

Ely Air Lines -

Zzyzx

by Mike Ely and Linda Street-Ely

If you were scanning a Los Angeles sectional chart (aviation map) in the 1970s, you might have spotted a small airstrip depicted in the Mojave Desert. Near Baker, California, this desert landing spot showed up in AOPA's annual directory as a gravel runway somewhere between 3,000 and 3,600 feet



long, depending on the year. Forty feet wide. Elevation just under a thousand feet. Trees and wires off one end.

There was no tower, no fuel, and no services beyond a nearby "resort," about a hundred yards away. Early listings mentioned a courtesy car, even a limousine, and a restaurant. By the mid-1970s, it was closed to the public. Not long after, the airport disappeared from the directory altogether. The runway was erased by wind and time. But Zzyzx was never an ordinary place to begin with. The name sounds like something dreamed up by Isaac Asimov: a place just this side of believable.

The town was created by Curtis Howe Springer, a man who claimed to be a doctor, a scientist, and a minister, all without credentials. In the 1930s, he was selling health products - supplements, herbal remedies, and the like - and giving advice on his radio program broadcast over hundreds of stations across the country.

By the '40s, he was ready to expand. He discovered a spring in the desert and built a health resort - a whole compound, actually. He got control of the land by filing mining claims with the federal government on over 12,000 acres and found willing labor in Los Angeles: free room and

board to homeless men in exchange for their work.

They built his desert retreat, Mineral Springs, including a 60-room hotel, goat and rabbit farms, mud and mineral baths, a radio station, a chapel, a power plant, a nursery, a small lake with a fountain and boating dock, and a lab to make his products. It drew a steady stream of visitors who paid whatever they could afford.

At some point, the airstrip appeared, possibly built on an old railroad bed. We haven't found an account of what it was like to land at Zzyzx Airport, but it would have been one for the bucket list. The remote desert area offers a unique landing experience with off-the-beaten-path charm. The runway was short and unpaved, requiring careful approach and landing techniques. Surrounding scenery includes striking desert landscapes and mountains. Wildlife sightings would add to the adventure. The atmosphere is tranquil.

But the medical establishment called Springer a quack, and the feds said he wasn't really mining and called him a squatter. Eventually, the Bureau of Land Management reclaimed the land. The resort closed, and today, his buildings house California State University's Desert Study Center.

We've always been drawn to places with stories. The more unique, the better. Zzyzx Airport was one of those places. For a time, you could land there. Now it exists only as a memory... and a name at the end of the alphabet, giving Springer the last word. *ElyAirLines.substack.com*

Family History Day with DAR at SHC

LIBERTY - The Sam Houston Regional Library and Research Center (SHC) presents its annual Family History Day with presentations and hand-on help from the Texas Society Daughter of the American Revolution (TXDAR) on Saturday, April 18, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Come learn about the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), why women join and how DAR resources can help both men and women uncover overlooked patriots. You may have one or more Revolutionary patriots in your family and this session will walk you through the resources available that help you explore your connection to these ancestors. Presenters will also share infor-

mation about the DAR's E Pluribus Unum Committee and specialty research group.

In addition, Texas State Library and Archives Commission (TSLAC) reference staff will describe the various genealogy tools available in Austin and Liberty. After the morning presentations and Q&A, DAR volunteers and TSLAC reference staff will be on hand to assist with family history research in the reading room from noon until 2 p.m.

The event is free and open to the public. To reserve your seat, please email samhoustonscenter@tsl.texas.gov or call 936-336-8821. Seating is limited.

Dayton Art Show runs April 20-24

DAYTON - The Dayton Community Exhibition Art Show will open to the public April 20 through April 24 in the halls of the Dayton Community Center. In conjunction with the Art Gallery Wall at the Jones Public Library, visitors will view all mediums of art including paintings, drawings, photography, sculptures, mixed media, digital art and more. There is no admission charge.

All art types will be considered for the event for area artists that would like to participate. A closing reception will take place April 26 from 4-6 p.m. with refreshments provided by the Dayton Enhancement Committee.

For more information, call 936-258-6630 or communitycenter@daytontx.org.

Eggcellent Adventures continues

LIBERTY - The Liberty Municipal Library's fun, hands-on after-school experience Eggcellent Adventures continues through April 30. All ages are invited to will learn how eggs develop into chicks and see the incubation process from start to hatch day. Participants will learn about the lifecycle of a chicken, how incubators work, egg candling, the excitement of hatch day and so much more. Programs will be held Monday through Thursday, each week, from 4:30-5:30 p.m.

The program will be overseen by Katie Clark, Prairie View Texas A&M 4-H extension agent serving Liberty County. The extension service provides research-based education and services to county communities that support youth development and improve quality of life.

To register or for information, contact the library at 936-336-8901 or use the QR code below. Library hours are Monday-Thursday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Friday, 1-5 p.m., and Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The library is located inside the Geraldine D. Humphreys Cultural Center at 1710 Sam Houston Street.



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Candlelight Vigil Thurs., April 23, *Continued from Page A-1*

nity to make a difference in young lives. It is hoped that this vigil will impress upon everyone that every

Community Day in Wallisville set for Sat., April 25

WALLISVILLE - The Cross Baptist Church will host its 3rd Annual Community Day and everyone is welcome to a fun-filled time on Sat., April 25, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Best of all, there is no charge to attend.

The day will include a little something for everyone. Take time to see the Wallisville VFD fire truck. It's a great chance for neighbors to see the equipment and for the youngsters to learn what it's really like to be a firefighter. Come hungry and purchase some delicious jambalaya, shop at the local vendor booths, visit with neighbors, and register for a chance to win prizes. Throughout the day there will be games and activities for the kids to enjoy.

A few vendor booth spaces still remain, so don't delay and register today. Whether you have used items to sell, homemade craft goods, or products, you are welcome. Given the family friendly nature of this event, we reserve the right to restrict the sale of obscene or questionable items.

The booth fee is \$15. Register at thecrossbaptist.org/event.

child is entitled to be loved and that preventing child abuse is the responsibility of all citizens. Child Abuse Prevention Month is an opportunity to highlight the role we all can play to support parents and families. During the month of April - and throughout the year as we raise awareness regarding child abuse prevention - our attention is best focused on prevention efforts that create healthier environments for children.

For additional information about Crime Victims'

Rights Week, Child Abuse Prevention Month, and/or the upcoming Candlelight Vigil on April 23 you are encouraged to contact Victim Assistance Coordinator Brenda Sanchez at the Liberty County District Attorney's Office 936-336-4609.

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Boots, Bling, Bandanas, *Continued from Page A-1*

to serve CASA's mission of advocating for the best interest of children who have been abused or neglected in the court system.

Use the QR code at right to register. To arrange for pick up of auction items, call 936-334-9000.



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