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TRC TODAY
a newsletter for
employees of the
Texas Rehabilitation
Commission

Vol. 12 No. 8
August 1990

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A new lease on life

Bill Reese doesn't like state employment. He is quick to tell you about it.

In 1974, Reese worked as the engineer in charge of specifications for the Texas Board of Control (now the State Purchasing and General Services Commission). After four years of state employment, he yearned for the private sector and the big bucks that go with it.

Finally, he went into a satisfying career in fluid mechanics, his specialty area, in Arlington, Texas.

Things changed when he began having small strokes caused by plaque breaking loose from a blocked carotid artery in his neck. Surgery saved his life but contributed to partial paralysis in his left arm and leg, causing a major mobility impairment.

His normally candid opinion softens when he talks about the Texas Rehabilitation

Commission and his own program of rehabilitation.

He went back to work with his previous employer, Fluid Technics, just in time for the great oil industry market crash of 1985 and was promptly laid off from a \$60,000 a year job.

According to Reese, the effect was devastating.

"One day you are well healed, a condo owner with big plans - the next you are up to your ears in debt, not wanting to deal with the reality of your situation."

The Texas Employment Commission referred Reese to Sonia Nixon, counselor in the Arlington TRC office.

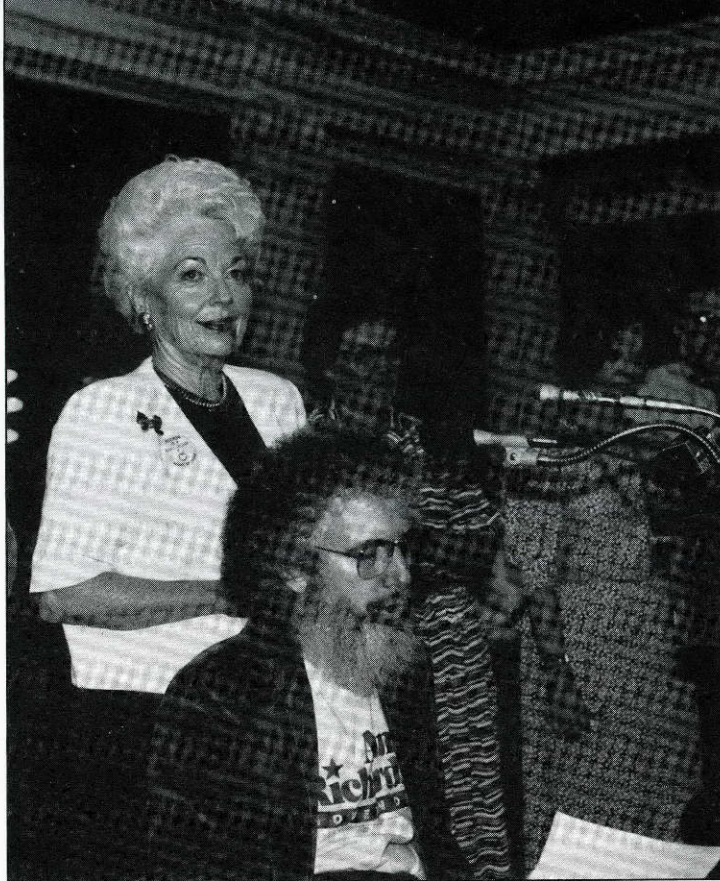
"I had heard of your agency when I worked for the state, but I had no idea what you all did - and didn't really care until I needed you," he says.

Continued on page 8



Just prior to his stroke, Bill Reese had logged 5 million domestic air miles in a two-year period in the American Airlines Advantage program, making him the second most traveled member of the program. After surgery he wondered if he would ever be able to board a plane again.

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Richards endorsed by disability advocates

In a press conference July 11 at the State Capitol, the Coalition for Texans with Disabilities endorsed Ann Richards, State Treasurer, in her candidacy for governor. Disability advocate Bob Kafka (foreground) lauded Richards' sensitivity to the needs of Texans with disabilities. Richards also received the Texas Rehabilitation Association Legislative Award the same week.

We finally have a RSA commissioner who understands

TRC staff meeting features Joe Owens

The customary TRC staff meeting at the Texas Rehabilitation Association conference July 10 centered around remarks by Joe Owens, executive director of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation.

Few speakers can talk to more than 200 people in a crowded room, at a mandatory staff meeting, without generating some resentment. But, Owens is one who can.

The focus of Owens' three-hour talk was that congressional priority for people with disabilities has remained the same since 1920--employment rather than welfare.

But, said Owens, "As good as the system is, there are still those who want to change it."

He outlined new challenges ahead in the field of rehabilitation--privatization of rehabilitation, the manpower concept of rehab services and apathy among professionals in rehabilitation.

Then he challenged those who would accept the challenge.

"If you are a professional who has grown stale or burned out in this business ... if you have lost the vision, the passion that is so important to our success ... do yourself and us a favor and get out! For the challenges ahead, we are going to need people who are devoted and committed to this field."

On an optimistic note, Owens expressed confidence in the newly appointed commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration, Nell Carney, who also spoke at the staff meeting.

"I have just two words to tell you that our rough times since our last meeting (1986 TRC staff meeting at TRA) are over ... those words are 'Nell Carney.' We finally have a RSA commissioner who understands service delivery."

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President signs ADA

The Americans with Disabilities Act is now the law of the land.

President Bush signed the measure into law July 26 after it passed by majority vote in both the House and Senate in early July.

The Senate removed the last major hurdle to its enactment July 11 when it voted to reject an amendment that would let employers keep AIDS-infected workers from food-handling jobs.

After a three-year struggle, advocates, people with disabilities and rehabilitation professionals savored victory as they watched the president sign this landmark piece of legislation.

Among other things, the act would prohibit discrimination in employment, transportation and public services against some 43 million people with physical or mental disabilities.

ADA supporter Senator Tom Harkin, of Iowa, sees the legislation as "the completion of the agenda for civil rights in America."

Business and industry leaders, who fought hard against ADA, will watch closely over the next few months as the appropriate federal agencies draw up regulations to put the ADA into effect. Many business leaders fear that the ADA will result in extensive business costs.

Getting a jump on ADA

Austin's Capital Metro is a winner among U.S. transit systems according to ADAPT (American Disabled for Accessible Public Transportation).

Why? A commitment to disability support from a new transit authority. The result of that commitment ... a fleet of lift-equipped mainline buses, an accessibility transportation coordinator, and constant input from the disability community.

A Capital Metro citizens advisory group is taking a look at the whole disability transit picture ... curb cuts, sidewalks, bus stops, bus routes and continued community outreach.

The result is a top notch transit system meeting the needs of the disability community.

Capital Metro isn't concerned about having to change their system to suit ADA requirements. As Nancy Crowley says, "The biggest impact will be on other systems. We are already on top of accessibility."

U.S. Savings Bonds for education now tax free

TRC's Human Resource Management is offering U.S. Savings Bonds for purchase throughout the year with a new tax free feature on bonds for education.

The tax-free bonds are a great way to get a head start on saving for your child's college education.

Based on the current minimum interest rate of 6 percent, your money will grow quickly. Here are some examples of minimum returns possible:

Child's age now	Value at age 18 with monthly allotments of	
	\$50	\$100
one	\$17,356.08	\$34,712.16
six	10,328.96	20,657.92
ten	6,025.72	12,051.44
twelve	4,226.88	8,453.76

Human Resource Management reminds TRC employees that payroll deductions can be arranged for bond purchases.

For more information on U.S. Savings Bonds, contact Eva Salinas in Human Resource Management at (512) 483-4331.

Awards

TRC Service

JULY 1990

Region I

10 years:

Rose Mary Rodriguez
Margaret Delpalacio

Region III

10 years:

Alejandro Guerrero
Edna M. Reynolds

15 years:

Jackson King

Region IV

10 years:

Wanda Williams

15 years:

Arlene P. Arauza

20 years:

John A. Baker

Region V

10 years:

Rosa Maria Lopez

20 years:

George Andreatos

25 years:

Otha J. Crain

Region VI

10 years:

Barbara Bernhardt

DDS

10 years:

James A. Reeves
Donna Goodenough
Jean Nault

15 years:

Dorothy Kopecky
Diana Alexander

Central Office

10 years:

Kaye Beneke
Lydia Arguello

25 years:

Dale Place

TRA conference highlights

The TRA annual conference in Corpus Christi, July 8-12, was highlighted by memorable speakers.

Among the most notable were Rehabilitation Services Administration Commissioner Nell Carney, Executive Director of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation Joe Owens, and National Rehabilitation Association President Bill Brownfield.

A common theme in their remarks concerned the challenges to the rehabilitation profession in the reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act and implementing the Americans with Disabilities Act (see "Owens" page 2).

"The great challenge is coming," said Carney. "The reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act will meet with adversity from groups who are prepared to tell Congress that the rehab program is beyond repair. It isn't. You represent much of what is good and works in our system."

Brownfield, responding to the federal concern for adhering to policies and regulations, admonished rehab professionals: "When you are bogged down in doing things right, don't forget to do the right thing."

Another annual highlight of the conference was the TRA awards luncheon where rehabilitation professionals were recognized for outstanding contributions to the field. Award winners for 1990 are:

TRA Awards

Research Project Demonstration

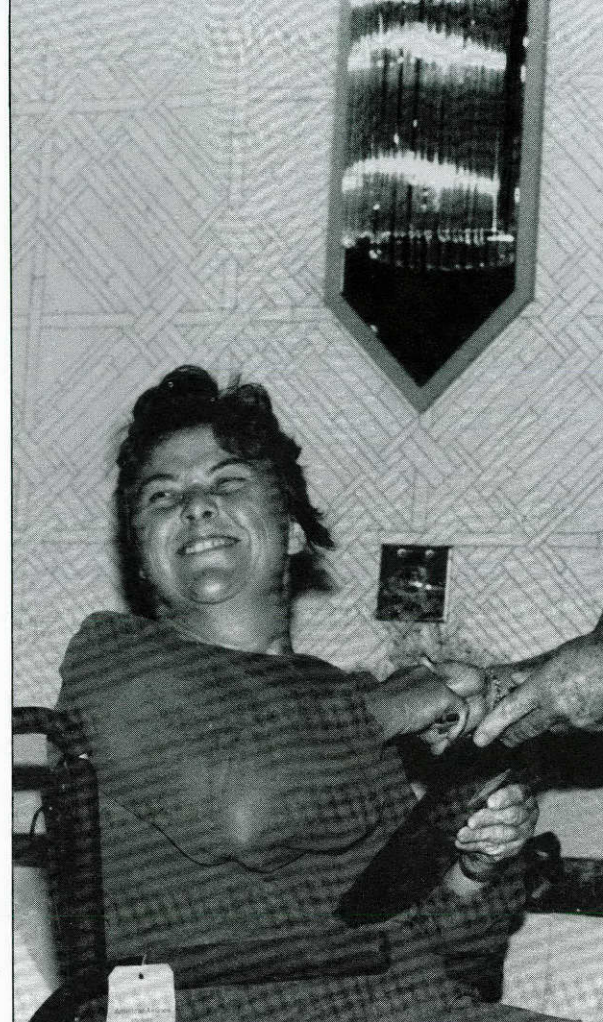
- ◆ Marion Sokol, M.D. - Any Baby Can/Laredo

Rehabilitation Professional of the Year (physician)

- ◆ James E. Williams, M.D.
Fort Worth

Rehabilitation Professional of the Year (non-physician)

- ◆ Pat King/Fort Worth



Dorothy Ellis, winner of the TRA 1990 Disabled Citizen of the Year award, for her and courage in overcoming barriers to disability beyond a high school diploma. She holds an associate of arts degree and has certificates in several areas. Her extensive volunteer work is devoted to the REACH independent living center.

Employer of the Year

- ◆ Chuck Monroe, Parkland Memorial Hospital of Dallas

Extra Mile Award

- ◆ Rueben Taniguchi, TRC area manager at the Dallas Northeast Field Office

Disabled Citizen of the Year

- ◆ Dorothy Ellis/Fort Worth

President's Meritorious Service Award

- ◆ Frankie Watson, TRC administrative officer in Houston Regional Office
- ◆ Donn Vorse, TRC counselor in Houston Central Field Office

Legislative Award

- ◆ Ann Richards, State Treasurer/Austin

Membership Award/Recruiter of the Year

- ◆ Mary Zersen/Galveston
- ◆ Glenda Turner/Crockett



of the Year Award, was cited for demonstrating motivation assistance offered by public or private service agencies. Ellis small business administration and computers. Some of her dependent living center in Fort Worth.

Division Awards

Placement Division/Bottom Line Award

Joanne Milton/Dallas

Association of Disability Examiners Doyle Wheeler Award

TRC Commissioner Vernon M. Arrell/Austin

Association of Rehabilitation Secretaries

Cross of the Year

Wyatt Hall/Austin

ARS Service Award

Linda Aiken/Victoria

Rehabilitation Administration Association

Merit Step Award

Frankie Watson/Houston

Rehabilitation Counseling Association

Counselor of the Year

Carol Bennett/Arlington

ational Evaluation and Work Adjustment Association

Member of the Year

de la Cruz/San Antonio

Commissioner's Message Box

Q Looking at the calendar, I've noticed that we will be getting our paychecks on the 4th of September. Is there any way we can get our checks on August 31? I am speaking for the TRC employees. I live from paycheck to paycheck. Also, is there any way we or some of us can get paid twice monthly? On the 10th of each month, I am flat broke. It is very frustrating.

A The Texas Legislature changed paydays for state employees from once-a-month on the last day of the month to once-a-month on the first day of the month (HB 62, 69th Legislature, 2nd Called Session). Unfortunately, no individual agency can change that process. I agree that this practice works a hardship on employees when the first day of the following month falls on a non-workday, or worse yet, when the first workday is not until the 3rd or even the 4th of the month. I have asked Deputy Commissioner Dale Place to discuss this issue with other state agencies via the State Agency Coordinating Committee's (SACC) Personnel Subcommittee to determine what can be done to address this problem. Any solution would probably require a statutory change involving the Legislature. Concerning a twice-monthly payroll at TRC, Assistant Deputy Commissioner Mike Mericle has agreed to survey eligible employees to measure the level of interest. I have also asked Human Resource Management to determine the fiscal implications (i.e. increased costs) associated with a twice monthly payroll. HRM findings will be available when the review is completed. We all live from paycheck to paycheck. Yes, even the Commissioner!



Region II

Barby McCarley was recently selected for the rehabilitation services technician position in the Return to Work Program at the Fort Worth South Field Office.

J. F. Jacobsen, rehabilitation services technician Wichita Falls Field Office, retired May 31 after almost 21 years with TRC.

Region III

Elaine Coy, administrative secretary in the Austin Regional Office, was promoted to rehabilitation services technician in the East Austin Field Office.

Region IV

Donn Vorse, counselor in the Houston Central Field Office, died Thursday July 5 from injuries received in an assault at his home. Co-workers became concerned when Vorse did not show up for work and when someone called the office saying he had found Vorse's keys and wallet in the back of Vorse's pick-up. Police found Vorse about 1 p.m. on Thursday in his Montrose Blvd. apartment. At this writing, the incident is still under investigation by the Houston Police Department. Vorse's many friends in the Texas Rehabilitation Association set up a memorial fund in his name. Those wishing to contribute may send donations to Margaret O'Malley, P.O. Box 542703, Dallas, Texas 75354-2703.

Elizabeth Richardi was recently selected as the rehabilitation services technician in the Houston Field Office North.

Diana H. Jett, counselor in the Houston East End Field Office, has moved to a counselor position at the Rosenberg Field Office.

The Pasadena Management Unit welcomes two new staff members: Suzanne Baxter will be a counselor in the Pasadena Field Office and Phillip Roddy will assume counselor duties in the Clear Lake Field Office.

Accidents

- In one year, more than 10 million Americans are seriously injured by accidents.
- Most disabling injuries occur not in motor vehicles, not in dangerous occupations, but in the home!
- Each week, 61,500 people are injured at home.
- 36,500 people are injured in motor vehicle accidents every week.
- 46,200 people are injured weekly in recreational activities.

National Safety Council

Region IV recently made some area manager reassignments. Stephanie Slattery, area manager in the Conroe Field Office, has moved to the Houston North Field Office to become area manager there. Doug Harrison, area manager at the Houston West Field Office, was reassigned to the Conroe Field Office.

Region V

Three rehabilitation services technicians in the McAllen supervisory unit were recently "upgraded." Connie Stanley and Emma Ochoa in the McAllen Field Office, and Maria Piton in the Laredo Field Office.

Region VI

Mae Goffney, counselor in the Dallas Northwest Field Office, was profiled in the June issue of the Functional Restoration Quarterly, a publication of the Productive Rehabilitation Institute of Dallas for Ergonomics (PRIDE). Goffney works closely with PRIDE interviewing and counsel-

Region VI *continued*

ing clients and coordinating job placement. "I think the goals of PRIDE and TRC are the same," said Goffney. TRC assists PRIDE in returning injured workers back to employment.

Merle Edgmon, counselor in the Dallas Northwest Field Office, left TRC June 30 after five years of service at TRC.

The Texas Association for Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities (TACLD) will hold its 26th annual state conference November 7 - 9 at the Fairmont Hotel in Dallas. Pre-conference sessions are scheduled November 7. The full conference begins November 8. For more information, contact TACLD, 1011 West 31st Street, Austin, Texas 78705. Telephone: (512) 458-8234.

Central Office

Edward J. Flanders, former director of program audit, died June 23 in Fresno, California. Flanders retired in April 1986 after almost 13 years with the Commission. He was 68 when he died.

George Schneider, systems analyst in data administration, left the Commission June 29 to join the Health and Human Services Coordinating Council.

Joellen Flores Simmons, assistant deputy commissioner for programs, was recently profiled in the TIBH News, a publication of the Texas Industries for the Blind and Handicapped. She has been a TRC representative on the TIBH Committee since 1988.

Rolph Dean, ERS program manager in the San Antonio Northeast Field Office, was recently promoted to program specialist in the Central Office. He is taking over the position held by Wayne Sanders who was promoted to director of legislative and program development.

Watt Pye, former news reporter and NASA film producer, has joined TRC as a technical writer/editor in Publications.

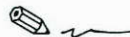
The Governor's Committee for Disabled Persons Employment Awards Conference will be held October 26 at the Wyndham Southpark Hotel in Austin. Featured speakers are Geri Jewell, comedienne and actress from the NBC sitcom "Facts of Life," and Richard Pimentel, nationally known motivational speaker. For more information, contact GCDP at (512) 483-4384.



The Department of Transportation has welcomed people with disabilities to "friendlier skies." April 5, DOT released final rules for enforcing non-discrimination policies for people with disabilities. Among other things, rules to air carriers include requirements for all newly-constructed aircraft (with 30 or more seats) to have moveable aisle armrests on seats for easier access and for accessible lavatories on new wide body aircraft.



People with physical disabilities are eligible to receive a "Golden Access Passport" to federally operated parks, monuments, historical sites, recreation areas and wildlife refuges. The passport includes a 50 percent discount on fees for federal facilities such as camping, boat launching and parking. For information, write U.S. Department of the Interior, National Parks Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127.



The Hogg Foundation's Commission on Community Care of the Mentally Ill has published the results of a three-year study on creative and workable ways to improve services including ways to help the state comply with court-ordered reforms. The study, *Texans with Severe Mental Illness*, is available for \$3.00 per copy from the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health, Publications Division, P.O. Box 7998, Austin, Texas 78713-7998.



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Reese *continued from page 1*

Nixon arranged for Reese to work with Kathryn Hale, employment preparation specialist, in 10 weeks of job readiness training, both individually and in a group.

"Kathryn Hale is your real secret weapon," says Bill about the impact she had on his motivation to work. "She got me motivated and used personal contacts that I already had to get me back into my field."

After several years of bleak employment opportunities, Bill suddenly got two job offers--one from Bechtol Engineering, a worldwide firm, and another from Oil and Gas Specialities Company, a smaller firm run by a friend of his father.

He chose OGASCO because he thought he could be more productive in a small, family-oriented operation.

Now, he expects to work 10-15 more years before retirement.

What is different this time around? "I keep Kathryn Hale's card in my top desk drawer," he says. "I call her occasionally to get pep talks. Fifteen minutes on the phone with her fills me with enthusiasm."

She has even softened his opinion of state agencies.

**In FY
1989
TRC
served
365
eligible
stroke
clients.**

In the next issue:

Board member
profile

National Disability
Employment
Awareness Month
information

Safety at TRC

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