TULSA WORLD
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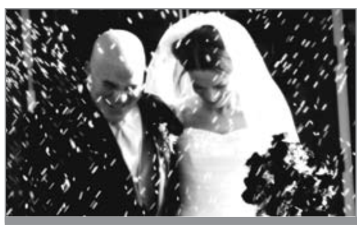
BUSINESS

bing E4
Ba-da-Bing!
MICROSOFT'S SEARCH ENGINE REVS UP.

hulu E4
Hulu fading
SHOWS, AD REVENUES DRYING UP.



E5
Wed, divorced in '09?
ACTION LINE: STATUS CHANGES TAXES.

E6
Don't 'show me the money!'
MACKAY: JOB HUNTERS WANT WORK SATISFACTION.

FLIGHT DELAY

▪ New DOT rule will fine airlines for flights confining passengers more than 3 hours.

BY D.R. STEWART
World Staff Writer

It's going to be an interesting spring and summer for the U.S. airline industry and its passengers.

On April 29 — just about the time moist breezes from the Gulf of Mexico begin colliding with cold fronts from the Rocky Mountains to produce violent spring and summer thunderstorms in Oklahoma and north Texas — the Department of Transportation will implement its new Tarmac Delay Rule.

The new rule will subject airlines to fines of up to $27,500 per person if the carrier confines passengers on delayed aircraft for more than three hours. The rule also requires airlines to publish data about delayed flights on their Web sites.

Some airlines are asking DOT for exemptions to the new rule.

Last week, American Airlines joined JetBlue Airways and Delta Air Lines in seeking a temporary exemption from the Tarmac Delay Rule at John F. Kennedy International Airport while the main runway is under construction. The three carriers are the largest operators at JFK.

American said the gridlock due to construction at JFK will lead airlines to "cancel flights rather than run the risk of incurring such crippling penalties."

In general, the airline industry regards the Tarmac Delay Rule as a drastic overreaction to a nonissue for the vast majority of passengers and flights.

"In January, American Airlines operated 46,571 flights and had two tarmac delays of three hours or longer," said American spokesman Tony Smith, quoting data from DOT's Web site.

The new rule also is likely to have unintended consequences, industry officials say.

Alexis Higgins, marketing director for the Tulsa Airport Authority, said a snowstorm that caused airlines to cancel nearly the entire flight schedule at Tulsa International Airport Jan. 28 and 29 may offer a glimpse of the future under the new rule.

"The weather situation and the fact we're seeing more canceled flights is affecting us and airports across the nation," Higgins said. "(The Tarmac Delay Rule) is definitely going to have a trickle-down effect. We're not against passenger rights — we don't want tarmac delays — but I don't think we anticipated the response would be wide-spread canceled flights.

"It appears to us they (airlines) are not taking any risk at all."

Airline executives said when in doubt, rather than risking multi-million-dollar fines, they will cancel flights.

Kate Hanni, executive direc-

SEE DELAY E5

Canceled flights light up the arrivals and departure board at Tulsa International Airport Jan. 28 because of icy conditions. CORY YOUNG/Tulsa World

> 'It appears to us they (airlines) are not taking any risk at all.'
>
> **ALEXIS HIGGINS**
> *marketing director for the Tulsa Airport Authority*

Highlights of the Tarmac Delay Rule

Highlights of Department of Transportation Tarmac Delay Rule:

1. Beginning April 29, airlines confining passengers in delayed aircraft for three hours or longer without giving them a chance to deplane will be fined $27,500 per passenger by the Department of Transportation.

2. Passengers confined on delayed aircraft for more than three hours must be permitted to deplane and return to the terminal unless pilots and air traffic controllers determine it is unsafe to unload passengers or allow the plane to return to a gate.

3. Airline flights that are chronically delayed, or more than 30 minutes late on at least half its flights each month for four consecutive months, can be fined by the Department of Transportation.

4. The Department of Transportation will require airlines to publish delayed flight information on their Web sites.

Source: The Department of Transportation, news reports

Greatest gamblers still at the heart of oil exploration

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Somebody else might pick up an aged copy of "The Greatest Gamblers" and feel like they were reading of a bygone era, a boom that never will be again. Gone.

Not me. Earlier this month, I finally cracked open Ruth Sheldon Knowles' classic exploration of American oil's founding, rise, fall and rise again. Her son Tony Knowles, the former Alaska governor and head of the Tulsa-based National Energy Policy Institute, first told me about the book and his pride in his mother's achievement.

I can see why. Originally published in 1959 for the centennial celebration of the U.S. oil industry, "Greatest Gamblers" lays out tale after tale of risks taken and hopes floated, sometimes rewarded, sometimes dashed.

Characters with depth

Mostly it's the story of men whose faith proved them right if not always rich. Edwin Drake, on his last few dollars and wisps of good will, finally struck oil around the creeks of Titusville, Pa., and set off this mania that hasn't subsided 151 years later. Drake gained little from his find except the historical satisfaction of being the man who started it all.

And then there's my new hero, Mike Benedum. Somehow this historical figure escaped my consciousness until now. He and partner Joe Trees played hunches, gave some of the first strong credence to the new science of geology and drilled dry holes and gushers almost in equal measure. Yet Benedum never gave up and, while maintaining the independence of the earliest wildcatters, struck enough fields to make himself into a near billionaire.

Old made new

"Great Gamblers" also shows that what goes around comes around. How so? Well, I was fortunate enough to join New Dominion LLC Chairman David Chernicky, some of his company's best hands and investors on a field trip several weeks ago to oil and gas operations in Prague, Centerview and Oklahoma City. I saw the old made new again.

Ten years ago, these were abandoned fields and Chernicky, showing the same verve and diehard resolve as the classic wildcatter, convinced locals, investors and infrastructure builders to believe in his own gamble that plenty of production remained well below the surface.

Those fields are now yielding oil and gas from scores of wells. In fact, many of the historic American oil fields that Knowles touted in her book are suddenly all the rage again, due to better drilling technologies. The biggest percentage growth in new rigs is in oil exploration's original home, Pennsylvania, where the massive Marcellus Shale draws billions' worth of investments.

Same battles, different age

Ruth Sheldon Knowles worried about the domestic oil industry giving up too much to the foreign fields. She also quoted grizzled wildcatters who fretted about too much government intervention and the financial pressures of explorers forced to use the latest gusher's profits to pay for the last dry hole's expenses.

Some things never change, not 51 years ago, not ever. Read "The Greatest Gamblers" again and be impressed.