

Another Houston Turning Point

By _____

Anyone from Texas who travels among the 50 states or overseas knows the fascination and intrigue that our state holds among populations worldwide. The great Texas legends—whether true or embellished—long have kindled imaginations around the globe.

Houston always has been central to Texas' glorious celebrity. One of the earliest sources of Texas-inspired musings—immortalized by Edna Ferber in *Giant*—was the State's raucous oil and gas industry, the rough-and-tumble frontier that gave rise to the Bayou City and spawned its early successes. The on-screen performances of Jett Rink, *aka* Glenn McCarthy, Rock Hudson and Elizabeth Taylor only served to amplify the world's perception of life in the Great State of Texas.

Decades later, fervor for the Texas mystique focused keenly on Houston with the genesis of the space age, when NASA's intrepid astronauts first breached the confines of the earth's atmosphere and put the city on the international—and galactical—map. Soon, Houston was drawing people from around the world to see not only the Space Center, but also the "Eighth Wonder of the World," the cavernous Astrodome, named in honor of Houston's new space-age persona. Once again, Hollywood turned its attention to Texas' newest captivating theme and forever distinguished the city with the famous line, "Houston, we have a problem."

Houston's identity has long been established: It is the home base of a unique breed of gutsy pioneers, the headquarters for a legion of leaders, the epicenter of innovation and cutting-edge ideas. Ask anyone—anywhere—where the finest healthcare can be found, and the most frequent response you will receive is, "At the Texas Medical Center in Houston." Today, the Texas Medical Center not only reflects the same stature of the State's early success stories, but it also looms large on the vista of the next great zenith in our State's proud history.

Within a few short months, if everything stays on schedule, Houston and Texas will take the first step on a journey of infinite promise whose destination lies far beyond our present horizons. We take that step with sure footing, bolstered by the knowledge and commitment of a partnership of individuals and institutions of unusual caliber and capacity.

The Southeast Texas BioTechnology Park will capture for the Texas Medical Center, Houston and the Lone Star State the same universal preeminence in the field of healthcare that fueled our reputation as world leaders in oil and space exploration. Houston can expect an economic boost the likes of which this city has never seen, as academics, medical professionals and business leaders push the limits of the science frontier in this new facility located in the heart of the world's most advanced healthcare arena—the Texas Medical Center.

It bends the imagination to conceive of the boundless opportunities for greatness that lie before us with the advent of this new collaborative endeavor. From the halls of Houston's new

Southeast Texas BioTechnology Park, groundbreaking treatments and cures will take shape and take flight, borne on the currents of public acclaim and demand, to markets around the world. The discoveries and new products that will originate here promise to change the face of healthcare and enhance the lives of generations. With the opening of this Park, Houston has a rare opportunity to give the world the most precious gift imaginable—freedom from scores of diseases and afflictions that now mark their days with pain and isolation.

Today, near South Main and the back door of Rice University, lies a tract of land that is the future home of the Southeast Texas BioTechnology Park. What today is a barren, idle expanse of soil soon will be the site of a pivotal research development that will complete the Texas Medical Center's potential for world-class performance—commercialization of biotechnology products. The best is about to get better.

The Park is a bipartisan, multicultural community effort led by State Senator Rodney Ellis and State Representative Scott Hochberg, both of Houston, along with a coalition populated by the leaders of educational institutions and local businesses representing every major industry in Houston today. It is a marriage of state government, academia and industry that promises a new era of success and greatness.

One day, just as in the film classics, *Giant* and *Apollo Eight*, Hollywood will write the screenplay for this great new Texas story. Today's global community needs innovative treatments and cures, and they, too, will shout the refrain, "Houston, we have a problem." As NASA did in decades past, the Southeast Texas BioTechnology Center will answer that call.