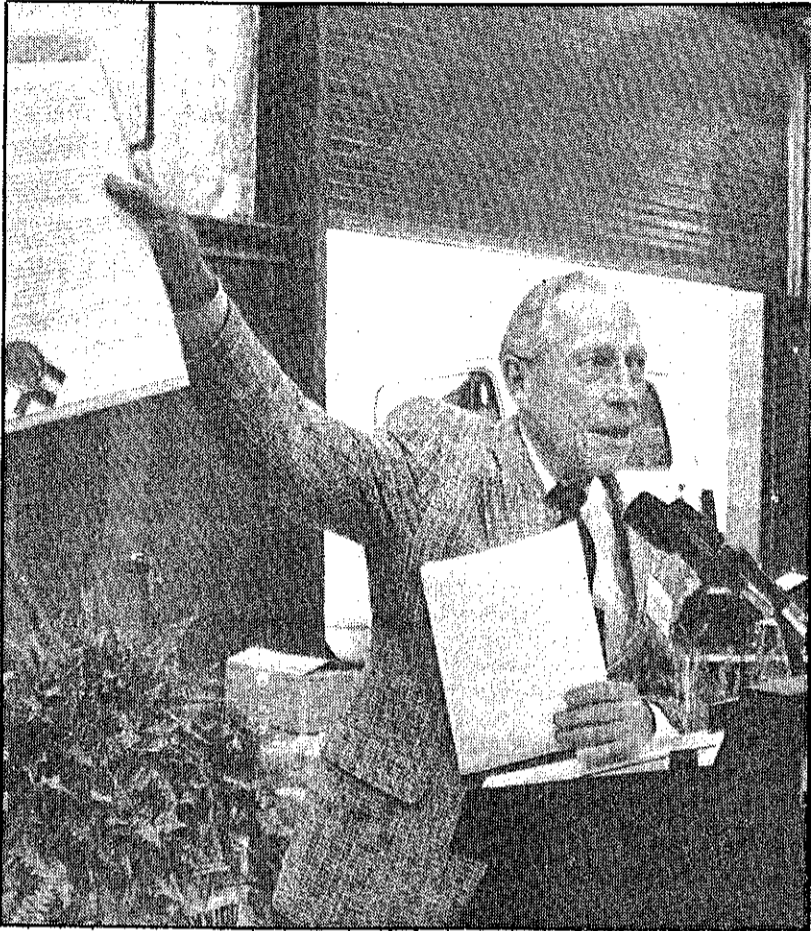
The ceremonies were to be held outside. However, heavy rains forced about 100 people to gather in a Texas Eastern building near the marker site. The Foster Middle School Band attended and played patriotic music.

The Big Inch Pipeline, built in 1942, was one of the "lesser known heroes of World War II," said Mark Davis, a Texas Eastern official. "During the last two years of the war the pipeline delivered a total of 262 million barrels of oil," he said.

The pipeline was 24 inches in diameter and stretched 1,254 miles, from Longview to Norris City, Ill. "It was the largest crude oil pipeline constructed at that time," Davis said.

The pipeline was built in 350 days.

The Big Inch "enabled the allies to rise to victory on Texas crude



By Darlene Chapman-Clark/staff photographer

Dr. Norman Black of the Gregg County Historical Commission holds up the proclamation during the dedication Friday of the Texas Historical Marker marking the beginning of the Big Inch Pipeline. The ceremony was held at Texas Eastern Transmission Corporation.

oil," said Gregg County Judge Ken Walker. "Living history is right here in our midst. We have people here in Gregg County that helped build the pipeline. We ought to be thankful to them," he said.

As the crowd celebrated the pipeline that had such an impact on World War II, Longview Mayor Martha Whitehead asked that everyone give "grateful thanksgiving that today our country is at peace."

## Beautifiers at Work in Longview

Aluminum cans, trash, discarded hot water heaters and a deer carcass are just a few of the items found by Janie Griffin as she volunteers as custodian of the North Fuller Road area. For fifteen years, weather permitting, this lady has been picking up trash twice a day on both sides of the road from North Fuller to Walnut Lane to Kieffer Road in Gregg County. On April 28 Mrs. Griffin was honored by Longview Beautification Association (LBA) for her volunteerism to make the environment a better place to live.

At the LBA annual meeting Mrs. Griffin, Velma and Ulysses Johnson and members of the South High Street Beautification Project were recognized with special awards for their contributions to community improvement and beautification.

Mrs. Griffin, who grew up in Kilgore and was a pumper for the Flewellen lease for thirteen years, bought bags from the city and then trucked to the site where she cleaned up the roadway. When she discovered oversized and bulky items like the hot water heater, she contacted the Precinct 1 County Commissioner whose staff would assist in the removal. Once asked why she does this, Mrs. Griffin replied, "to keep it clean, of course."

Living across the street from the Big Inch Pipeline historical marker on Martin Luther King Boulevard are Velma and Ulysses Johnson. Four years ago, the Johnsons took it upon themselves to adopt the marker and keep the surrounding area clean. Eventually, they planted flowers, first dragging a water hose across the street to maintain the area, but subsequently, the city installed a water



Velma & Ulysses Johnson of Longview (Photo courtesy of Longview News-Journal).

tap next to the marker in order to make the Johnsons' beautification effort easier. The Johnsons were also responsible for starting the Crime Stoppers program in their area.

Several years ago some South Longview citizens wanted to see their area cleaned up and beautified. Wanda Sigler and Harry Berntsen made a proposal for a partnership between the citizens and the City of Longview to beautify the High Street right-of-way, which is the main artery into the city from the south and from the airport. In 1995, about 19 volunteers began to clean up the major roadway, helped with mowing, and planted and continue to maintain crepe myrtles and seasonal flowers, bulbs, and wildflowers within designed flower bed areas. Local businesses in the area contributed financially. Originally, the flowers and crepe myrtles were watered daily by volunteers using one gallon jugs. Later, the city purchased a 130 gallon tank that is now borrowed and used to complete the watering.

The South High Street caretakers—Jo Ann and Bill Bickham, LaNell and

Bill Buvens, Laverne and Vince Hudson, Phyllis Lowery, Susie and Paul Morris, Wanda Sigler, Gwen and Van Willis, Wanda and John Allen, Madge and Harry Berntsen, Bob O'Brien, and Lesley and Joe Jordan—continue to plant, water, maintain, mow, pick up litter, and work towards a cleaner and more beautiful neighborhood. "Additional volunteers are being recruited and we hope other residents will want to start similar neighborhood programs," Berntsen said.

A special award was given to the Longview FFA Chapter, whose students tilled the soil, prepared the beds, and landscaped a major road median area. Plants and additional labor were provided by Longview Beautification Association who will maintain the site as an Adopt-A-Park area. In addition, the LBA named the Good Shepherd Medical Center as the recipient of the LBA Annual Award, as the outstanding business/industry for landscaped grounds.

# Grassroots

SUMMER 1996

## Laura Bush Visits Winners

Welcome to the summer issue of Grassroots, officially dedicated to all 1996 Keep Texas Beautiful award winners. All entrants for the Individual Environmental Award and Governor's Community Achievement Award competitions should be recognized for their hard work and dedicated efforts on behalf of litter prevention and beautification. Congratulations are extended to all the winners of these two categories.

On May 8, Individual Environmental Awards judging was held in Austin. Entries submitted were judged under several categories including Media, Individual Leadership, O.P. Schnabel Senior Citizen Leadership, Ruthe Jackson Youth Leadership, Sadie Ray Graff Education Leadership, Ebby Halliday and Maurice Acers Business/Industry Leadership, and Civic Organization Leadership.

"There were over 100 applicants for these awards, and because all of the entrants had such a strong commitment to improving their community and environment, the judges had a difficult task in selecting the winners," said KTB President Laura Lantrip. The blue-ribbon panel of judges was comprised of community, business and government leaders from throughout Texas. Look for marquis throughout this issue announcing the accomplished recipients of the Individual Environmental Awards.

The judging for the prestigious Governor's Community Achievement Awards took place on May 23.

Awards were presented to communities in nine population categories, having the best grassroots, volunteer environmental programs in the state. The winning communities split \$700,000 in landscaping prizes

provided by the Texas Department of Transportation. These nine communities exhibited excellence in organization, clean-up, beautification, recycling, and litter law enforcement. The prizes are designated for landscaping along state-maintained highways in their communities. According to Ms. Lantrip, the quality of the entries was exceptional.

"This year's awards have reached a new level of environmental excellence. Over 70 communities were nominated, and together they represent a new level of community service in Texas," Ms. Lantrip said.

KTB was pleased when Texas' First Lady, Laura Bush, expressed heartfelt interest in learning more about the KTB award-winning communities. On June 17-18 Mrs. Bush completed a whirlwind tour of these nine winning towns. According to coordinator Robin Loving, who hosted a reception at the Governor's Mansion, "Most guests were amazed that their volunteerism with Keep Austin Beautiful brought their tax dollars back home for beautification. Mrs. Bush proved to be a most gracious hostess as she spoke with her neighboring Austinites."

*continues on p. 25*



Willie Kocurek of Keep Austin Beautiful and Mrs. Bush

## THE "BIG INCH" PIPELINE

### FACTS AND STATISTICS

1. The Big Inch Pipeline was the largest and longest petroleum pipeline ever constructed at the time (1942).. From Longview to Phoenixville, Pennsylvania it is 1,496 miles long and 24" in diameter. 358,000 tons of steel were used in the pipeline.
2. The pipeline crossed 8 mountain ridges and 30 rivers and tributaries.
3. The project took 350 days.
4. 15,000 men worked on the pipeline.
5. There are 220 miles of feeder lines from the East Texas oil field to the Longview intake.
6. There are 27 main-line pump stations from Longview to Phoenixville, PA, with each valve weighing 8 tons. These same pumps, with modifications are in use today pumping gas instead of crude oil.
7. The crude oil moved at 5 miles per hour, taking a barrel of oil twelve days to complete the journey.
8. The amount of oil delivered daily averaged 317 barrels.
9. Prior to Pearl Harbor, Texas oil (and East Texas oil) was shipped to the large refineries in the East by railroad tank cars, tankers and barges. After the United States entered World War II German submarines sank an average of 3 oil tankers a day in the Gulf of Mexico and off the East Coast of the U.S. (The civilian population of the U.S; was unaware of this drastic problem, although Secretary of the Interior, Harold L. Ickes, foresaw this development and in 1940 advised President Franklin D. Roosevelt that a pipeline must be constructed to counter this event.)
10. When East Texas oil arrived at the storage tanks in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York the tanks were almost empty.
11. The total amount of crude oil supplied to the East Coast refineries in the last two years of World War II was 262 million barrels.
12. Without the Big Inch pipeline and our East Texas oil the story of the European part of World War II would have been different. As it was the Allies never were without gasoline for the airplanes, tanks and other vehicles.

Prepared for Judge Mickey D. Smith, 3-29-2001  
Norman Black, D.D.S.