



A hearing is

Applying for disability determination benefits from the Social Security Administration can be a tense, anxious and harrowing experience. And, it is done entirely through forms and medical reports.

That process has caused many advocates, usually those who are denied benefits, to complain to their congressman about the impersonal nature of establishing eligibility for benefits.

But this is not always the case. Meet Mac Crone, supervisor of the Houston Office of Disability Hearings. For many appellants, he is the last step in the DDS appeal process but their only personal contact with a decision maker in their case. He is "their day in court."

He is a good listener ... he has to be. "People in the appeals process have something they want you to know and they will start telling you at their first opportunity," says Crone. "We let people unload at the start of a hearing."

The hearings, often held in Crone's office, are quasi-legal in form, requiring sworn testimony and one-third are represented by lawyers.

"Our hearings are designed to treat people with dignity and respect, as well as fairly and personally," says Crone. "This is a tough business. We are dealing

Meet
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also

with people who are under great stress. The stakes are high for them—their livelihood is on the line."

The Personal Appeals Hearings program began in 1984 in Texas as part of the backlash created in the early 1980s from people whose benefits were terminated because of the tightened review process. Congress authorized the appeal process for those who were scheduled to have benefits terminated so that they could request a face-to-face opportunity to bring new evidence for reconsideration.

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a "seeing"

TRC TODAY is a newsletter for the employees of the Texas Rehabilitation Commission.

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Two TRC employees receive over \$2,000 for their good ideas. 5

NADE Swings Texas Style

On October 6-11, the National Association of Disability Examiners (NADE) held their annual conference in Austin at the Marriott at the Capitol. Disability examiners (DEs) from across the country, as well as six disability examiners from San Juan and Puerto Rico, attended.

Hosted by the Texas Association of Disability Examiners (TADE), the theme of this year's conference was *NADE's Challenges Bigger Than Texas*. Highlights of the conference were a bus tour to San Antonio, a presidential reception featuring Texas-style dress, live music, tacos and sausage wraps, and "Magaritaville II" at Austin's Zilker Park.

The conference began with a big Texas welcome from Jimmy Jackson, executive deputy commissioner, followed with presentations by Harry Smith, NRA president, John Mather, M.D., Social Security Administration (SSA) chief medical consultant, and

Elaine Fultz, professional staff member on Social Security U.S. House Ways/Means Committee.

This year's conference chairperson was Glenda Croom, case consultant for DDS.

Susan Parker, SSA associate commis-

sioner for disability, addressed the conference; Dan Eudy, director of information management services, presented a program on the automated work stations and Dave Ward, assistant deputy commissioner, moderated a panel of DDS administrators from the states of North Carolina, New Jersey and Michigan. TADE's own Martha Gonzales, a DE in Unit 08 of DDS, was the recipient of several awards.

All TRC employees interested in the disability determination process are invited to join TADE. For more information, contact Membership Chairperson, Lavon Hummell at (512) 445-8940.

Not Again!

Last month we reported on a virus outbreak in the Baytown office. This month the software virus SWAT team has found over 23 PCs in the Central Office infected with the "Stoned Virus."

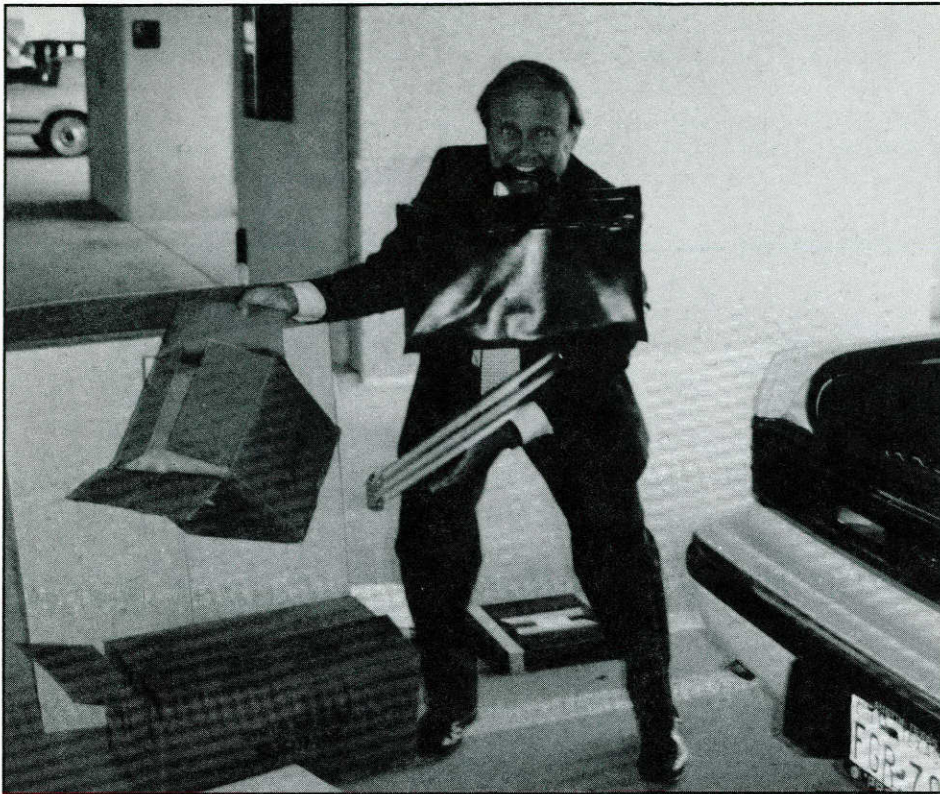
So how were we infected? It could have been very easy and very innocent. Someone could have taken a disk home to work on it and brought it back to the office. Or someone could have brought in a really cool program or game to share with their fellow workers.

The ways to spread computer viruses are all too easy but the way to stop them is just as simple. Any floppy that is not TRC related or that has been in a computer not owned by TRC must be scanned by CIC. There are no exceptions to this rule.

Each month seems to bring new virus outbreaks. So far TRC has been lucky and none have caused serious damage, but we can't count on our luck holding out. Again, employees are the only line of defense. We urge you to follow established procedures for non-TRC disk screening and approval.



Martha Gonzales, this year's TADE parliamentarian, received an award from Tom Christopher, 1990 NADE President.



ON THE ROAD AGAIN...

Making managers out of people

When most people are just waking up, Bob Rundell, trainer extraordinaire, is already on the road out of town. You see, he has to get to his new destination early enough to check out the equipment and make sure the room is right for his management training seminars.

In the last three years since he has been with TRC, he has held over 75 events for over 1,400 people, putting in over 10,000 hours in training. The management training events cover a wide variety of topics such as creativity, communications and managing conflict. Initially, they were all held in the Central Office. Each field office would nominate three people to come to Austin for the sessions.

When decided that it was more cost efficient and that more people could be reached, Rundell went out on the road and with great success, "In going to the regional offices, I was able to tailor my programs to meet their

individual needs." The success, however, is a team effort. Bob works closely with the regional training officers who keep him informed on pertinent issues.

Rundell's biggest challenge when conducting the seminars is to get the energy level up so people can get more out of their time spent, "Trainers have to be part entertainer. Learning is enhanced when people are enjoying themselves. It has to be fun."

The purpose of the events is not only to learn new skills, but to challenge the way people think and to stretch themselves beyond the usual, comfortable pattern. "The reality is that everyone can be creative," says Rundell. "They need to try it, experience it and fail. Then try it again. It's okay to feel the fear. I want people to walk away feeling challenged to try something different and be willing to think about their jobs and ask themselves—what can

be done differently to make it better?"

After 75 events, is he tired of it? "I can't think of a more exciting job. You can be on the leading edge of change," says Rundell. "There is nothing more thrilling than giving people new ideas and watching an atmosphere of hope and optimism emerge."



Happy
Thanksgiving
Holiday

Eye on the 90's

It's got to get better than this!

While federal funding for most education programs decreased during the 1980s, special education jumped by 34.5 percent, says a new Education Department study. Rehabilitative services and disabled research also increased from \$700 million to \$1.8 billion.

Elementary and secondary education decreased 15 percent and postsecondary education fell by 24 percent during the decade. Funding increases in research and rehabilitative services helped balance the decrease, but overall, the federal government spent 5 percent less on education in 1990 than it did in 1980.

The largest decline in education spending came during President Reagan's first term. Between 1980 and 1983, education spending dropped 18 percent. Since that period it has increased 16 percent. (All the above figures were produced by the National Center for Education Statistics and were adjusted for inflation.)

Needless to say, the advocates for federal resources for rehabilitation should be justly proud of the results of their work during this most difficult period. Although funding for rehabilitation and special education fared better than most, as a country, we need to be alarmed about what is happening to our educational system as a whole.

So why is education so important? The November 1991 issue of the *Atlantic* answers this, "The crisis in American education has ominous implications for the well-being of our political system ... and the limited appetites and aptitudes of this generation are already adversely affecting the practice of politics and the nature of our democracy."

Region IV

John Baker, counselor in the Houston Southwest Field Office, accepted responsibility for the TIRR Field Office. Baker has 21 years of experience and will be an asset to the Houston West Management Unit.

Region V

A welcome aboard to Mary Solis to the Edinburg Field Office in the position of RST III for Counselor Nancy Murray.

On October 23, Terry Smith, regional director of the San Antonio Office was a guest on Channel 5 (San Antonio CBS affiliate) discussing NDEAM activities and TRC. He was accompanied by Ron Dixon, chairperson for the San Antonio Mayor's Committee.

Region VI

Emily Ugarte was selected for the Dallas County, non-English/Spanish speaking program. She returned to TRC after serving as residential director at the Deaf Action Center for the past nine months.

Donald R. Cross, counselor in the Dallas Regional Office, retired July 31 after 17 years of service with TRC.

DDS

Sara Tirado joined the staff of the Office for Civil Rights on October 7. She fills the secretary III position and comes to us from the Department of Human Services where she was employed for six years.

Central Office

The Human Resources Management Office welcomes Kim Townsend, who will work in the benefits/compensation area.

Ruby Y. Wright, retired after 26 years of state service. She served as secretary for the Governor's Committee for Disabled Persons.

TRC Media Services took home both regional and national awards from the 29th Annual Institute of the National Association of Mental Health Information Officers. The Governor's Committee for Disabled Persons was also honored with awards in several categories.

Regional Notes



Your
help
is
their
hope.



The United Way Campaign is now underway. The deadline for donations is November 25. Please be generous with your contributions.



Fun and Games

in the Valley

On November 30, the Valley Association for Independent Living and the City of Harlingen Parks & Recreation Department are sponsoring the Valley Abilities Expo, being held at the new, totally accessible Harlingen Sports Complex from 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

It is designed as a way for the disabled community of the Rio Grande Valley, including their families and friends, to get together, have some fun, get some useful information and maybe some money if they're lucky.

There will be a "Steel Wheels Pentathlon" (invitational purse) with a \$100 prize for the best in each indi-

vidual category and \$250 for the overall winner. In addition, there will be free wheelchair repair and advice by factory mechanics, a pumpkin pie eating contest, game contests for all, free health screening, tennis and basketball demonstrations, an auction, the Ms. Vail 1991 Contest, a talent show and wheelchair dance.

The Holiday Inn in Harlingen is offering a flat rate of \$40 per night for rooms (with limits of four people per room). For more information, call the Valley Association for Independent Living at (512)425-7573.

Good ideas pay off

Their successful suggestions saved TRC and the state of Texas \$22,698.08 and earned both employees a sum total of \$2,269.81

Two TRC employees were the happy recipients of cash awards from the Texas Incentive and Productivity Commission. The cash amounts represented 10 percent of the net cost savings as a direct result of the suggestions made. Their successful suggestions saved TRC and the state of Texas \$22,698.08 and earned both employees a sum total of \$2,269.81.

Donald Orgeron, counselor in the

Longview Field Office, received \$1,846.61 for his idea to replace letters mailed to clients about appointments with prepaid postcards. This enabled TRC to save \$18,466.08 during its first year of implementation.

Tommye Everett, who is now retired, received \$423.20 for her suggestion to revise the monthly postage warrant reimbursement to a quarterly system, saving TRC \$4,232 during its first year in use. Everett was a RST in the Northeast San Antonio Field Office.

"I appreciate the time and effort that these employees took in submitting these suggestions

and I'm very proud of the awards they won," says Vernon Arrell, TRC commissioner, "This is definitely a win-win situation."

TRC urges you to take time to submit to the Texas Incentive and Productivity Commission any money-saving ideas you think of as you are performing your job. However simple they might seem, they could translate into big savings for TRC and a big boost to your own pocketbook. Employees can request an employee suggestion form from Human Resources Management or contact Agency Coordinators Joann Edge at (512) 483-4326 or Cecilia Stark at (512) 483-4332.

October 1991 Service Awards

Region III

15 years

Timmie L. Monroe

20 years

Billy F. Feltman

Adeline M. Kasper

Region V

15 years

Gloria Alderette

Maria Del Maldonado

Region VI

20 years

Evelyn R. Steckly

DDS

10 years

Kathy R. Fitzgerald

15 years

Charles R. Bailey

20 years

Ralph W. Cearley

Central Office

10 years

Mary Townsend

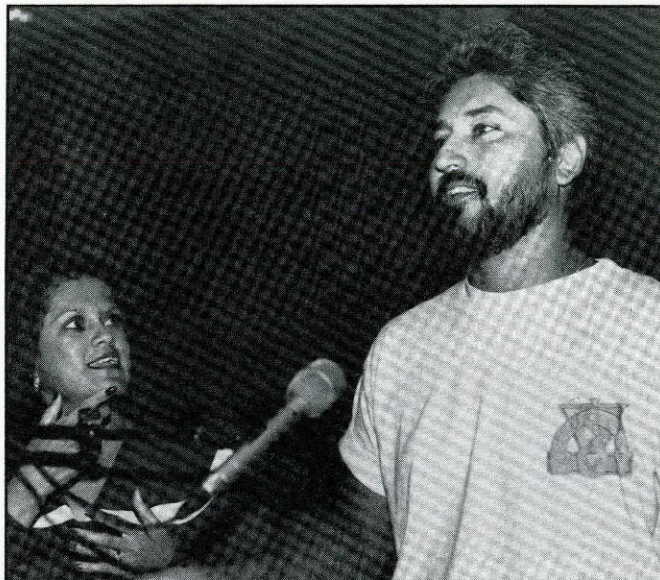
15 years

James V. Barth

20 years

Charlotte A. West

Correction



Last month on page 8 of TRC Today Carmen Asebedo and Daniel Moya were misidentified.

Hearing *continued from page 1*

The decision of the hearings office is based upon new information, medical or otherwise, and actual observation of the applicant in question.

"Obviously, we make better decisions when we see and talk to people," says Crone. "But I'm not sure that taxpayers and Congress are willing to pay for the entire disability determination process to become face-to-face."

Until they do, Mac Crone and his counterparts across the state, are the only smiling faces an applicant will see in the anxious process of disability determination.



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