

# Transportation NEWS

October 1996 Volume 22 Number 2

## BWD makes it to TxDOT record book For first time, a district goes entire year without lost-time accident

**F**or the first time in department history, a district has gone a complete fiscal year without recording a lost-time accident. The Brownwood District accomplished the feat during fiscal year '96, which ended Aug. 31.

In years past, several districts have come close. However, Brownwood is the first to report no lost-time injuries throughout an entire year.

The Brownwood District has earned an excellent reputation for occupational safety. For the past three years the district's accident rate was second lowest in the state for all three safety categories: lost-time accidents, vehicle accidents and all injuries.

Mark Bradshaw, Brownwood District director of administration, said the district's accomplishment "is a direct reflection on the work ethic, loyalty and dedication by all Brownwood District employees."

"The commitment and focus on accident prevention for 365 days without a lost-time injury has resulted in the district being able to maximize its resources and reduce costs associated with on-the-job injuries," Bradshaw said. "The accomplishment requires diligence on the part of all employees, who must use safe practices in all their activities."

Bradshaw said district supervisors and managers constantly stress and train employees using safe practices while district management supports the safety program



**While the Brownwood District has set a record by going a full fiscal year with no lost-time injuries, San Saba Maintenance Section employees, including maintenance technicians John Whitney, left, and Michael Poe, have not had an accident or injury since record-keeping began in 1990.**

and makes it a priority in the workplace.

The lost-time injury rate is a key indicator in determining how

any organization is doing in controlling on-the-job injuries. An injury is considered a lost-time injury if an employee misses at least one full shift following an accident.

Supervisors and safety coordinators strive to see that all employees wear the required personal protective equipment on the job. In addition, districts and divisions have worked to ensure that new employees are adequately trained before starting work.

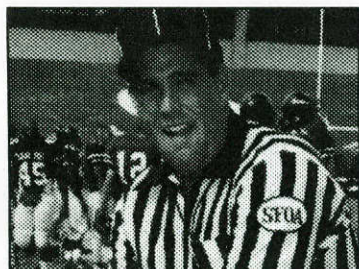
Bradshaw said that despite Brownwood's record year, there is still room for improvement.

"We must look on this achievement as

one step toward our ultimate goal of no accidents and no injuries," he said. "Our San Saba Maintenance Section achieved this goal. Since we began keeping records in 1990, San Saba has not incurred an accident or injury. If we can accomplish this goal in one county, we know we can accomplish the same goal districtwide, which we've proven. And if we can accomplish this goal in one district, we can accomplish the same goal statewide."

Jerral Wyer, director of safety and industrial hygiene in the Occupational Safety Division, said "Our ultimate goal is for every payroll unit to be accident- and injury-free. If each work group or team will concentrate on what they can do to prevent accidents, the overall picture will take care of itself." ★ *Contributed by the Brownwood District*

### Inside



Kelly Comer wanted to be a coach, but when that didn't work out, he opted for refereeing.

Page 8



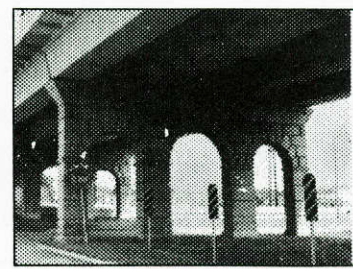
When Wichita Falls' Billy Hibbs isn't on the job, he's an authentic mountain man.

Page 11



A bridge designer from Australia got a cram course in Texana when she visited Austin.

Page 12



Beaumont District designers looked to the past for inspiration for the Laurel-Liberty overpass.

Page 13



**Q:** I'm an administrative technician in an area office in the Houston District. I try to maintain a travel information area containing bumper stickers, maps, the Texas Travel Guide, Calendar of Events and other TxDOT materials in my office. People frequently stop by our office to request these publications.

I have two questions relating to the availability and cost of these publications.

First, would you consider changing the present system to allow area offices to obtain these publications directly from the Travel and Information Division?

Secondly, as these items are distributed as a public service, could these publications be charged to public information as opposed to being charged to the area office budget?

**Brenda J. Thompson**  
Houston District

**A:** Brenda, thanks for your question. I referred your question to Doris Howdeshell, director of the Travel and Information Division, and she explained how the distribution of travel literature works. The current system for districts to order literature is the most cost-effective method to get travel literature to our offices outside of Austin.

Once publications are printed, they are shipped to TxDOT's Austin warehouse. As districts order publications, they are distributed to TxDOT's regional warehouses in Post, Athens and Seguin once a week and picked up for delivery to district warehouses. Once the district warehouses have the publications, they are available for distribution to area offices. Individual shipments to every area office would be costly, since they would have to be delivered by the postal system or a freight company. In addition, individual requests would require additional FTEs to package and prepare each request

## 55 enhancement projects selected

Fifty-five projects throughout Texas that go beyond standard transportation activities will be built using \$40 million in federal transportation funds, following action in August by the Texas Transportation Commission.

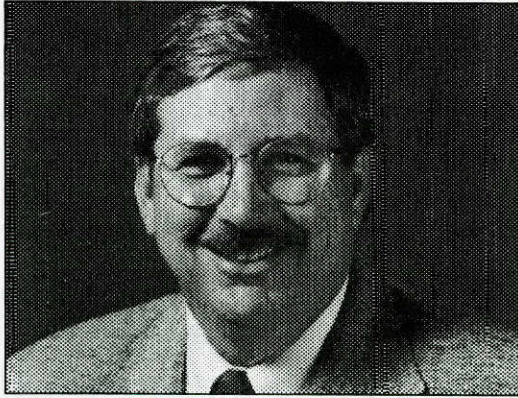
Commissioners selected the projects from 387 proposals nominated by local sponsors under the Statewide Transportation Enhancement Program.

The program funds a broad range of transportation-related activities, including landscaping and scenic beautification, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, historical

## Burnett steps down as AASHTO president

TxDOT Executive Director Bill Burnett's term as president of American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) expired Oct. 1.

Appointed to the post in October 1995, Burnett had two main goals: developing AASHTO's position on reauthorization of



**Bill Burnett**

## Ask Bill

for shipment.

Travel publications are produced by TRV to stimulate travel to and within the state of Texas. Promoting tourism is part of TxDOT's strategic plan. Travel publications are allocated first to the Texas Travel Information Centers (TICs), and secondly to fulfill requests generated from Texas' tourism advertising. Once TICs and tourism requests are satisfied, districts are shipped their bulk literature requests. Through inventory control, TRV can determine when publication quantities are being depleted. If a publication is being depleted before another shipment will arrive in Austin, a "hold" is placed on all orders other than shipments to the Travel Information Centers and the tourism requests. This could create some back orders to the districts and delays to the area offices.

If an area office finds itself without literature for public request, please refer individuals to TxDOT's travel information line, (800) 452-9292. A packet of literature will be mailed directly to the individual's home.

TRV pays to produce the state's travel lit-

erature. The cost for producing this literature is a major portion of that division's annual budget. There is no cash charge to an area office for these publications. The charge numbers from the area offices are expenditure charges as opposed to cash charges. The charge numbers from the districts and area offices are used to track who uses the literature. ★

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*If you have a question for the big guy, send it in care of the Public Information Office at the Dewitt C. Greer Building. Be sure to include your name, work address and telephone number. We will withhold your name at your request, but Bill won't answer anonymous questions.*

## BUD director Smith honored by TSABAA

Frank Smith, Budget and Finance Division director, was named the 1996 Administrator of the Year by the Texas State Agency Business Administrators' Association (TSABAA).

"We received a number of distinguished nominations for the award," said Randi Warrington, TSABAA president "Mr. Smith's achievements were prominent in this select group of nominations and the association is proud to honor him in this way."

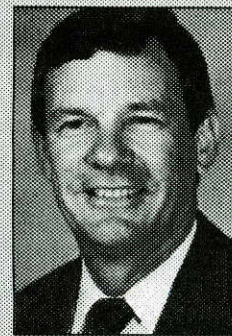
As BUD director, Smith oversees the management of TxDOT's financial planning operations for more than 14,000 department employees. Some of the division's responsibilities include developing and implementing systems and policies related to accounting, forecasting, budgeting and processing of receipts and revenues.

Business administrators representing more than 113 Texas state agencies comprise TSABAA. The organization aims to "establish and promulgate high standards of ethics and efficiency in the conduct of the business affairs of agencies, departments and institutions of the government of the state of Texas," said Warrington.

The award was presented at the association's annual conference in July.

In 1993, state employees elected Smith to a six-year term on the Employee Retirement System board of trustees.

The 35-year TxDOT employee earned a bachelor's degree in management from the University of Texas at Austin. ★ *Janie De La Cruz, Public Information Office*



**Frank Smith**

preservation and water-pollution control. The program is authorized under the federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991.

"The commission has made a concerted effort to pick projects we think are most beneficial to Texans and at the same time are representative of all our geographic regions," said Commissioner of Transportation David Laney. Federal funds may be used for 80 percent of the project cost. Local projects sponsors are responsible for the remaining 20 percent. ★ *Public Information Office*

the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), and streamlining the federal transportation policy-making process.

Darrel Rensink, director of the Iowa Department of Transportation, will succeed Burnett. ★

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# Bridge tender leads swinging life

## YKM's Kenneth Hale keeps family tradition alive at Sargent Beach

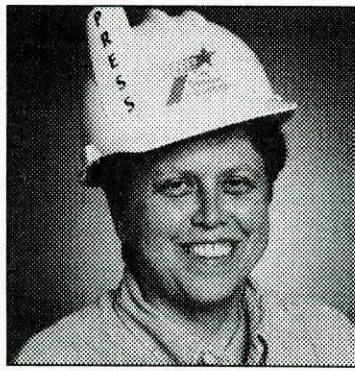
The Texas Department of Transportation has a group of swingers working in the Yoakum District. Hard as that may be to believe, it's true. I know. I spent the day with one of them a couple of weeks ago at Sargent Beach. Here is his story, and none of the names have been changed to protect the guilty or the innocent.

"Yep, us bridge tenders lead a swinging life," said Kenneth Charles Hale, chief bridge tender and assistant maintenance foreman at the Sargent swing bridge on the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway. "During my career as a bridge tender, I've seen more than 1,000 tows pass through here carrying everything from crude oil to formaldehyde to molasses.

"Everything you can imagine comes down the waterway," he told me, "and what a lot of folks fail to understand is that on the Intracoastal, boats have the right of way; cars don't."

Hale estimated that 70 percent of the people who drive over the swing bridge are patient and understanding when the bridge is out for boat traffic. The ones who don't understand are usually "the people who come down here on the weekends to party," he said. "They don't realize that this swing bridge is for the convenience of cars, but if there's boat traffic, the cars will have to wait."

Some motorists get downright nasty about the delay, according to



Eloise Lundgren

### A Day in the Life

Not only is swinging all in the family, but then there's the retired swinger who can't resist dropping by a couple of times a week. Gene Krock, a barefoot Tennessean known fondly as "Waterman," always brings his dog Duchess along to check up on his former colleagues and spin a few yarns about his swinging good old days.

In fact, Krock was genuinely glad to see me. "Now I'll get to talk because I've got somebody who'll listen to me," he said amid gales of laughter from Hale and Price. (And Krock did tell me lots of tales, but that's another story.)

It was apparent they all enjoy their jobs, cracking jokes and spinning yarns, but there's a definite serious side to being a bridge tender.

"One of our main duties is to pass on to the tugboat captains information about conditions," Hale explained, "like weather, water currents, location of sandbars, direction of the wind. The bridge tender's life can be at risk if the tug operator doesn't do his job right."

Price pointed out that some tug boat captains don't listen to advice from bridge tenders. "I've seen some pretty crazy things," he said. "I've even seen a tug with several loads get lost, tearing up around 10 boats before the operator finally did something about the situation."

Hale remembered that when he first started work as a bridge tender, the wheelhouse was attached to the side of the swing bridge and radios were in use.

"We used spotlights at night to keep an eye on the boat traffic, but tows could still come up on you by surprise," he said. "I was like a cat — unless it was raining or sleeting, I pulled my shift, which was the graveyard, entirely outside the wheelhouse on the bridge itself."

"This place is entirely different at night, even with everything all lit up," he continued. "It can get pretty hairy trying to get wide loads through in the dark."

While there are built-in safety features to keep cars from driving onto the bridge when it's open for waterway traffic, bridge tenders blow a horn — one long and one short to indicate the right of way is open and four short and one long to indicate the right of way is closed.

"We do that for two reasons," Hale told me, "to warn everyone — boats and cars — and to protect ourselves."

Born in New Gulf, Texas, which "doesn't exist anymore, except for the golf course," Hale told me, he came to Matagorda County when he was two weeks old and has lived there for 63 years.

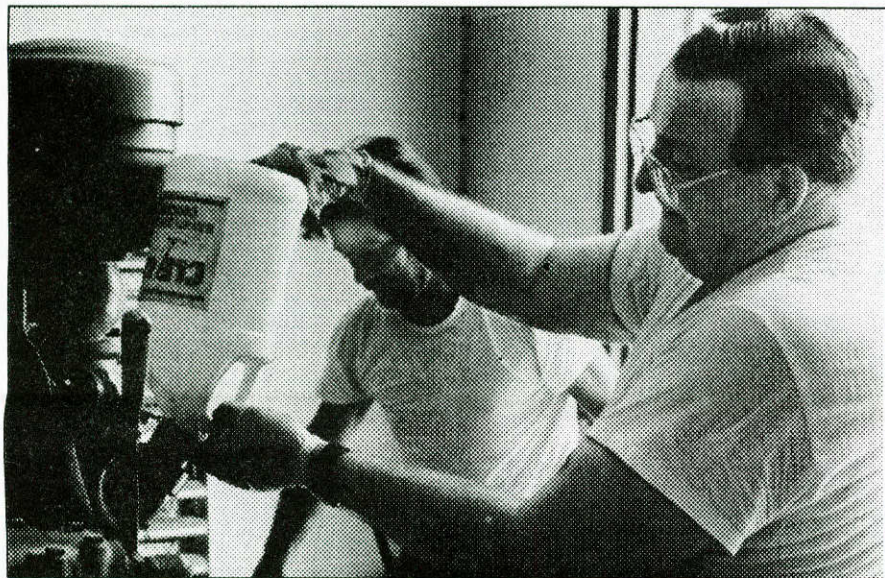
"My mother's family came here from Germany and Czechoslovakia in 1846," Hale said. "The sailing ship they were on made three stops: New Orleans, Galveston and Matagorda Bay. My ancestors had to fight Karankawa Indians, who were cannibals, so they could settle here."

Hale heard lots of other family stories growing up, particularly from his grandparents. "I spent all my summers on my grandparents' ranch," he reminisced. "I took care of Granddaddy's cows, pigs and chickens, and I hung out clothes, chopped firewood, churned butter and made cream for my grandmother."

He now enjoys spending time taking care of the family cemetery. "There are 70 graves," he said, "and only one set, a man and wife, aren't kin. There are three rules to being buried in that cemetery: must be kin, Catholic and baptized."

Hale said he almost got a chance while he was in the Army to be

Please see Hale, page 15



Charlie Hale, right, and Ed Price perform routine maintenance on the Sargent Beach swing bridge's diesel engine.

Hale. "I've actually had a few come up these stairs," he explained, pointing to the stairs leading up to the wheelhouse where he controls the movements of the bridge, "and threaten me with all kinds of unkind words and bodily harm."

He's also seen motorists try to slip around the gates when they're down and boats try to beat the bridge when it's closing. "People will do all kinds of crazy things," he said ruefully.

Hale actually started with the department in 1956 as a bookkeeper. He did that for 10 years before going to work for a sulfur products company as a roughneck on a drilling rig. He retired after 20 years, returning to TxDOT in 1986 to operate the swing bridge, quickly moving from graveyard shift operator to chief bridge tender.

"I'm having a good time working and collecting a retirement check at the same time," he laughed.

I discovered quickly that Hale's job involved a lot more than opening and closing the swing bridge. Every bit of maintenance is performed by Hale and his crew of four. While we visited, Hale and one of his assistants, Ed Price, worked steadily, performing routine maintenance.

"We take pride in our equipment," Hale said as he and Price cleaned the motor and changed the oil. "If we perform simple maintenance, this equipment will last a long time. It's like I always tell my kids: 'If you take care of things, they'll last.'"

I wondered how they were able to time the maintenance work to coincide with boat traffic.

"It's a simple thing," Hale said. "I get on the radio and warn all the boats that we'll be changing the oil or changing the cables or whatever, and that there will be an hour of down time."

"He knows everybody," Price said, smiling. "He's got a lot of friends out there talking on the radio."

Hale claimed he stole Price from the Matagorda Bay swing bridge. "I couldn't do without Ed," he confided. "Heck, we're more



# TEAMS to change employee evaluations

TxDOT Employee Achievement Management System will debut in fiscal year 1998

**Meredith Whitten**  
Editor

Wondering if you'll "meet requirements" at your next employee evaluation? As part of the department's Retooling efforts, the way TxDOT employees are evaluated is going to change.

Starting in fiscal year '98, the department will institute the TxDOT Employee Achievement Management System (TEAMS). TEAMS is TxDOT's system of performance management, a continuous and collaborative process in which employees and supervisors work together to maximize performance.

A random department survey found that both employees and supervisors were unhappy with the current evaluation process. They felt that it was not adequately getting done, that it was not effective and that it did not meet its intended goals. So, a cross-functional team formed, and with substantial employee input, members developed TEAMS.

Major differences between the old evaluation process and TEAMS include eliminating the rating system, establishing a common review period for all department employees, focusing on coaching, and tying performance and feedback to four shared goals common to all TxDOT employees. These four shared goals are customer service, employee satisfaction, safety and resource accountability.

The main goals of TEAMS is to improve employee and supervisor interaction year-round, not just at evaluation time.

"We're all working toward TxDOT's vision," said Robert Rodden, a business analyst in the Information Resource Management Office. "I know that as a business analyst certain job activities I do fit into certain goals. A maintenance tech who's out on the road is working toward those four same goals. It puts us all on the same page."

With the new evaluation process, employees and supervisors will be more aware of how they are doing at any point during the year. So, when evaluation time rolls around, there will be no surprises.

"We're trying to get away from the fact that you get your performance plan and then you see your supervisor 365 days later and then it's a big guess of 'I wonder how I did,'" said David Kopp, New Braunfels area engineer, who worked on the TEAMS effort. "And the supervisor, after having not seen you for 365 days, is probably guessing too, 'I wonder how he did?' We're trying to make it where they're going to see each other all year and they're going to have something true and honest there."

"With the current system, there's no two-way communication because the employee is looking at what box is checked. We're taking the boxes away to promote that communication."

TEAMS strives to do this through two-way communication and coaching.

"With the current system, there's no two-way communication because the employee is looking at what box is checked. One of the things we kept hearing was, 'My boss just tends to check meets requirements and tells me nothing,'" Rodden said. "We're taking the boxes away to promote that communication."

This is where coaching comes in.

"We're trying to get away from the supervisor being the judge," Kopp said. "He sits behind a desk and he makes rulings on how you did. He's going to become a coach instead of a judge. Now you're going to spend time together throughout the year, so when you sit down, that evaluation is practically done."

Rodden said that's what employees indicated they wanted out of the performance plan process.

"That's exactly what we heard from employees in the survey. They said, 'Spend

more time with me. Don't just give me something and say hi to me 365 days later,'" Rodden said. "Supervisors told us they need a better way to document employee performance. TEAMS will give them a tool to develop their employees and hold them accountable for their performance and behaviors."

Coaching involves linking job activities to TxDOT goals; establishing clear, measurable standards; identifying training and development activities; providing feedback on strengths and areas for improvement; dealing with issues immediately; considering employee input and additional assignments; documenting strengths and opportunities at the end of review period; and agreeing on future goals.

By coaching, supervisors and employees will work more as a team, with supervisors praising good performances, yet still letting "players" know when they need improve-

ment. Coaching occurs continually throughout the year, not just at review time. Frequent feedback, positive reinforcement, and training and development planning are essential results from coaching. Notes taken from coaching sessions throughout the year will also assist both the employee and supervisor during the actual performance plan review.

TEAMS is scheduled to start in fiscal year '98, so employees and supervisors will begin training next spring.

All employees will receive a briefing about the new system through a video that will be available to all offices in March 1997. The employee training will stress what is different with the new system and the employees' increased involvement in the TEAMS process.

All TxDOT supervisors will attend a 12-hour class during April-July 1997. This class will provide supervisors with hands-on practice in moving toward a coaching style of leadership. ★

**Robert Rodden**  
IRM business analyst

## Subcommittee makes pay recommendations

State employees are just going to have to wait a little longer to find out what the Legislature has in mind for an across-the-board pay raise.

As reported in the September Transportation News, the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Salary and Benefit Comparison met Sept. 25 to vote on its recommendations to the full House Appropriations Committee.

Although the subcommittee staff's report contained a considerable amount of information regarding a state pay raise, the subcommittee, chaired by Rep. Billy Clemons, did not make a recommendation concerning an across-the-board increase but did act on other measures that are designed to make state employment more competitive with the private sector.

"I'm encouraged by the actions taken," said Cassie Carlson

Reed, deputy executive director for administrative services and chairperson for the State Agency Coordinating Committee, representing the state's 15 largest agencies. "I feel certain that an across-the-board increase will be taken up by the Legislature. In the meantime, the subcommittee has made recommendations that will help career state employees in the long run."

Included in the recommendations is a new pay schedule that will increase agency flexibility in certain job classifications, especially current exempt positions. The subcommittee also recommended adding an additional step (Step 9) in the Group 2-21 pay groups. These subcommittee recommendations will be submitted to the full committee.

The full House Appropriations Committee will meet Oct. 16. T-News will keep you posted on this issue as it unfolds. ★



# Davis finds coaching cheerleaders rewarding

**Janie De La Cruz**  
Public Information Office

At the end of a long work day, most parents find it challenging enough keeping the kids at home entertained. But what's it like when you find yourself faced with dozens of kids with lots of energy to burn? Just ask Christina Davis, who makes the time each year to coach up to 80 cheerleaders. Her squads have been winning awards at both the local and state levels of competition.

Davis works as an administrative technician in TxDOT's Design Division, where she produces and distributes documents for state highway lettings. She has been coaching 7- to 13-year-old girls in the Central Texas Pop Warner League for the past four years. She finds the job of putting together award-winning squads both challenging and rewarding.

"The biggest challenge by far is giving so much time to coaching," Davis said. "There are long nights and short weekends. But you know in your heart that you love what you do."

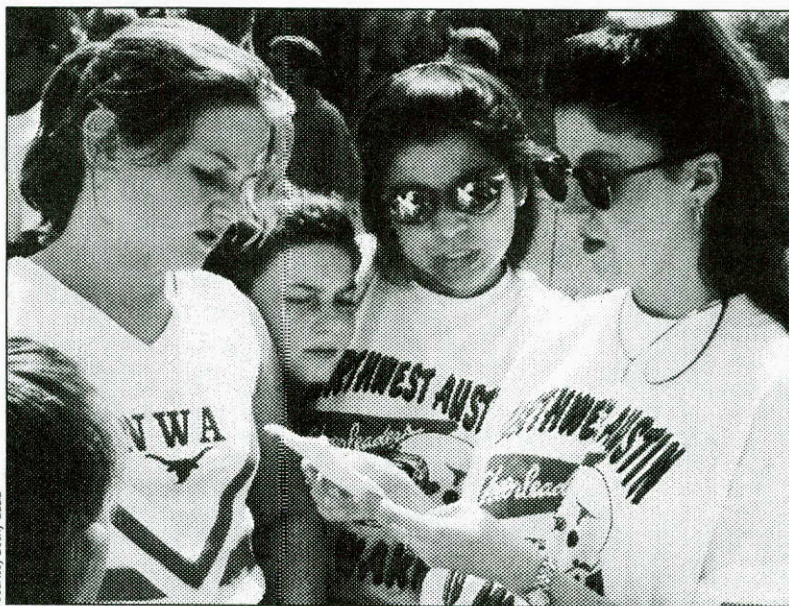
Davis' interest in coaching began several years ago when a fellow co-worker, Maria Cabello, and Cabello's daughter, Maggie, started a Pop Warner Cheerleading Program for East Austin in 1993.

"Together, we've formed a powerful coaching team," Davis said. "Each of us brings a different skill to build a stronger squad. For example, Maggie is a cheerleader at Austin's Johnston High School. And if it wasn't for Maria, I would have never been involved in helping children."

Davis said that although coaching is challenging, it has its rewards as well. "First, I love to see children get involved in extracurricular activities," she said. "Today's life can influence a child's outcome in life too quickly. It's better to see these girls and boys on the field instead of on the streets."

Davis' cheerleading squads have garnered numerous awards in the past few years. Her Greater East Austin Youth League squad placed second in 1993 in the Pop Warner Central Texas Cheerleading Competition and placed fifth in state competition.

In 1994, Davis' Falcon Athletic League cheerleading squad placed fourth in the Pop Warner Central Texas Cheerleading Competition.



**Ashley Kasner, Rachel Henrizi and Lorin Grant listen to their coach, Christina Davis, right.**

Last year, her Falcon Athletic League cheerleaders took second in the Pop Warner Central Texas Cheerleading Competition and finished fourth in state. All of her squads have been invited to perform in the Blue Santa Parade.

"Knowing that you have helped build a child's confidence and helped change a life has many rewards," said Davis. "To receive awards during the football season can make them feel on top of the world. But by making them see what they, as a team, can accomplish through a lot of hard work is very rewarding in itself."

Davis has advice for those who want to be successful coaches.

"Remember, you are there for the kids. You have to put in 100 percent dedication for the children, not yourself," she said. "The kids look up to you as a role model and they watch your every move. To have them want to come to practice and enjoy themselves is a sign of a good coach." ★

## 'Seven Habits' course a hit with BRY participants

**Denise Fischer**  
Bryan District

The Continuous Improvement Office recently highlighted the expansion of TxDOT's management training to include an intensive course in the well-known and highly touted philosophies of Dr. Stephen R. Covey, author of "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People."

In the business world today, it is nearly impossible not to hear frequent mentions of Covey and his seven habits. So when the "Seven Habits" course recently was taught in the Bryan District, employees had the opportunity to see first-hand just what all the fuss was about.

Employees used the three class days to review each of the seven habits one by one. The foundation of the class lessons were the many video lectures given by Covey at various seminars. TxDOT trainers, Jon Clements of the Paris District and Ronnie Medlock of the Materials and Tests Division, jumped in after each video lecture to expand on Covey's points or to lead class discussions.

One of the most anxious moments of the class came when the trainers handed out

each person's sealed Seven Habits Profile, a compilation of what each participant's supervisor, employees and peers think of the employee's operating style. Each member of the class had received a packet of questionnaires several weeks before the first day of class. Participants also received a self-evaluation survey for gauging how they look at themselves. All of the other questionnaires had to be distributed to those co-workers who know participants well. Questions ranged from "Is he/she happy when others succeed?" to "Does he/she have the courage to say 'no' when appropriate?" Each person who answered the questionnaire received an envelope to mail the packet in directly, where it would be processed into the final profile.

When the trainers handed out the profiles, participants were both eager and terrified to find out how they were perceived by others. Once the anxious moment of diving into the results was over, most employees found the profile very helpful. As trainers had predicted, most employees found they were a lot harder on themselves than those who answered their questionnaires. And the weak points employees described about themselves usually were pretty close to the

weaknesses others found in them.

One of Clements' and Medlock's recommendations about using the profile was to review it and develop a 30-day plan to work on improving one area of behavior or lifestyle. Then they recommended selecting a "coach," someone the employee trusts, to review the improvement plan and give feedback at the beginning and the end of the 30-day effort.

There is so much depth and usefulness to Covey's material that learning it is like peeling an onion. In class, when participants felt enlightened by one "layer" and wanted to mull it over, it was time to move on to the next "layer." By the third day, most employees felt awash in new knowledge and skills. Covey said it best when, in one of the final video segments the class watched, he described a conversation he had with a man who had just completed his seminar. The man told Covey the material was like trying to take a drink from a fire hose. That is an excellent analogy to describe the experience — it is both powerful and engulfing.

The current "Seven Habits of Highly Effective People" course program is full and a waiting list has been started for fiscal year '98. ★



# Employees asked to refocus on reducing waste

**Sam Reyes**  
General Services Division

"Reduce Your Waste II," the sequel to last year's "Reduce Your Waste" recycling campaign, is being premiered for the third annual Texas Recycles Day on Nov. 15. The recycling team wants employees to reaffirm their commitment to reduce the amount of material TxDOT send to the landfill.

"Reduce Your Waste II" focuses on office, fleet, roadway, buildings and break areas, the five main areas where TxDOT can make a difference in waste reduction.

In the office, using GroupWise is an effective way to communicate and reduce waste. Electronic memos and newsletters can significantly cut the amount of paper consumed. Using double-sided copies for internal communication is another effective way to reduce paper consumption.

In the fleet area, properly inflated tires last longer, and using retreads reduces the number of tire casings going to the landfill and saves the department money.

In roadway construction, on-site materials can be reused and the lives of original

products extended. The environmental aspect of product packaging should be considered when materials and supplies are purchased.

Doors, hardware and other building materials should be considered for reuse in renovations. Landscape maintenance should include leaving grass trimmings on the lawn to return natural nutrients to the soil. In the break area, employees are encouraged to use reusable containers such as mugs, plates and utensils to reduce the amount of Styrofoam and plastics going into the landfill.

It is estimated that the average Texan throws away more than six pounds of garbage a day. More than 22 million tons of garbage go to Texas landfills each year. Up to 80 percent of that waste is potentially recyclable. By simply reducing what the department sends to the landfill, TxDOT can reduce the burden on landfills, save tax dollars, preserve natural resources and protect the Texas landscape.

To refocus everyone to reduce TxDOT waste, the Recycling team has designed a pledge card that can be used two ways.

First, as a pledge to talk to fellow employees about the benefits of reducing waste, and secondly, as an entry to win one of many great prizes on Texas Recycles Day. Last year, Abby Armendariz of the Travel and Information Division, won a \$500 gift certificate from H.E.B. Texas Recycles Day prizes this year include a 1996 Jeep Wrangler, donated by the Steel Recycling Institute; a 486 laptop computer, donated by Texas Instruments; a \$4,500 gift certificate from Home Depot; a vacation package for four to San Antonio, donated by Sea World; and five \$500 shopping sprees from H.E.B.

The recycling staff has set a goal of receiving 7,000 pledge cards from employees. Last year, 4,779 employees returned cards. The recycling team challenges all employees to increase participation by 50 percent. Return pledge cards to your recycling coordinator by Nov. 1. They will be forwarded to the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission for the Nov. 15 drawing. Former employees may send their pledge cards to TxDOT, 125 E. 11th Street, Austin, Texas 78701-2483. Mark your card, "Attention: Recycling Office." ★

## Reduce Your Waste II (This time we're taking names)

I pledge to talk to someone about waste reduction.

### Office

- E-mail instead of sending hard-copy documents Contacted \_\_\_\_\_
- Double-sided copying when copy is necessary Contacted \_\_\_\_\_

### Fleet

- Keep tires properly inflated Contacted \_\_\_\_\_
- Use retreaded tires Contacted \_\_\_\_\_

### Roadway

- Request vendors to reduce / reuse their packaging Contacted \_\_\_\_\_
- Look for ways to reuse materials on-site Contacted \_\_\_\_\_

### Buildings

- Leave grass trimmings on the lawn Contacted \_\_\_\_\_
- Reuse doors, hardware and lighting fixtures Contacted \_\_\_\_\_

### Break areas

- Use reusable mugs and cups for beverages Contacted \_\_\_\_\_
- Encourage the use of minimal food packaging Contacted \_\_\_\_\_

- Talk to someone about a waste reduction item listed above
- Write the name of the person you talked to next to the item(s) which you discussed
- Print your personal information below
- Cut out this pledge form and return it to your Recycling Coordinator by Nov. 1, 1996 so you will be eligible for prizes being given away by the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission on TEXAS RECYCLES DAY, Nov. 15, 1996.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_  
 Work phone \_\_\_\_\_  
 District / Division / Special Office \_\_\_\_\_

## Management Services will review employees' questionnaire responses

In July, TxDOT employees received a questionnaire asking for suggestions on how the department could increase efficiency and reduce costs. The survey was administered by the Transportation Systems Efficiency Advisory Committee (TSEAC), a group of nonpaid private-sector individuals appointed by the Texas Transportation Commission to advise it on matters of costs and efficiencies.

TxDOT's Management Services Office, which is supporting TSEAC, compiled 1,385 suggestions submitted by 711 employees.

After the commission reviews the recommendations from TSEAC as well as suggestions made by employees, survey results and any implementing actions will be reported in Transportation News. ★

## Two hours leave maximum allowed for Nov. 5 voting

Nov. 5 is Election Day. The last day citizens may register to vote in the election is Oct. 6. Early voting begins Oct. 16 and closes Nov. 1.

Employees will be allowed a maximum of up to two hours of "Other Leave, Code 25" to vote on Nov. 5, General Election Day.

This leave can only be used on election day for voting and if doing so during the employee's normal scheduled work time. ★

## Yoakum District sets annual golf tournament for October 12

The Yoakum District will host a golf tournament on Oct. 12 at the Yoakum Municipal Golf Course. The tournament format will be a three- or four- person scramble and is open to any TxDOT employee or retiree. Anyone interested in playing should contact Bob Arlitt at (512) 293-4343 or Al Flessner at (512) 293-4337. ★



# Service to others motivates firefighters

## PAR volunteers face grueling conditions, danger in off-the-job avocation

Phyllis Chandler  
Paris District

Imagine being surrounded by temperatures so hot that metal melts, or covered in smoke so thick it resembles night. Breathing is impossible, so you carry an air tank, but even that is only good for 20 minutes. Add to that some 25 pounds of protective gear you must wear, and you get a glimpse into the life of a firefighter.



Paris District volunteer firefighters include, from left, E.J. Cates, Tim Wright, Mark Miller, Stephen Shedd, Michael Taylor, Tim Dorner, Thomas Irwin, Barry Preas, Stacy Hatcher, Jeff Strickland, Mark Bates, Tracey Hankins, Kerry Hansford, Kenneth Parker and Stanely Roberts. Standing on truck in rear are John Noe and Michael Gibson.

Some employees in the Paris District don't have to imagine it. They live it. Every time a call goes out, no matter the time, no matter where they are, they slip on their protective gear and masks and prepare to fight the flames. They're volunteer firefighters. And some of them do it because it's a part of them.

"It has to be in your blood. There've been times when I've been in the middle of fighting a fire that I've asked myself, 'Why am I doing this?' But then, I just take a break, get a drink of water and I'm ready to go again," said Kenneth Parker, chief of the Detroit Volunteer Fire Department and signal technician for the Paris District's Signal Shop.

For 18 years, Parker has volunteered with the fire department. His fascination with it began when he was a teen-ager.

"It started when I was about 13. Every time the fire whistle went off, my curiosity got the best of me. I'd go out to the fires and just watch them. I couldn't do anything then, but I wanted to help," he said.

Firefighters come from nine different counties but are alike in many ways. There are three chiefs, one lieutenant and one certified training officer among them. The others are just as important in what they do. They are available at all hours of the night and day to come to the aid of people in need. They place their lives in jeopardy every time they step into a burning house or field.

For Parker and 16 other Paris District employees, the question is not why they keep doing what looks impossible, but why not. Between them, they've devoted more than 130 years to this, pardon the pun, hot

pursuit. But they wouldn't have it any other way.

"I've always liked being available to help the people in the community. It's what I enjoy doing," said E. J. Cates, special crews supervisor for the district.

While most firefighters may be drawn to the excitement of firefighting or its philanthropic rewards, there's more to being a good firefighter than just interest. According to Brian McNevin with the Texas Commis-

sion on Fire Protection, the agency which accredits firefighters, certified volunteer firefighters must complete a commission-

approved basic firefighter curriculum which involves 458 hours of classroom instruction in 32 subject areas including fire protection systems, rescue, building construction, and of course, firefighter safety. Participants must also have at least 40 additional hours in first aid training.

"To be certified, volunteers also have to pass a written exam and a performance training test," McNevin said. Certification is not mandatory for volunteer firefighters, McNevin said, but the commission does recommend it. "Proper training and certification is the best way to go," he said.

Cates, who is the training officer for the Cooper Volunteer Fire Department, concurred.

"We spend another four hours each month training at the department. We have an obligation to the people we're here to help, but our safety comes first. That's why we spend the time to get our people certified," he said.

But nothing takes the place of live fire training. The Texas Engineering Extension Service operates a week-long training course at its Texas Fire Training School at Texas A&M University. There, participants get some hands-on experience in tackling different kinds of fires from burning airplanes to

propane tanks.

"We learn how to work as a team. Everybody's got a job to do when we're out there. We can't afford for one person to let up on his job because everybody would pay for it," Parker said.

That type of training doesn't come cheap. A week-long course at the school costs \$450 for each firefighter. "That's really tough for those volunteer departments who sometimes don't have access to enough equipment, let alone the money to pay for the training," McNevin said.

Anything associated with firefighting is expensive, Parker said, particularly for volunteer departments that can't rely on city taxes for support.

"A fully equipped engine could cost as much as \$140,000, but we can get a refurbished one for about \$40,000. That meets our needs. If a truck is 20 years old, it doesn't make us any difference as long as it performs," he said.

While some departments might not have the money, the equipment or the numbers of a big city — the Detroit Fire Department only averages 12 active firefighters — or see as much action as the big cities, volunteer firefighters in rural towns have their share.

In 1981, when local towns were plagued by several grass fires, most of the area's volunteer fire departments were the communities' first defense.

"It was normal for us to get a call during the day, and not make it back to the station until late that night. We just went from fire to fire. And since we only have two trucks, half of us worked one side of the county and the other half worked the other side. But we did it. It takes some patience, some discipline to be a firefighter," Parker said.

It also takes dedication because firefighting is not for the faint at heart.

"We had one guy, fresh out of high

"I've always liked being available to help the people in the community. It's what I enjoy doing."

E. J. Cates, Paris District  
special crews supervisor

school, who said he wanted to join the department. He came to one of our training sessions when we were practicing using a SCBA (self-contained breathing apparatus)," Parker said. "That's not the easiest thing to do when you're all bunkered out with your helmet and your hood and this air tank. It can be pretty heavy. But once we showed him what he had to do, that was his first night and his last. To be a volunteer, you have to want to stay with it."

Dousing flames is only part of the story. Firefighters are often the first ones on the scene of an accident, rescuing trapped victims and controlling traffic. And these volunteer firefighters do it all without pay.

"I wouldn't do this for the money. I'm a public servant. That's what keeps me going," Cates said.

And many small communities in Texas could not keep going without them. ★ Vicki Campbell, PAR, contributed to this story.



# When officiating, Comer stars in stripes

**Penny Mason**  
Lubbock District

Offsides. Illegal motion. Holding. Pass interference. Personal and technical fouls. Sound familiar? It is certainly familiar jargon for Kelly Comer, construction inspector in the Lubbock District.

Comer wanted to be a coach. But when that didn't work out, he decided that being a referee was the next best thing.

He majored in history at West Texas State University. But it was while minoring in physical education that he was first introduced to sports officiating.

"I've always loved basketball and football," Comer said. "And when I found out that the associations were looking for officials, I was definitely interested."

Comer referees for the South Plains Chapter of the State Football Officials Association and the Lubbock Chapter of the Southwest Basketball Officials Association. He has refereed for nine years.

His training included attending several rookie clinics and practicing on-floor mechanics during scrimmage games.

"Then I bought a whistle and a uniform and went to work," he said.

Comer started with a seventh grade junior high boys basketball game — Olton vs. Abernathy.

"I was excited, scared and in a brain-lock all at the same time," he said. "I made a lot of mistakes."

Though he feels more comfortable on the floor nowadays, Comer doesn't think the job is any easier.

"Each team is different — each situation is different," he said.

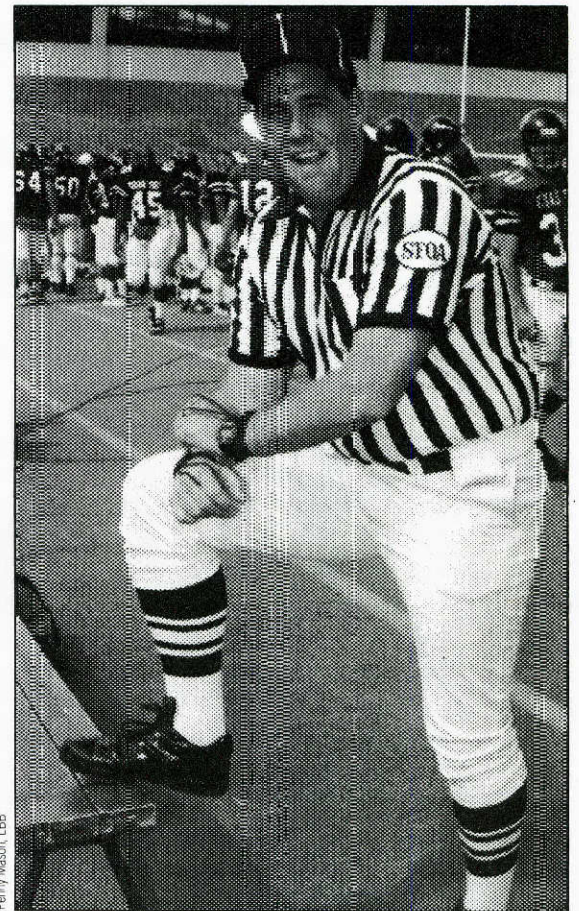
Comer officiates at least three nights a week most of the year. He's garnered 918 points, which puts him on the Division II level in basketball and Division III in football. Division V is the lowest level and Division I is the highest.

Points are awarded for each game officiated — one point for a junior varsity game, two points for a high school game and four points for college.

But for all his accomplishments, Comer says he officiates because he enjoys the players.

"Especially the kids," he said. "That's the main reason I officiate. I like being with the players."

From playoffs to interscholastic leagues, Comer has refereed all levels of competition. "I've also worked with the Texas Association of Private/Parochial Schools, calling the TAPPS Six Man State Championship," he said. "Being a referee is great. If anyone is interested, give me a call. We always need officials." ★



Penny Mason, LBB

**Kelly Comer is a construction inspector in the Lubbock District. At night, though, he whistles while he works.**

## Ribbon cutting opens Texas 47 in Brazos County

**Denise Fischer**  
Bryan District

Bryan-College Station opened its first major new-location highway in more than 20 years on Aug. 28 when the ribbon was officially cut on Texas 47 in western Brazos County. More than 75 local dignitaries and even five horses were present for the ribbon-cutting and to participate in the inaugural drive on the seven-mile highway.

The new road includes a major interchange at each end, linking Texas 21 west of Bryan to Farm-to-Market Road 60 (Stotzer Parkway) west of College Station. The four-lane divided highway provides motorists with some appealing vistas through what is now mostly countryside. When development begins and traffic volumes warrant, Texas 47 may be upgraded into a freeway design, with the present roads serving as frontage roads to the eventual mainlanes.

Besides being a major addition to the local transportation system, the highway designation is also noteworthy in that when the num-

ber 47 was chosen, it was in tribute to the department's then-Engineer-Director Raymond Stotzer, who graduated from Texas A&M University in 1947.

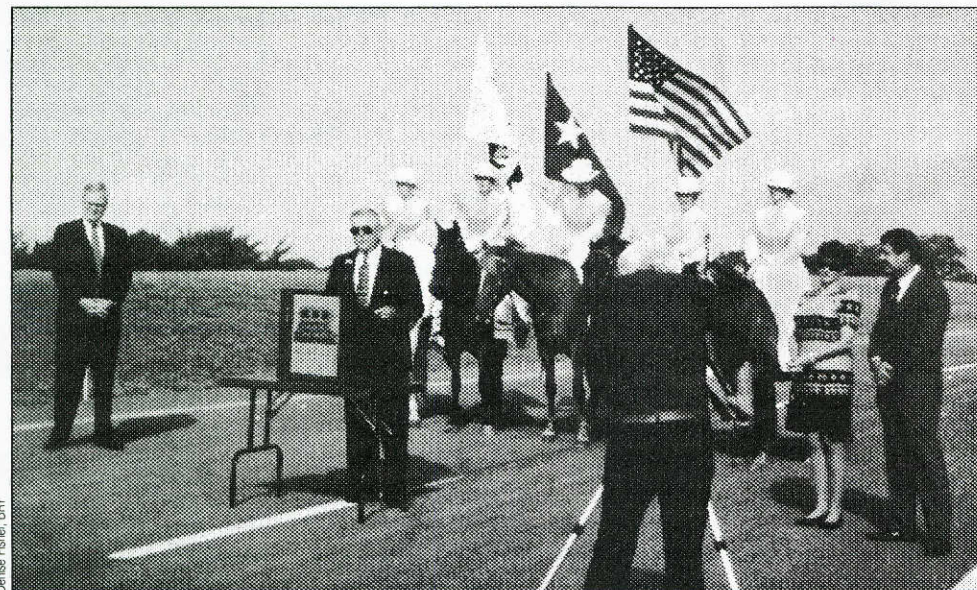
Bryan Area Engineer Pat Williams said he is pleased to open a new route for the growing Bryan-College Station community. "This highway is the first new route to be constructed here since the State Highway 6 freeway was finished in the mid-1970s, so opening it was definitely a piece of transportation history for this county," he said.

Development of the road was spurred by local support. Texas A&M University led the way in acquiring some 450 acres of necessary right of way, and officials with the cities of Bryan and College Station, as well as the Brazos County government, saw the benefits of the highway to the community. Construction began in October 1993 under an \$11.2 million contract with Glenn Fuqua Construction and Glenn-Wade Contractors.

On opening day, participants had the rare opportunity to stand in the middle of the pavement to enjoy a buffet brunch hosted by the contractor. The event had some added pageantry with the arrival of one of the highway's first two Adopt-a-Highway groups. Texas Ladies Aside, a horse-and-rider drill team dedicated to the promotion of Peruvian horses, arrived with both horses and riders outfitted in their authentic Peruvian costumes and tack. The five Peruvians, which are fine-gaited horses, strutted through the staging area and took position behind the podium to preside over the ribbon-cutting ceremonies. Representatives from the highway's second Adopt-a-Highway group, the Brazos County Democratic Party, were also present for the ribbon-cutting.

The program was led by Brazos County Judge Al Jones, master of ceremonies, and also included remarks from Bryan District Engineer Lonny Traweck, College Station Mayor Lynn McIlhaney, Texas A&M President Ray Bowen and Bryan City Manager Mike Conduff.

Texas 47 intersects Texas 21 at the Texas A&M Riverside Campus and intersects FM 60 near the terminal entrance of Easterwood Airport. The highway is posted as a 70 mph highway. ★



Denise Fischer, BRY

**The opening of Texas 47 in Brazos County was marked by appearances by Texas A&M University President Ray Bowen (left), Brazos County Judge Al Jones, College Station Mayor Lynn McIlhaney and Bryan District Engineer Lonny Traweck. The Texas Ladies Aside drill team, one of the highway's first Adopt-a-Highway groups, also took part.**



# Flow signals aid war against congestion

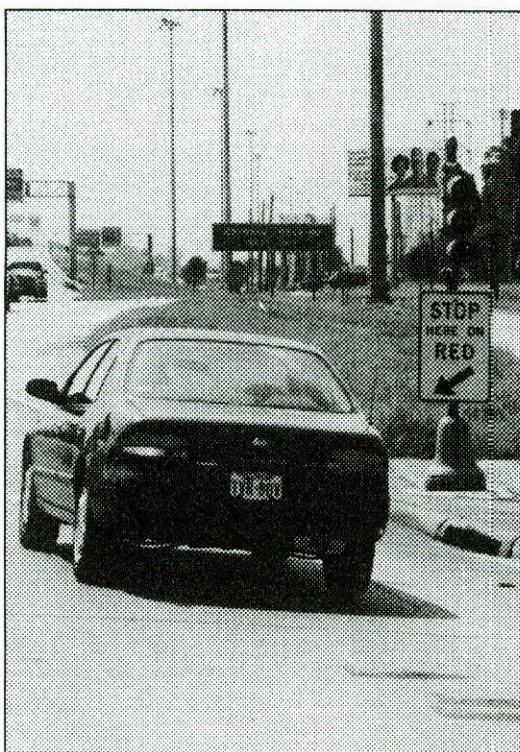
**Victor Tsai**  
Houston District

A new weapon was unveiled last month in the war against congestion in Houston when flow signals were activated on the westbound entry ramps of the Katy Freeway (Interstate 10 West). By regulating the flow of vehicles as they enter the freeway, TxDOT hopes to improve travel times and reduce accidents on Houston's most-congested arterial freeway.

Since the signals were turned on July 31, they have contributed to a very slight increase in speed, about 3 to 5 mph, according to Linc Wright, who was the flow signal project manager during the start-up phase. Motorist compliance to the new signals has been good, ranging from 80 to 96 percent since the project started.

"I think the reason we've been successful in getting people to respect the signals is that we've kept our promises," Wright said. "We said we would keep the delays on the ramps to a minimum and we weren't going to back up traffic into the intersections, and we've managed to do that."

The idea behind flow signals is that a freeway moves the most traffic at an optimal speed, about 40 mph. At faster speeds, the cars spread out and waste capacity. At slower speeds, the number of cars passing a given point is reduced. By not allowing cars to enter the freeway in bunches and slowing



**By regulating the flow of vehicles as they enter the freeway, TxDOT hopes to improve travel times and reduce accidents on Houston's most-congested arterial freeway.**

down freeway traffic, the flow signals maintain a steadier flow, which also should reduce accidents caused by stop-and-go traffic.

TxDOT decided to start flow signals on the Katy Freeway because of its congestion

and because improvements are still years away, pending the completion of a major investment study of the corridor. In upcoming months, flow signals on the eastbound side of Interstate 10 and other freeways, such as U.S. 290 and U.S. 59, will gradually come on-line. "Doing things in a step-by-step fashion is really the best way to go from an operational standpoint," Wright said.

Flow signals have been around since the 1960s, when they were used on selected ramps of Houston's Gulf Freeway (I-45 South). The success of that endeavor was hampered by the need for personnel to actually drive to the site if the signal timing needed adjustment. Today, traffic at the flow signals is monitored by remote video cameras and loop detectors in the pavement and once the software is upgraded, timing will be controlled remotely from TranStar. Also, the use of several consecutive signals will be more effective than one or two isolated signals.

Modern flow signals have been credited with improving traffic flow in Los Angeles, Seattle, Minneapolis and Portland, Ore. Results in each city have varied, but all reported either increased travel speeds, reduced travel times or reduced accident rates after flow signals were implemented. If Houston's flow signals continue to improve travel times, westside commuters will have some much-needed relief from freeway congestion. ★

## Retirement more than golf, cattle for Bohuslav

**Pearlie Bushong**  
Yoakum District

When Ben Bohuslav retired from the Yoakum District as district engineer in 1992, he discovered that playing golf and raising cattle did not keep him busy.

So, when the city of Yoakum asked him to do a park study, not only did he do the study, but he applied for and received a grant for the RV park and recreational area. He also did the engineering work for the \$300,000 project which involved the design and construction of the park.

That project was the start of Bohuslav's small engineering firm. With the aid of other retired engineering technicians, Bohuslav now spends about 50 percent of his time working on projects for cities, private industry and TxDOT's Aviation Division consulting on several airport projects.

"I still struggle with raising cattle, but I play less golf now than I did when I worked for TxDOT," Bohuslav said. "Something always comes up that seems more important than playing golf."

He still finds time to spend with his grandchildren. One of his granddaughters is a student at Texas A&M, Bohuslav's alma mater, so he attends all the Texas A&M home football games.

One of his goals for retirement was to return to his roots. So, he recently took a trip to the Czech Republic to meet some of his relatives. Although he had never met his cousins, his parents had corresponded with them after a relative looked them up in 1946 during the U.S. occupation of that country in World War II.

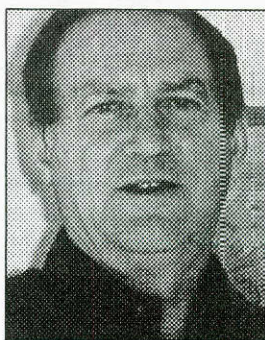
"My parents visited them in 1978 when my great-aunt was still alive. She had stayed behind in the little village of Dubinec to take care of her parents and later get married when four of her brothers went to the United States in the late 1800s," Bohuslav explained.

One of the four brothers was Bohuslav's grandfather.

"My grandfather was one of 12 children. Seven of his brothers and sisters died before the age of 14 due to malnutrition," stated Bohuslav.

When Bohuslav arrived in Prague, a cousin picked him up at his hotel and drove him about 100 miles to the village of Dubinec.

"The countryside over there is beautiful with rolling hills, huge pine trees, wheat fields and small lakes. Their roads are in very good condition, too."



**Ben Bohuslav, former Yoakum District Engineer, stays busy during his retirement with his own engineering firm. He has also traveled to the Czech Republic to meet relatives.**

older people do not trust anyone. The younger ones want to leave the farms and work in the cities."

The new government consists of a parliament and a president.

After Bohuslav returned to Prague, he discovered a McDonald's where he had a Big Mac and a large Coke for the equivalent of 20 cents. His ice cream cost him two cents.

"The Czechs raise most of their food and brew their own beer. Their homemade beer agreed with me much better than the commercial brews here in the States," said Bohuslav. "However, the hotels are owned and operated by corporations and they charge the going rate."

There is a large amount of tourism in Prague, but the public transportation system is excellent with subways, trolleys and small buses.

"One of the things that impressed me the most was the good condition of the city streets, and the cleanliness," said Bohuslav.

He was also surprised at his ability to communicate in the Czech language he learned as a child.

Bohuslav plans to take his wife, Lou, with him the next time he visits the Czech Republic. ★



## ENV serving as 'guinea pigs' in GIS project

Transportation Conference attendees will get a hands-on look at some of the newest technology that TxDOT is working to incorporate into project planning, the Geographic Information System (GIS).

The Environmental Affairs Division (ENV) is one of the guinea pigs for integrating GIS into the department. ENV has two prototype GIS workstations and used the equipment on the massive Anderson Tract Wetland Mitigation Project. ENV is also using GIS to map the similar Blue Elbow Swamp Mitigation Project in the Beaumont District.



**Water Quality Specialist David Van Gorder and Graphic Information System (GIS) Specialist Jennifer Gaa work at ENV's GIS workstation. GIS will be demonstrated at the Transportation Conference in College Station this month.**

GIS allows its users to view a map of a site in various layers, much like a flip chart with clear plastic overlays. With GIS, the layers are electronic and can be viewed in any combination. An engineer or an environmental professional need display only

the layers that pertain to their work, avoiding the clutter and confusion of looking at other layers of information. For instance, a project map could be designed to include views of roadways, topography and endangered species habitat. Individual layers can be used to generate an overall comprehensive map showing all the resources relevant to alternative routes for a project.

Another aspect of GIS is to develop the information needed to create the various information layers. The Texas Historical Commission (THC) is using TxDOT enhancement funds to develop a database

on historical and archeological properties. This information will be incorporated with GIS software to log and pinpoint site-specific maps. ENV is tracking THC's progress and is making suggestions on options to better serve TxDOT's needs in the cultural resources management area. The finished product should

help streamline the cultural review process for projects.

Since the division was formed in 1993, ENV has pursued GIS as a tool to improve the method for environmental research and studies within TxDOT. ENV's GIS team started with staff members who were inter-

ested and then filled in its ranks with members from each of its disciplines: project management, historic structures, archeology, biological resources, communications, noise abatement, hazardous materials and water resources.

With Division Director Dianna Noble's support, the GIS team sought help from experts in the Information Systems Division (ISD), who just happened to be looking for users to test GIS equipment and software. As a result, ISD provided the division with two prototype workstations. Noble also gave approval to hire a GIS specialist, Jennifer Gaa.

Gaa designed an interactive demonstration for the Transportation Conference. Attendees will be able to sit down at one of ENV's workstations and get a feel for how GIS can help with a project. In addition to looking at the layers of information contained in the Anderson Tract and Blue Elbow projects, the demonstration will also enable users to look down to the county level at aquifers, vegetation, soil types, known landfill locations and Superfund sites. David Van Gorder, the ENV water quality specialist who carried out much of the GIS work for the Anderson Tract and Blue Elbow projects, will also staff the demonstration to answer questions about it.

Gaa will also give a talk on "GIS: Current and Future Applications for Environmental Planning and Mitigation" at the conference.

ISD's effort that has allowed ENV to work with GIS equipment is called the "Information Services Business Process Retooling — Tech 3 (ENG/CADD/GIS)." A report is planned for December on which hardware and software will be adopted as a result. ★ *Tom Bruechert and Richard Goldsmith, ENV.*

## Hundreds turn out for diez y seis fiesta

**Linda Ribble**  
Public Information Office

TxDOT's Committee for Hispanic Awareness (TCHA) held its third annual diez y seis celebration Sept. 13 at Austin's Camp Hubbard Building 2 cafeteria, where crowds were treated to music by Mariachi Estrella and an abundant supply of homemade Mexican food.

About 450 employees attended the festivities, which mark the anniversary of the start of Mexico's war for independence from Spain in 1810.

Steve Piña, 1996 TCHA chairman, attributes the event's success to committee members' dedication and organization. Piña said another key factor was the role and support of Senior Management Team members.

In addition to the annual diez y seis festivities, TCHA's goals include developing a mentor program and establishing a yearly scholarship fund. Piña said, "We want to be a shining star of TxDOT and have a membership branch in each district."

This year's diez y seis celebration was dedicated to the memory of Roy Lopez, known as "Yankee" to many of his co-workers, friends and family. A 20-year department employee, Lopez worked with the Motor Carrier Division (and its predecessor, the Central Permit Office) for about 10 years. Alongside co-worker Rod Castilleja, Lopez' persistence and efforts lead to TCHA's formation in 1994.

Piña anticipates a bigger and better diez y seis celebration for 1997. He said, "Each year the celebration is better because our network grows by word of mouth."



**Donna Sheppard, VTR, was one of several hundred who feasted on homemade Mexican food at the diez y seis celebration at Austin's Camp Hubbard.**

Senior Management Team members Bill Burnett, Cassie Carlson Reed and Bob Cuellar participated in opening ceremonies. Director of Staff Services Russell Harding accepted a plaque on behalf of the senior management team for their support. ★



# Catching up for being born too late

WFS Maintenance Supervisor Billy Hibbs recreates life of 'mountain man'

Dale Terry  
Wichita Falls District

He thinks he was born about 150 years too late. He's a mountain man without a mountain, an adventurer tied to the strange customs of a modern civilization — and he makes the best of both his worlds. He is clean-shaven and wears his hair short and evenly trimmed. But, he'd be more comfortable with long hair and a beard. His quick smile comes naturally and will disarm the best of cynics who don't understand what he's all about. He's Billy Hibbs, the maintenance supervisor of the Electra Maintenance Section in the Wichita Falls District — and when he's not on duty with the department, he's an authentic mountain man.

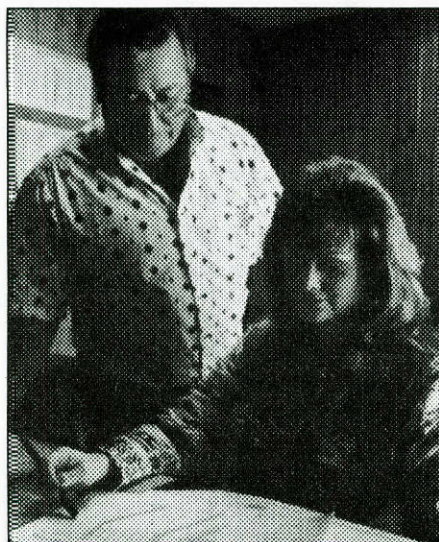
He wasn't always a mountain man. He wasn't always a maintenance foreman, either. Hibbs joined the department in 1968 as a maintenance tech with the Wichita East Maintenance Section. It wasn't long before others discovered he was talented in many areas, and in 1972 he transferred to the Special Jobs Crew where he did a bit of everything, with a specialty in heavy equipment. Then, in 1993, he was named the head of the Electra Maintenance Section. One would never suspect that Hibbs, or "Moonshine" as he's called by fellow mountain men, has a big part of his heart firmly attached to the past which makes his life very content. Much of his adult life has been influenced by his father-in-law, Bob "Reb" Neal, who was also his mentor and best friend. Hibbs readily admits that he misses Neal, who died a few months ago. It was Reb, a former Marine, who got Hibbs interested in judo.

"Judo is the gentle method of self-defense and something I really got involved in," Hibbs said. "You don't have to be big, but you've got to be in good shape and be able to keep your concentration sharp as a razor."

Hibbs and Neal were teaching judo and giving demonstrations in the late 1960s and 1970s. They taught seniors (age 18 and older) and gave demonstrations everywhere from military groups to country club events. Neal, however, got a new partner when Hibbs, with his quickness, lunged at Neal in a demonstration and rammed his knife deep into Neal's leg.

Hibbs was one of the original 15 Renegades when the black-powder group organized in Wichita Falls in 1969. The group became involved in reenactments of Civil War battles such as the Battle of Wichita, the Battle of the Brazos, Skirmish at Hillsboro and the Battle at Sabine Pass. The group was active from 1976-1979 — then Hibbs found the mountain men.

The Mountain Man Association, also known as the Brotherhood of Men, is a family-oriented organization with about 900



On the job, Billy Hibbs of the Wichita Falls District is a maintenance supervisor. Off the job, he's a mountain man. He's pictured above with Cymantha Cato, WFS, and at right with Glenn "Tree" Wood.

members throughout the United States. The Renegades adapted to the transition to the mountain man group perfectly since they already were conforming to many of the guidelines and rules.

According to Hibbs, members recreate the dress and life of the trappers known as mountain men in the 1840s and earlier. These men traded with Indians, and sometimes had to fight them. They were an independent breed, living off the land and surviving the wilds and the weather with handmade tools and skins for clothing.

"We are as authentic as we can possibly be," Hibbs said. "We make our own outfits (not costumes) from elk and deer skins. We decorate them with cow and deer bones and we do our own beadwork. We even make a lot of our own knives and other items we need when we are out on our own. Most of our members have a hunter's lodge (teepee) or a lean-to made of skins and decorated authentically."

Being a mountain man is not for everyone. The men meet at rendezvous sites all across the nation. Women and children are not allowed to be members of the group, but they are always welcomed as guests, and family is always present at all gatherings.

Getting to a rendezvous is rough work. "We get out in the wilderness in Colorado, Wyoming and New Mexico and meet others from all over creation. They come from every walk of life and of every size and age. We also have quite a few Indians who come. They were an integral part of the mountain man's everyday life as friends and enemies alike," Hibbs said.

One has to prove himself to go into the mountain men. Going up in stages, a mem-



ber takes a three-day trip alone with only a black-powder firearm, knife, bedroll and a canteen of water. The men also travel up to two weeks in the wilderness on foot, by land and water trying to cover as much distance as they can.

"Being a mountain man teaches physical and mental skills, self-confidence and survival techniques," Hibbs said. "When you go in on a two-week trip, you only have the supplies you can carry. If you go back to your vehicle or other kind of civilization for more, you are excluded from the campsite."

While on the trips, and at rendezvous sites, the men are trained in hide tanning, hand forging of tools and weapons, skinning techniques and other outdoor-related topics.

Hibbs's hobbies are not far removed from his mountain man activities. He enjoys bow-hunting deer and turkey, collects muzzle loading weapons and primitive knives — and he even hand forges some of his own knives.

So, how did Hibbs get the nickname of "Moonshine"? Well, you'll have to ask him yourself. But, you may have trouble recognizing him — he's talking about how good long hair and a beard feels in the winter up in Wyoming. ★



# Engineer returns to first love — the piano

## After graduation, DAL's Kim Carroll is accepted by Van Cliburn Piano Institute

Sharon Reiter  
Dallas District

If she hadn't chosen to design roadways, Kim Carroll, an engineer in the Dallas District, may have spent her professional life behind a grand piano instead of a drafting table.

"I have been playing the piano since I was about 3 years old," said Carroll. "My father is a professional pianist, and he was my first teacher."

And Carroll is not the only musician in her family. She has three sisters and one brother who were also raised with the piano.

"Lessons were expensive, so we used to all wake up at 5 a.m. and practice before school," she said. "It sounded like an orchestra warming up at our house."

Carroll was the only one of her siblings to pursue the piano into adulthood. Her father taught her until she was 12. From 12 to 16, Carroll studied classical piano with Pierette Mouledous, the head of Eastfield's piano department.

"Even though I was only a teen-ager, Pierette would let me play with her college students and participate in her masters classes," Carroll said.

When Carroll graduated from high school, her mother persuaded her to get a degree in a "stable" career field. Although Carroll would have loved to pursue her musical aspirations, she agreed that she needed to study something more practical. She went to Texas A&M, where she graduated with a degree in civil engineering.

After graduation, Carroll realized she missed the piano and vowed to get back into it. At 23, she returned to Pierette for another five years of instruction.

In 1990, Carroll auditioned for Van Cliburn's Piano Institute. The institute, which began about seven years ago, is a two-week conference where pianists — instructors and students — critique each

other.

"It is very prestigious, and a big honor, to be chosen for the institute because only about 30 people out of about 200 are chosen every year," said Carroll. "People come from all over to participate. They come from Australia, Hungary, Japan, Korea and Canada. I auditioned two years in a row, and was fortunate enough to be selected both times."

Pierette and her father are not the only instructors Carroll has studied under. Jose Feghali, artist in residence at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, and Pierette's husband, Alfred, artist in residence at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, have also worked with Carroll.

In her prime, Carroll would practice the piano about five hours a day. "I don't play as much anymore as I wish I did," she said. "I have a baby grand in my apartment, but it always seems I have something else going."

That something else is an interest in politics. In 1992, she was a national delegate during the presidential campaign. While doing that she met, and was inspired to compose a musical piece for, then-California Gov. Jerry Brown.

"That is what I enjoy most about the piano," said Carroll. "It's the emotion you get to pour into it. It's a way of communicating to others that can be as deep as you want it to be without saying anything."

"That is how I felt during my participation in the presidential campaign, and I was able to express that to Jerry through my music."

Carroll said she would like to explore the possibility of composing more pieces as well as teaching.

"I enjoy performing more than anything else," she said. "I have played for friends and family and at some weddings. In fact, I used to belong to a contemporary Christian rock group. But I wouldn't rule out the potential of teaching others in the future." ★

## Engineer from 'Down Under' gets taste of Texas



Jeff Carmack  
Public Information Office

When Australian bridge design engineer Angela McDonnell visited Austin last month, she had no trouble getting used to the food. It wasn't what she was used to eating — there apparently being little Tex-Mex where she hails from — but she adapted. And the weather gave her no problems, since the climate here is much like Queensland's. And the miles and miles of nothing but miles and miles also reminded her of home.

The one thing she couldn't get used to, however, was "y'all."

**Australian bridge design engineer Angela McDonnell, center, gets an up-close look at the U.S. 183 project in Austin. Serving as tour guides are Mary Lou Ralls and Dean Van Landuyt, bridge design engineers in the Design Division.**

McDonnell, who works for the Department of Main Roads, Queensland's equivalent of TxDOT, was here on one leg of a trip. Her next stop was to be Toronto's Ministry of Transportation. She also had stops scheduled for Albany, N.Y., and the Federal Highway Administration in Washington, D.C.

She said her trip will keep her away from home for a total of two months.

Her trip to America is part of a research

project she is involved in. She said Australia faces many of the same infrastructure problems as does the United States — namely, highways and bridges that are too old and that were designed for less traffic and lighter loads than are now the norm. She said about 75 percent of the bridges in Australia were designed to carry loads lighter than the current legal maximum.

Her research project involves proof-load testing of bridges. In a nutshell, she said, this involves putting an increasingly heavy load on a bridge and monitoring how it behaves. This helps ensure that bridges can handle the heavier loads they are now expected to carry.

Mary Lou Ralls, a bridge design engineer in the Design Division, said McDonnell got to pick the brains of some of the best bridge designers and researchers in Texas, at TxDOT, the University of Texas at Austin and Texas A&M University.

McDonnell's trip is being financed by a professional engineering association in Australia. The association grants scholarships to young engineers for research projects that benefit the profession and the general public, McDonnell said.

Since all work and no play makes for a pretty dull trip, McDonnell's new friends in Texas made sure she had some fun. She got to eat some real Texas barbecue, took a walking tour of historic downtown Austin and caught a Jimmie Dale Gilmore concert at the Backyard in Bee Cave. ★



# Bridge design takes bold step into past

Marc Shepherd  
Beaumont District

When the Beaumont District began work on an overpass for the city of Beaumont, engineers decided it was time to try something different. So, Dean Van Landuyt rolled up his sleeves and put his creativity to the test. His final design is something that's become the talk of Beaumont.

"We've always done a tremendous job of building safe and great bridges," said Van Landuyt, senior bridge design engineer in the Design Division. "But at the same time we've kind of dulled the senses."

One look at the new Liberty-Laurel Overpass in Beaumont will convince you that that trend may be changing. Instead of the standard concrete and steel design used on most bridges, Van Landuyt went back to the 1930s and took a cue from some of the local architecture. Sporting a high Roman arch and columns, old-time street lamps and a creative railing, Liberty-Laurel is an eye-catcher that's left Beaumont citizens quite proud.

Why the flashback to the past? The overpass serves a sort of gateway to Beaumont's historic district known as Old Town. The historic section features homes and buildings that serve as a tribute to the days when Beaumont was an oil boomtown. Liberty-Laurel connects Beaumont's west end to the downtown area. Motorists traveling the streets approaching the overpass make their way through old oak trees, historic buildings and homes built in the early 1900s.

According to Duane Browning, area engineer in Beaumont, Liberty-Laurel adds much to the historic district. "Why not design something that keeps in step with the environment?" he said. "Liberty-Laurel really looks good and adds something to this area."

Constructing a bridge over an Interstate carrying more than 124,000 vehicles every day is no easy job. At one point during construction, crews closed the Interstate to install huge concrete beams weighing more than 150,000 pounds. *Even with traffic tied up, most people took it in stride.*

"We actually had people drive through the project just to take pictures," said Browning. "Many people would drive by and tell us it (the project) is looking great and that they couldn't wait to see the finished product. We received a lot of positive feedback."

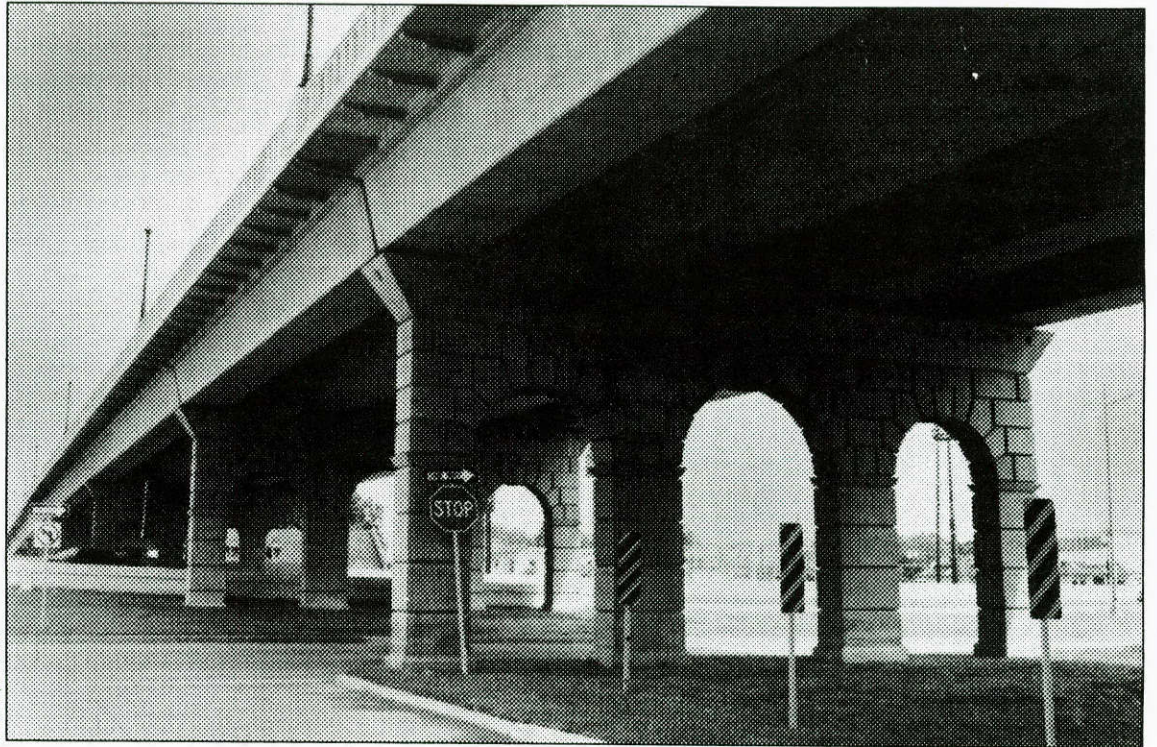
Aesthetics aren't the only pleasing quality of the new overpass. The fact that TxDOT can be creative and inexpensive goes a long way with Van Landuyt. "I stress economy," he said. "I like to design things that look expensive, but aren't."

Constructing the Roman arch forms posed the biggest challenge

to designers and engineers. However, it turned out to be one of the easiest and least expensive problems to fix. Van Landuyt designed one set of forms and used them for all the forms on the overpass.

"All reinforcing is the same. Everything is the same. In fact, the contractor was pleased how easy and fast the entire process went," said Van Landuyt.

Liberty-Laurel has left a good impression, not only because of its looks, but the fact that it was completed eight months ahead of schedule. The drought helped speed things along but more important was the attitude of the contractor's employees. "This was something different for them. Employees took a great sense of pride in what they were doing," said Browning. Attitude combined with the



The new Liberty-Laurel overpass in Beaumont features a high Roman arch and columns, old-time street lamps and creative railing.

lack of rain brought the project in way ahead of schedule.

The project was at the request of the city of Beaumont. Forty years ago, the city began looking for a way to connect the downtown section with the city's west end. Large amounts of traffic tied up the main intersection between the west end and downtown Beaumont. Construction on the overpass began in January 1995 at a cost of \$7.1 million. ★

## Motorists benefit from new 'lemon law' report

More Texans are benefitting from a consumer law that protects new-vehicle buyers from getting a "lemon" for a car.

Motor Vehicle Board Chairman N. Scott Jones announced the release of the fourth annual lemon-law complaint report published by TxDOT.

The 33-page publication, required by the Texas Motor Vehicle Commission Code, reports on the number of complaints received in 1995 and how they were handled.

"In 1995, we processed just over 1,700 complaints compared to fewer than 1,600 in fiscal year 1994," said Brett Bray, director of TxDOT's Motor Vehicle Division.

"In 475 cases, consumers received addi-

tional repairs, trade assistance, repurchase or replacement of vehicles. Benefits totaled more than \$3.8 million," Bray said.

The report has been expanded this year to include a breakdown of the complaints filed by model so consumers can determine if a particular model has received more or less than its expected share of complaints.

The models with a market share greater than 1 percent having the fewest complaints were Honda Accord, Toyota Corolla, Honda Civic, Saturn SL, Ford Escort, Ford Ranger, Nissan pickup and Toyota Camry. Models having the most complaints were Chevrolet Blazer, Ford Mustang, Dodge Caravan vans, Chevrolet Cav-

alier, Ford F Series pickups, Dodge BR pickups, Ford E vans and Chevrolet Camaro.

The report also includes a list of defects by component system reported by consumers in their complaints, a list of the motor vehicles found to be "lemons" and ordered to be repurchased, a description of how the lemon-law program operates and how manufacturers handle complaints from consumers with warranty defects in their new motor vehicles.

To request a copy of the annual report or more information about the Texas Lemon Law, call David Brunke, assistant director for consumer affairs, at (512) 505-5166. ★ *Motor Vehicle Division*



## Service Awards

### October

#### Abilene

**30 years**  
Robert G. Kilpatrick  
Troy S. Swink  
**20 years**  
Grady R. Vasquez  
**10 years**  
Maxie W. Allen  
**5 years**  
Donna L. Wootton

#### Amarillo

**25 years**  
Carroll E. Blevins  
Len M. Mixon  
Jackie D. Shaw  
**15 years**  
Rickey A. Shuck  
Bobby G. Sims  
John L. Williams  
**10 years**  
Randal S. Downey

#### Atlanta

**15 years**  
Johnny E. Jackson  
Don A. Watson  
**10 years**  
David C. Fulton

#### Austin

**30 years**  
Jannette M. Overfelt  
**25 years**  
William G. Beaver  
Aleene V. Selucky  
**15 years**  
Daniel E. Crenwelge  
**10 years**  
Dolores E. Lillquist  
Jackson A. McHorse  
Michael R. Walker  
Michael L. Walton  
**5 years**  
Kevin W. Carter

#### Beaumont

**25 years**  
Larry V. Berotte  
**15 years**  
Leroy Coates  
Charles E. Dennis  
**10 years**  
Minnie M. Calais  
Ray W. Crader  
Laverne M. Danos  
Michael E. Medley

#### Bryan

**30 years**  
Larry D. Andrews  
**20 years**  
Raymond Thompson  
**15 years**  
Ricky G. Allen  
Obry E. Hatcher  
Shirley N. Hunn  
**10 years**  
Mark N. Johnston  
Joseph Kmiec

#### Corpus Christi

**30 years**  
Enrique Olvera  
Rodolfo Olvera Jr.  
**15 years**  
William C. Adkins  
Guillermo Cabello  
Alejo C. Garcia Jr.

#### Dallas

**40 years**  
Kenneth R. Hawkins  
**30 years**  
Edwin G. Krajca  
**25 years**  
Dickie W. Russell  
**15 years**  
Danny S. Hise  
Charles E. Proctor  
**10 years**  
Mary W. Darst-Yarbrough  
Mike A. Elliott  
Roger A. Griffith  
James R. Janovsky  
Donald J. Lanoue Jr.  
Jeffrey M. Laquey  
Rene Meza  
Barbara A. Shepherd  
**5 years**  
Gary D. Lenderman  
Mark S. Millen

#### El Paso

**30 years**  
Joe C. Rivera  
**10 years**  
Francisco Cordero  
Lionel R. Salmon  
Jack E. Wonner

#### Fort Worth

**20 years**  
Charles R. Bilby  
**15 years**  
Matthew O. Asaolu  
James Darling  
**10 years**  
Ronald G. Beckham  
Stanley R. Elliott  
Debra A. Harris  
Robert T. Martin  
James C. Moore  
**5 years**  
Laura C. McCook  
Gary D. Miller

#### Houston

**25 years**  
George F. Gonzales  
Loyd W. Lucas  
**15 years**  
Syrnella B. Hudspeth  
David F. Lakin  
Eliseo I. Rendon  
Wayne A. Rentschler  
Pilar M. Rodriguez  
David J. Wleczyk  
**10 years**  
Thomas R. Comeaux  
William P. Hendley  
Emma T. Mendoza  
James D. Milligan  
Marilyn K. Morgan  
Mary H. Young

#### Laredo

**15 years**  
David Enriquez  
**5 years**  
Santiago R. Rocha

#### Lubbock

**20 years**  
Wayne N. Christian  
**10 years**  
Eddie L. Bilbrey  
Juan L. Bursiaga  
Fred E. Phillips

#### Lufkin

**25 years**  
Sue B. Jackson  
**15 years**  
Edward E. Fancher  
**10 years**  
Earnest L. Barrett

#### Odessa

**15 years**  
Mills Scales Jr.  
Frank C. Schneider  
**10 years**  
Euel E. Blocker  
Nicky D. Hahn  
Samuel Natividad  
Larry T. Ornelas  
Pamela T. Pickens  
Hector U. Raygosa  
Russell J. Whitworth

#### Paris

**35 years**  
James B. Flowers  
**30 years**  
Edman D. McLeroy  
William B. White  
**25 years**  
Ronnie P. Barcheers  
**15 years**  
Johnny D. Todd

#### Pharr

**30 years**  
Apolonio Carbajal  
Antonio Casso Jr.  
Ramon Guzman  
Rene Lopez

#### San Angelo

**15 years**  
Michael S. Hebert  
Rosario G. Longoria Jr.

#### San Antonio

**35 years**  
Melvin H. Boerner  
**30 years**  
Estanislado Escamilla  
Larry W. Etter  
**15 years**  
Kane P. Mattke  
Steven C. Simpson  
**10 years**  
Aida C. Chapa  
Thomas A. Graff

#### Tyler

**30 years**  
James C. Wood

#### Waco

**10 years**  
Felix Suarez

#### Wichita Falls

**30 years**  
Virgil G. Smith Jr.  
Fred J. Waggnar  
**10 years**  
Joyce M. Bujak  
Jerry L. Sconce  
Vernon D. Sorrell  
Ralph L. Stark

#### Yoakum

**30 years**  
Chrysteen M. Kuhns  
**10 years**  
James H. Caka  
Darleen A. Dieringer  
Patrick J. Hull  
Debra L. Vickery  
Richard A. Zahn

#### Budget and Finance

**5 years**  
Angela B. Freytag

#### Construction and Maintenance

**30 years**  
Barbara U. Tutt

#### General Services

**30 years**  
Ira O. Sigler  
**20 years**  
Stephen L. Brown  
**5 years**  
Albert R. Breton

#### Information Resource Management

**10 years**  
Brian S. Rawson

#### Information Systems

**15 years**  
William C. Klipple Jr.  
**10 years**  
Gia K. Dirks  
Vickie L. Willis

#### Materials and Tests

**10 years**  
Troy A. Dewitt  
Donald J. Hansard  
Jeffrey S. Lansdowne  
Mark H. Necessary

#### Motor Vehicle

**25 years**  
Edward J. Sheridan Jr.

#### Occupational Safety

**5 years**  
Toni V. Luther

#### Right of Way

**25 years**  
Gary H. Walker  
**10 years**  
Diana L. Jordan

#### Senior Management Team

**10 years**  
Cassie Carlson Reed

#### Traffic Operations

**25 years**  
Charles A. Comparini Jr.  
John N. Thornton  
**15 years**  
Patricia G. Packert

#### Transportation Planning and Programming

**5 years**  
Frances S. Mendez  
Gloria J. Willis

#### Vehicle Titles and Registration

**25 years**  
Don G. Burnell  
Glen R. Kinnibrugh  
**15 years**  
Gary W. Bible

#### Travel and Information

**20 years**  
Alice N. Sedberry  
**5 years**  
Janis R. Ellis

## Calendar

### October

**3** District Equipment Supervisor's Meeting, Austin, GSD  
**11** Laredo District Headquarters Ribbon cutting, LRD  
**14-16** Transportation Conference, College Station, STF  
**31** Commission Meeting, Austin

### November

**11** Veteran's Day (holiday)  
**13-14** Accident Prevention Management Meeting, Austin, OCC  
**20-22** NHTSA Project Management Course, Corpus Christi, TRF  
**21** Commission Meeting, Austin  
**28** Thanksgiving Day (holiday)  
**29** Holiday

### December

**2-6** Fall Research Management Committee Meeting, Corpus Christi, RTT  
**19** Commission Meeting, Austin  
**24** Holiday  
**25** Christmas (holiday)  
**26** Holiday

### January 1997

**1** New Year's Day (holiday)  
**20** Martin Luther King Jr. Day (holiday)

### February

**17** Washington's Birthday (holiday)  
**19-20** 1997 Area Engineers Conference, Austin, FDO  
**28** Good Friday

### June

**23-27** TP&D Conference, Austin, TPD

### September

**3-5** Texas/Mexico Border Conference on Border Safety, South Padre Island, PHR

## In Memoriam...will appear next month.

### WIN sets membership drive for October

The Women's Information Network (WIN) is having a membership drive Oct. 1-31. The goals are to increase the WIN awareness and expand membership.

Prizes will be given to the three WIN members who recruit the most new members. Prizes will be awarded at the annual

WIN dinner meeting, Nov. 14. Also, this year each member will receive a WIN pin.

WIN will continue to strive as a networking bridge among the various organizational units and welcomes the opportunity to expand the membership, generate new ideas and build alliances within TxDOT. ★

### MAT presents division awards

The Materials and Tests Division recently presented several awards to laboratories and personnel for outstanding work in 1995.

The District Laboratory of the Year Award went to the Wichita Falls District Laboratory for accomplishments in total quality management and continuous improvement, professionalism, proficiency, training, automation, safety and customer service.

Winner of the Most Innovative Laboratory Award, the Houston District Lab, demonstrated achievements in research, implementation of new operating procedures and systems, and accomplishments in modes of transportation other than highways.

The Laboratory Employee of the Year, Ronnie McManus of the Dallas District Laboratory, demonstrated outstanding performance. His nominators said, "He constantly strives for excellence and in doing so, has saved the district money and maintained the district's awareness of the need of testing and quality control. McManus has made the phrase, 'working together to make roads for tomorrow' a reality."

Judges included representatives of the Texas Hot Mix Association, the Lime Association, Associated General Contractors, the Center for Transportation Research and Texas Transportation Institute. ★*Contributed by the Materials and Tests Division*



## Retirements

### August 1995

#### Travel and Information

Patricia C. Lukens, 22 years, Information Specialist I

### July

#### Brownwood

Darrell J. Modgling, 25 years, Maintenance Technician IV

Lyle F. Greene, 16 years, Motor Vehicle Mechanic III

#### Corpus Christi

Enrique Olvera, 30 years, Engineering Technician V

#### Houston

Paul R. Reck, 17 years, Engineering Technician IV

### August

#### Atlanta

Thurman W. Thompson, 34 years, Roadway Maintenance Supervisor

#### Childress

Jerry W. Burchard, 29 years, Maintenance Technician IV

#### Dallas

Junis E. Cook, 37 years, Engineering Specialist II

James C. Garrett, 11 years, Right of Way Agent IV

Robert R. Smith, 26 years, Maintenance Technician IV

Ronald L. Smith, 14 years, Maintenance Technician IV

Labron R. Walker, 30 years, Maintenance Technician IV

#### Houston

Melba W. Barker, 25 years, Administrative Technician IV

Russell E. Knapp, 35 years, Engineering Specialist I

Albert E. Stewart, 29 years, Maintenance Technician V

#### Laredo

Rose G. Reyna, 32 years, Administrative Technician III

Antonio T. Martinez, 25 years, Roadway Maintenance Supervisor I

Gregorio S. Mendoz, 27 years, Maintenance Technician IV

#### Lubbock

E.C. Corona Jr., 16 years, Maintenance Technician IV

W. O. Fluit Jr., 13 years, Maintenance Technician IV

Donalee C. Warlick, 24 years, Right of Way Agent II

#### Lufkin

J. I. Brittain, 16 years, Maintenance Technician IV

#### Odessa

Charles L. Webb, 34 year, Director II

Juan Zepeda, 18 years, Maintenance Technician III

#### Pharr

Eloy Juarez, 30 years, Maintenance Technician IV

Jose H. Ramirez, 9 years, Stock Clerk III

Rene Ramirez, 29 years, Motor Vehicle Mechanic III

#### San Antonio

Jack E. Meurin, 41 years, Engineering Specialist I

Jimmy E. Vogel, 32 years, Engineering Technician V

Frank E. Wolff, 28 years, Roadway Maintenance Supervisor

Herbie L. Belvin, 34 years, Director of Programs II

Alfred G. Clement, 37 years, Engineer V

Guillermo L. Garza, 31 years, Maintenance Technician V

Enrique E. Moreno, 27 years, Maintenance Technician IV

Raymond G. Koehler, 23 years, Maintenance Technician IV

Charlie Payne Jr., 26 years, Maintenance Technician IV

Victor F. Jaramillo, 30 years, Roadway Maintenance Supervisor

Israel R. Hernandez, 31 years, Engineering Technician IV

Reynaldo Ramirez, 27 years, Maintenance Technician IV

Wilbert W. Schimcek, 32 years, Maintenance Technician IV

Peggy R. Greer, 20 years, Administrative Technician III

Rodolfo Z. Uriegas, 34 years, Maintenance Technician IV

David R. Gomez, 35 years, Maintenance Technician V

Charles H. Arnold, 26 years, Administrative Technician III

#### Tyler

Brenda P. George, 15 years, Administrative Technician II

#### Waco

Allin L. Tipton, 26 years, Maintenance Technician II

#### Wichita Falls

Jimmy N. Glenn, 31 years, Maintenance Section Supervisor I

James H. Pierson, 34 years, District Warehouse Manager II

William I. Pressom, 34 years, District Maintenance Manager

Gerald D. Fuller, 32 years, Heavy Equipment Operator III

#### Yoakum

Lawrence R. Emerson, 27 years, Program Administrator III

Charles H. Hanzelka, 32 years, Engineering Technician IV

Jessie C. San Miguel, 35 years, Maintenance Technician IV

Leon Steffek, 36 years, Maintenance Technician IV

#### Budget and Finance

Glenn I. Rabun, 37 years, Auditor III

#### Design

Audrey "Lavonne" W. Laster, 31 years, Administrative Technician IV

#### Right of Way

Marjorie B. Hamby, 37 years, Appraiser IV

Jerry J. Hodon, 30 years, Right of Way Agent IV

#### Senior Management Team

Emma D. Cox, 39 years, Staff Services Officer IV

Marie W. Stinnett, Bryan District, Jerry L. Williams, Tyler District and James Justice, General Services, were incorrectly listed in the September Transportation News as having retired in August.

## Hale

### Continued from page 3

stationed in Germany where he would have had the opportunity to look up some of his distant relatives.

"I completed infantry basic training," he said, "and here's an example of my luck: the first half of the alphabet got sent to complete eight weeks of artillery basic training while the last half of the alphabet went to Germany.

"Of course, Hale begins with an 'h', so I ended up on a troop ship to Alaska and Korea instead of seeing where my ancestors came from," he grinned. "I was seasick for 10 and a half days until the ship's cook fixed me up with saltine crackers and bread crusts."

Hale's troubles didn't end once he arrived in Korea; he couldn't find his unit.

"We went to three places in Korea before we could find anyone who had even heard of the 76th Anti Aircraft Battalion," he said.

Although he was just a private, Hale combined common sense with luck, landing himself a staff job as a military intelligence non-commissioned officer instead of winding up as a private in a line battery.

"I met a master sergeant who wanted to go home but hadn't found a replacement yet," Hale said. "When he found out I could type 60 words a minute, he asked the colonel if he could have me work for him. The colonel approved the request, provided I passed the background investigation for a top-secret security clearance.

"After the FBI got through checking with people who had known me since the time I was born," he continued, "I got the job, got promoted to sergeant and the master sergeant got to go home."

In less than two years, Hale had his own jeep, his own driver and was running all over the 38th parallel. "You'd have been proud of me," he laughed. "I had two 45s strapped to my hips; I looked like Gen. Patton, except my guns weren't pearl-handled."

According to Hale, he learned a lot of things in the Army, including how to crack a safe. "But I ain't going to tell you how," he teased me. "If I hadn't been brought up strict by my mama and daddy, I could have been a crook after my military intelligence experience."

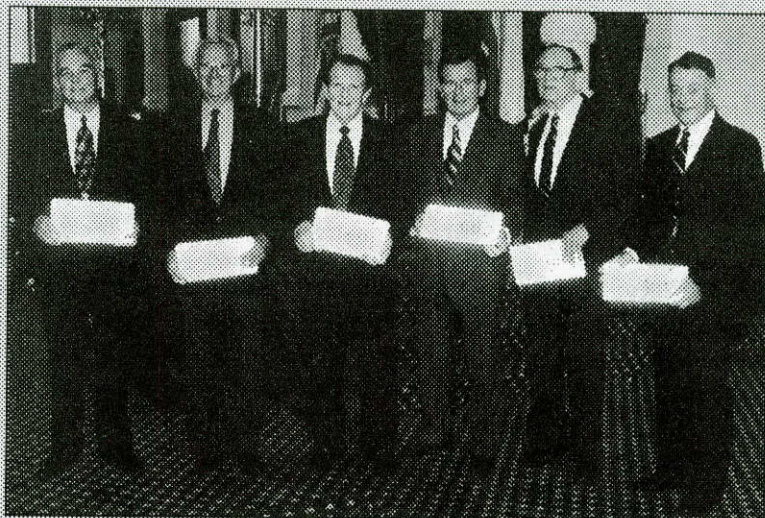
But he didn't. He came home to Texas, married his wife, Shirley, and together they have four children: Robert, 38; Vanessa, 36; Scott, 34; and Karen, 26.

"My kids got a lot of love from their mother and me," Hale said, "but the material things they got they had to work for. You know, cars and things like that.

"I've been on my own since I was 14 and I had to work for everything I own," he said. "I wanted my kids to understand that things don't come easy."

Everyone, sooner or later, gets asked the rhetorical question, "Who would you like to be stranded with on a desert island?" Quite honestly, if that ever happens to me, I hope I'm stranded with Charlie Hale, Ed Price and Gene Krock — we'd never run out of stories to tell. ★

### New tags debut



Gov. George Bush presented the new Legion of Valor specialty license plates to these war heroes during a ceremony at the capitol. Pictured from left to right are Al Walraven, Navy Cross; Robert E. Galer, Congressional Medal of Honor; Dr. Mel Carter, Navy Cross; Dick Agnew, Distinguished Service Cross; J.W. Naul, Navy Cross; and Dean DeTar, Air Force Cross. The license plates are issued by TxDOT's Vehicle Titles and



## Letters

This is a note of thanks to you and your fine staff for going the extra mile in helping motorists on the highway.

Last June, my wife and I were traveling down Interstate 35 with another family, when the car gave out on us just outside of Hillsboro. A Texas Department of Transportation employee named **Billy Watson** gave us a ride into town and helped us find a good mechanic. His primary job was picking up litter, but he took the time to help us, and we are grateful. Keep up the good work!

**Bruce Cain**  
Ithaca, NY

*Billy Watson is a maintenance technician in Hill County in the Waco District.*

.....

On March 15, my wife and I were traveling on U.S. 287 between Dumas and Amarillo. Just before getting to the Canadian River, we had tire trouble on our pickup. I had just recently broken a rib and was really dreading having to bust the nuts loose on the wheel and lift the spare tire from the trunk, when one of your maintenance pickups traveling the other way, turned around and came back to help. I felt you should know that **Joe Don Prather** was courteous and very willing to help me in my time of trouble. Even though I tried more than once to pay him for his trouble, he refused and just said

he was glad to be able to do it. We don't seem to run in to many who are so willing to help others, so when I do, I feel we should give them recognition for their efforts.

**Cecil W. Wright**  
Lubbock

*Joe Don Prather is a maintenance supervisor in Potter County in the Amarillo District.*

.....

This morning our car stalled out. As I tried to determine the cause, I looked in my rear-view mirror and saw a Texas Department of Transportation auto pull into my lane. The driver stepped out and assisted the two handicapped beings holding up traffic.

**Ken Prestidge** used our gear to start the car and offered to drive with us to a garage. But we stalled again. He let us call for a wrecker and even drove us home. But wait, there's more of his kindness to talk about. Because of the noon heat and the need for a cooler for the 70+ passenger, he allowed Mr. Manning to sit in his air-conditioned car and wait for the wrecker. The use of the phone was another kind gesture.

We commend Ken for rescuing us.

Thanks, too, for the wonderful job you all do on our local roads.

**Aldine Manning**  
Amarillo

*Ken Prestidge is a maintenance supervisor in Canyon in the Amarillo District*

.....

My husband and I recently took a road trip through a portion of the United States and we were surprised (and many times jolted about) by the road conditions we traveled on in other states. On the last leg of our journey, we couldn't wait to get to the Texas border because we knew that the Texas roads would be in better and safer condition for traveling. I had always heard that Texas had better roadways, but now I know that first-hand.

I also have to mention that as we crossed over into a new state, we were greeted with a welcome sign but we did not experience such an appealing invitation to a state as evidenced by the well-maintained and hospitable welcome center located at the Texas borders (especially the one located at U.S. 75 at the Texas/Oklahoma border).

Although we find ourselves complaining of the inconvenience caused by Texas highway construction and improvements, we wanted to let you know that we are grateful for those services and really appreciate the job the Texas Department of Transportation is doing to keep our roads in better and safer traveling conditions.

Keep up the good work.

**Valarie Spake**  
Austin

# It's time to renew!

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