

NON-CIRCULATING

Transportation NEWS

May 1997 Volume 22 Number 9

Don't let summer be a bummer '123 Safe Days of Summer' campaign aimed at employee awareness

Safety can mean the difference between life and death. To increase employee awareness of work zone safety practices and to prevent on-the-job accidents and injuries, department is kicking off the "123 Safe Days of Summer" campaign, sponsored by the Occupational Safety Division (OCC).

As summer approaches, the pace of roadway maintenance and construction picks up. Unfortunately, the volume of traffic on Texas highways increases, too, with many Texans traveling and enjoying the long summer days. So, it is vital that all department employees are aware of steps they can take to ensure a safe work zone.

Each year between May and August, on-the-job accidents and injuries increase significantly. Eight of TxDOT's last 10 on-the-job fatalities have occurred during the summer.

- An employee walking behind a contractor's hot mix truck was knocked to the ground and run over by the truck.

- An employee operating a pneumatic roller on a slope was pinned beneath it when the roller overturned.

- An employee flagging for a hot mix operation on an FM road was struck by a motorist. Both the employee and the motorist were killed.

- An employee sitting in a van parked on the roadway shoulder died when the van was hit by an 18-wheeler.

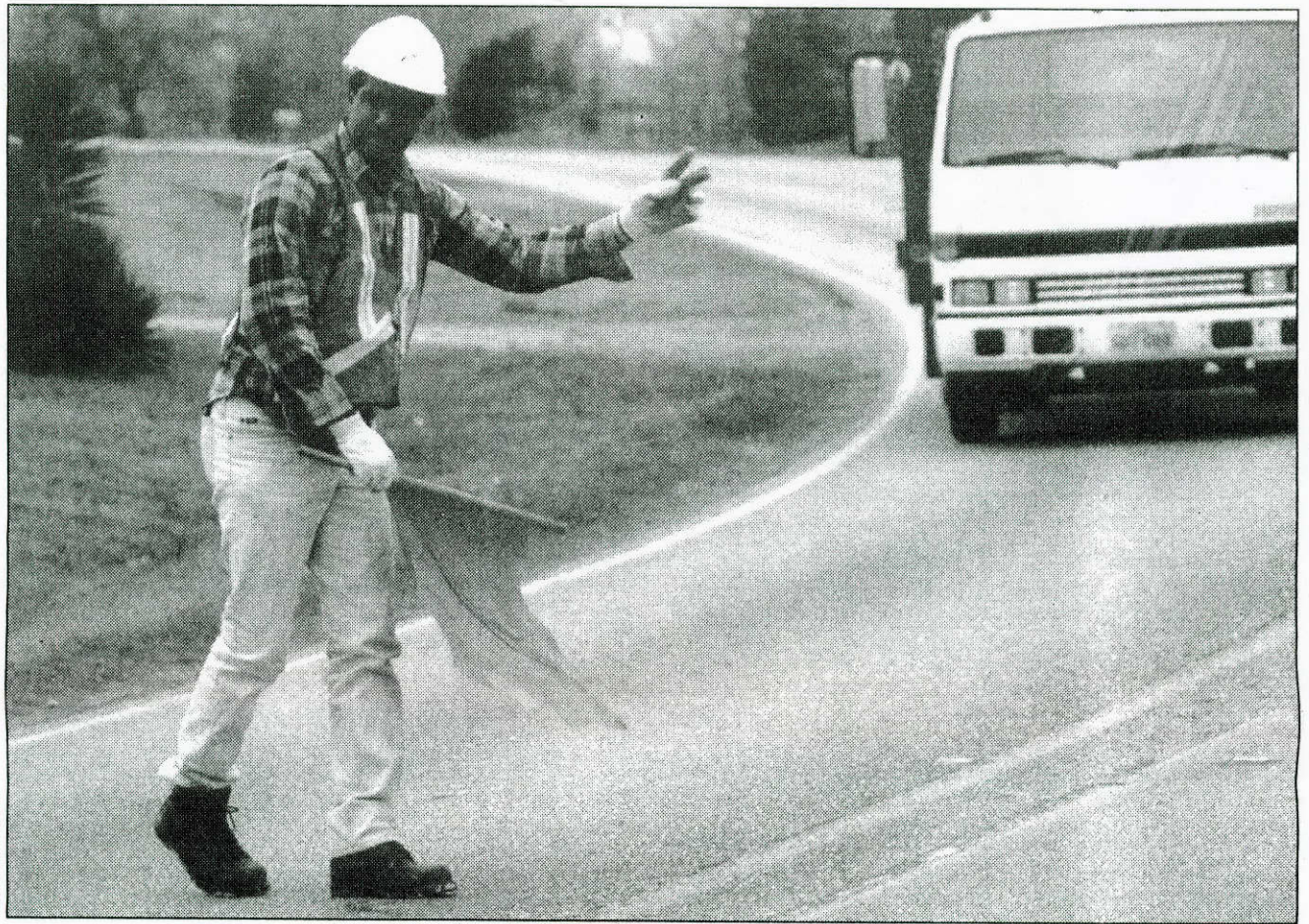
- An employee was crushed by a roller when it turned over.

- An employee was killed when his courtesy patrol pickup, which was pulled to the shoulder of a road, was struck by another vehicle.

- An employee inspecting a striping job was walking toward another TxDOT vehicle when a third party collision caught her, trapping her between her vehicle and a barrier.

- An employee was standing by a state vehicle parked in a grass median after picking up cones when struck by a third-party vehicle.

TxDOT's workforce expands in the summer, with an increase in temporary employ-



Michael Amador, TRV

ees, summer hires and project employees.

Because of their inexperience, these groups are at a high risk for injuries and accidents. But safety rules and procedures apply to everyone.

Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that employees receive safety orientation. Employees must be briefed on safety procedures which apply to their responsibilities in the workplace. All employees must be provided and required to use the appropriate personal protective equipment, such as hard hats, steel-toed boots and safety vests, when and where necessary.

Many district safety coordinators offer a safety orientation training session for all new employees, including summer hires. Safety meetings during "123 Safe Days of Summer" are essential to the safety and

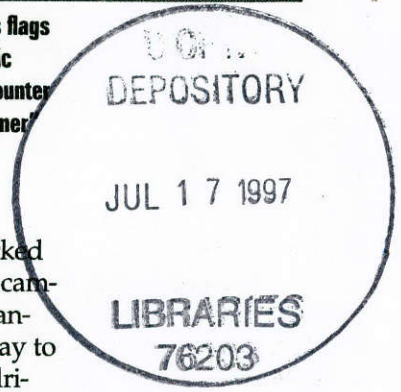
Brazos County Maintenance Technician Travis Davis flags for a patch crew on FM 1179 in the county. As traffic volumes increase, so does workplace danger. To counter this, OCC has launched the "123 Safe Days of Summer" campaign.

health of every TxDOT employee.

Although the department has embarked on efforts—such as the Give Us a Brake campaign—to educate the public on the dangers that road crews face, there is no way to ensure that all motorists abide by safe driving habits. And, with increasing traffic on Texas roadways, the dangers are becoming increasingly perilous for TxDOT employees working in the field.

Safety meetings held May through

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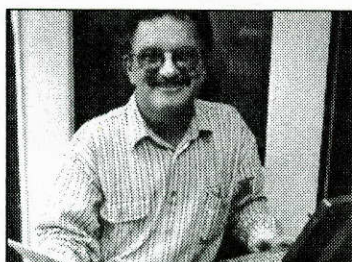
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Q I have a handgun permit and would like to know what my rights are as far as TxDOT is concerned. Chapter two Section 10 of the Human Resources Manual addresses this issue but goes beyond Texas Penal Code 46.035 in restricting a permit holder from having a weapon in his or her personal vehicle while parked on state property.

Donald Hansard
Materials and Tests Division

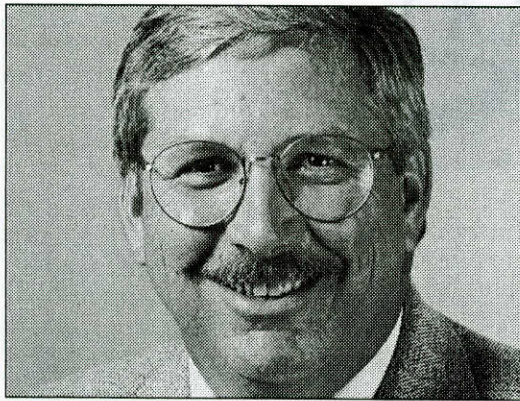
A Thank you for your letter regarding TxDOT's handgun policy. Section 46.035 of the Penal Code lists the places and situations in which it is unlawful for a license holder to carry a handgun. While the Penal Code does not necessarily make it illegal to carry weapons on department property, department policy does prohibit employees from doing so. Vernon's Texas Civil Statutes, Article 4413(29ee), which provides for concealed handgun licenses, states in Section 32 that employers may prohibit their employees from carrying concealed handguns onto the premises. Accordingly, department policy states, "Employees shall not carry or keep personal firearms or any other deadly weapon, as defined in the criminal statutes, while performing their assigned duties for the department. Also, no one, including employees on or off duty, may keep such weapons at any time while on or in department property." This includes parking areas, so keeping a weapon in your personal vehicle while parked on department property, whether or not you have a permit, would violate department policy.

.....

Q The department is converting from Lotus 1-2-3 and WordPerfect to Microsoft Excel and Word. These software programs are still perfectly good and are better than many homes and businesses currently use. Most of the floppies, manuals and documentation are just thrown away. With school funding in short supply, can this software be donated to schools? This may not save TxDOT any money, but Texas school children will benefit.

Lanny Wadle
Budget and Finance Division

A Lanny, we have been trying to develop a legal method to give software to schools since 1992. As you may have read when opening a new piece of software, there are various agreements that the software manufacturers have us to agree to, in order to use their copyrighted software. When reduced to the most common element, we are simply obtaining a right to use copyrighted material when we "buy" software. We have written Microsoft, IBM, Digital and LOTUS about the possibility of transferring to other state agencies and/or schools. The answers varied from having to destroy all software and manuals to some rights of limited transfer.



Bill Burnett

Ask Bill

At that time, our own legal staff recommended that we destroy surplus software. We could challenge the manufacturers about whether they really owned it, but a court case would be long and difficult to win. As a result of the manufacturers' position and the recommendation of the legal staff, an Administrative Circular published in 1993 directed the surplus software be destroyed.

The subject was reopened in April 1995 by the Department of Information Resources, when they published their standards on the Sale or Transfer of Computers and Software. That publication basically pointed out the risk that third parties pose to copyright laws and generally recommended that before a computer system (or software, by implication) is sold or otherwise disposed of, all program and data files on any associated computer media should be completely erased.

The State Property Accounting (SPA) users group has been working since early 1994 to change how we purchase software and how the state of Texas could change the way we treat software as surplus. There was a recent meeting between members of the Attorney General, the Comptroller, the State Auditor, the General Services Commission, and various agencies on this subject. The participants agreed to try to find alternatives to current purchasing agreements and a better way to transfer surplus software. When results of the group's efforts are made final, then maybe we can change the way we treat surplus software.

I would like to transfer our old software to schools, but if in the effort to save the schools a little money we find that TxDOT has violated copyright laws, then the value of that software doesn't outweigh the legal liability our agency would face.

.....

Q Why is TxDOT losing so many experienced engineers and technicians to the private sector? I feel like I am the only rat left on a burning ship. What is TxDOT doing to stop the bleeding?

Tony Gonzalez
Corpus Christi District

A Tony, thanks for your letter. Although I can't answer for everyone who leaves the department, I can give you some information that might help explain the situation. As you probably know, TxDOT lost many experienced employees due to retirement incentives which had an impact through 1996.

Also, the lack of cost-of-living pay raises since 1992 has widened the pay gap between private and public sector pay and has contributed to employee losses, including engineering areas. The number of engineers who stated the reason for their departure as "inadequate pay or lack of opportunity" was 41.67 percent in fiscal 1995 and 43.18 percent in fiscal '96. The same was true of engineering technicians, with a rate of 27.43 percent and 36.24 percent for fiscal '95 and fiscal '96 respectively.

TxDOT, as a whole, had a turnover rate of 18.35 percent for fiscal '95 and 23.51 percent for fiscal '96 of employees citing "inadequate pay or lack of opportunity" as a reason for their departure during exit interviews.

To stem the loss of experienced employees, we have tried to broaden classifications within the guidelines of the State Classification Act. These efforts include compressing the engineering job series so our first level begins at salary group 18; merging the Construction Inspector and Project Manager job families to allow a career ladder through salary group 19; revising the General Engineering Technician job family, and where appropriate, removing supervisory requirements on job titles where lead worker status was actually the practice.

Additionally, we requested increased pay for engineering positions by proposing the addition of a salary group between the current classified salary group 21 and the beginning of the exempt-level pay structure. The Texas Transportation Commission has also endorsed a request for a three percent increase in pay for all state employees for both years of the current legislative biennium. *

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Hotline established to help North Dakota flood victims

Employees wishing to help victims of the North Dakota floods can call the donation hotline (1-800-809-1450) to learn about immediate needs and ways to ensure that help reaches those who need it most.

Also, individuals or groups can work through local disaster relief organizations, such as the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army. *

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Publisher
Eloise Lundgren
Executive Editor
Roger Polson
Editor
Meredith Whitten
Design and Production
Jeff Carmack

Contributing PIOs
Phyllis Chandler
Mark Cross
Randall Dillard
Susan Hodgson
Kerry Kutch
Linda Ribble
Melissa Welch

Staff Support
Amanda Flores
Shabrel Howard
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Michael Amador
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Griff Smith
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Stan A. Williams

Vegetation no match for BMT's Horne

Resident herbicide expert helps East Texas district battle undesirable plants, grasses

Anyone who has ever gardened or done yard work has experienced the frustration in trying to get rid of weeds and grass that sprout up where you don't want them.

Undesirable vegetation has even been fodder for Hollywood. In the 1950s movie, "The Day of the Triffids," humans battled to save the earth against an army of overgrown traveling alien blooms.

In the original "The Thing," scientists and soldiers at the North Pole fought for their lives against a carrot from outer space (really James "Gunsmoke" Arness in a really bad costume) that walked upright and craved human blood.

"Little Shop of Horrors" (both the original black and white Roger Corman classic and the more recent musical version) featured a sci-fi Venus flytrap that also thrived on blood and sang like a '60s Motown soul man.

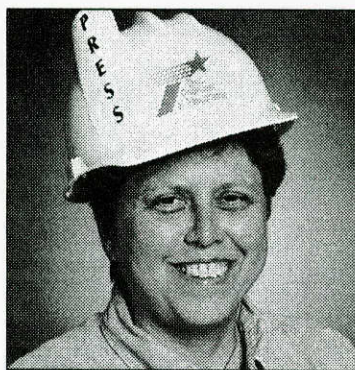
Salt water proved the undoing of the terrible triffids while electrocution quickly dispatched the other movies' leafy villains. But in real life, vegetation management is handled in a much more mundane and simpler manner involving plants that generally aren't carnivorous.

Take, for instance, Joe Horne, Beaumont's "resident expert on herbicide," as he is fondly characterized by district employees. Horne's main weapons against persistent unwanted flora are chemicals, even though they have names that sound like they're from a Louis L'Amour western novel: Roundup, Rodeo, Pathfinder.

"The majority of state-approved herbicides are not harmful to humans," explained Horne, a TxDOT herbicide operator for 23 years. "But we're extremely careful when we're spraying because there are all kinds of laws and regulations on the use of herbicides. You've got to know which chemicals to put out for certain vegetation."

"You've got to be able to recognize the different blades of grass," he said. "There's Bermuda, which is planted by the state and is an official grass, but when it comes up in the shoulder or cracks in the road, it has become undesirable."

There are also a lot of variables Horne takes into consideration when applying herbicide. "I don't spray when the wind's blowing faster than 10 miles an hour," he said. "And I have to watch the direction of the wind. For example, I wouldn't want herbicide to get



Eloise Lundgren

A Day in the Life

keeps his eyes open for other schools that can augment the required training, and he's also taught some of the classes.

Born in Vidor, Horne enlisted in the Air Force for four years after high school. After doing his stint in the quartermaster corps, he moved back to his old stomping grounds and got married. He worked at a propane company and as a warehouse manager for a beverage company, among several jobs, before he began his TxDOT career.

"Twenty-four years ago I started off as a flagger," Horne reminisced. "Then, they put me on a backhoe and I was also a crew chief on a patching truck. After about nine months of working here, the herbicide job opened up and I got it."

Although born without tear ducts, Horne wears protective tinted glasses and said he's never been bothered by the chemicals. "My 24 years here at the district have been good years," Horne said. "I've enjoyed everyone of them."

He also enjoys spending time with his parents, who live in Beaumont, and his two sisters and three brothers. The Horne family, I soon discovered, is pretty unique.

"All of us kids were born on holidays," he said. Horne was born on November 24, Thanksgiving Day, 1941; his brother, George, was born on Feb. 22, George Washington's birthday, 1943; his sister, Mary, was born on New Year's Day 1945; his brother, Robert, was born on Memorial Day 1947; his brother James was born on November 11, Veterans' Day, 1949; and his baby sister, Hallie, was born on Christmas Day 1951.

His other interests include traveling, visiting his property in Marble Falls, fishing, gardening ("I think it's kind of funny that I spend all day doing away with plants in the right of way and then come home and plant more"), hunting, carpentry, reading Stephen King and

Dean Koontz novels and volunteering at the Southeast Texas Rehabilitation Hospital.

"My wife, who was a registered nurse at the Baptist hospital, used to volunteer with me," Horne said. "We'd read to patients and play bingo, dominoes and cards with them."

"My wife always kept me busy and out of trouble," he said quietly, and then explained that Joyce had passed away October 16 after a long illness. "Having my daughter, Dana, and her boy, Justin, living with me helps keep me going," he said.

"The Lord gave me two good kids, Daniel and Dana," he said proudly. "Neither one of them has ever been in trouble; they're just



Joe Horne, Beaumont District herbicide truck operator, readies his truck before going out to battle undesirable vegetation.

on someone's trees by accident."

He also doesn't apply herbicides in the rain. "There are some herbicides you don't want in people's water," Horne said. "Besides, you don't spray chemicals just to see them get washed away."

He works closely with Margaret Robicheaux, a maintenance contract inspector. "We do whatever coordination is necessary," she said. "What would be the point if Joe sprays herbicide one day and I contract for someone to mow the same area the next? We've not only wasted the herbicide, we've wasted tax dollars, too."

"The parts of this state are all different. Southeast Texas is like a greenhouse," he continued, "so undesirable vegetation loves this weather. Johnson grass is bad and bloodweed can take over, too. And then there are the willow trees that come up in our drainage

Please see Horne, page 10

FTW lab wins TQI innovation award

Chad Lorange
Fort Worth District

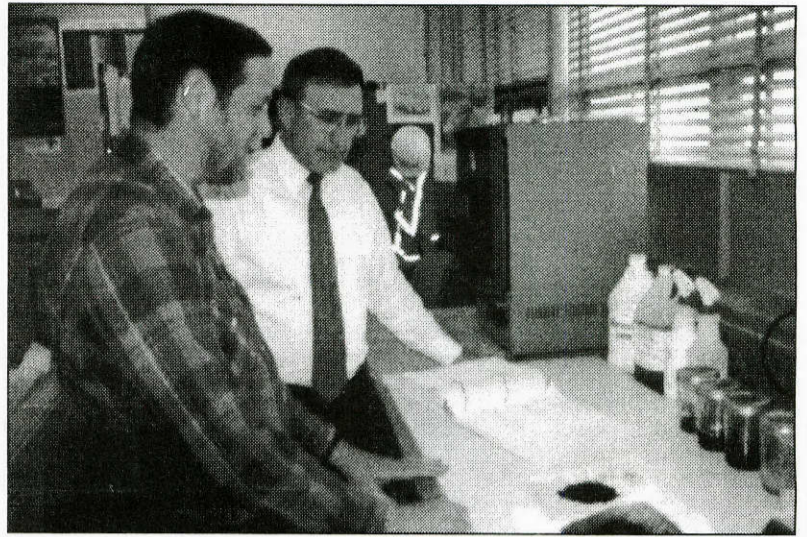
In March, the Fort Worth District Lab received a Texas Quality Initiative (TQI) award for developing test procedures and specifications to evaluate asphalt release agents. Approved agents would replace diesel and harmful solvents currently being used to remove residue from plant equipment, truck beds and all other equipment used in hot mix laydown operations.

Lab personnel, who have been working on the project since July 1994, say the testing procedures will identify environmentally safe agents that could save construction and maintenance sections both time and money. Technicians believe the release agents will eventually penetrate the pores in the metal and form a barrier protecting the equipment from hot mix materials. As a result, crews become more productive and efficient because they spend less time cleaning equipment.

These agents will also save money by extending the life of hot mix materials. Diesel and solvents contaminate and soften the hot mix material, increasing the number of potholes maintenance crews must fill.

It has been known for some time that diesel and solvents will strip the asphalt from the aggregate, which leads to potholes, District Materials Engineer Richard Williammee said. If prevented, the pavements will last longer.

Texas Quality Initiative Awards honor outstanding achievements and contributions in the construction transportation community, and are given to projects, products or processes in three different categories: teamwork, quality and innovation. A committee of transportation experts from across the state recognized the Fort Worth



Fort Worth District Lab Technician Paul Shover shows District Engineer Wes Heald new procedures for testing asphalt release agents used during hot mix operations. The procedures have been adopted statewide and are being considered by other states.

District Labs efforts under the innovation category.

Our testing procedure and product approval process developed to evaluate asphalt release agents has been approved for statewide implementation, said Fort Worth District Director of Construction Bob Julian. This, in and of itself, warrants the special recognition these employees have received, but the district has also received correspondence from the Federal Highway Administration indicating that these procedures may be adopted by other states too. The Houston thing is work really. ★

Travel Conference has something for everyone

Who was it that said you can't have your cake and eat it, too?

Well, whoever it was has never attended a Texas Travel Counselors Conference. The annual event, held this year in Arlington, is for travel professionals and representatives

tours that will help them to do their jobs better," according to Meharg.

A combination of roundtable discussions, industry updates, administrative meetings, general sessions on leadership and communication with the media, and study tours of

Spence has been largely responsible for promoting Arlington's many attractions and sporting events.

The award is named in honor of Gene Phillips, who was manager of San Marcos' Aquarena Springs and a driving force in the emerging tourism industry in the 1970s.

"Pretium habemus quid tendemus," reads the tongue-in-cheek inscription on the Roadrunner Award, which honors the employee who "tells people where to go." Telling people where to go, literally, is the job of TxDOT's professional travel counselors, and one of those counselors, Jan Autry from the Gainesville TIC, was the 1997 Roadrunner recipient.

An eight-year TxDOT veteran, Autry is a state and nationally certified professional travel counselor. She chairs the division's uniform committee and has served on various other committees and special projects.

In presenting the award to Autry, Meharg said, "the Roadrunner Award recognizes Jan's outstanding service to the traveling public and to Texas, signifying her willingness to contribute whatever is necessary to get the job done."

Mike Talley, editor of the Texas State Travel Guide, was the first recipient of TRV's Lone Star Award, which was initiated to recognize division employees who are not travel counselors.

"The Lone Star Award is a testament to Mike's exceptional contributions to the travel industry, the travel information centers, the division and the department," Howdeshell said. "He always goes the extra mile to share information he has gathered and is well-respected by everyone in our profession." ★

Linda Levitt, TRV, and Eloise Lundgren, PIO, contributed to this story.



A trip to an American Airlines facility in Arlington was one of the many study tours taken by participants in the 1997 Texas Travel Counselors Conference.

from the Texas Department of Transportation, Texas Travel Industry Association, American Automobile Association and city convention and visitors' bureaus, and is five days of fun-filled and entertaining — albeit a grueling test of endurance — training, information and professional development.

Conference Chairman Milton Meharg, Travel and Information Division (TRV) director of travel services, put together "an extremely tight schedule that provided travel counselors excellent training and information about the Metroplex. Counselors took notes during the sessions and the study

Denton, Lewisville, Dallas, Fort Worth, Arlington, Grand Prairie, Irving and Grapevine made the conference an event that proved learning can be fun.

Conference highlight was the presentation of the Gene Phillips Hospitality Award, Roadrunner Award and the new divisional Lone Star Award at a luncheon near the end of the conference.

Robert J. Spence, director of tourism and sports for the Arlington Convention and Visitor's Bureau, received the 1997 Phillips Award for his contributions to the \$25.4 billion Texas travel industry and his support of the state's tourism program. Active in the travel industry for more than 25 years,

Anti-speeding PSA targets young men

Mark E. Cross
Public Information Office

The set, aside from normal filming equipment used in production work, was full of vehicles. There was a late-model BMW, a restored hot rod, a wrecked car and even a DPS cruiser lurked in the background (as they usually do). It wasn't an auto auction; it wasn't a used car lot; nor was it an auto mechanic's workshop. It was the film set of "Excuses," TxDOT's latest public service announcement (PSA).

"Excuses" is targeted at male drivers between the ages of 18 to 24. TxDOT hopes the 30-second spots will not only help to slow these speed demons down, but also make a lasting impression of the consequences of speeding. The PSA, part of TxDOT's "Don't Wreck Your Life" campaign, began airing in Texas April 9. It is sponsored by TxDOT's Traffic Operations

Division (TRF).

Speeding is second only to drunken driving as the cause of fatal traffic crashes, so safety is the main point conveyed in "Excuses." The need to capture the attention of this group of speedsters is urgent because statistics show that they are overrepresented in traffic fatalities.

The television shoot took place on a beautiful March afternoon in one 12-hour day at McKinney Falls State Park, just south of Austin. The basic premise of the script centers around the many seemingly "innocent" excuses people, more specifically teen-agers, give officers in the hopes of talking their way out of a speeding ticket.

"We want to stress the consequences of this type of behavior," said Karen Gibson, TRF traffic safety specialist. And, boy, do they ever. The final shot features a stunned young man, obviously involved in a fatal crash, sitting in a smashed vehicle staring

vacantly into the camera with a voice-over message stating, "Try talking your way out of this one. Speeding can kill and not just yourself. Don't wreck your life."

TRF and GSD&M, an Austin-based advertising firm, wanted these PSAs to be realistic and thought-provoking. So they found a production company (FilmRow) and director (Steve Eshelman) who committed to the anti-speeding message.

This PSA, like others in the Don't wreck your life campaign, should reach the target audience, as well as make them have second thoughts about the possible results of speeding.

The "Excuses" theme of the anti-speeding spot is one of which any driver can relate to. TxDOT officials plan to make the spot available to other states for their own traffic safety campaigns. ★

Hispanic Awareness Committee achieves official recognition

Carlos Contreras
Audit Office

The Hispanic Awareness Committee (HAC) has been recognized by the Senior Management Team as an official TxDOT organization.

Now in its fourth year, the HAC is a non-profit organization open for membership to all TxDOT employees. It was established to commemorate one of Mexico's key holidays, the 16th of September. It was on this day in 1810 that Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla delivered the famous *grito* (cry) for independence that began the revolution which freed Mexico from Spanish rule.

The HAC, in conjunction with TxDOT management, is directed towards these goals:

- Increasing the quality of members' working relationships within TxDOT, helping them work toward TxDOT's goals and objectives;
- Increasing cultural diversity within the department;
- Aiding employees in understanding the complexities of TxDOT's operations by networking with other employees; and
- Supporting our communities by becoming involved in projects for civic betterment.

Activities for 1997 include the Diez y Seis celebration, the group's cornerstone activity; a summer social for members; and sponsoring of a needy family for the year-end holiday season. Committees are being formed to address membership, the Diez y Seis celebration, fund-raising, scholarships and networking.

The HAC has been challenged by SMT to establish a chapter in every district. Membership is open to all TxDOT employees at \$5 per year. Most of the revenue from membership dues will be dedicated to the scholarship fund. If you are interested in joining the HAC, please phone Steve Pina at 416-2445 or GroupWise SPINA, or Carlos Contreras at 463-8652 or CCONTRER. ★

Registration fees can help support schools

Mike Viesca
Vehicle Titles and Registration Division

TxDOT presented a check to Texas Tech University Chancellor John Montford April 4 benefitting the school's scholarship fund. The \$204,650 check represents the amount raised through the sale of Texas Tech license plates since 1990.

TxDOT administers the specialty plate program through the Vehicle Titles and Registration Division.

"The department of transportation is proud to be involved in something that benefits higher education," Burnett said. "We believe the collegiate license plate program is a fund raiser that attracts participation because it's unique and it gives motorists a

very visible way of showing off their Red Raider pride, or pride in their own college or university."

Texas Tech license plates bear the "double T" logo and are available for \$30 in addition to the regular registration fee. Tech gets \$25 for its scholarship fund and the remaining \$5 goes to the state to cover manufacturing costs. Personalized collegiate plates sell for \$70 plus the registration fee. There are currently 37 Texas schools in the collegiate license plate program.

Motorists may purchase their collegiate license plates at their county tax assessor-collector's office. These county officials are TxDOT's statutory agents for vehicle registration and titling matters. ★

Rules governing employees' political activities outlined

TxDOT encourages employees to take an active interest in local and state affairs and in political issues. However, these activities must be conducted on the employee's own time while off duty.

As stated in the department's Human Resources Manual, employees may engage in political activities. However, such activities must be conducted on the employee's own time, and not on department premises. Employees also may not use any state property or resources for political activities, including telephones, computers, typewriters, envelopes, postage, etc. These policies are contained in sections 2 and 5 of Chapter 2 of the Human Resources Manual.

State law prohibits the use of any funds, including employee salaries and state property, for influencing the outcome of any election, or the passage or defeat of any legislative measure. The General Appropriations Act, Article IX, Section 5 prohibition covers any legislation that may affect the department or state employees, including state employee pay raise legislation.

Failure to comply with these restrictions can result in disciplinary action and loss of salary. Penal code provisions also apply to misuse of state property and could lead to criminal prosecution.

"I can not overemphasize either the seriousness with which the Legislature, the commission and I regard any breach of these laws and policies, or the certainty and severity of the consequences," said Executive Director Bill Burnett. "With the use of ordinary common sense and discretion by all concerned, we should be able to avoid any problems."

Questions about permissible activities should be directed to the Office of General Counsel at (512) 463-8630. ★

Traffic circle is pride of Park Place

Victor Tsai
Houston District

On a drizzly morning at Kelley's Country Cookin' at the corner of Interstate 45 South and Park Place, J. C. Howard sits at a table and has his morning coffee and a cigarette. He wears the reflective orange vest that identifies him as a TxDOT employee and his wide-brimmed straw cowboy hat. Several elderly ladies come by the table to chat,

"Before we did the project, there was just grass inside the circle and concrete islands around it," Coté said. "What made matters worse was that wrecker drivers would park on the grass and just tear up the grass and make ruts in the ground. It was just a mess."

Completed just a few weeks ago, the traffic circle at Park Place has been paved with multicolored concrete paving stones in a saw-tooth pattern. Dozens of diamond-shaped planter boxes have been constructed

Greater Park Place Community Development Corporation, says the project touched a chord with residents, calling it a ecumenical effort, involving civic clubs, churches, service groups, businesses and the private sector. State Rep. Diana Davila, who represents District 145 from an office located near the circle, deserves most of the credit for making the project as successful as it has been, Medrano says.

"Because the intersection is a gateway to Houston, because of its proximity to William P. Hobby Airport, we wanted something to improve the visual impression of our city to visitors," Medrano said. The project adds to the beautification of the area and adds to the perception of stability and pride in the community.

But no one takes more pride in the project than Howard, an engineering technician in the South Harris Area Office. During the nine months that contractor Jerdon Inc. of Stafford worked on the project, Howard has kept a careful watch every step of the way. It was Howard who suggested the rock gardens as a field change to stop erosion behind the retaining walls. He has become well-acquainted with every business and resident in the area, and they in turn treat him as one of their own. He takes obvious pride in his work as he walks the area, picking up litter and tending to the plants.

Nothing has brought out the community involvement in this area as much as this project, he said. "It's a very visible difference in the community," he said. "For example, near the pedestrian walkway over the freeway, we used to have to clean up graffiti once a week. Since we did the beautification in that area, we've only had to clean it up less than once a month."

Coté hopes the community involvement extends beyond the construction period and into the maintenance of the project. The project was designed to be maintenance-free; there's nothing to mow, so the only thing to do is pick up litter. "We hope that area businesses and civic groups will get involved and help keep up the area. Before, there really wasn't any reason to do anything because it was so ugly, but now that it's done, we're hoping everyone does their part to keep it looking nice," he said. ★

This story originally appeared in Forum, the Houston District's newsletter.



The traffic circle at Park Place is paved with multicolored concrete, and dozens of diamond-shaped planter boxes have been planted with fan palm trees, oleanders, nandinas, pampas grass and yucca plants.

telling him how much they like the work he has done for this neighborhood. Always the gentleman, he stands up as they approach and listens to their concerns about unsightly right of way or vagrants sleeping under the freeway. In the short time he has worked in this area, this 16-year TxDOT veteran has become a very well-known Park Place visitor.

The Park Place beautification project was let in May 1996 and it was the last project of the Houston District's first landscape architect, Stacey Aycock, before her retirement. Her successor, Dana Coté, a landscape architect, worked on the project while he was employed by the Texas Transportation Institute before coming to TxDOT.

and planted with fan palm trees, oleanders, nandinas, pampas grass and yucca plants. Under the I-45 overpass, a retaining wall has been constructed from brown-colored concrete and creeping honeysuckle, which grows well in shady areas, has been planted behind the wall. To prevent erosion, rock gardens have been built where the water comes off the overpass and drains out through small holes in the retaining wall.

What Aycock and Coté envisioned, and what Howard built is more than a simple highway beautification project. The effort to clean up and beautify the Park Place circle has galvanized and bonded this community with a common purpose. Rafael Medrano, director of community relations for the

MAT's Hamilton is '97 Pollard Award winner

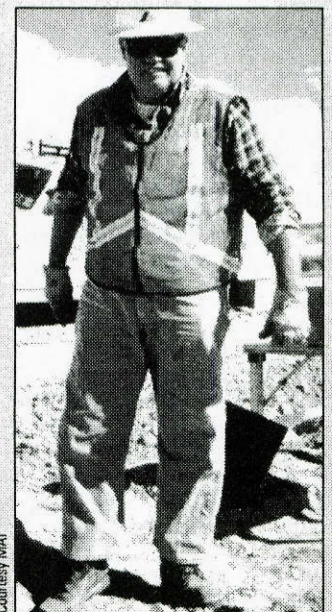
Honor recognizes contributions to materials, testing education

Richard L. Hamilton of the Materials and Tests Division's (MAT) Concrete/Cement Section has been named the recipient of the 1997 Albert H. Pollard Award for Excellence for his efforts to ensure uniform concrete testing through assistance in development of the Portland Cement Concrete Pavement quality control/quality assurance specification, co-development of the American Concrete Institute course and training of district personnel on new methods for the department.

Hamilton's 31-year career with the depart-

ment began in the Austin District's Georgetown Residency. In March 1970, Hamilton transferred to MAT's Physical Testing Section. Throughout his career, Hamilton has always been available to help and train new employees.

The Albert H. Pollard Award for Excellence has been a MAT tradition for five years. It was made possible by the bequest from the late Bertie Pollard in honor of her husband, Albert Pollard, a MAT employee. The award recognizes contributions in the advancement of education related to materials or material testing. ★



Courtesy MAT

LTPP data helps stretch highway dollars

Pavement performance program is largest, most comprehensive ever undertaken

Roger Polson
Public Information Office

Imagine a stack of 3.5-inch floppy disks reaching as tall as a nine-story building. That's a lot of floppies. But that's how many it would take to store all of the information that's been amassed in the database at the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) as part of the Long Term Pavement Program (LTPP).

LTPP is one of several ambitious research studies authorized by Congress 10 years ago under the banner of the Strategic Highway Research Program (SHRP). To date, about \$150 million has been spent on LTPP. It's the largest and most comprehensive pavement performance program ever undertaken. Before the program reaches its conclusion in another 10 years, a total of about \$250 million will have been spent.

The information contained in the LTPP database has been collected from about 2,500 general and specific in-service pavement sections throughout North America. Texas alone has about 230 of these test sections. Data collected includes inventory, materials testing, climate, maintenance, rehabilitation, traffic and monitoring (automated and manual), distress, friction, longitudinal profile, cross profile and deflection. The information derived from the study will be used to help to protect the sizable investment that makes up North America's highway infrastructure, estimated at a whopping \$40 billion and encompassing about 4 million miles of road.

It is with these staggering facts in hand that TxDOT recently participated in an LTPP "pep rally." The day and a half session held in Austin in March, featured presentations from experts who chronicled Texas' involvement in the program and laid out a plan for the final 10 years of the study.

"Our investment in this program is enormous," said Bobbie Templeton, TxDOT's assistant director for field operations and national coordinator for the SHRP initiative. "We need to make sure that the field personnel responsible for monitoring these test sites stay on top of this study. In the next 10 years, the information gathered could revolutionize how we build highways."

Templeton said that improved materials, pavements and maintenance procedures will help stretch the dollars spent on highway construction and prevent America's aging infrastructure from crum-



Information collected from about 2,500 pavement sections throughout the United States and Canada forms the database at the Federal Highway Administration as part of the Long Term Pavement Program, under the Strategic Highway Research Program.

bling beneath increased traffic demands.

"We wanted to bring our folks together from across the state to renew enthusiasm for this program," said Templeton. "Many of the people who are responsible for these programs weren't even in the department 10 years ago when the study began."

The objectives of the pep rally were to educate new people about LTPP, inform the districts about what is going on with LTPP, emphasize the need for the districts' active and continued support of the program, identify what Texas expects to gain from this 20-year research effort and reestablish communication between all parties.

More information about LTPP in Texas and North America is available from the department's Research and Technology Transfer library or consult the LTPP web site at <http://www.tfhrc.gov/pavement/ltppltpphome.htm>. ★

Some information in this report was taken from the January-February issue of TR News.

Survey reveals employee attitudes

Last summer, the Survey of Organizational Excellence was sent to 20 percent of TxDOT employees by the University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work. Forty-eight percent of the polled employees responded. Results reveal what employees see as the department's strengths and weaknesses.

The most recent survey indicates that employees think the department provides good customer service; high-quality services; and maintains good relations with the public, the Legislature and other state agencies. Employees also think the department does well on strategic planning. Fifty-five percent believe that employees understand the state, local, national and global economic issues that affect TxDOT. The survey also indicates that employees think their benefits are good. Seventy percent of the employees also reported that the benefits and compen-

sation packages offered by the state were a consideration for them in taking their positions. Many employees think that our external communications are good, with 62 percent agreeing that employees have access to information about job opportunities, conferences, workshops and training.

On the down side, the survey indicates that 73 percent of responding employees think their salaries are not competitive with similar jobs in the community. Also, many employees think that supervisors could do better at giving feedback to improve performance; and employees could be given more opportunities to participate in strategic planning and goal setting. Fifty-six percent of responding employees also feel that trust between managers and employees could be improved, as could management's fairness in dealing with employees. Further, many employees feel that supervisors could

empower employees more. Finally, many employees also feel that internal communications could be improved. For example, 63 percent think that the right information does not reach the right people at the right time.

This same survey was sent to all employees in the summer of 1994, with 35 percent responding. Results from that survey are similar to the 1996 results. Comparison of the results indicate that the department has improved slightly in many areas since 1994.

A comparison of the 1996 survey results for TxDOT employees, with all state employees surveyed in 1996, reveals great similarities. The major strengths and weaknesses identified by TxDOT employees were the same as those identified by all state employees when they were asked about their own agencies.★

1920s, '30s see beginnings

Editor's Note: This is the second in a series of eight excerpts from a history of the department that would become TxDOT. The history was written by former Travel and Information Division staffer Hilton Hagan.

Hilton Hagan

CHAPTER TWO Rebuilding

Gov. Moody named Ross S. Sterling chairman of what highway people came to call "the reform commission." Sterling was a founder of Humble Oil and Refining Company. He sold his interest in the oil company in 1925 and went into large-scale land development near Houston. He and former Gov. Bill Hobby operated the Houston Post.

Sterling's work as chairman of the commission gave him a good public service record and the public visibility to run for governor in 1930. He won.

Cone Johnson was a Tyler attorney, active in state and national politics. Indeed, he once had played one of those tiny, but pivotal parts that might have changed the course of U.S. and, perhaps, world history.

only one division engineer," Brown writes, "and that was in an emergency."

After leaving the department, Gilchrist went into private engineering practice in Dallas. One night about 1 a.m., he received a telephone call. It was Dan Moody. He asked Gilchrist what kind of a highway commissioner R. A. Thompson would make. Gilchrist said he didn't think it was a good idea to appoint an engineer to the commission, but added that Thompson would make an excellent state highway engineer.

A few days later, names of the new commission were announced. And they selected Thompson to be the department's chief administrative officer.

Soon after, Thompson appeared in Gilchrist's office in Dallas, asking for his advice in staffing the new department. Gilchrist reached for a yellow pad and wrote the names of several people, suggesting them for the key jobs.

"About a year later, Thompson tired of the job and the highway commission invited me to return," Gilchrist wrote in 1967.

"When I walked into Thompson's office, he

bound and printed on excellent heavy paper. On the first page of each chapter was a color drawing and the book contained many photographs, an expensive item in the days of hot-type printing and halftone engravings.

Gilchrist was pleased with the book until he walked into the Senate Gallery to see Bob Poage (who later represented the Waco area in Congress) waving a copy of the report and speaking in favor of a resolution to censure the department for extravagance. "He did not get many votes, but we did not do much more in color," Gilchrist said.

Rehabilitation a focus

The main task facing the department, in 1928 was the rehabilitation of hundreds of miles of road that suffered from neglect and poor maintenance in the Ferguson era. Gilchrist set to work. In 1928, the department spent \$49 per mile for maintenance, most of it for work to satisfy the U.S. Bureau of Public Roads to regain federal aid.

Maintenance costs were running about \$1 million a month statewide by 1930. The system consisted of 18,928 miles on August 31, 1930, including 8,167 miles of "earth" roads.

There were 18 divisions (districts) by then, each with maintenance forces ranging from one hundred to four hundred hands, said a department report, "such variation being due to the quantity of work as affected by seasonal changes and types and ages of roads under maintenance."

The biennial report boasted that between 1928 and 1930, approximately 1,100 miles of gravel roads had received asphalt surface treatments. The cost of a single treatment ranged from 12 to 16 cents a square yard, and double bituminous treatments from 17 to 21 cents a yard.

Maintenance forces also were used in "betterment" work. In the 1928-30 biennium, state forces had widened almost 800 miles of roadway. Projects covering 400 more miles were under way at the beginning of FY 1931.

Prior to 1929, there was no standard method of signing the highways in Texas. In May, highway crews started erecting signs and marking pavements in accordance with standards jointly set by the states through the American Association of State Highway Officials (the words 'and Transportation' were added to the name in 1975). In the first year, Texas highway maintenance crews erected more than 100,000 signs.

Gilchrist also was proud of the first division maps of the highway system that showed the alignment of the highways accurately. "Hundreds of miles of highways shown on older maps by straight lines from city to city had never been surveyed," he reported. Maintenance forces pitched in with others from district design groups and state offices to cure this flaw.

One good effect of making the maps more accurate was the development of a weekly detour report. This was compiled and sent out to field offices, chambers of commerce, auto associations, newspapers, and individuals who asked for it. Gilchrist said the service was started as an experiment, but predicted it would become a regu-



Workers labor to join two cantilevers during construction of the Rainbow Bridge between Port Arthur and Bridge City. The bridge was completed in 1937.

At the 1912 Democratic Convention at Baltimore, he was the leader of a group of Texas delegates credited with swinging the presidential nomination to Woodrow Wilson, the nation's president during World War I, and father of the idea of a League of Nations.

President Wilson appointed him solicitor of the State Department and Johnson was credited with having done much toward stabilizing American foreign policy.

W. R. Ely was a district judge in Abilene. The youngest of the three members of the commission Moody appointed, he provided geographical balance to the commission, representing West Texas.

Their first task was choosing a new chief executive for the department. Historian Norman Brown, in his account of the Ferguson administration, says the man who replaced Gilchrist was merely a figurehead. Turnover in key positions was rapid and constant in the two Ferguson years, but Gilchrist's successor "during his whole tenure selected

handed me the same yellow sheet and said, 'You cannot possibly object to your organization.' He had hired all of the group I selected."

A tradition is born

Gilchrist cited this as the beginning of a tradition of hiring highway employees on the basis of their qualifications. Setting aside political connections as the main consideration in hiring provided a staff that would remain stable no matter who occupied the Governor's Mansion. This provided continuity for long-term projects and programs. It also brought in talented people who began to think in terms of careers with the department. Stability fostered traditions and standards that served the department through the next generations.

In the Seventh Biennial Report of the department issued in 1930, Gilchrist reported "there were no changes in administrative personnel of the State Highway Department during the biennial period" — a far cry from the turmoil of the previous one.

Incidentally, Gilchrist, with what he thought was pardonable pride, made quite a document out of the biennial report. It was

of many TxDOT traditions

lar part of the department's services to the traveling public. What would they think of today's computerized road condition reporting system?

Shape up — or else!

Gilchrist was intent on employees polishing up the department's public image — or else. In 1930, he told the Legislature: "Each employee has been instructed that safety to the traffic on the highway must be his first consideration. Courtesy on the part of the employees of this organization is expected at all times. To assure these policies are being carried out and in order to be able to identify any employee who may disregard such instruction, the Commission requires that every workman on the road directly employed by the Highway Department shall wear a standard identification badge when on duty.

"Such badge must be conspicuously worn to enable anyone to identify an employee against whom he may wish to register a complaint." And, almost as an afterthought, he added: "Likewise, these badges may serve to identify employees who may deserve merit for exceptional services rendered."

The department's paper pushers did not do without tight managerial scrutiny either: "Steps have also been taken to see that the highest degree of efficiency is maintained in the clerical department of the various offices. A grading system has been adopted for division offices in which employees making errors in their work or falling to comply with all necessary procedures are given demerits.

"These demerit charges are collective, and offices whose work fails to meet certain fixed standards of efficiency are investigated to determine the cause.

"In addition, this plan has instilled a friendly spirit of competition between the forces of different offices and each separate group vies with all others in an effort to place their office at the head of the list in the monthly grading.

"As a result of this general increased alertness," Gilchrist wrote proudly, "the department is attaining the maximum in efficient and economic administration."

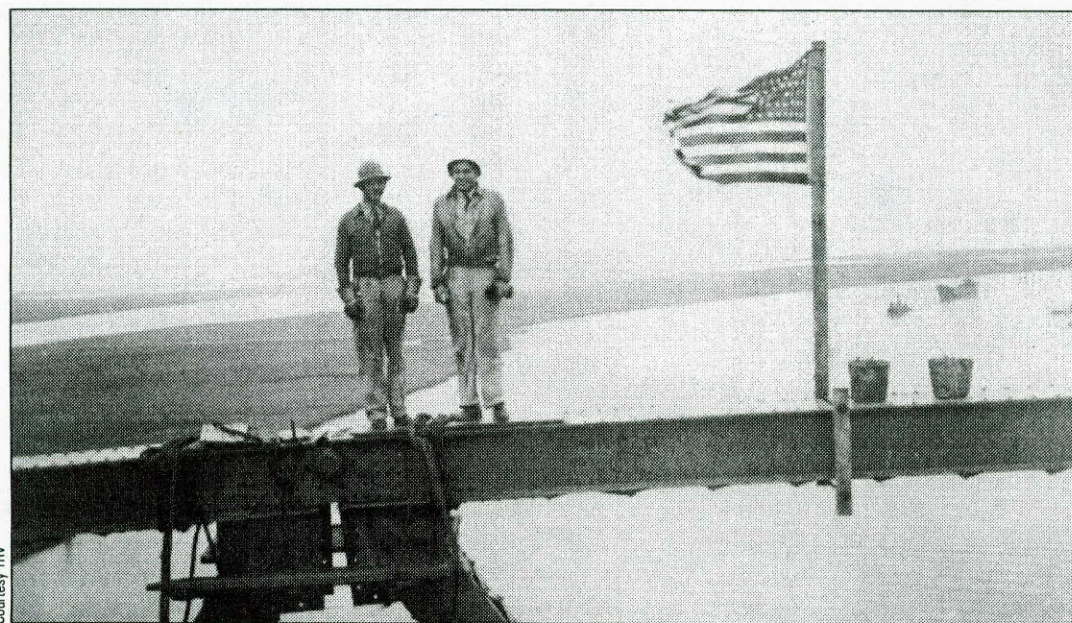
Benefits improve workers' lot

The commission was beginning to think of other benefits to improve the working person's lot: "We recommend that provision be made for insuring employees of the highway department," the commission recommended. "Many cases of injury, and some cases of death in the line of duty, have occurred without provision by law for assisting those injured, or the families of those killed. We believe that provision for insurance would so improve the morale of the department employees that it would increase their efficiency to a marked extent."

Along with increased maintenance activity came an effort to provide places to house equipment and materials conveniently. In 1928-30, 70 county maintenance warehouses were established "on lots leased for five to 10 years at low rentals." In other places, cities and counties had furnished free loca-

tions. About this same time, the department started providing tents and cook wagons for crews in isolated areas so the workers could stay on the job for days and weeks at a time when necessary.

Some of the maintenance equipment was downright exotic. The department had three nail pickers operating around the state in 1930. Each consisted of a truck with a gener-



Courtesy TRV

ator mounted in the bed to provide current to electromagnets suspended just above the road surface. Purpose of the nail pickers was to, well, pick nails. It seems incredible that so many nails could have been spilled on the road. One can only wonder how they got there, but there they were. Working on roads in the 12 counties in the Waco District, for example, one machine harvested more than 6,000 pounds of nails.

Home-made center striper

There was no commercial center striping equipment on the market at the time, so the department made its own paint stripe machines at Camp Hubbard. The machines looked like an old-time garden cultivator — a three-wheeled gizmo powered by a man pushing the device along the middle of the road by a pair of plow handles.

Another problem was not so easily handled. The commission Gov. Moody appointed found quickly that there were not enough people or equipment in the Accounting Division to keep track of the money.

Before Sept. 1, 1927, there was one bookkeeper and two assistants handling all the accounts of the highway department. The total equipment in the division was two adding machines.

All the accounts — all the accounts that were humanly possible to be kept by three people, anyway — were kept by hand. The commission asked for an audit. The auditor found the books in an unholy mess and suggested just starting from scratch. A private firm was hired to install a new accounting system.

As a result, 21 positions were added to the division, possibly one of the few times in department history that an overnight seven-fold increase in personnel has been ordered.

Furthermore, they were mechanized if not automated. Here is an inventory of the bookkeeping equipment on hand three

years later: "Two seven-bank Hollerith tabulating machines, two horizontal sorters, six duplicating punches, one gang punch, two electric Remington bookkeeping machines, three Comptometers, and five adding machines."

The Seventh Biennial Report of the department enthused: "Through this increased personnel and modern equipment

Rivet inspectors B.P. Greenwade and D.A. Talbert pose atop the nearly joined north and south cantilevers of Rainbow Bridge.

it has been possible to keep accurate account of the operations of the highway department through all its phases; and from the Hollerith tabulating equipment may be drawn a wealth of statistics and cost data on road maintenance and construction."

The Registration Division had 27 typists and file clerks on the regular payroll, with extras hired during the peak registration period. The big breakthrough in the division was the action of going to a 3-inch by 5-inch registration form that could be filed directly without further typing or handling when received from the counties.

Before the forms were designed to fit the files, all the data had to be transcribed on cards that fit. After the big changeover, the form went directly into the file after an inspection by the auditor.

"The Registration Division has been instrumental in locating hundreds of cars that have been reported stolen," the biennial report said. Although all the filing was done by hand, systems were designed to flag vehicle records with "alarm cards." When there was an inquiry or transaction involving a car so identified, the alarm card showed up and the appropriate people warned.

"The files are so indexed," the report boasted, "that this division is able to give information on any registered vehicle by long-distance telephone in a minimum of time." Vehicles registered in Texas in 1930 totaled 1,445,250.

Registration scheme abandoned

Meanwhile, the state had abandoned using horsepower as a basis for assessing registration fees and had gone to a graduated system using vehicle weight. In fiscal

Please see History, page 12

Texas travel writer has endless job

But somebody's gotta do it, and GSD's McLeod is equal to the task

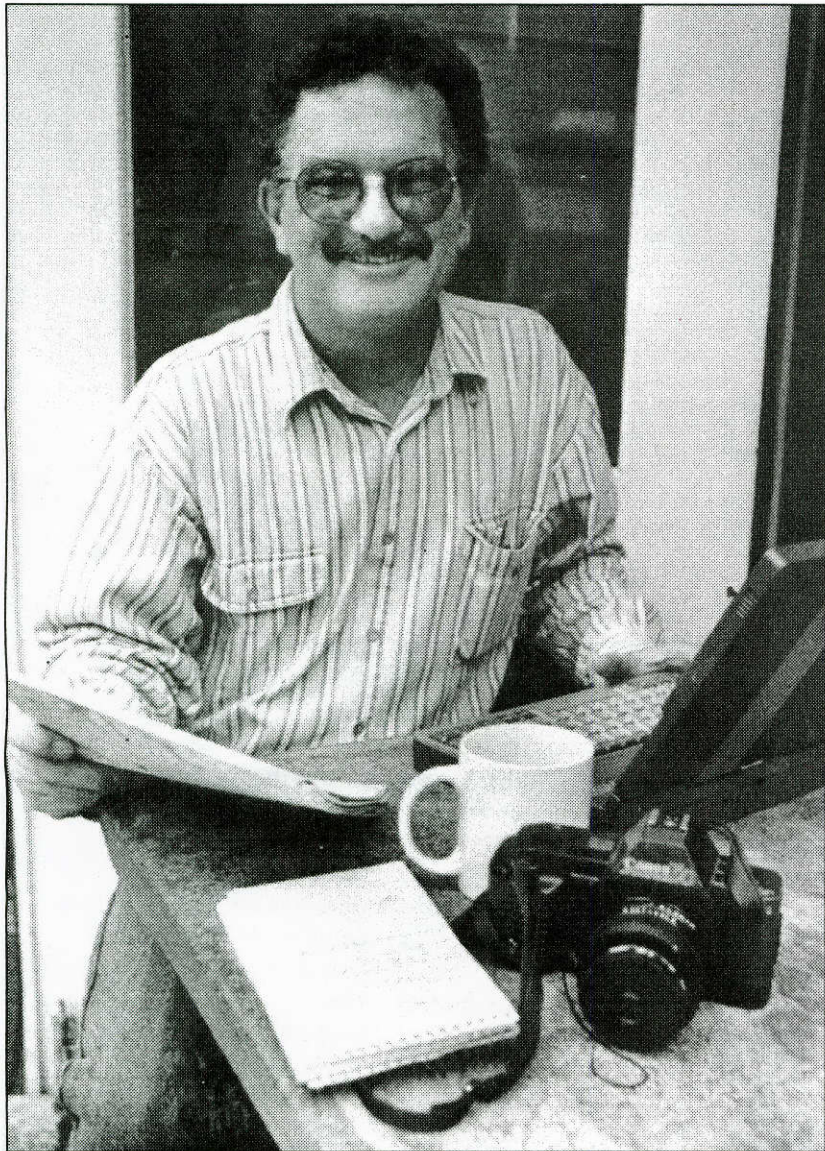
Jeff Carmack

Public Information Office

"There's so many good things to write about in Texas, why write about the bad things?"

That's the opinion of Gerald McLeod who, in addition to running the General Services Division's Electronic Publishing Center in Austin, is the author of a travel book.

The book is titled *Day Trips, Vol. I*. It's a collection of the first 100



Travel writer Gerald McLeod and the indispensable tools of the trade: laptop computer, notebook, roadmap, camera and coffee.

columns McLeod has written for the Capital City's alternative weekly newspaper, the *Austin Chronicle*.

His travels have taken him all over the state, and led to discoveries like "the best burger in the world, at Simmons Country Store in Leesville, south of Luling" and "some cool people like Wild Willie in Wimberly," who makes sculptures out of junk.

McLeod has been with TxDOT for almost 15 years. He started out as a graphic artist with GSD (that's the Equip-

ment and Procurement Division for the old-timers, or D-4 for the *real* moss-backs.) He applied at TxDOT after spending a year as the art director at an Austin ad firm and another year freelancing.

Soon after starting with the department, he took a second job with the *Chronicle* to make a little extra money. "The *Chron* was biweekly then," he said, "and it was just me and the art director putting it together, with me primarily building ads." As the paper grew, so did the payroll. Soon, McLeod found his part-time hours dropping "from about 30 a week to about 10." His bosses at the paper didn't want to let him go, so they asked him to do some writing.

"These people weren't just my bosses and co-workers but also

my friends and they didn't want to just say 'adios.'" he said. "I had been doing some writing for them, like their guide to Central Texas barbecue, and 101 Central Texas swimming holes, and a guide to East Austin, so we tried to find a job at the *Chron* that wouldn't take too much time away from my job at TxDOT."

The result was McLeod's weekly column, *Day Trips*. "Some of the ideas that were thrown out were the Public Notice column. I really wanted to do that," McLeod said. "Another suggestion was that I become food editor, but that's not my bailiwick. Editor Louis Black suggested I do a travel column. So April 12, 1991, was the first *Day Trips* column. I covered the Highland Lakes Bluebonnet Trail."

And now, 311 columns later, his works have been assembled in a book. The idea for a book came from a joke made by former *Chronicle* writer and now Austin City Council member Darryl Slusher. "Darryl came up with the tag line [at the end of every column] 'collect 'em all' as a joke, but everyone took it real seriously. People would call and ask 'Hey, I missed number 12; when you gonna publish them in a book?' and we thought maybe this isn't a bad idea."

It wasn't a bad idea. The initial press run has just about sold out and now, McLeod said, they're wrestling with the idea of doing a second press run. Also, *Vol. II* is now in the works.

The road to being a travel writer wasn't a straight one. McLeod was born in Idaho, raised in Kansas and Nebraska, and came to Fort Worth when he was in the fourth grade. After getting out of school he was an auto mechanic for a couple of years, and worked in a factory, but in the back of his mind was the desire to be a writer.

"As a child, I always wanted to be writer," he said. "Everyone else wanted to be a cop or a fireman; I wanted to be a writer. So when I got laid off from a factory job in Fort Worth, I decided to go to college." He enrolled in a junior college in Fort Worth and "graduated with a two-year degree after four years." From there he came to Austin, where he studied journalism at the University of Texas, and like countless others, he never got Austin out of his blood.

He cut his journalistic teeth at a weekly paper in Lumberton, where he stayed about a year. "I was dating a woman in Austin," he said. "We decided we would get married, so I moved back to Austin. Then we decided we wouldn't get married."

Two years as a graphic artist in an Austin typesetting house taught him typography and gave him a love for the work. He then spent another year at an Austin ad firm ("which has since gone belly up," though he claims there is no cause-and-effect relationship). Following a year of freelancing, he landed jobs at TxDOT and the *Austin Chronicle*. And the rest, as they say, is history.

McLeod said one of the best things about his *Chronicle* gig is that "it gives me an excuse to explore all these places that I probably wouldn't go to otherwise. I kind of go out of my way to see things I wouldn't if I wasn't writing about them," he said. Sometimes we find some really great things. Castroville [west of San Antonio] was one of those. And Walburg [north of Georgetown] is not much of a town, but they have a great restaurant."

And he's had so much fun that it's hard for him to say which one he's liked best. "A lot of them really stand out as being a lot of fun," he said. "Last year's trip to Balmorhea and Fort Davis [in West Texas] was fun. And Fossil Rim Wildlife Park [outside Glen Rose in the Fort Worth District] is Texas eco-tourism at its finest."

Writing about interesting places in Texas offers a lot in the way of job security because, much like painting the Golden Gate Bridge, the job never gets finished. "My mom asked me once, 'what are you going to do when you run out of places to write about?' and I told her, 'Mom, this is Texas. I'm never going to run out of places to write about.'" ★

Horne

Continued from page 3

outstanding." The Hornes lost their first son, Joseph, at an early age.

Horne likes to kid around and tell people his son, Daniel, is in prison. After he enjoys your reaction, he then explains that Daniel is a lieutenant at the Mark Stiles State Prison in Beaumont.

"Boy, you sure looked surprised when I told you that," Horne laughed. "You didn't

know what to say. (He's right, I didn't; he had me going.)

"But you're nice," he said, smiling. "You even told me you'd leave that part (about Daniel) out of the story."

Yep, Horne enjoys his joke, likes telling stories, and most of all, likes to stay busy.

"It was nice meeting you," he told me as I was leaving and he was heading for his truck. "I've got to get started spraying pretty soon; the weeds are already coming up."

(A personal note: This column is dedicat-

ed to Joyce Horne, who, although I didn't have the honor of knowing, must have been a great lady. And perhaps this verse from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem, *Resignation*, will bring some comfort to Joe.)

There is no Death! What seems so is transition;

This life of mortal breath

Is but a suburb of the life elysian,

Whose portal we call Death. ★

Robert Nichols nominated to commission

Texas Transportation Commission nominee Robert Nichols of Jacksonville says, if confirmed by the Texas Senate, he will serve all of Texas.

Nichols, nominated by Gov. George W. Bush to replace David Bernsen of Beaumont on the transportation commission, said that his experience as a businessman, engineer and former Jacksonville mayor has prepared him for work in state government.

"To be successful in business you have to work for the customer and excel in three areas: service, quality and efficiency," Nichols said. "That same philosophy can work in government and I intend to bring that philosophy with me to TxDOT.

"I plan to work for all Texans. Input from all areas — rural and urban — is important and benefits the state as a whole," he said.

Nichols, who served on the Jacksonville city council from 1980-1984 and was mayor from 1985-1989, said his years as an elected public servant will benefit him if he is confirmed.

"I know how important it is to build consensus on issues and get people to work for the good of the whole, rather than for individual agendas," Nichols said.

Texas Transportation Commissioner David Laney said he knows Nichols by reputation. "I look forward to working with him. The experience he brings to the commission will prove exceptionally valuable to TxDOT and the citizens of Texas," said Laney.

Outgoing commissioner Bernsen said he has talked with Nichols. "I believe he'll do a great job for Texas. I certainly will help him in any way I can," said Bernsen.

Bernsen said Texas has the best transportation system in the United States, if not the world.

"Our transportation system is neither Republican nor Democrat; it's Texan. It means economic development, which we need to compete in a global economy," Bernsen said. ★

State of transit is focus of conference

Clare Hagerty

Public Transportation Division

A sunset riverboat cruise on Lake Austin and a rowdy Roadeo competition, in which bus drivers from across the state maneuvered vehicles through tricky obstacle courses, were two of the highlights of this year's Texas Public Transportation Conference at the Austin Hyatt Regency Hotel March 23-26.

TxDOT's Public Transportation Division (PTN) co-hosted the conference, along with the Texas Transit Association, Texas Transit Vendors and the Capital Area Rural Transportation System.

The Texas Public Transportation Conference, in its 25th year, is the state's premier transit event. It offered educational workshops, training classes and general sessions covering community relations, vehicle maintenance, air quality and transportation, employment law, marketing and technology sharing. Each focused on the current state of transit in Texas and the nation, and the direction in which it is headed as the turn of the century approaches.

TxDOT Executive Director Bill Burnett presented the winners of the 1997 State Roadeo Competition at a special awards dinner March 23. In the Large Bus category, Capital Metro drivers Arthur Murillo and Ernest Acosta won first and second place, respectively. Third place went to Jesse Quintero, a driver for VIA Metropolitan Transit in San Antonio. In the Paratransit category, in



Gay Shackelford, TRV

The Friend of Texas Transit Award this year went to Carole Warlick, left, director of Hill Country Transit. San Antonio District Public Transportation Coordinator Carolyn Goodall, right, received the first Texas Public Transportation Coordinator of the Year Award. Also pictured is Judy Bymam, PTN director.

which drivers of smaller, wheelchair-accessible buses competed, Eddie Canales of Southwest Transit in Uvalde won first place, Ricardo Canales of Community Council Southwest in Uvalde won second place and Bob Roberts of The Transit System in Glen Rose won third place.

Texas Transportation Commission Chairman David Laney presented the 1996 Friend of Texas Transit Award and the TxDOT Public Transportation Coordinator of the Year Award, which was presented for the first time, at the awards luncheon March 24.

The Friend of Texas Transit Award is awarded each year to a representative of the transit industry for outstanding service in public transportation development in Texas. This year's winner was Carole Warlick, director of Hill Country Transit.

San Antonio District Public Transportation Coordinator Carolyn Goodall received the

first Texas Public Transportation Coordinator of the Year Award. Goodall has worked in the Transportation Planning Section of the San Antonio District Office for the past 20 years and, in 1987, she became the first woman at the district level to assume responsibility for the public transportation programs. Since then, she has worked to enhance public transportation in the 12-county San Antonio District through the 63 transit agencies she oversees.

"We were especially honored this year to have these two women recognized at our conference for their outstanding achievements in promoting public transportation in Texas," said Judith A. Bymam, PTN director. "Both are true transit advocates and deserve recognition for their hard work in supporting the future of public transportation in this state." ★

Safety

Continued from page 1

August should focus on high-exposure areas, past summer accidents and preventing accidents in the operations being performed. Each morning, supervisors and crew leaders should conduct a safety review of the day's activities. This establishes a game plan for reducing the possibility of accident or injury.

All employees should receive a copy of the Handbook of Safety Practices, which contains general safety rules and procedures. They should use the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices, when planning and setting up traffic control.

OCC's "123 Safe Days of Summer" campaign includes the following activities and information:

- A safety bulletin will be sent weekly to each safety coordinator via GroupWise. They may forward this information to their supervisors or include it in safety meetings. Information will be covered from the safety and the hazardous materials sections.

- A hazardous materials poster contest was held in March. The

winning slogan will be used on posters covering the safe handling of hazardous materials distributed to all department facilities.

- The Occupational Safety News, OCC's division newsletter, will be provided monthly from May to August.

- An accident reduction contest for personal injuries and vehicle accidents will be initiated. Every district will have a reduction goal to achieve during the month of May through August. Each district that meets its goal in one or more categories will be recognized at the 1997 HRM/APM Conference in November. A special award will be presented to the district with the greatest percent reduction from their previous three-year average rate for each category.

Vehicle backing stickers will be provided to each district. These go on vehicle steering wheels to remind drivers to follow safe backing procedures.

Safety awareness is not limited to summer months, but with the history of increased injuries and fatalities during this period, employees must do their part to ensure that workers as well as motorists are safe on Texas highways. ★ *Contributed by the Occupational Safety Division*

TRAC gets students to use their noodles

Meredith Whitten
Public Information Office

TxDOT engineers may be hard-pressed to find spaghetti in the department's spec book. But that didn't stop students in Bridge Krahula's science class from using the Italian staple to build bridges.

About 20 juniors and seniors at Manor High School participated in the exercise, which was designed to teach the students

spaghetti and some glue, the students were limited only by their creativity.

Each group chose a name — such as Bridges R Us and RC Construction — and had a month to work on their bridge until Ralls and Miller returned, along with Bridge Design Engineer Mark Blosscock, to load test the students' bridges.

The bridges weighed from 4 ounces to 13 ounces each and supported weights ranging from 9 pounds to 56 pounds.

While they tested the bridges, Ralls, Miller and Blosscock fielded questions from the students, many of whom grimaced as their bridges collapsed.

The International Pasta Company's bridge had the best weight ratio. The three students in the group were exchange students from Germany, Switzerland and — is this an unfair advantage? — Italy.

Ralls said the students obviously paid attention during the

lectures because their structures used sound engineering techniques.

"The designs showed a lot of creativity and imagination. They were using some very good engineering principles in their designs. They understand some basic fundamental principles that we use in our engineering applications," Ralls said.

Blosscock agreed, adding that the students also were concerned with the bridges' aesthetics, something department engineers must contend with as well.

"There was real attention to trying to make the thing graceful and light and still achieve the span that they were trying to. We're trying to do that now in the department — we're looking more into the aesthetic aspect," Blosscock said.

TxDOT engineers could also learn something from the students' designs.

"We're thinking about building some TxDOT bridges with spaghetti," Blosscock joked.

The activities were part of the department's TRAC (TRANsportation and Civil Engineering) efforts. TRAC encourages high school students to pursue a career in the transportation field. TRAC targets high schools with high female and minority populations.

TxDOT is the TRAC sponsor in Texas. The department lends a computer and electronic equipment (called the TRAC PAC) to a high school. TRAC fits into the curriculum of math, science and social studies classes with more than 30 computer-related activities.

As of fall 1996, the department had implemented TRAC in 10 Austin-area high schools, according to Marlene Bradley, TRAC administrator in the Human Resources Division. Bradley said the department plans to implement TRAC into 10 Houston-area high schools by this fall.

The program seems to be on the right track, according to Krahula.

"They've gotten a lot out of this. They're at the age where they're starting to think about college. Several of them are very interested in engineering, so something like this is very beneficial to the kids," Krahula said.

Bradley agreed, noting that department employees benefit as well as students and administrators.

"Activities, such as the bridge design project at Manor High School, give our TxDOT TRAC volunteer employees an opportunity to interact with the students," Bradley said. "The engineers are able to relate the engineering concepts that have been used when designing projects such as the bridges. The students learn what engineers do on the job."

The bell rang and Krahula's class ended. The students headed off to lunch, where spaghetti was sure to be on someone's menu. ★



Michael Amador, TRV

Mary Lou Ralls and Mark Blosscock inspect model bridges, built from pasta, constructed by high school juniors and senior as part of TRAC (TRANsportation and Civil Engineering), which works to encourage students to pursue a career in the transportation field.

engineering principles and encourage them to consider a career in engineering.

Mary Lou Ralls, bridge construction and maintenance engineer, and Johnnie Miller, engineering specialist, both of the Materials and Tests Division, talked to Krahula's class about what it takes to become an engineer, including course work and opportunities. Then they gave the class an assignment: build your own bridge.

Armed with their newly acquired engineering knowledge, a 12-ounce bag of

History

Continued from page 9

1930, the average passenger car cost \$7.87 to license, trucks averaged \$18.42, and registering the average motorcycle cost \$3.87.

Texas had rehabilitated itself in the eyes of the federal highway authorities and was again receiving federal aid for construction.

In the 1928-30 biennium, the department received \$10.2 million in federal reimbursements for construction. As is the case today, the federal money was paid only after the work was approved.

Bids for highway work were received monthly, much as they are today. May 1929, had a record letting: \$7.7 million for work on 396.3 miles of highway. Contractors, then as now, were paid on the basis of monthly estimates by resident engineers.

Although there was a Materials and Tests Division in 1930, most testing was done outside the department. Labs at the University of Texas and Texas A&M examined most materials for the department, with occasional overflow testing going to commercial laboratories.

The lab located on the Little Campus at UT in Austin tested "sand, gravel, stone, concrete compression specimens, cores, mixing waters, callches, et cetera." Test reports were submitted twice daily to the department's Materials and Tests Division where the results were analyzed and checked to see if the specifications in the plans were being met.

The university provided the building and some of the equipment, plus services of a testing engineer. The highway department's con-

tribution was a secretary, a typist, and eight lab assistants.

In 1930, the commission sought approval to construct a building to house a central state testing laboratory. "With a state central laboratory housed in the state highway department building," the commission argued, "we could do our routine work and some research work, with the result that Texas A&M and the University of Texas could be used for research, which is what they really want to do."

Meanwhile, Materials and Tests began stationing field inspectors at material supply sources, such as quarries, mines, and refineries. In 1930, there was a department inspector on duty at the rock asphalt mines in Uvalde County and another at the Texas Company refinery at Port Neches, inspecting "oil" asphalt. Ten other inspectors specialized in checking sand and gravel at various locations and three more checked shipments of rock to highway department jobs.

The commission's plea for a building to house a central testing laboratory was part of a larger request for a single structure to house all headquarters functions. Language of the request in 1930 almost sounds like the department's Austin-office space plight of the 1980s and 1990s: "We wish to renew our recommendation that the State Highway Commission be permitted to erect a building to house the State Highway Department in Austin, such a building to include provision for a laboratory, research department, and ample other space for carrying on its activities, now and in the future. The efficiency of the department is very much curtailed by cramped and

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Honor of recognition remains

'96 Highway Beautification Awards mark banner wildflower year

Roger Polson
Public Information Office

As a banner wildflower year bloomed across Texas, the 27th annual beautification awards were presented during the opening session of the 1997 maintenance conference in Austin.

The awards were presented before 600 maintenance personnel by Construction and Maintenance Division Director Thomas Bohuslav and Executive Director Bill Burnett. And though the setting for the '97 version of the awards was drastically different than the first awards presented by Lady Bird Johnson in 1970, the honor of being recognized for efforts to keep Texas beautiful was still the same.

For the first few years of the awards, the ceremony was held at the LBJ Ranch between Johnson City and Fredericksburg. Former President Lyndon B. Johnson and Dewitt C. Greer attended in 1970.

While this year's awards did not have any former presidents, the presence of so many people directly involved in the department's beautification efforts allowed the finalists and award winners a moment in the spotlight before their peers.

1996 Vegetation Management Award San Angelo District

The San Angelo District was selected for this first-time award because of its efforts to support the department's vegetation management program. District employees view the care of existing vegetation and establishment of new vegetation in the rights-of-way as an important and integral part of TxDOT's mission.

Their approach promoted native grass and wildflower cover on the rights of way using native grass and wildflower seeding and "spray-on" soil retention blankets to reduce erosion and increase seed germination. The installation of rock berms, filter fabric barriers, and in some instances, installation of permanent concrete berms, contributes to the reduction of soil erosion and siltation of the Colorado and Nueces river basins.

Mowing procedures closely follow the department's guidelines to promote both safety and visual enhancement. Timing of mowing operations helps to enhance wildflower stands. Various sites have also been designated and signed as non-mow areas to help protect endangered species such as the Texas poppy mallow.

1996 Highway Beautification Award Lewis Davenport

Lewis Davenport, maintenance supervisor for the Dallas District's Southwest Dallas County, and his crew have worked tirelessly to support wildflower beautification each year. They have established hundreds of acres of bluebonnets on slopes throughout the section, locating areas that are suited for the seed. Spring mowing is delayed and strip mowing is performed for safety and wildflower preservation. Davenport also established many acres of non-mow areas to help preserve and protect native wildflowers, grasses and wildlife.

To increase the enjoyment and safety for motorists driving Interstate 20, Davenport and his crew have planted six different areas on the I-20 median. Pampas grass, abelia, yaupon, holly and wax myrtle were planted in intervals. The section has also worked on cooperative programs with municipalities and citizens groups. For instance, the Boy Scouts worked on a project to plant trees along Farm-to-Market Road 1382.

Highway Beautification Award Runner-Up

Kevin Harris of the Paris District's Grayson County has given highway beautification a high priority. By controlling mowing, wildflowers such as crimson clover and coreopsis mature and reappear each year. An aggressive herbicide program has slowly eradicated Johnson grass and other invasive weeds which choke out or hide more appealing wildflowers and native grasses.

Harris has partnered with local communities on landscaping projects to bring local interest and funding for landscape improvements. He also works diligently with local developers to ensure that their landscaping enhances the roadside beautification of the highway system.

Highway Beautification Award Finalists Ruperto (Peto) Perez

"Peto" Perez's beautification efforts in the Odessa District's Sanderson Section are punctuated after each rare West Texas rainfall. His efforts include selective mowing to create seasonal displays of wildflowers and contour mowing to promote growth of natural grasses, mesquite, yucca and blooming cactus. At a Blue Star Memorial Highway rest stop under Perez's care, native plants and expansive walkways of native stone welcome visitors to the area.

Gary Bilbrey

Gary Bilbrey, Coke County, San Angelo District, has worked tirelessly to protect the Colorado River, E.V. Spence reservoir and Oak Creek from damaging runoff. His goal has been to establish stabilized ground cover on all rights of way in his area. Through the use of recycled topsoil and progressive grading practices, this goal is being achieved throughout the county. He has worked to balance aesthetics with safety in protecting native flora and wildlife habitat. In the spring, roadsides bloom with red Drummond phlox, indian blanket and other wildflowers planted and nurtured by Bilbrey and his crew.

Eddie Moore

Eddie Moore and the employees in the Bovina Maintenance Section in the Lubbock District's Parmer County had their work cut out for them by a tornado which destroyed the roadside park on U.S. 60. They rebuilt the park using salvaged and new material. Tables and benches were reconstructed, and anti-graffiti coating was applied to all surfaces and native plants were selected to finish the job. Honey locust and black locust trees as well as lilac bushes were planted. Because of their hard work and creative efforts travelers are once again enjoying the comfortable roadside park.

Highway Beautification Award Nominees

Eldon McCurley, North Tyler Maintenance Section, Tyler District; Harold Baldwin, New Boston Maintenance Section, Atlanta District; James Parker, Erath County, Fort Worth District; Donald Smart, Coryell County, Waco District. ★

Despite change-ups, Retooling efforts in high gear

Organizational changes moved the Retooling Office under Deputy Executive Director for Administrative Services Cassie Carlson Reed, but the office's mission remains the same - rethinking the way TxDOT does business so it operates more efficiently.

Since it started in January 1994, TxDOT's Retooling effort has made great strides. Of the 14 business areas originally identified for retooling, six are actively involved in retooling. Four are in implementation and two are in the redesign phase. After the reorganization, Brian Rawson was named director of the Retooling effort. He noted three qualities the program must have for success.

"Three ingredients for success in assessing the Retooling program are quality staff, committed leadership and a solid approach," said Rawson. "Those are three critical elements that I was looking for, and all three exist today."

Retooling now includes more of the implementation aspect, which can have a wide impact on operations and employees.

Rawson stressed that the department's Retooling efforts involve and affect everyone, and that the Retooling Office simply provides

the means for employees to rethink the way TxDOT does business.

Myrna Klipple, a business analyst, said Retooling prepares TxDOT for the future. "We're known for having the best highways, but we want to have a jump on how we're doing business. We're trying to look to the future and how we can plan for TxDOT," Klipple said.

Each of the 14 Business Process Retooling (BPR) projects has a redesign phase and an implementation phase. During the redesign phase, the team works on mapping out ways to change, streamline or something the particular process. Once this part is finished and the results are OK'd by the executive sponsor, the BPR moves into the implementation phase. The implementation phase is divided further into many business improvement projects (BIPs), the steps taken to implement the changes. "We're just now really getting to reap the rewards of Retooling," he said. "A lot of people have put a tremendous amount of effort and time and we're starting to see some of the actual benefits." ★

Service Awards

May

Ahlone
25 years
 David R. Elmore
 20 years
 Rondale H. Worthington
10 years
 Richard Benavides
5 years
 Frank C. Deloera
 James A. Gilbert Jr.
 Joe D. Jones
 Sonya L. Mitchell

Amarillo
25 years
 Ronald W. Matthews
20 years
 Robert Aguirre
15 years
 June M. Baer
 Emergildo P. Rodriguez Jr.

10 years
 Kendall L. Clawson
 Claude N. Fedric
 Lane E. Provence

Atlanta
35 years
 Raymond T. Ellison II
 Elvin E. Rousseau

30 years
 Henry L. Wyatt
20 years
 Lonnie R. Hutsell
15 years
 William L. Gatewood
 Tommy L. Sparks Jr.
10 years
 William K. Cook
 Charles W. Lineberger
 Kevin R. Mote
 Steven W. Oney
 Clifton M. Sellers
 David R. Selman

Austin
35 years
 Layton L. Brown
25 years
 Evelyn L. Deshay
 John J. Howell
15 years
 Tracy L. House
 Sharon A. Little
10 years
 Blake A. Dommert
 Deborah D. Hayes
 Tobin W. Homuth
 Leota D. Pieper
 Helen G. Stewart

5 years
 Dennis W. Behrends
 Girard K. Behrends
 Doug H. Booher
 Russell S. Eubanks
 Mitchell S. Haley
 Slade W. Harris
 Steven K. Heselmeyer
 Steve B. Higgins
 Grady L. Moreland
 Chad A. Nutt
 Robert E. Teaford

Beaumont
20 years
 John C. Bartee
15 years
 Daniel L. Cornwell
 Steven C. Helton
 Paul C. Hugon
 David S. Maxedon
 Johnny R. Perez Sr.
 John F. Snoddy Jr.
 Mary A. Stidham
10 years
 Samuel L. Willey
5 years
 Barbara E. Brooks
 Niney J. Prejean
 Leanne L. St John

Brownwood
30 years
 Gary V. Tarver
15 years
 Kenneth L. Moore
10 years
 Robert A. Carroll

Bryan
30 years
 Erby Cooper Jr.
20 years
 Janice H. Sterling
 Gregory L. Straughter
15 years
 Donnell Burns
 Terrell G. Gerland
 Raymond G. Kluck
 Paul J. Oliver
10 years
 Donald M. Sanders
5 years
 James R. Baker
 Jessie E. Fenner
 Walter R. Lockett
 John R. Wallace
 Nathan B. White

Childress

15 years
 Micheal T. Doss
5 years
 Jerry W. Branam
 Jesse R. Butler
 Samuel L. Doby
 Charles R. Gaston
 John W. Manley
 John D. Ricks

Corpus Christi
20 years
 Rafael C. Lopez
15 years
 Roy A. Allen
 Edwin J. Guernsey
5 years
 Ali Bashi

Dallas
30 years
 Curtis L. Oppermann Jr.
25 years
 Terry W. Prince
 Billy T. Willingham
 Mark A. Young
15 years
 Robert M. Brown

10 years
 Scott J. Bonds
 Gary L. Holcomb
 Archie M. Hughes
 George M. Isom
 Timothy K. Massey
 Robert E. Rust
 Lenard V. Wall Jr.
 Paul E. Williams
 Gary L. Wingo
 Kathryn M. Wingrove
5 years
 John D. Brewer
 Paul E. Cooper
 William R. Fuller
 Mark D. Jackson
 James P. Kern
 Jack S. Pullen
 Elliott Stovall

El Paso
35 years
 Charles R. Shook
30 years
 Jose M. Lagos
 Vicente Luna
 George C. Moreland
20 years
 Francisco Gonzales
10 years
 Clayton D. Long
5 years
 Alonzo M. Aranda
 Fidel M. Baeza
 Benjamin D. Benavidez
 Eduardo A. Martin
 Pablo T. Salgado

Fort Worth
30 years
 Carole H. Shea
25 years
 Tommy J. Bird
20 years
 Michael W. Looney
 John Marquez Jr.
15 years
 Anthony C. Jaramillo
10 years
 Sammy C. Brazeau
 Judith K. Brown
 Lindsay K. Buckler
 Oscar R. Chavez
 Felicia H. Davis
 Marsha M. Lively
 David A. Reese
 Peter G. White
 Paul W. White

5 years
 Rodney S. Bush Sr.
 Scott B. Hall
 Andrew V. Kissig
 Anette M. Moss
 John I. Ramos Jr.
 Allen O. Shelley
 Calvin L. Strawbridge

Houston
35 years
 Walter R. Himly
30 years
 Eddie L. Kuta
 Beatrice P. Ott
20 years
 Sandra T. Hatcher
15 years
 William E. Andrade
 Elvia R. Cardinal
 Eliseo J. Flores
 Gary W. Fojtik
 Ronald L. Forest
 Anthony P. Garcia
 Michael E. Johnson
 Augustine M. Rangel
10 years
 Terri A. Leblanc
 Gary D. Witt
5 years
 Terry L. Dayton
 Ramiro M. Garcia

Roberto Hernandez
 Ka W. Ho
 James H. Mims IV
 David L. Pritchett

Laredo
20 years
 Jose L. Delapass
 Incencio G. Rivera
15 years
 Ricardo E. Pena
10 years
 Edmundo Garcia Jr.

Lubbock
35 years
 Maxie V. McElroy
20 years
 James L. Harris Jr.
10 years
 Ronald W. Baker
 Robert G. Comey
 Keith W. Craig
 Jimmy D. McCann
 Robert W. Ratcliff
 Julius N. Weiser
5 years
 Michael H. James
 Joe L. Porter Jr.

Lufkin
40 years
 James K. Denum
35 years
 Donald L. Williams
30 years
 William H. Walker
25 years
 Stephen D. Allen
 Robert W. Parker
 Jerry E. Shrader
20 years
 Eddie F. Allen
15 years
 Clarence R. Brown
 Bryan K. Smith
10 years
 Steven L. Harris
 Burton G. Jones
5 years
 Jennifer N. Rodrigues

Odessa
15 years
 Elias T. Aguirre

Paris
15 years
 Billy W. Williams
10 years
 Stacy E. Hatcher
 Nolan G. House

Pharr
20 years
 Rosendo Garcia Jr.
 Jose A. Garza Jr.
15 years
 Estella F. Buchen
 Hector Cantu
10 years
 Isaías Gutierrez
5 years
 Donna E. Rodriguez

San Angelo
35 years
 William R. Rogers
30 years
 Michael L. Decker
20 years
 John S. Alley
 Donna K. Hill
15 years
 Steven T. Deere
10 years
 Matt C. Carr
 Louis Gonzales Jr.
 Efrain Zaragoza

San Antonio
40 years
 Columbus Stutes Jr.
35 years
 Benigno G. Villarreal
30 years
 Norbert J. Drzymala
 James M. Johnson
 Edward L. Maierhofer
 Calvin B. Pfeiffer
25 years
 Roland A. Ames
 Frank G. Fonseca
15 years
 Joseph W. Anders
 Connie G. Casas
 Carl G. Friesenhahn
 Nellie S. Nunez
 Jesse P. Patterson
 Richard J. Valadez
10 years
 Melissa L. Escamilla
 Kenneth L. Jungman
 Felix A. Lerma
 Sharon A. Neumann

Tyler
20 years
 Tony R. Buford
 Bryan J. Hollis
 Benny V. Steen
15 years
 Preston L. Massey

James E. Mattox
10 years
 Donna H. Harrison
 Wesley R. Price
5 years
 Janice H. Allen
 Ronnie D. Blackstock
 Edward D. Coleman
 Charlotte S. Morgan
 Danny M. Page
 Royce K. Traylor
 Joseph M. Word

Waco
20 years
 Randall C. Bradshaw
 Harold G. Campbell Jr.
 Ricky A. Quinn
 Chris A. Starr
15 years
 Michael G. Collins
 Jerry A. Lanford
10 years
 James G. Gremminger
 Monte L. Kohring
 Ricky D. Payne
 Albin A. Pettey
 James G. Wagnon
5 years
 Johnny A. Guerra
 David P. Neumann
 David H. Pederson
 Larry D. Sanders

Wichita Falls
30 years
 Geraldine T. Young
10 years
 Alisa M. Browning
 Johnny B. Herrell
 Jeffrey L. Hulsey
 Carole C. Mayo
 Lester D. Moses
 Edward W. Widders
 Paul D. Wolf
 Brady L. Woolsey

Yoakum
30 years
 Linda E. Ohrt
20 years
 Johnny J. Luna
 Johnny J. Parr

10 years
 Brent A. Gorman
 Terrel W. Maertz
 Stephen J. Matula
 Robert E. Maxey
 James G. Pustka
 Steven W. Tschatschula
 James C. Untermeyer
5 years
 Richard W. Rouse

Budget and Finance
25 years
 John A. Beall
20 years
 Rosalinda R. Soto
5 years
 Patrick S. Palmer

Civil Rights
5 years
 Michael E. Tapscott

Design
30 years
 Richard O. Clark
25 years
 Herbert R. Neimann
15 years
 Bobby W. Heine
 David P. Hohmann
 Dean W. Van Landuyt
10 years
 Robert J. Janek
 John T. McPherson

Environmental Affairs
5 years
 Henry G. Quinn

General Services
20 years
 Manuel S. Rodriguez Jr.
10 years
 Ernest G. Gregg
 Kathleen G. Nichols
 Dorcas T. Paden
5 years
 Darlene Y. Austin
 Robert R. Dean
 Michael D. Labinski
 Marilyn S. Arteschoufsky

Gulf Intracoastal Waterway
5 years
 Belvolyn A. Smith
Human Resources
10 years
 Trina B. Miller

Information Systems

15 years
 Rita A. Compton
10 years
 Javier Nava
5 years
 Lorie Ramirez

Internal Audit
15 years
 Lee H. Stone

Materials and Tests
35 years
 Joe R. Canfield
30 years
 Clifton E. Coward
25 years
 Janet M. Jensen
15 years
 Caroline A. Herrera
10 years
 Mark A. Crawford
 Douglas W. Dupler
 Leonard D. Garcia

Research and Technology Transfer
20 years
 Debbie L. Hall

Traffic Operations
25 years
 Linda F. Wallin

Transportation Planning and Programming
15 years
 Carolyn M. Hanson
 Stanley W. Labauve

10 years
 Bobby F. Lester
 Margaret D. Thurin

Travel and Information
5 years
 Mary L. Martin

Vehicle Titles and Registration
25 years
 Cathy T. Williamson
20 years
 Glinda J. Ornelas
15 years
 Dorothy S. Beckhusen
5 years
 James P. Landrum
 Staci A. Lundin
 Judy A. Sero

Retirements

March

Childress
George L. Scott, Maintenance Technician IV,
 11 years

Dallas
Dennis D. Emerson, Engineering Technician V,
 26 years

San Antonio
Estanislado Escamilla, Maintenance Technician
 IV, 31 Years
General Services
Dorothy A. Schwartz, Word Processing
 Operator II, 25 years

April

Austin
William E. Mitchell, Maintenance Technician
 III, 10 years

Patsy G. Ashbranner, Administrative
 Technician III, 14 years

Dallas
Shirley W. Erby, Maintenance Technician III,
 19 years

Paris
Billy G. Lomax, Maintenance Technician III,
 16 years

Calendar

May

5-7 NIGP Professional Development Class, Austin, GSD
8 East Texas Facilitators Conference, Tyler, TYL
8-9 NIGP Professional Development Class, Austin, GSD
26 Memorial Day (holiday)
27-30 Transportation Planning Conference, Corpus Christi, TPP
29 Commission Meeting, Austin

June

2-8 Spring Research Management Committee Meeting, Arlington, RTT
9-13 13th Annual TxDOT Internal Audit Conference, Austin, AUD
19 Emancipation Day (holiday)
23-27 TP&D Conference, Austin, TPD
28 Commission Meeting, Austin

July

4 Independence Day (holiday)
14-16 Radio System Specialist Workshop, Corpus Christi, TRF
31 Commission Meeting, Harlingen

August

27 LBJ's Birthday (holiday)
28 Commission Meeting, Austin

September

1 Labor Day (holiday)
3-5 Texas/Mexico Border Conference on Border Safety, South Padre Island, PHR
10-12 NIGP Professional Development Class, Austin, GSD
25 Commission Meeting, Austin

October

13-15 Transportation Conference, College Station
15-17 NIGP Professional Development Class, Austin, GSD
30 Commission Meeting, Austin

History

Continued from page 12

scattered office facilities."

Another significant achievement of the Sterling-Johnson-Ely commission eventually grew into another state department — the Department of Public Safety. In 1927, the Legislature authorized the highway department to hire 20 license and weight inspectors.

The inspectors roamed the highways of the state. Dressed in plain clothes, they had the chancy job of stopping overloaded trucks and causing them to be weighed. Their task was complicated by the fact that drivers were not required to carry with them anything that showed the authorized carrying capacity. That meant that a suspected vehicle would have to be checked against county records before the arrest was made all this in a time well before the advent of two-way radios. Inspectors also dealt with pleasure car drivers who registered heavy luxury cars as lighter models to save on fees.

Even though it was time-consuming work, the inspectors nevertheless made a good showing, generating about \$500,000 in fines against an outlay of about \$50,000 for two years' operations.

When the Legislature met in 1929, a bill was proposed to provide more inspectors. That bill died in the regular session, but in a called second session it re-emerged, calling for 50 inspectors who would be known as the State Highway Patrol. That bill passed almost unanimously.

In September, the highway department advertised for applicants. The hopefuls were presented with a 22-page application form to be sworn before a notary and accompanied by a doctor's certificate of good health. Besides all that, applicants had to submit their war records. There was still more. Ten form letters were supplied to each applicant to be filled in by reputable businessmen from the applicant's neighborhood. These references were to be sent in directly to the department and not returned to the applicant. In spite of all the red tape, 1,600 men applied.

The first cut eliminated all who did not have at least a 10th-grade education, stand five feet eight inches tall, were not between 21 and 40 years old, who weren't sound physically, or who did not have good moral character. Four hundred applicants remained after that.

They took examinations "of a practical nature that should have been answered by anyone having the required schooling." Eventually, the 1,600 candidates were boiled down to a few good men, 50 to be exact.

In the first week in January 1930, they arrived in Austin for what may have been the first training school for law officers to be held in Texas. The highway department borrowed barracks and other facilities from the Adjutant General at Camp Mabry, giving the school a distinctly military flavor.

Five lieutenants from the old inspector group were appointed. One was in overall charge of the school and conducted physical training. The other lieutenants were in charge of, respectively, care and policing of the barracks, lectures and examinations, care and use of firearms, and riding and care of motorcycles.

Few of the rookies had previous law enforcement experience. Not many knew much about riding motorcycles. Sometimes, the schedule included night practice rides to nearby towns after a full day of training. Not to worry, the commission reported, everything worked out all right: "At the end of seven weeks' intensive training, during which time not a single disorder, cross word, or fight occurred among the men, they were assigned to the various stations across the state."

The report also noted, "Their job is a hazardous one and they are constantly in danger of an accident, which may result in possible injury for life or instant death, yet there is no provision made for hospital treatment, nor any form of accident insurance carried for them."

A discussion in the official report to the Legislature by the highway commission of some of the situations that faced the new patrolmen sounds curious — and bigoted — looking back across six decades. Yet it paints a word picture of some common scenes from that era: "A class of drivers who are dangerous to the traveling public and is found to a considerable extent in certain portions of the state, especially during the cotton picking season, are the itinerant day laborers and their families. These people usually travel in groups in old, worn-out vehicles with each vehicle so loaded to its capacity with household implements and bedding attached to any outside part available, and with its human capacity overflowing in the rear with feet and legs.

"Usually their knowledge and under-

standing of the road laws are practically nothing, and quite often we find that they can speak very little English, if any, understand less, and seldom read or write at all.

"...And frequently they are not violating any law at all at the time, but are a menace to safety because of lack of understanding or equipment. These constitute only a few of the great number of dangers that follow the lack of a strict drivers' license law in Texas at this time.

"Certainly no one who can neither read nor write the English language nor understand the signs, warnings and laws of the highways should be allowed to drive a vehicle on the highways of this state, especially when the vehicle is of such a class that it alone is unsafe to be driven at all."

Although the commission in its biennial report was proud of the achievements of the highway patrol, it seemed to feel uncomfortable at being in the law enforcement business. This is what it told the Legislature:

"We are ready and willing to continue the organization, but impressions have existed that the State Highway Department should not be a law-enforcing body. The State Highway Commission expresses no views on this matter except to say that should the Legislature, in its wisdom, desire to either remove the organization from under the control of the State Highway Commission, or to continue it, that we stand ready to cooperate to the fullest extent." The highway patrol remained part of the highway department until 1935. Even today, operating costs of the highway patrol and license and weight inspectors (and in recent years, most other functions of the Department of Public Safety) are financed from the State Highway Fund.

The highway department, Gilchrist and the commission weathered a raft of investigations during the 1928-30 period. Once the department was censured for buying closed cars for engineers in Lubbock and Amarillo. After all, cars with canvas curtains were good enough for the rest of the state, weren't they?

The commission finally did get approval to build a highway building in Austin, but not one that would serve all the functions of the department for as long as it had hoped. Still, the structure at 11th and Brazos served administrative functions well and still houses commission offices and hearing rooms, the administration and key functions of several headquarters divisions. ★

In Memoriam

Employees

Robert E. Brunson, Engineering Technician IV, Houston District, died Feb. 24, 1997.
Devidas B. Tulsiani, Director I, Traffic Operations Division, died Apr. 24, 1997.
James M. Taylor, Planner II, Traffic Operations Division, died Feb. 10, 1997.
Zena Weaver, Maintenance Technician IV, Houston District, died Mar. 27, 1997.

Retirees

William J. Alsop, Engineer IV, retired from the Traffic Operations Division in 1968, died Feb. 24, 1997.
Alton P. Arnold, Maintenance Technician III, retired from the Austin District in 1981, died Jan. 24, 1997.
Henry M. Baker, Jr., Chief Accountant II, retired from the Childress District in 1984, died Jan. 22, 1997.
George W. Benningfield, Maintenance Technician III, retired from the Abilene District in 1974, died Feb. 14, 1997.
Robbin F. Burns, Skilled Laborer, retired from the San Angelo District in 1965, died Jan. 25, 1997.
Edward W. Couch, Right of Way Appraiser III, retired from the Abilene District in 1973, died July 25, 1996.
Charlie J. Cox, Maintenance Technician III, retired from the Tyler District in 1977, died Jan. 18, 1997.

James E. Cox, Maintenance Technician II, retired from the Atlanta District in 1975, died Nov. 25, 1996.
Basil A. Davis, Maintenance Technician II, retired from the Tyler District in 1979, died Dec. 29, 1996.
William M. Dodson, Maintenance Technician III, retired from the Houston District in 1983, died Feb. 19, 1997.
Antonio Enriquez, Maintenance Technician III, retired from the Pharr District in 1980, died Feb. 24, 1997.
Oscar B. Green, Maintenance Technician III, retired from the Lufkin District in 1979, died Feb. 19, 1997.
Adolph P. Gregory, Maintenance Technician III, retired from the Corpus Christi District in 1974, died Feb. 16, 1997.
Noviles Jacob, Maintenance Technician III, retired from the Beaumont District in 1987, died Jan. 7, 1997.
Billy M. Johnson, Right-of-Way Agent IV, retired from the Austin District in 1985, died Feb. 5, 1997.
Risdon A. Jones, Maintenance Technician II, retired from the Atlanta District in 1982, died May 1, 1996.
Lloyd Keating, Maintenance Technician I, retired from the Brownwood District in 1971, died Feb. 8, 1997.
Opal W. Kinabrew, Secretary III, retired from Administration in 1968 (as Opal W. Jones), died Feb. 23, 1997.

Carl G. Kokemot, Motor Vehicle Division Chief Investigator, retired from the Vehicle Titles and Registration Division in 1994, died Mar. 19, 1997.
Tom B. Lollar, Maintenance Technician II, retired from the Atlanta District in 1975, died Feb. 2, 1997.
Fred Marrs, Maintenance Technician III, retired from the Dallas District in 1980, died Feb. 23, 1997.
Louis E. Marshall, Engineering Technician IV, retired from the Odessa District 1970, died Feb. 5, 1997.
Andres M. Martinez, Maintenance Technician II, retired from the San Antonio District in 1976, died Feb. 4, 1997.
Gonzalo Martinez, Semi-Skilled Laborer, retired from the San Antonio District in 1966, died Sept. 23, 1996.
Lee R. Michalke, Maintenance Technician III, retired from the Yoakum District in 1977, died Mar. 24, 1997.
Ralph A. Mobley, Maintenance Technician III, retired from the Yoakum District in 1977, died Mar. 20, 1997.
Walter A. Mooney, Maintenance Technician III, retired from the Amarillo District in 1977, died Dec. 10, 1996.
Richard W. Paske, Motor Vehicle Mechanic III, retired from the San Angelo District in 1996, died Jan. 8, 1997.

Cecil B. Price, Maintenance Technician III, retired from the Lubbock District in 1976, died Feb. 15, 1997.
Charles D. Pruitt, Maintenance Technician III, retired from the Atlanta District in 1986, died Jan. 16, 1997.
James B. Roy, Groundskeeper III, retired from the Travel and Information Division in 1993, died Jan. 24, 1997.
Austin E. Sanders, Maintenance Technician II, retired from the Bryan District in 1972, died Feb. 26, 1997.
Jewel M. Smiley, Maintenance Technician II, retired from the Waco District in 1972, died Jan. 15, 1997.
Philip C. Thomas Jr., Planner I, retired from the Transportation Planning and Programming Division in 1987, died Feb. 13, 1997.
Hiland C. Weaver, Engineer III, retired from the Lubbock District in 1970, died Feb. 5, 1997.
Floyd M. Westfall, Maintenance Technician III, retired from the Wichita Falls District in 1975, died Feb. 6, 1997.
John C. White Jr., Graphic Arts Superintendent, retired from the Information Systems Division in 1971, died Feb. 27, 1996.
Bobby S. Williams, Engineering Technician V, retired from the Houston District in 1993, died Feb. 12, 1997.

The following letter was received by
Bridge Engineer Ralph Banks:

Dear Mr. Banks:

We wish to express how pleased and proud we are you wrote such a wonderful piece for Transportation News. Harold McNeil (Mac) was my brother-in-law. My husband passed away four years ago. His mother (88) and all the family have always been proud of him. Thank you for putting into words things we would have liked to have said about him. I know you know Wayne Rust who retired from the Highway Department here in Mount Pleasant. He is a cousin of Harold's through marriage to his wife Virginia, who was a McNeil. Wayne brought this piece you wrote to our attention. We wish to thank you again.

Yours truly,
Barbara McNeil

Banks' First Person story on Harold "Mac" McNeil appeared in the March 1997 issue of Transportation News.

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On Monday, April 21, I lost my ruby/diamond bracelet somewhere in the parking lot or inside Building 1 at Camp Hubbard. This particular piece of jewelry was my Christmas present from my husband and it was a sentimental as well as expensive gift that I treasured.

I am pretty rushed in the mornings as I have a 6-month-old daughter and some mornings are pretty hectic. Anyway, I really was not too concerned when I did not have my bracelet on as I could not remember if I had even put into on that morning. I frantically searched my home throughout, as well as both of our vehicles. The bracelet was nowhere to be found. I thought I had seen that piece of jewelry for the last time.

Tuesday morning (April 22) I was away from my desk putting a notice on the bulletin boards on every floor of Building 1. As I returned to my desk, I had received a call from **Sue Worsley** with the Transportation Planning and Programming Division. Before I could return the call, Ms. Worsley called again and asked if I had misplaced anything. As I told her what happened, she asked me to come to her office on the fourth floor of Building 1. When I got in her office, she introduced me to **Deandra Sprott** who in turn asked me to describe my lost jewelry. I was so thankful for her finding the jewelry that I could not help but cry. I truly appreciate Ms. Sprott's honesty and integrity. She has restored my faith in other people. She just as easily could have kept his expensive piece of jewelry without my knowledge as I had no idea where I had lost it. I tried to give her a reward, however, she would not accept it. I just want to say "thank you" again to Deandra Sprott for her honesty. I thank God that she is the person who found my bracelet because she returned it to me. Her act of kindness is greatly appreciated and I believe Deandra is truly a special person.

Sincerely,

Judy Thorp

Vehicle Titles and Registration Division

Deandra Sprott is a Traffic Analyst in the Transportation Planning and Programming Division. Sue Worsley is division secretary.

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The following letter was received by Abilene District Engineer Maribel Chavez:

Dear Maribel:

In the past you have indicated to me that you preferred my talking to you rather than writing a letter. I have made an effort to call you, but since you were unavailable at the time, I am writing you this letter anyway.

After approximately 40 years working in this industry, I feel it necessary to pause and acknowledge some of the good things I have experienced in this business.

Our Area Engineer, **Blair Haynie** and his staff are the best I have experienced in all these years in getting solutions to problems in a timely fashion. Blair's staff is a reflection of Blair, and **James (Wally) Milliner**, in particular, is knowledgeable and fair in handling the problems we encounter.

Sometimes we feel overwhelmed with the paper that's generated, but I know this is not the fault of the people involved but a reflection of the needs of the system within which we operate.

I want to take this time to thank you and Blair and Wally and the others in the office for the tenacity, efficiency and good humor which you have consistently contributed to our relationship.

Gerald Stephens
Stephens Martin Paving, Inc.
Abilene

Blair Haynie is Abilene Area Engineer and James Milliner is Abilene Area Projects Manager.

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This letter was received by Ken Prestidge, maintenance supervisor in Canyon.

On Thursday, Jan. 2, my family and I were driving south on I-27 between Amarillo and Canyon in heavy traffic when we experienced a blowout. I managed to get the vehicle onto the feeder road safely, however the remains of the tire were still in the road and causing a problem in heavy traffic. While I was pondering how to remove the tire from the road without getting run over, Mr. **Howard Steffans** from your department arrived in a maintenance vehicle and removed the tire from the road. He then drove on to where we were parked on the frontage road and offered his assistance in changing the tire. This offer was especially welcome because I have recently had back surgery and need to refrain from heavy lifting. We changed the tire, repacked the car and were off again in relatively short order thanks to Mr. Steffans' assistance.

I want you to know how much we appreciate his assistance and his cheerful, helpful attitude. This situation could have been especially unpleasant without his help. I have already expressed my thanks to Howard and I want you to know how much I appreciate the departmental attitude that encouraged him to stop and assist a motorist in difficulty. It would have been very easy to remove the tire from the road and drive on.

Donald J. Mackie
Salado

Howard Steffans is a maintenance technician in the Amarillo District's Canyon Maintenance Office.

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My wife and I had the misfortune to have a flat on Texas 144 between Granbury and Glen Rose. The slope at the place we pulled over on was such that we were unable to get

the car raised sufficiently to get my spare on. With much apprehension we gave up and waited for help. At this point **James Martinez** and **Gregg Wells** stopped to assist us. We just wanted to commend them as courteous, helpful gentlemen. With their assistance we were on our way home. It was such a comfort to know we were in safe, trustworthy hands of the state employees. Our heartfelt thanks to you and yours at the Glen Rose department.

Max Shaw
Kerrville

James Martinez is a maintenance technician in the Fort Worth District's Glen Rose Maintenance Section. and Gregg Wells no longer works for TxDOT.

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I am a citizen of Travis County and a police officer for the city of Austin and would like to thank **Jamie Witten** and **Clinton Anderson** for their assistance in helping me get home recently. I had run out of gas and saw a couple of TxDOT trucks working on the north expressway near Parmer Lane. I walked back to them and Clinton called my situation in to the dispatcher. Jamie helped me get my car running again, allowing me to get home.

I am appreciative of their concern and just wanted someone to know that they are great guys. I can't say enough about how lucky I was out there. Again, I thank y'all.

Carlos Dominguez
Austin

Clinton Anderson is a Roadway Maintenance Tech III and Jamie Witten is a Heavy Equipment Operator III. Both work out of the Travis Central Maintenance section in Austin.

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