

News & Views

★ Texas Rehabilitation Commission ★ A Human Energy Agency ★

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From Client to Outstanding Employee

As it turns out, Mario Martinez was not just another TRC client.

With limited formal education, Martinez would probably not have left the Panhandle cotton fields around Hereford, Texas where he did migrant field labor until he was 20. That was in 1965.

Then, a heart condition, brought on by childhood rheumatic fever, forced him to see a doctor in Amarillo. The news was not good. Martinez' condition would keep him from doing any further physical labor.

Unsure of his future, he sought the advice of a welfare worker in Hereford who referred him to the Texas Rehabilitation Commission field office in Amarillo where John Fenoglio was a counselor.

Going to TRC for help became a real turning point in Martinez' life.

"John Fenoglio believed in me," says Martinez, "He was one of the very few people who trusted in my ability to succeed."

Together, they decided that radio broadcast training at Elkins Institute of Radio in Dallas might get Martinez on a career track.

Fenoglio's persistence got Martinez', who had no high school diploma, into Elkins' program which launched him into three successful years in radio broadcasting.

The training was not easy for Mario. Problems with the language



With TRC's help, Mario Martinez broke away from his migrant worker background to a career in radio and, later, a career as a TRC counselor. He won the TRC Outstanding Employee of the Year Award for Region 1 in 1986.

(he had learned Spanish first as a child) caused him to work twice as hard as anyone else. But he achieved his goal.

"It's what makes Mario different," says Fenoglio, "He dealt with adversity and he did it with wit and courage."

After three years in broadcasting, Martinez made the decision to finish his schooling. "I had a hunger for more education," he says.

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Legislative Update

FEDERAL

- The Supreme Court upheld a Social Security Administration regulation that the government may deny disability benefits to people applying for disability payments if their impairments are non-severe, even if they cannot perform their past jobs. Justice Lewis Powell, writing for the court, said the federal Social Security law is not violated when benefits are denied to someone found to be less than severely disabled.

STATE

Following are some of the bills and resolutions passed in the regular session of the 70th Legislature which have significance for TRC, its employees and its clients. Those which have been signed by the Governor are designated with an asterisk:

House

House Bill 2252:

"Tax shelters" employee contributions to the Teacher Retirement System and the

Employee's Retirement System with the employer making the contribution. Will mean more employee take-home pay.*

House Bill 156:

Changes the current law to read that a physician's statement is not required for a disabled parking permit if a person is an amputee or must use a wheelchair.

House Bill 503:

Requires state agencies to contact members of the Legislature before distributing publications to them.

House Bill 1154:

Strengthens the current support program to assist mentally or developmentally disabled persons and their families which provides, among other things, special equipment, transportation, medical services and attendant care.

House Concurrent Resolution 36:

Develops a committee to study the organization and structure of state agencies with the possibility of merging agencies with similar functions for efficiency and cost effectiveness.

House Concurrent Resolution 165:

Sets up a special interim committee to study whether the state's health and human services programs are meeting the needs of Texans with disabilities with maximum use of available funds.*

Senate

Senate Bill 1150:

Strengthens court protection for abused elderly or disabled persons.

Senate Bill 1249:

Requires a symbol to be attached to vehicles driven by hearing impaired persons to identify them as non-hearing in case of emergency.*

Senate Concurrent Resolution 58:

Directs certain agencies to develop by January 2, 1989, a written plan and interagency agreement for a continuum of services to children with disabilities.*

Transitions

Charles D. Wolston, senior counselor in the Wichita Falls Field Office, retired May 31 after 19 years of service with TRC.

Margaret Wilson, ADP records control clerk in the Houston Field Office Central, retired May 31 after 11 years with the Commission.

Dorcas Green, administrative technician in the Amarillo Field Office, left the Commission May 22 to further her education. Green began her career with TRC in 1969.

Retiring as a rehabilitation technician in the Amarillo Field Office, **Oleta Ray** left the Commission May 31 after 21 years of service.

Thelma E. Jordan, stenographer in the Austin Field Office North, retired April 28 with 16 years of service with TRC.

Don C. Buck, counselor in the Austin Field Office South, left April 30 after 14 years with the Commission.

Vernon M. Garrison, senior counselor in the Houston Field Office North, retired May 31 after more than 15 years with the Commission.

Andrew Harris, counselor in the Fort Worth Field Office North, died May 19 at age 33 in Abilene. Harris had served in this Fort Worth office until he became ill last fall.

Bob Ward, retired supervisor of Initial Unit 10 in DDD, died May 28 at age 52. Ward had retired in March after 13 years of service.

Michael Mayfield has replaced Occie Wadsworth, who recently retired as counselor in the Lubbock Field Office. Mayfield holds a master of science degree in management and human relations from Abilene Christian University.

Andrew "Ron" Sicotte has replaced Mario Martinez as counselor in the San Angelo Field Office. Sicotte has a master's degree in rehabilitation from the University of Arizona.

Rueben Taniguchi, counselor in the Fort Worth West Field Office, assumed ERS program manager duties effective June 1.

Jessie Johnson, stenographer in the Waco Field Office, has been appointed to the newly-formed rehabilitation technician slot in the Waco-Texas State Technical Institute Field Office.

The position of operations director for Initial Directorate 02 in DDD, opened by the retirement of Mike Bartlett, has been filled by **Connie Miller**, who has served as MHMR liaison director for the past year.

Roy W. Howard, facility specialist at the Central Office, retired May 31 after 15 years with the Commission.

Kenneth W. Koenig, ERS program manager in the Fort Worth West Field Office, retired May 31 after 15 years of service with TRC.

After 15 years with the Commission, **Dorothy Innerarity**, administrative technician in the North Austin Field Office, retired May 31.

Over 100 Years of DDD Experience Retires

Eight long-time Disability Determination Division employees retired on May 31. At a reception in their honor May 29, David J. MacCabe, deputy commissioner for disability determination, pointed out that, along with them, 123 years of DDD experience retired in one month. They are (above, first row from left) Eldon Riley, operations unit supervisor with 15 years of service; Joe Edmondson, disability examiner with 13 years of service; Mike Bartlett, operations director with 26 years of service; and Augusta Cooper, technical reviewer with 14 years of service. (Second row from left) Mary Zinni, disability hearings officer with 17 years of service; Mary Faloon, operations unit supervisor with 14 years of service; and Judy Wade, mail clerk with 10 years of service. (Not pictured is Frances Havins, clerical supervisor with 14 years of service.)



Session Ends Without State Appropriations Package

The regular session of the 70th Texas Legislature is over, and we're back to square one in the appropriations process.

State lawmakers ended the 120-day regular session June 1 without agreeing on a state spending bill. A special session, called June 22, has as its main priority to finalize a spending package everyone can live with.

TRC employees and people with disabilities who benefit from our services were left with a variety of questions about state funding for TRC programs. To answer all the questions or speculate on all the possible scenarios which could occur in the special session would be counterproductive if not impossible.

A review of how things stood at the end of the regular session may be helpful.

When the Legislature adjourned June 1, both the House and Senate had passed their respective versions of a state spending measure (House Bill 1 and Senate Bill 123). Differences in funding levels outlined in the bills necessitated a joint conference committee to reach a compromise on parts of the bills with different funding figures.

"The conference committee never got to TRC," says Charles Harrison, controller for the Commission. H. B. 1 would fund TRC at approximately the same level as FY 1987, or the "current services" level. Under this proposal, the Deaf-Blind Multihandicapped Program would be the most adversely affected since grant funds now supporting the program would not be replaced by state funds in FY 1988-89. As for other TRC programs, H. B. 1 would not reduce the current service levels to disabled Texans, but it would not allow program expansion to reach more people currently unserved.

Senate Bill 123, on the other hand, allows for limited growth in the Vocational Rehabilitation Program, along with healthier funding increases for Extended Rehabilitation Services, Independent Living, and the Deaf-Blind Multihandicapped Program. This bill would allow TRC to serve more people than we currently serve through these programs.

These are the only two budget proposals introduced as legislation

during the regular session. Other proposals, specifically the Governor's and the Lt. Governor's, have caused much speculation with respect to state agency budget considerations.

Governor Clements' proposal would appropriate fewer funds to TRC in FY 1988-89 than were appropriated in FY 1987. It would reduce services in all major program areas by not providing enough state funding to maintain the level of federal funding we now receive.

Lt. Governor Hobby's proposal would, with a couple of exceptions, reduce S. B. 123 to approximately the same level as H. B. 1, the current services level.

Commissioner Arrell suspects that when the House and Senate firm up their suggested budgets for the special session, their recommendations for TRC will "... basically be a combination of H. B. 1 and S. B. 123 as amended by the Hobby plan."

But, as the Commissioner goes on to say, "It's a whole new ball game. Whatever any of us had so far died at the end of the regular session."

More TRC public forums are scheduled this summer. The forums last August provided valuable information and consumer perspective on current TRC programs and services. This year, one forum is planned in Amarillo for July 21, 4:00 p.m.—7:00 p.m. at the Center for Community Health, the Pickens Building, 1200 Wallace Blvd. and one in Nacogdoches for July 23, 4:00 p.m.—7:00 p.m. at the Nacogdoches Treatment Center, 119 Hughes St.

May 4th marked the tenth anniversary of the regulations for Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. In 1977, at the strong urging of the disability community, Joseph Califano, secretary of Health Education and Welfare, approved the 504 regulations which prohibit discrimination in employment of people with disabilities and require the provision of services by the federal government and by programs financed with federal funds.

**HEAR YE!
HEAR YE!**

"Call to Rise," the first national juried museum-quality art exhibition for the physically challenged will be held at the Orlando Museum of Art at Loch Haven Park, Florida January 10, 1988. It is the first art show designed to provide a national forum for artistic excellence among living American artists with physical disabilities. Works will include painting, drawing, sculpture and prints. Applications are available from Pat Barkley, "Call to Rise" coordinator, P.O. Box 3826, Orlando, FL 32806, (305) 237-6112. Application deadline is July 1, 1987, and selection notifications will be mailed August 5.

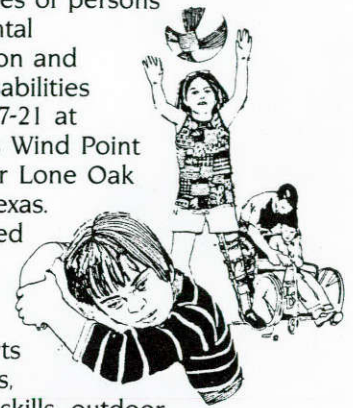
Editor's Note: Information for the "Milestones" portion of "News & Views" is not available this month. We will add the service awards for this month to the newsletter as soon as possible.

Who says counselors don't stick together? On a recent trip to Big Bend with family and horses, Tyler Counselor Naomi Marksbury had trouble with her new pick-up truck and injuries to her horses in some of the roughest terrain in the state. When the Alpine dealership told her that parts for her truck would take a week to arrive, did she call home? Nope. . .she called her friend and fellow counselor in Alpine, Hugh Johnson. Hugh responded in typical "good Samaritan" fashion, bringing medicine for the horses with an offer to board them for a week until the truck was fixed. Naomi finally got home, tired but grateful for people like Hugh.

"The rapid pace of technology is creating new opportunities on a daily basis for persons with disabilities." So says IBM's National Support Center for Persons with Disabilities. The center was created to help employers, agency directors, educators and public officials learn

how technology can improve the quality of life for disabled people in the school, home and work place. For more information, call 1-800-IBM-2133 or (404) 238-3521 (TDD).

The Association for Retarded Citizens/Texas is sponsoring a camp for families of persons with mental retardation and other disabilities August 17-21 at Pawnee's Wind Point Park near Lone Oak in east Texas. Supervised day activities include nature arts and crafts, camping skills, outdoor games and daily respites for parents. Reservations must be paid in full by August 5. For more information call 1-800-252-9729.



TRC Wins Civil Rights Suit

The Texas Rehabilitation Commission and several agency managers were found not guilty May 19 of civil rights violations in a suit filed by a TRC employee.

Major Jones, a Disability Determination Division employee, claimed he was denied several promotions because of his race.

The jury agreed with TRC's contention that Jones was not denied promotion because of discrimination, retaliation and/or conspiracy to deprive him of his civil rights.

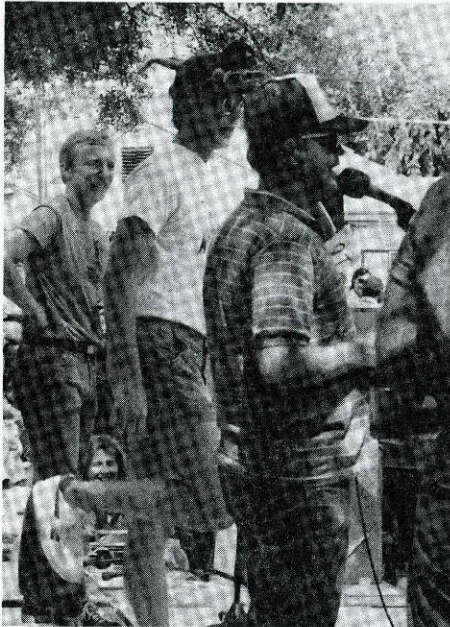
In addition to the complaint filed against the managers, Jones accused TRC of discrimination under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Federal District Judge Walter Smith dismissed that case May 20, the day following the jury verdict.

Commissioner Max Arrell says he is pleased with the outcome of the case and for the managers involved. "The results of these proceedings confirm our faith in our system of employee selection," he says.



Bill Branch—TRC's Punny Man

Bill Branch still remembers the first time his skill as a punster was officially recognized. It was during his high school days when he announced to his class, "I don't mind school, it's just the principal of the thing."



Bill Branch (foreground), disability examiner in DDD's Unit 16, persevered through several rounds of competition to become a finalist in the 10th Annual O. Henry Pun off in Austin. Between work, puns and family life, Branch also finds time to play in a country western band which travels to dance halls throughout Central Texas almost every weekend.

It was, perhaps, as he waited outside that principal's office that Branch realized the price one pays for being the class clown. As he puts it, "Laugh and the class laughs with you—but you stay after school alone." Fortunately for Branch, the recognition of his sharp wit has become more positive since his school days. And, fortunately for those who appreciate a good pun, he decided the "price" is worth it.

Branch, 38, moved to Austin from El Paso six years ago to be a disability examiner in the Disability Determination Division. Each May, for five of those years, he has matched wits and puns with some of the best (and worst) punsters in the state at Austin's Annual O. Henry Pun-Off.

Branch's forte in the contest is the "High Lies and Low Puns" competition. Two contestants draw a subject from a fish bowl and must come up with an appropriate pun within five seconds, or be eliminated. The winner advances to the next round. The more loud groans and shaking heads a pun elicits from the audience, the better.

A sampling of Branch's quips from this year's, the tenth, competition (better—or worse?—if read aloud):

Subject—Fast/Junk Food: "Our football team had this big, mean linebacker who only played in the first part of the game. He was the first QUARTER POUNDER." (Booooooo.) "We went to church this morning and they didn't take up a collection. It was a FREE HOLY." (Frijole, get it? Hissss.)

Subject—Things in a Tool Box: "That sure is a SAWSY lookin' WRENCH over there." (Arggggh!) Nobody really knew what POWERS SAW." (Ooooooooooooh!)

Believe it or not, with puns like these, Branch placed third in this year's competition. In fact, he's been a finalist every year. It's probably not as hard to believe that he doesn't do much to prepare for the event. Spontaneity, a good comprehension of the English language, a broad knowledge base and "a personality disorder" are a punsters' best weapons.

Branch credits his sense of humor with helping him cope with the intense, complex, and sometimes, downright sad, aspects of his job as a disability examiner. He credits his co-workers with extreme tolerance—especially as competition time approaches each year.

He recalls one pun-off when the medical knowledge required in his job came in particularly useful. The subject? "Internal Body Parts." It took a lot of NERVE; but, Branch was able to get right to the HEART of the subject.

Houston Hosts '87 TRA Conference

It's time to pack your bags and make plans for the annual Texas Rehabilitation Association conference.

Houston is the host city for this year's conference July 12-15. The folks there have pulled together an impressive array of workshops and special events which may prove to make the '87 conference the best yet.

Titled "A Fusion of Energy," the 1987 conference at the Hobby Plaza Holiday Inn in Houston will feature keynote speaker John Bradshaw, a noted Public Broadcasting Service personality, along with legislative highlights by Lex Frieden, executive director of the National Council on the Handicapped, State Senator Chet Brooks and Representative Lloyd Criss.

Other activities include a tour of NASA, a country western dance and barbeque, an auction and a volleyball tournament featuring the best local chapter teams from around the state.

James L. Jackson, executive deputy commissioner, says TRC employees who are TRA members may get time off from work (charged to their training leave) to attend the conference at their own expense provided they get permission from their supervisors.

If you haven't received your pre-registration form, or for more registration information, call (214) 951-0403. And make hotel reservations now at the Hobby Plaza Holiday Inn, 9100 Gulf Freeway, Houston, Texas 77017. Telephone: (713) 943-7979.

★ Applause

These TRC employees recently received press coverage for the Commission: **Alan Craig**, counselor in the Baytown Field Office; **Ron Sicotte**, counselor in the San Angelo Field Office; **Occie Wadsworth**, retired counselor from the Lubbock Field Office; **Michael Mayfield**, counselor in the Lubbock Field Office; **Charles Byars**, counselor in the Wichita Falls Field Office; **"Pug" Litteken**, rehabilitation technician in the Wichita Falls Field Office; **Mario Martinez**, area manager in the El Paso East Field Office; **Jo Anne Hull**, counselor in the Corsicana Field Office; **Hector Flores**, counselor in the Del Rio Field Office; **Christi Meador**, counselor in the Pasadena Field Office; **Mel Fajkus**, program specialist in the Central Office; and **James L. Jackson**, executive deputy commissioner.

Michelle Bailey, TRC Consumer Advisory Committee member, has been selected to be featured in *Good Housekeeping's* "100 Women of Promise, Class of '87." The article will appear in the July 1987 issue.

Del Sparks, program specialist in the Central Office, and **Laurie Begam**, counselor in the Houston Central Field Office, co-authored an article titled "Vocational Rehabilitation: Positive Step in Aiding Workers, Employers" which appeared in the May issue of *Abode*, the official publication of the Houston Apartment Association.

Jo Anne Hull, counselor in the Corsicana Field Office, on behalf of the Commission has awarded the Texas Employment Commission of Ellis County a certificate of appreciation for providing courtesy office space to Hull for the convenience of Waxahachie and nearby residents.

The Spina Bifida Bowl-A-Thon in Austin last April received \$2,300 in support from TRC employees in the Central Office and DDD. Robert Stanislawski, supervising auditor in Management Audit and vice-president of the Spina Bifida Association of Austin, reports a total of over \$14,000 in pledges in the Austin area during the public awareness and fund-raising event. Stanislawski acknowledges the consistently solid response of TRC employees in the SBA fund-raiser each year.

Outstanding Employee

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His next move, in 1970, brought him back to TRC—as an employee, not a client. Martinez got a job as an interviewing technician for the Commission at Big Spring State Hospital.

"I felt like I needed to put back a little bit of what I drew from the system," says Martinez.

After passing the GED, he enrolled at Howard County Junior College.

Within seven years he had worked his way up to a counselor's position at the San Angelo Field Office.

Eventually, Martinez got a degree in psychology from Angelo State University. Meanwhile, he continued to distinguish himself as a good counselor and move up through the TRC ranks.

As a senior counselor in 1986, Martinez received the Outstanding Employee of the Year Award for Region I. And John Fenoglio, now deputy commissioner for programs, was on hand to make the presentation.

How does he feel about Martinez' accomplishments? "It makes you feel pretty special," states Fenoglio, "It's part of the pay a VR counselor gets—it's what makes him stay a VR counselor."

In January of this year, Martinez was promoted to area manager in the El Paso East Field Office. In this capacity he is able to help hundreds of people just when they need it the most.

Who knows? Maybe some of them will become TRC counselors.



TRC News & Views is published by the Texas Rehabilitation Commission for distribution to its employees and retirees throughout the state. Inquiries may be addressed to Vernon Dement, Public Information Office, Texas Rehabilitation Commission, 118 E. Riverside Drive, Austin, Texas 78704; or telephone (512) 445-8249.

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