

# News & Views



★ Texas Rehabilitation Commission ★ A Human Energy Agency ★

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March, 1985

VR & DDD Units in Ruins

## Blaze Destroys Dallas Field Offices

Fire raged through an office complex in Mesquite, a suburb of Dallas, last month, reducing the entire structure including two TRC offices – to a pile of charred rubble. The blaze which claimed the Dallas Field Office East and Disability Determination Division Medical Relations Field Office was ruled arson. The arsonist's apparent target, according to officials investigating the crime, was the Mesquite Abortion Clinic located in the same complex.

No one was injured in the fire which was reported to authorities late at night on Friday, Feb. 22. Ironically, the destruction came exactly two years to the date from the office's opening in 1983.

The DDD field office was a total loss – nothing was salvaged. The VR field office fared slightly better. Unit employees and their families searched the rubble as soon as they were allowed to the following day. Their efforts netted the recovery of approximately 75 percent of the client files contained in the office and precious little else.

The value of furniture and equipment lost by the commission is estimated at \$18,800. The estimates, however, do not include the value of the staff's personal items which went up in smoke.

Counselor Gary Kirby's loss included an autographed picture of John Wayne. Suzette Skinner, counselor, counted her own paintings among her losses. Photographs of family and friends, childrens' drawings, certificates, diplomas and many other such items – with sentimental value likely much high-

er than actual cost – were destroyed or ruined.

The case files and other property that was recovered were removed to the Garland Field Office where temporary headquarters have been established until emergency office space is located and leased. The TRC truck carrying desks, filing cabinets and new vouchers for the counselors' use was dispatched early Monday. At this writing, Central Office, Regional Office and local personnel were making a concerted effort to make arrangements to keep inconvenience and hassle to employees, clients, vendors and others who do business with the office to a minimum.

Pat Gibbs, medical professional relations officer in the east Dallas unit, has temporarily relocated to Austin where she will try to reconstruct as much information as possible from DDD files and computers.

Emotions ran high among the VR employees gathered in the Garland Field Office conference room trying to make some sense out of the smokey and wet case folders which were saved and decide how to proceed. Frustration mixed with feelings of anger, displacement, personal loss and concern for their clients marked their conversations. Unsure of what the immediate future holds for him and his col-

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Filing cabinets among the rubble

# Multi-Faceted Austin Leaves Commission



Edward Austin

To recount the experience and accomplishments of Edward Austin, Assistant Commissioner for Legal Services, in a capsulized version would be impossible. His experiences as a petroleum economist, a lawyer, an associate professor at the University of Texas, a regular Army officer with combat service in World War II and Vietnam, a member of the NATO military arm (SHAPE), a member of the staff of the Secretary of Defense, and advisor to military forces of the Republic of China provide the ingredients of a TV mini-series.

“ In the position of attorney you meet crisis and challenge every day.....”

Austin started service with vocational rehabilitation in 1967 as a disability examiner and will retire March 15, 1985, leaving a positive influence on the life of the commission.

His contributions to the agency are immense. In the summer of 1969, Austin was appointed to a

five-member group given the responsibility to organize the Texas Rehabilitation Commission which was to come into existence September 1, 1969.

Upon Commissioner Jess Irwin's

resignation in 1978, the Board asked him if he would be interested in being commissioner. He agreed to serve as commissioner only until a permanent commissioner could be found.

In March, 1972, the agency came under the jurisdiction of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and subsequently, Austin formed the Office for Civil Rights and developed a comprehensive civil rights program for the commission. The value of this program has been proven by its record. Never has the commission, a Board member, or a TRC employee been found guilty of civil rights violations in the courts. "Other agencies look to us as having a model, aggressive affirmative action program," he says.

Having been an associate professor at the University of Texas, Austin still maintains a faculty locker there and manages to get away at noon, three times a week, for exercise, jogging, and a steam bath. Apparently, a strenuous physical regimen has been part of Austin's regular activity for years. A story still circulates the agency about how, several years ago, he embarrassed a much younger Randy

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## Funding Fight Intensifies

Since the 69th Texas Legislature convened in January, the Texas Rehabilitation Commission has already defended its 1986-87 budget requests before two legislative committees.

The Budget and Oversight Subcommittee of the House Health and Human Services Committee and the Senate Finance Committee have heard testimony from Commissioner Arrell and various consumer groups in support of crucial programs budgeted for the upcoming biennium. The Budget and Oversight Subcommittee has yet to report to its main committee which will in turn report to the House Appropriations Committee, and the Senate Finance Committee must still report to the entire Senate.

At stake, are funds to begin a demographic survey of disabled Texans, and a comprehensive medical rehabilitation program for cata-

strophically disabled persons, the general Vocational Rehabilitation program, Extended Rehabilitation Services, the Governor's Committee for Disabled Persons, and the Volunteer Resources program.

Meanwhile, in response to decreasing state revenue dollars, the Commissioner has issued a memorandum directing all TRC employees to tighten their belts for the fiscal year beginning Sept., 1985. He is committed not to have a reduction-in-force as in the past, nor does he want to limit case service funds for clients. Instead, Arrell wants to reduce overall spending through a unified effort toward conservation of funds. With few exceptions, conservation measures will affect hiring, travel, merit raises, and capital outlay. Hopefully, these adjustments will keep the commission within budget and prevent more drastic measures later.

## Speeches Give Life to Past

# Dr. Wade: VR's Guardian

If you were commissioner of TRC, who would you go to when you really needed to sit down and talk to someone about vocational rehabilitation matters? Commissioner Arrell has no problem with that question — he goes to Dr. David Wade, Administrative Medical Consultant now with the Disability Determination Division.

Dr. Wade carries extensive credentials in the field of vocational rehabilitation. His career began in January, 1945 when he was completing his fourth year of residency at the New York Psychiatric Institute in New York City. He had been offered a superintendency at a New York hospital, but he had also heard that J. J. Brown, director of the Vocational Rehabilitation Divi-

sion of the Texas Board for Vocational Education, wanted to talk to him about coming to work for rehabilitation in Texas. To the good fortune of the vocational rehabilitation community here, Dr. Wade accepted the latter offer and has remained here for 40 years, nurturing and directing the agency.

In 1969, when the separation bill was passed — the bill which brought TRC into existence — Dr. Wade worked on Governor Preston Smith's staff as director of Comprehensive Health Planning. "The governor conferred with me about the bill," says Wade, "and decided, after its passage, that he would name me interim commissioner. It became my responsibility to reshape the organization of the agency."

And reshape it he has, in direction and philosophy. As Commissioner Arrell points out, "No one has had more influence on the rehabilitation movement in Texas and in the nation than David Wade."

Dr. Wade has seen many changes over the past 40 years, and he has grown with the changes and with the agency. His leadership is as vital and dynamic now as it ever has been, and much of that vitality can be seen in his "History of Vocational Rehabilitation" speech.

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“ I feel  
comfortable converting  
disabled people  
into people  
with ability. ”

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At certain meetings in the various TRC regions, he has delivered this speech to the delight and thorough entertainment of his audiences. It is a factual and often humorous chronicle centered around significant figures in the history of vocational rehabilitation in Texas such as J. J. Brown, C. G. Fairchild, then counselor at the central office and later director, and L. T. Johnston, also a counselor and later assistant director. Dr. Wade takes an historical subject, which may seem cold and distant even to those of us whose careers have grown from that history, and injects it with life and pertinence. He allows his listener to "know" these early central office workers, not by their titles and accomplishments, but by recounting how they reacted to very human situations.

Dr. Wade's delivery is half the fun. The flair and color he lavishes upon these speeches, at the very least, hold his audiences' attention.

Even after such a long tenure in the rehabilitation field, he still maintains a humbling outlook. "I think the basic philosophy of this agency suits my personal philosophy so exactly that I have never really wanted to do anything else within the state human services network," he says. "I feel comfortable with the philosophy of converting disabled people into people with ability."



Dr. David Wade

# Sunset Commission "OK's" TRC

Based upon the knowledge that some state agencies might come into existence and, eventually, become obsolete, the Texas Legislature passed the Sunset Law which created the Sunset Advisory Commission, an official body charged with reviewing each agency and making recommendations as to its function, organization, and procedure as well as its very existence.

Agencies undergo review every twelve years; 1985 is the Texas Rehabilitation Commission's year for review.

On a practical level, no one at the commission fears for our existence. TRC provides a much-needed avenue to the vocational rehabilitation of disabled Texans. Yet, the SAC is recommending several important changes to the 69th Legislature. Among those are changes which will affect the Consumer Consultation Committee.

First, SAC is recommending that the CCC become the Con-

## Reagan Requests "Level Funding" for VR

President Reagan has sent his FY '86 budget request to Congress, including recommendations for cut-backs in some programs serving disabled Americans. According to the President's requests, Vocational Rehabilitation would maintain "level funding" for the basic state grants program. The budget request is far below the amount authorized by Congress. "Level funding" would freeze the VR appropriation at the 1985 figure and would not allow for increased inflation nor for an increased number of disabled clients to be served over the 1985 amount.

Under the proposed budget, Projects with Industry would lose \$1.4 million from the 1985 appropriation. Independent Living and the National Institute of Handicapped Research would lose \$5 million and \$4.1 million respectively. Funding for Developmental Disabilities would remain largely intact except for a \$2.7 million proposed reduction in its Special Projects program.

sumer Advisory Committee. Also, members of the CAC have traditionally received a consultant fee for their participation in the quarterly advisory meetings. Senate Bill 118 and its companion, House Bill 360 (both recommended by SAC), would substitute the consultant fee with a compensatory per diem — a lesser amount.

Furthermore, these bills also provide that if a member of the Board, the Developmental Disabilities Council or the Consumer Ad-

visory Committee is disabled, he may have attendant costs reimbursed, as they relate to his official function.

These are not drastic changes, but they are important to the individuals affected. Moreover, they are changes of the sort that the SAC is empowered to make.

Commissioner Max Arrell says of the current SAC report, "They did not recommend anything that would be detrimental to the day to day operation of this commission."

## Bartlett Summons 2nd Round Table

On February 14, 1985, Steve Bartlett, U.S. Representative from Dallas, called for participants to gather for the 2nd Rehabilitation Round Table at the Dallas Rehabilitation Institute.

Congressman Bartlett has become an advocate for rehabilitation legislation, and his "Round Table" is a worthy attempt to acquire as much input as possible from a cross-section of disability advocates and service providers voicing their

concerns about rehabilitation legislation.

Currently, he is formulating an amendment to Section 1619 of the Social Security Disability Amendments of 1980. Basically, it addresses the problem of loss of eligibility for Supplemental Security Income and Medicaid benefits when a recipient begins working. Much of the discussion at the "Round Table" centered on 1619 and ways to strengthen its provisions. This amendment would promote increased employment for disabled SSI dependents, eliminate disincentives for their seeking employment by extending Medicaid benefits, and create incentives for employers to hire disabled persons. It would also make 1619 permanent and would install two demonstration grant programs under Title VI of the Rehabilitation Act.

Another related issue discussed was the problem of insuring disabled people who find jobs. Many carriers are reluctant or simply refuse to insure a disabled employee. A possible solution offered at the "Round Table" would be to give a tax incentive to insurance companies that accept disabled clients. It would work much like the targeted jobs tax credit.

Other issues such as transit, attendant care, employer incentives, and independent living were addressed by the "Round Table."



U. S. Representative Steve Bartlett



Some members of the Budget Office staff. Standing left to right: Doug Jourdan, Carol White, Suzanne Diffen, and Harry Amon. Seated is Carolyn Parks of the Planning Office which has recently merged with the Budget Office.

## Budget Office Main Link in LAR

It began in October, 1983 and progressed through lengthy preparation, projection, and revision until, in July, 1984, it was presented as the Texas Rehabilitation Commission 1986-87 Legislative Appropriation Request (LAR), or as it is sometimes called, the Budget Request.

The ever present need among state agencies to make financial predictions far ahead of time, the complexities in conforming to the format specified by the Legislative and Governor's Budget Offices, and the manpower needed to complete the task combine to make formulating the budget a monumental effort.

A thirteen-year veteran of TRC, Doug Jourdan, along with his staff, is the primary steward of the developmental process for the budget proposal. Involving every program and department at the agency, "the budget is a nightmare of coordination," says Jourdan. "I don't know

of any project around the agency that gets more people involved in it."

At the beginning, a twelve member budget committee, comprised of representatives of each individual program and other resource persons, is appointed by the commissioner to assist in defining policy to be followed in developing the LAR. It addresses such topics as federal funding levels, inflation factors, program operating levels, and the rate of salary increases to be requested. For the purpose of creating the budget, the programs are broken down into activities, each with an activity manager who must coordinate the development of his portion with the budget office staff. There are altogether some 20 program and activity managers.

The budget office staff that developed the 1986-87 LAR consisted of budget analysts Harry Amon, Suzanne Diffen, and Tracey Schlatter, and budget clerks Joyce Torres and Carol White. (Torres has since been replaced by Mary Hunt). This small staff worked many long

hours during the week, on weekends, and some holidays to complete the LAR. Jourdan says that there is just too much work to accomplish the task, and try to keep up with other more routine chores, without working some overtime. He is extremely proud of the budget staff. "We work hard and pride ourselves in putting out a top-quality product."

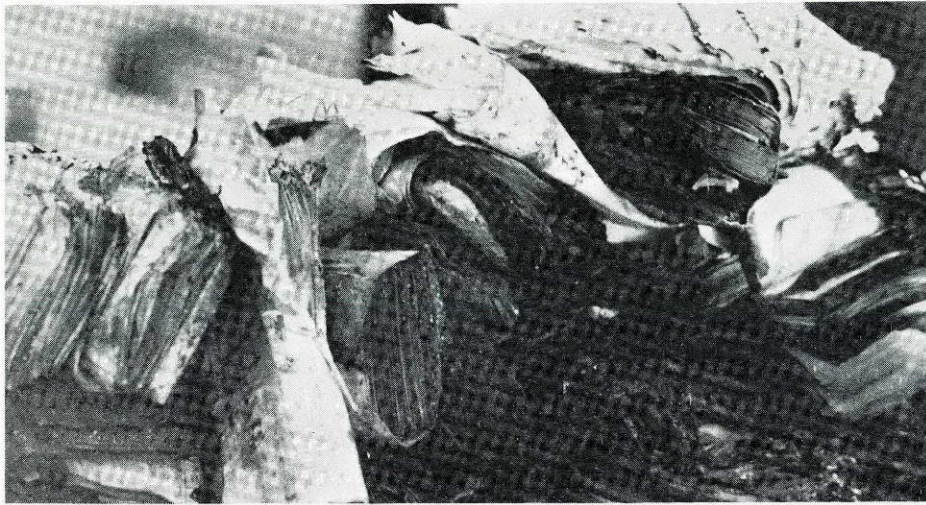
In addition to the program and activity managers, a half dozen other people outside the budget office assist in the preparation of special supporting schedules that are a part of the budget request. At various points throughout the process, Planning, Information Services, Word Processing, and ultimately, Printing Services also make much-needed contributions to hammering out the LAR.

Work on the budget begins long before it is presented to the legislature so that the Legislative and Governor's Budget Offices can evaluate it and make recommendations before the Texas Legislature convenes, every odd-numbered year.

In part, the difficulty in preparing and understanding the budget document lies in the complicated format dictated by the Legislative and Governor's Budget Offices. According to Jourdan, "the format is the State of Texas' variation of the zero-base-budgeting concept. It results in a document that is extremely cumbersome and difficult to follow. Furthermore, the whole zero-base-budget concept is not geared for agencies which utilize federal as well as state funds."

To avert difficulties in the budget-making process, an early step has been injected which provides for up-front estimates at what the overall budget will look like upon completion. This diminishes the need for significant changes late in the process and prevents delays.

"The purpose of the LAR is to form the basis of our request for appropriation of state funds for the operation of our agency," says Jourdan. "Despite the difficulties inherent in the process, we look upon its development as an exciting challenge."



Stacks of charred files



The Dallas Field Office East staff. Standing left to right: Suzette Skinner, Gary Kirby, Don Cross. Seated left to right: Becky Benoit, Joan Kellehan, Burley Denton, Linda Benavides.

## Severe Weather Foils CCC

The terrible grip of severe weather throughout Texas prevented the Consumer Consultation Committee from meeting in Austin as scheduled February 4th, 5th, and 6th.

Created in Dec., 1976, the CCC provides advice and guidance to TRC in policy formulation and initial planning to assure that its programs are relevant and responsive to the needs of disabled persons. The members themselves include persons who receive or provide vocational rehabilitation services or those otherwise involved in the field of rehabilitation.

According to Kaye Beneke, staff coordinator for the CCC, the committee represents, more than ever before, a broad balance of disability groups and geographic regions (see chart). The committee is composed of representatives for the hearing impaired, spinal cord injured, speech impaired, severely physically disabled, epileptic, and mentally ill.

The Consumer Consultation Committee meeting for this quarter has been rescheduled for March 25th, 26th, and 27th, weather, of course, permitting.

## Blaze Destroys Office

(continued from page 1)

leagues, one employee expressed the apparent sentiments of all seven staff members from the VR office, "It's like being uprooted. I feel like a lost sheep."

TRC administration officials say they are committed to bringing order to the situation as quickly as possible. Acknowledging the staff's frustration, Commissioner Max Arrell also praised the employee's dedication and tenacity in the face of such a tragedy. "Some of them were out there to witness the fire take over our offices. They were all out there — some with their families — the next day to save what they could. I recognize and appreciate their efforts to overcome their own losses and to do what they could to benefit the commission," he says.

## TRC Consumer Consultation Committee

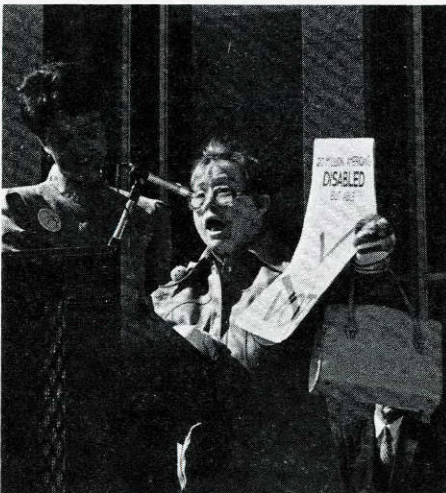
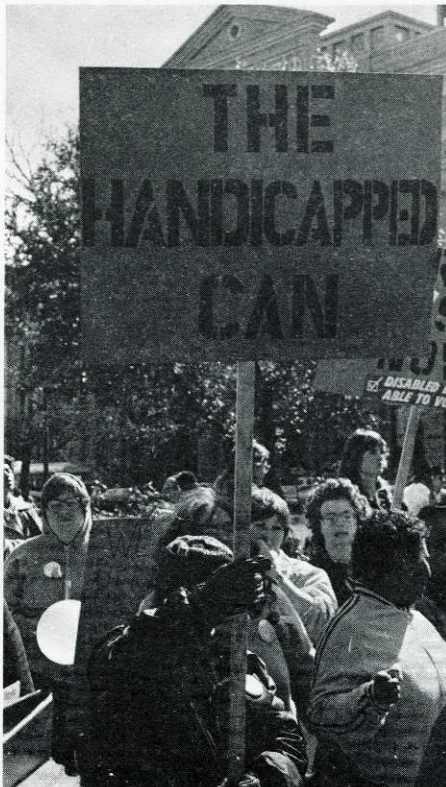
### Members:

Michelle Bailey\*  
 Russell Bowden\*  
 Betty Brown  
 Fermin de la Garza  
 Janie Farris  
 Ben J. Garrett  
 Robert G. Geyer\*  
 Marlene A. Goldstein\*  
 Hal Haralson  
 Jessie M. Hart\*  
 Brian McGinley\*  
 Robert C. Mehan  
 Trudy Putteet  
 Mark Rosenthal  
 Scotty Sherrill\*  
 Gary Shreve  
 Bobby C. Simpson (Chairman)  
 Jann E. Steed

### Location:

Houston, Texas  
 Allen, Texas  
 Amarillo, Texas  
 Laredo, Texas  
 Baytown, Texas  
 Brownwood, Texas  
 El Paso, Texas  
 Wichita Falls, Texas  
 Austin, Texas  
 Grand Prairie, Texas  
 Austin, Texas  
 Big Spring, Texas  
 Lubbock, Texas  
 Dallas, Texas  
 Nacogdoches, Texas  
 Monahans, Texas  
 Austin, Texas  
 Universal City, Texas

\* new members



## Rally Day

Mark it on your calendar! Advocacy, Inc. is again sponsoring Disability Rally Day on March 25th and 26th. Physically, mentally, and developmentally disabled persons from all over the state will gather in Austin to focus public and legislative attention on the unity and strength of the disabled community in Texas. Activities on the first day will include a priority panel on funding and issues, the report of the Council on Disabilities, the Governor's address and a reception, followed, on the second day, by bands, tours, and meetings with legislators. And the biggest event of all is a rally on the Capitol grounds. Drawing wide sponsorship from various organizations, Rally Day is an opportunity to support the disabled in pursuing their rights as Texas citizens. For more information about Rally Day and its schedule of activities call Desiree Russell at Advocacy, Inc. (475-5543)

The following is an excerpt from a letter sent to the San Antonio Field Office North from Charlotte Asch, a client assigned to Gary Simpson, senior counselor.

"I want to sincerely thank you for the help that you provided me recently, and without which I could not have gotten my current job. I appreciate so much the concern and interest you took in our interview and in subsequent follow-ups to see how things were progressing. It is heartwarming for those of us with disabilities that affect our bodies but not our ability to work to know that we have caring advo-

cates such as you to help us obtain jobs in which we can fulfill our potential."

Mary Valentini, program director in the Lubbock Field Office, received this letter from TRC client Neta Kyles.

"I wish to thank you all for everything that you have done for me. I'm back working now and feel real good. Without your help, I would still be unable to work. I'm proud to know that there is a place in America that is willing to help people like the Texas Rehabilitation Commission to get well and back on the job."

## Budget-Makers Battle for Benefits

As inflation increases and the dollar seems to shrink even as you stand in line at the grocery store, state employees are more concerned than ever this year about what salve to reduce the pain they might find in their pay envelopes. Sensitive to the financial needs of TRC employees, agency budget-makers have responded to this situation in their Legislative Appropriations Request. Although, of course, the increases in employee benefits have not been appropriated, they have been requested and, if funded, will substantially decrease the gap between a slim dollar and a full grocery cart.

For the 1986-87 biennium, TRC has requested a 6.8% across-the-board increase in classified salaries for each year. A merit increase of 3.4% (one salary step) has been requested for each year in the biennium.

The TRC budget also shows a requested increase in travel allowances. Mileage would jump from the current \$.23 a mile to \$.27 a mile, a 17.5% increase. Also requested is a per diem in-state travel allowance of \$60 in FY 1986 and \$65 in FY 1987, 50% and 62.5% respectively. For out-of-state travel, TRC has requested a travel allowance equal to the actual expense of the trip.

The Texas Public Employees Association Legislative Program recommends slightly different in-

creases. It asks for a 13.6% increase in all salaries for 1986, and a 7.0% in 1987. In addition, TPEA asks for merit raises of 1.7% per year, a mileage increase to \$.30 per mile, and an in-state and out-of-state per diem of \$75 without receipts.

## MILESTONES

This segment of News & Views honors TRC employees celebrating 10 years or more with the Commission as of the month previous to publication. Due to the length of the list, we are restricted to publishing these anniversaries in 5 year increments only. Here is a list of employees reaching these "milestones" in February.

### REGION III

15 years: George W. Moore  
Vernon Sydor, Jr.

### REGION V

10 years: Ernest J. Centeno  
Marisela Garcia

### REGION VI

15 years: Barbara L. Graves  
10 years: Freddie M. Glenn

### CENTRAL OFFICE

15 years: John K. Ribble

### DDD

20 years: Leslie Albrecht  
10 years: Diana H. Alexander  
Laurel Griffin  
Tommy M. Lec  
Vernette M. Wuthrich

We want to correct a mistake made in Milestones last month. Karen Waddell, of the central office has been with TRC for 10 years, not 15.

 **Applause**

**Carol Whitcraft**, Assistant Deputy Commissioner for Research, became the first woman ever to be commissioned as an admiral in the Texas Navy during "A Celebration of Leadership: Women in the Public Sector" conference by Governor Mark White in Austin last month.

At the same conference, **Joellen Simmons**, executive director of the Texas Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities, was recognized by Governor White as one of 23 women executives heading a state agency.

**Frederick Matthews**, senior counselor at the Corpus Christi Field Office South, was recently elected one of the vice-chairmen of the Mayor's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped at a luncheon on January 31st in Corpus Christi.

**Dick Lupia**, ERS program manager in the Lubbock Field Office, received an Appreciation Award for dedicated service to the Lubbock Area Extended Rehabilitation Services from its director, Charles Hastings.

These TRC employees received press coverage for the commission: **Jake Reeves** of the Tyler Field Office and **Dr. Irving Brown**, medical consultant in the same office; **Andy Alexander** of the Governor's Committee for Disabled Persons; and **Hugh Johnson**, senior counselor of the Alpine Field Office.

**Carol Champion**, of the Harlingen Field Office, and her husband, Tom, went to the Presidential Inauguration in January.

**Bertha Hinojosa**, program officer at the Dallas Regional Office, will be one of the keynote speakers at a conference entitled "Disabled Hispanic Texans: Rehabilitation and Employment" in San Antonio on March 20th and 21st.

**Edward Austin**

(continued from page 2)

Jennings, operations director in the Public Information Office, on a handball court. "Randy didn't know I had played handball, and I was experienced," he says.

The commissioner's office has also felt Austin's influence. "I don't know of anyone who has made a more positive contribution to TRC than Ed Austin," says Commissioner Arrell. "With his background, he's been of invaluable assistance to me."

Recently, Austin has devoted quite a bit of time to the Sunset Advisory Commission among other extensive legislative issues demanding his attention. "In the position of attorney," he reflects, "you meet crisis and challenge every day. It keeps you on your toes."

 **Transitions**

**Edward Austin**, Assistant Commissioner for Legal Services, is retiring on March 15, 1985.

**Doyle Wheeler**, Deputy Commissioner for Programs will retire this month on March 31st.

**Nita Kouretas**, counselor in the Fort Worth Southeast Field Office, retires on March 1st after almost 19 years of service.

**News & Views** 

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- Kaye Beneke . . . . . Director
- Vernon Dement . . . . . Editor
- Becky Nieto . . . . . Illustrator
- Susan Antoniowicz . . . . . Illustrator
- Sue Durban . . . . . Illustrator
- TRC Printing Services . . . . . Typeset and Printing

**TEXAS REHABILITATION COMMISSION**  
118 E. Riverside Drive  
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