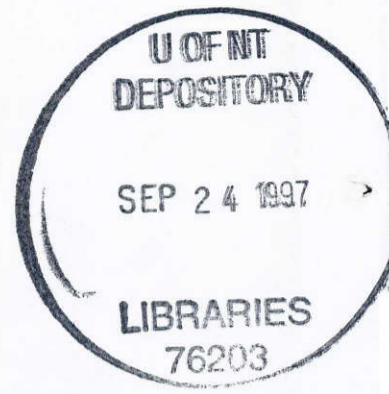


# Transportation NEWS

September 1997 Volume 23 Number 1



## NICHOLS JOINS COMMISSION

**Meredith Whitten**  
Public Information Office

Gene Schuler is meticulously describing how he makes roadside signs. He carefully explains how the size is determined and how the letters are placed, then demonstrates how it is done. All the time, Robert Nichols listens and watches intently. Although he takes no notes, it is obvious that Nichols completely follows what the Lubbock District Sign Shop employee says. If he doesn't know something, he asks.

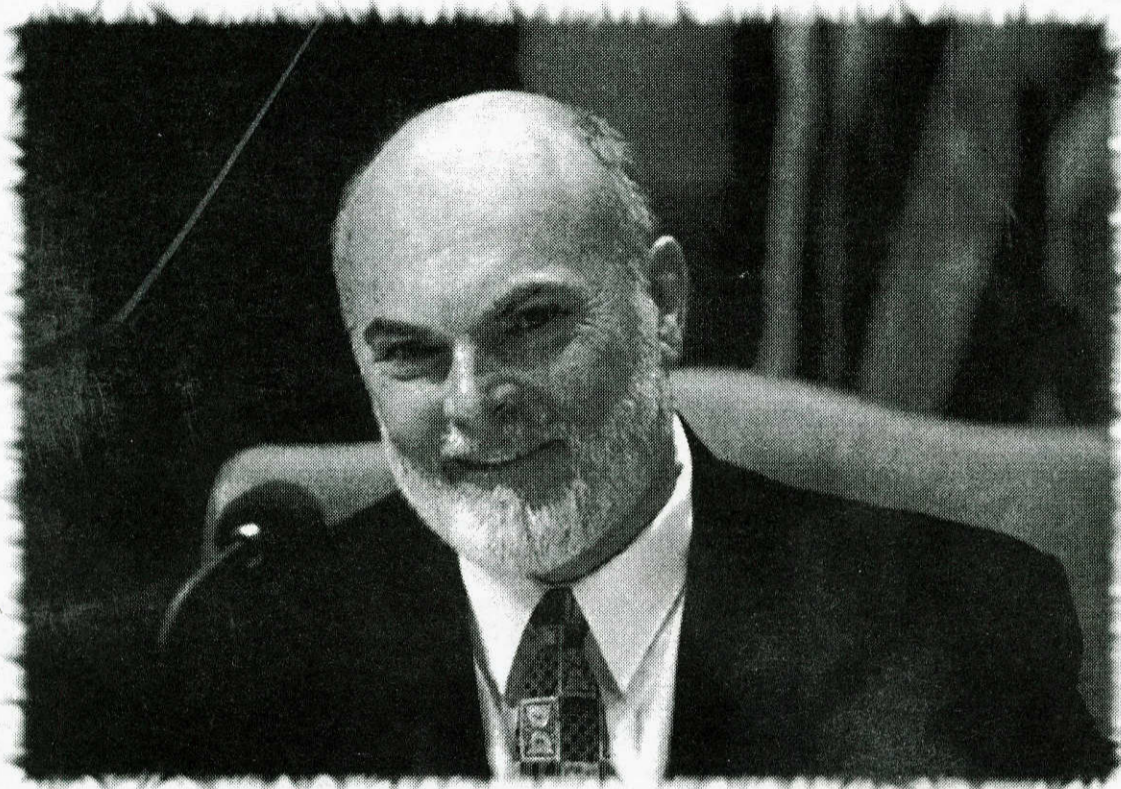
This scene is being repeated in TxDOT offices statewide, as Nichols, the newest member of the Texas Transportation Commission, makes his way from district to district.

The purpose of Nichols' visits is purely educational. To understand the department's operations thoroughly, he set out to see employees in action first-hand. The result has been a dizzying schedule that started in Lufkin on May 27 and will wind up in Houston Oct. 1. With Sallie Burk, his executive assistant, in tow, Nichols already had spent time in 20 of the 25 districts by the end of August.

"I want to go out and visit the people who are doing the work of the department, who are meeting the public and working with the communities," Nichols said. "I'm meeting with them, getting a feel for the facilities we have, getting a feel for the projects. I like talking to the people in the field close to the projects. They seem to know what we are doing well or not well."

Seeing local transportation systems for himself will give Nichols a valuable perspective when it comes time to make crucial decisions.

"You get a different impression when you see a project in person," he said. "For exam-



Courtesy TTV

**Jacksonville businessman Robert Nichols was appointed to the Texas Transportation Commission by Gov. George W. Bush in May. Since then, Nichols has embarked on a whirlwind tour of TxDOT's offices statewide. He plans to visit all 25 districts.**

ple, I've read lots of reports and traffic counts about Laredo, but when we got there what we saw was trucks backed up for five hours trying to get across the border. That's something you have to see."

His crash-course in Texas transportation already has changed the way he looks at things.

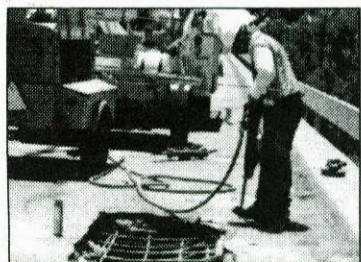
"He used to drive down the road and look where he was going," Burk said. "Now, he looks at the road."

Nichols was appointed to the Texas Transportation Commission for a six-year term by Gov. George W. Bush in May. He joins Commission Chairman David Laney and member Anne Wynne on the three-member board. He replaced David Bernsen of Beaumont, whose term expired.

Nichols' appointment came after much debate over the definition of "rural." State law requires at least one transportation commissioner to reside in a rural community, but it fails to define what constitutes rural. When making his appointment, Bush opted to follow Transportation Commission guidelines, which define rural systems as those serving a population of less than 50,000. Jacksonville, Nichols' hometown, has a population of 12,756. Despite his rural residency, Nichols is adamant that he is not on the commission solely to represent small-town interests. "One out of three positions is designated as rural commissioner, but every commissioner knows that he is responsible for the whole state," he said.

Please see Nichols, page 4

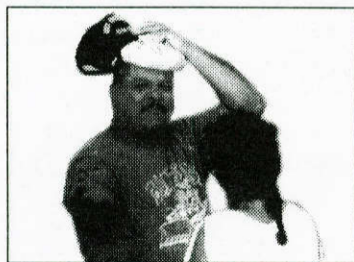
### Inside



TxDOT responded quickly when Amarillo motorists spotted a 3-foot-by-10-foot hole in a bridge. **Page 5**



Beaumont's Charles Jabbour recently attained something most of us take for granted — U.S. citizenship. **Page 6**

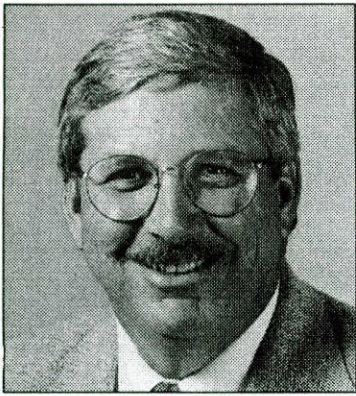


Department athletes displayed their prowess on the field during the annual TxDOT softball tourney. **Page 12**



After tornadoes leveled Dee Barry's home and left her yard barren, employees statewide chipped in to help. **Page 13**





**Bill Burnett**

## Ask Bill

have no TxDOT-issued method to personally identify ourselves to the public when we are out on department-related business. In this day and age when we are being warned to check everyone for identification, photo identification would be most helpful.

Thank you for your time and consideration to the above questions/requests.

**Henry R. Zimmerman Jr.**  
Burnet Area Office

**A** Thanks for your questions. Employee security is a priority for me, and the department is always looking for ways to make the workplace safe. This includes limiting access to employees' social security numbers, which are confidential information. After looking into the matter, I want to assure you that the department is taking every precaution to ensure that only employees who use the information in their jobs have access to employees' social security numbers.

As for electronic access, the Information Systems Division (ISD) allows employees access to confidential information on a need-to-know basis. Once the information is in printed form, the access issue becomes a distribution concern. Each TxDOT employee should make every effort to safeguard access to sensitive information about our co-workers.

In March, the Training Quality and Development Division instituted a procedure to further safeguard an employee's social security number. In the past, training confirmation reports sent to training coordinators included vendor numbers, which use an employee's social security number. The numbers are no longer included on these reports. Steps are now being taken to ensure the new procedure is implemented in ISD, which also schedules training.

As for security badges, being able to identify yourself as a TxDOT employee when conducting department business is becoming more important. The Austin District is considering issuing badges for its employees as part of an overall assessment of its security needs. As soon as a decision has been made, you will be advised.

**Q** I have noticed documents where names of persons attending classes and other like lists have the employee's social security numbers on them. With all of the electronic theft being reported on television and in the newspapers, it would seem prudent to abolish this practice. The media tells us quite often not to allow our social security number to be placed on anything that leaves our control. Perhaps an employee identification number could replace the use of our social security numbers.

Additionally, most of us also

**Q** I have a question concerning the treatment of overtime in the General Appropriations Act of the 75th Legislature [Article IX, Section 2, Subsection 6]. This change "precludes employees from receiving state compensatory time while working at their personal residence."

As an employee in the Information Security Branch of ISD, one of my job functions is to support users relative to their access to the mainframe. Occasionally, I am on call during nonbusiness hours. In the past when a problem arose during off-hours, it meant a trip into the office. Recently my division has provided me with a laptop and modem for use during on-call hours. This gives me the advantage of quickly determining the scope of the problem. In most cases I can solve the problem from home with the same result, plus serve the user in a timely manner. If the extent of the problem is such that I must go into the office, then I will certainly do that. Now that the technology exists and I have been authorized to provide customer support from home, I do not understand the application of this policy.

Thank you for taking time to address my concern.

**Marsha Smith**  
Information Systems Division

**A** Thanks for your hard work and dedication to TxDOT employees. Your question allows me to address a change in the new Human Resources Manual resulting from legislation passed during the 75th Legislature. The new manual will be distributed during the first week of September.

Effective Sept. 1, the new Appropriations Act provision prevents an employee from accruing comp time for work performed at the employee's personal residence. The act says that comp time may be accrued only at an employee's regular place of employment or "assigned duty point," and that the employee's residence cannot be designated as an "assigned duty point" for the purpose of accruing comp time. This doesn't mean that employees' "assigned duty point" cannot be their home, as it is for telecommuters. But it does mean that no employees can earn comp time when they work at home. While this may produce a harsh or unfair result in some instances, we have no choice but to comply with this provision of the law.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this issue, contact your human resources officer.

.....  
Got a question for Bill? Send it to "Ask Bill" at the Public Information Office, Main Office, or via GroupWise to MWHITTEN. Include your name, work address and phone number. We'll withhold your identity at your request, but remember, Bill won't answer anonymous letters.

**I**n the August issue of *Transportation News*, we published a story on page four about some of the major impacts of the 75th Legislature. The story incorrectly reported that the retirement multiplier was 2.5 percent. The correct retirement multiplier is 2.25 percent. *Transportation News* apologizes for any confusion caused by this error.★

## Department 80th anniversary celebrations draw near

Mark your calendars for the following upcoming events in celebration of the department's 80th anniversary:

**Oct. 13-15 — Transportation Conference** — The theme of this year's conference is "80 Years of Service the TxDOT Way." The conference will feature an exhibit about department history, the Innovation Showcase, an awards banquet, presentations and a reception room for retirees.

**Oct. 22 — District Open Houses** — Open houses statewide will not only give the department a chance to highlight its history, but also

will provide the public and local officials with a glimpse of present operations, programs and projects.

**Nov. 5 — Historical marker dedication** — A ceremony will be held to install a historical marker at the Greer building in Austin.

**Nov. 5 — 80th Anniversary Banquet** — The Associated General Contractors and Texas Good Roads Association are co-hosting a banquet at the Austin Convention Center at 6 p.m. All employees and retirees as well as the contracting community are invited to attend.★

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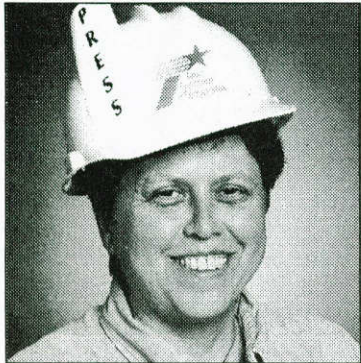
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# Legislative love affair runs deep for Pittard

Despite long hours, hectic schedule, policy analyst wouldn't do anything else



Eloise Lundgren

## A Day in the Life

pharmacy major," she explained. "But once you get the Legislature in your blood, it's hard to think of anything else. Besides, I knew I didn't want to take organic chemistry and physics (pharmacy prerequisites).

"A friend of mine was majoring in public relations," Pittard continued, "and what she did sounded like what I wanted to do, so I changed my major."

Deeply embroiled in her love affair with the Texas Legislature, Pittard even sat out a couple of semesters so she could work with lawmakers. But all was not a waste of time because her legislative work translated into an internship which meant college credit.

Before graduating in 1980 with a bachelor's degree in journalism, Pittard already had chalked up two years of experience with the Texas House of Representatives. She stayed with the House, working for several state representatives until 1989, when she joined a private law firm as a legislative consultant.

Then, in 1993, after taking off a couple of years to spend with her children, Dennis, 15, and Lisa, 11, Pittard rejoined the Legislature, where she worked for a little more than a year before moving to TxDOT.

"I wanted to stay in the legislative arena," she said, "but I was also looking for more stability and something that extended beyond the next election. I didn't enjoy having to start over every two years.

"With the department," Pittard explained, "I can have a stable job and still love what I'm doing."

Spending most of her time as a legislative policy analyst for Senior Management Team (SMT) members Bobbie Templeton, assistant executive director for Field Operations, and Daffney Henry, assistant executive director for Human Resources Management, Pittard stays involved in bills dealing with construction, materials, research, traffic operations, maintenance, retirement, workers' compensation, pay raises and the state employee classification system.

Her work during the session involves helping prepare fiscal notes, writing testimony and talking points for SMT members, establishing credible relationships with legislators and their aides, monitoring bills of interest to the department, briefing the SMT at weekly meetings, and attending legislative hearings and meetings with lawmakers. During the session, this translates into working almost every weekend and into the wee hours of the morning during the regular workweek.

"By the end of the session," Pittard said, "I'll probably have

*"Politics are almost as exciting as war, and quite as dangerous. In war you can only be killed once, but in politics many times."*

—Winston Churchill

Working as a policy analyst in TxDOT's Legislative Affairs Office is a long way from her days as a pharmacy major at the University of Texas at Austin, but Denise Pittard knows what she wants and is confident she made the right choice.

"I was already working for the Legislature when I started UT as a

between 250 and 300 comp hours. But that's welcome because I'll certainly need some down time after the Legislature goes home."

May gets extremely hectic for LAO, according to Pittard, because the Legislature is winding down and each LAO analyst may have as many as three hearings a day.

"Sometimes it works out where the meetings are scattered throughout the day, but sometimes it doesn't," she said. "It's really a juggling act to get where you have to be, so we often cover for each other. Coordination and prioritization are very important."

And if anyone thinks the job's done for Pittard and the LAO gang after the Legislature goes home, think again. LAO doesn't work from sun to sun; their work is never done.

"After the session," Pittard said, "we have to take a look at all the bills that passed and what impact they will have on TxDOT. We prepare legislative summaries for management and work with the affected divisions who must submit action plans to us."

The action plans outline exactly what needs to be done to implement the legislation within the department and set up a schedule for implementation, according to Pittard.

"LAO then updates legislators who want to know how we're complying with their bills," she said.

The Texas speaker and lieutenant governor will begin appointing interim committees midway between sessions, and LAO is "very involved in monitoring this process," Pittard said.

Does all this effort pay off, I wanted to know.

"I think the majority of the Texas Legislature has a positive impression of TxDOT," Pittard assured me. "The districts play a key role in keeping the department as a whole in a good light because of

the quick way most of them respond to complaints from legislators on behalf of their constituents."

After spending the day with Pittard, I had a sneaking feeling that she, too, was instrumental in painting that good picture of TxDOT for lawmakers. And one of her colleagues verified that feeling.

"There are plenty of good things I could say about Denise," Jefferson Grimes, State Legislative Affairs Section manager, told me. "Her experience has proven on more than one occasion to be of tremendous value to TxDOT.

"One of her greatest attributes," he continued, "is that she thrives in extremely stressful situations, plus she knows the House and Senate rules like the back of her hand."

Pittard remains modest about her talent. "I know that I couldn't do my job if I didn't

have the support of my husband, David, and my two children," she said.

David, who is a tool distributor, is known affectionately by his family as "Dave the Toolman."

"We can really relate to that television show, 'Home Improvement,'" said Pittard, who is not without her own special nickname, "Schlittermom."

"I love the summer and anything to do with water," she explained, "so I'm always swimming, water skiing or going to water parks with my children. I guess I'm a kid that will never grow up. Even when I'm 80 years old, I'll still be sliding down those water slides."

Whether she's at work or play, Denise Pittard knows how to cool down a heated situation.★



Policy Analyst Denise Pittard, right, practically lived at the state Capitol during the recent legislative session. Pittard spends much of her time working with Senior Management Team members, including Assistant Executive Director for Field Operations Bobbie Templeton, left.



## Nichols

Continued from page 1

His whirlwind tour of TxDOT offices is not the only thing that sets Nichols apart from past commissioners. For one, Nichols is not a lawyer. In fact, he has an engineering background.

Nichols earned a bachelor's degree in industrial engineering from Lamar University. Between 1975 and 1996, he founded and was chief executive officer of four companies in Jacksonville.

"Most people get into engineering because they love to build things, and that's why I got into it," Nichols said. "Rather than building streets and bridges and things of that nature, though, I was building things out of plastic."

Eventually, Nichols sold his companies, although they are all still operational in Jacksonville. Nichols' community involvement was not limited to his business life. He served on the Jacksonville City Council from 1980-1984, and from 1985-1989, he was mayor of the town. It was during his civic service that Nichols first came into contact with TxDOT.

"We'd work on a number of projects in Jacksonville and periodically we'd go to the Greer Building in Austin to make a presentation," he said. "We'd sit in that big room and watch the Houstons and the Dallahs make their presentations. We'd stand up with our posterboard and magic markers and talk about our projects, then we'd go home. All of a sudden I had a chance to work on the other side.

"I come to the commission with a different perspective — from an engineering background, a public servant background," he said. "I have a great appreciation of area and district offices and the work they do. I know they are the backbone of the department."

In Lubbock, Nichols spent the day in much the same way he has in all the districts he's visited. He met with the district engineer and other district administrators. After reviewing future projects of major significance, he discussed the district's maintenance needs and safety improvements. He also spent time with area officials, such as county judges and mayors.

The bulk of Nichols' visits, however, consist of meeting department employees. He visits every corner of the district headquarters as well as some maintenance offices and area offices.

Nichols said he's been impressed by the TxDOT employees he's met.

"They've been informative. I've been very impressed with the quality of people and their dedication. I was not expecting that degree of dedication."

As he goes from office to office, Nichols fires off endless rounds of questions. He doesn't leave until he's met everyone and understands what each employee does and how it fits into the department's mission. Most employees enjoy the chance to tell a commission member what they think and describe what they do. Many have never met a commissioner. At first, many employees are quiet

and reserved around Nichols, but after being in the room with him for just a few minutes, they relax and delve deep into a discussion of issues affecting the department.

On his tours of the districts, Nichols has gleaned important issues facing TxDOT employees operations, as well as learned the

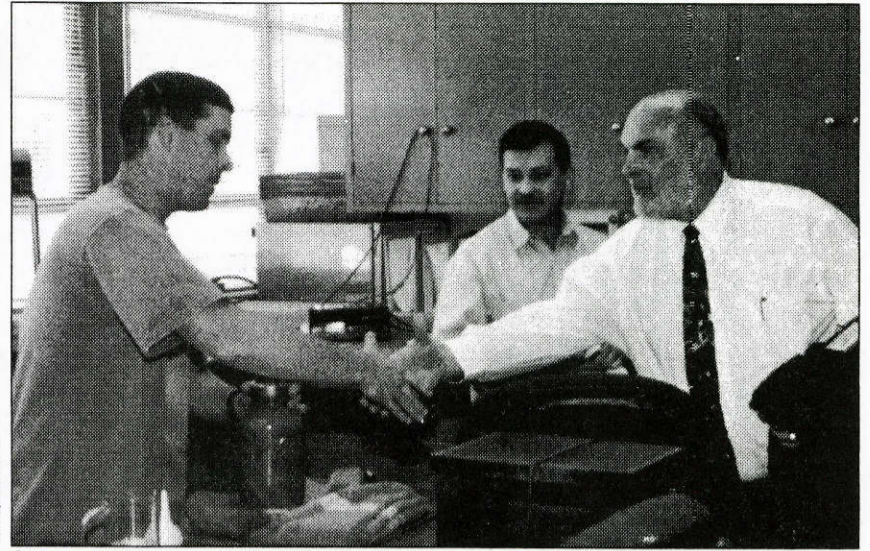
intricate ways in which the agency operates. "The main thing that I'm interested in is trying to see that we are doing the projects right, and that we are addressing the needs and doing everything as cost-effectively as possible. I was always kind of an operations person," Nichols said.

"I think one of the most important things the department does well is coordinating, planning and working with the communities, and that's extremely important. From a community standpoint, I can assure you that is very important to know that there is someone there they (TxDOT's customers) can talk to who can help them and guide them through these transportation and planning issues."

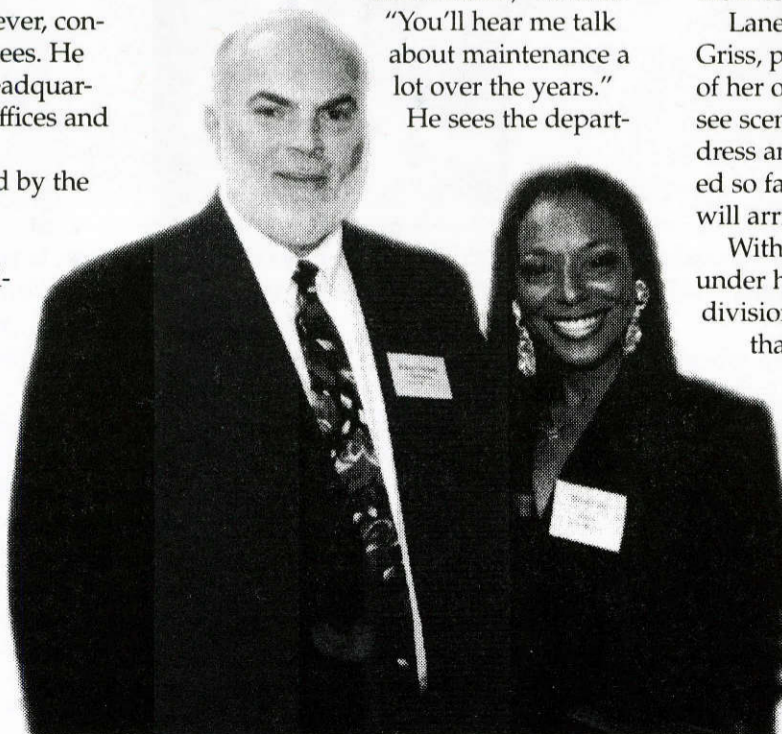
Nichols has four goals he believes the department should work towards. They are move traffic safely; spread economic development when we can while moving traffic; properly maintain the roads and infrastructure we have, even if it means reducing the number of new projects; and maximize the money that we receive into the actual projects. He said the department concentrates on improving mobility in cities, but doesn't emphasize moving traffic through the state as much as we should. For example, trucks who want to go from Florida to California have to go through Houston on I-10 or Dallas on I-20, the last thing most of them want to do. He's also a firm supporter of TxDOT's maintenance group. "I'm a real proponent of maintenance," he said.

"You'll hear me talk about maintenance a lot over the years."

He sees the depart-



Commission member Robert Nichols, right, has been shaking hands nonstop as he travels throughout the 25 districts. In the Paris District, he met James Hutchinson, engineering technician, left, and Bobby Jones, laboratory supervisor, center.



In addition to meeting department employees during his trips to the districts, Commission member Robert Nichols, left, also spends time with local officials, such as Pam Hardeaway, regional coordinator for Sen. David Cain.

ment's funding limitations as an opportunity, not a problem. "We should look for innovative ways to help pay for some of these projects. I see a lot of opportunities for toll roads, which will accelerate projects where there are high volumes of traffic and probably will free up some funds to do other projects. There also are opportunities to do community matching on projects. It's in the interests of those communities to help us do that. Roads are for everyone. We need to make sure that money to the maximum extent possible that comes into TxDOT goes into roads to the maximum extent possible where the transportation needs are greatest. We must somehow do that in a fair and equitable manner throughout the state."

When Nichols first announced that he would visit all 25 districts in less than 90 days, there were more than a few skeptics.

With each district Nichols visits, the second floor of the Greer Building is beginning to look like a page from a travel magazine. That's because before he leaves each district, Nichols sends Chairman Laney a postcard from the area, dated and stamped as documented proof that Nichols is indeed keeping his promise to see all 25 districts in slightly more than three months.

"When I was talking about visiting all the districts, Chairman Laney said in passing, 'well, send me a postcard,'" Nichols said. "So, everywhere we go we send him a postcard. We send it to his home, then he brings them to the office."

Laney's executive assistant, Mary Ann Griss, puts each postcard up in the window of her office. Anyone who happens by can see scenes from Longview, Odessa, Childress and every other area Nichols has visited so far. In just a few weeks, postcard #25 will arrive on Griss' desk.

With a visit to each district just about under his belt, Nichols will start to visit the divisions and special offices soon. When that's done, he plans to start the whole process over again next year, and repeat it each year of his term, proving he's dedicated to TxDOT and transportation in the Lone Star State.

"I'm not working on anything else. I've sold my businesses. I do not intend to start another business," he said. "I intend to work on the transportation commission 100 percent of the time."★



# Texas 31 blacktop paved with recycled rooftops

**Montrose Cunningham**  
Dallas District

Ever wonder what happens to all those asphalt shingles that are removed from your roof when you have a new one put on? Most people never give it a second thought. For the city of Corsicana, however, those old shingles mean new roadway.

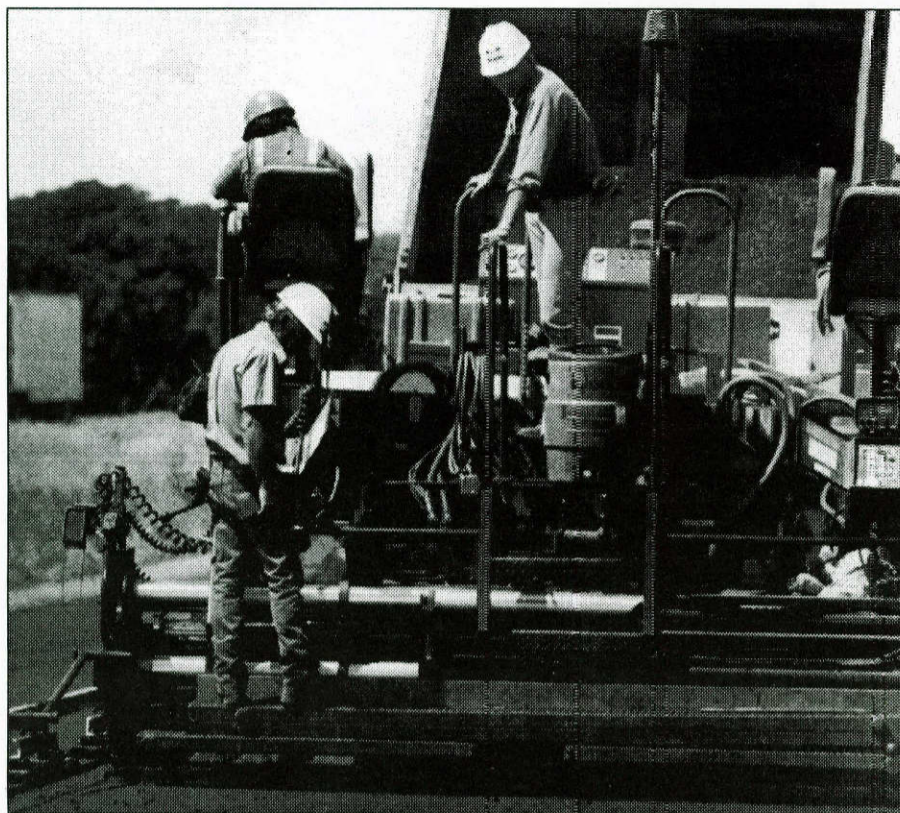
Every year residential and commercial roofing replacement activities generate 8 to 10 million tons of old roofing waste. In addition, roofing manufacturers in the U.S. produce approximately 1,000,000 tons of new waste roofing shingles and trimmings.

Historically, about 95 percent of this 22 million cubic yards of valuable, non-biodegradable solid waste has been placed in landfills. A study conducted by the Texas Transportation Institute determined that this roofing waste can be used in hot mix asphalt that's used on roadways. It's estimated that using approximately 2 percent roofing waste in asphalt mixtures would consume all roofing waste produced each year.

With that in mind, TxDOT's General Services Division took this opportunity to use recycled roofing shingles on a district project. The project chosen was Texas 31 in Navarro County. The section is approximately seven miles long and is between Farm-to-Market Road 55 and FM 2452.

District Pavement Engineer Joe Thompson said the reason this particular project was chosen was largely a result of good timing.

"Navarro County happened to have just



Crews use a hot mix asphalt that includes roofing waste to pave Texas 31. Using about 2 percent roofing waste in asphalt mixtures would consume all roofing waste produced each year.

the type of project that we needed at the right time so we felt it would be a good test project," he said. "We didn't want to test it on a road with a very large traffic volume so this four-lane, rural road was a good choice," he said.

Navarro County Area Engineer Darwin Myers said when the idea was presented to him he was a bit apprehensive at first.

"Normally this type of mix is used underneath the surface whereas this was to have traffic on it," said Myers. "So, of course, there was a thought in the back of my mind as to whether it would work or not."

Myers agreed, and after the site was established, it was up to the district laboratory to design the asphalt. This responsibility was given to lab employee Greg Gilmore.

The first thing he had to do was to determine the percentage of asphalt in the shingle as well as determine how much would be

conserved through this process.

"We conducted every possible test," he said. "We then had to test each individual aggregate to see if the grade would meet the hot mix asphalt specifications. Then we tried different percentages of shingle asphalt to see which would work the best."

After a month of testing, the design was approved and the asphalt was ready to be manufactured. Six hundred tons of mix were produced for each 1,000-foot test section. A large part of the process is removing deleterious material from the shingles such as nails, wood and other materials generally found in consumer roofing waste.

The test sections were finally put down in two sections. One using tear-off

waste which comes from consumer use and one using manufactured waste. Myers said it looks and feels like any other stretch of roadway. The only pitfall that was encountered was a soft spot on the shoulder of the road that caused the asphalt to break.

"That was a problem with the road itself, not the asphalt. It was quickly taken care of and the test section looks very good," assured Myers. "We've had traffic on it for a few weeks, and so far it has worked fine. We'll continue to monitor it as the summer weather gets warmer."

Myers hopes this project is successful so that it can be used on projects throughout the state.

"The use of recycled roofing shingles can extend landfill life and lessen our dependence on virgin materials," he said. "While at the same time providing good quality, cost-effective roads."★

# AMA bridges start to show their age

**Tonya Detten**  
Amarillo District

It appears to be more than a midlife crisis for some bridges in the Amarillo District. Mark Read, the district's bridge engineer, said many district bridges are showing their age.

"Most of our bridges are 40 years old. They are showing signs of deterioration," said Read.

In May, district bridge inspectors were alarmed by the damage to the substructure on the two "braided" ramps on Interstate 40 in Amarillo between Paramount and Georgia. After careful inspection of the bridges, District Engineer Mark E. Tomlinson made the call to close the bridges and make temporary repairs.

"Closing a bridge is an engineering judgment," said Read. "It's not a black-and-white decision. We thought the bridge had a little life left, but we were not willing to take chances."

TxDOT hired a contractor to repair the bridges temporarily, and they are now open to the public. "We expect to repair the substructure permanently within the year," said Read.

Another bridge in the district surprised TxDOT maintenance crews and engineers when a hole appeared in the deck June 18.

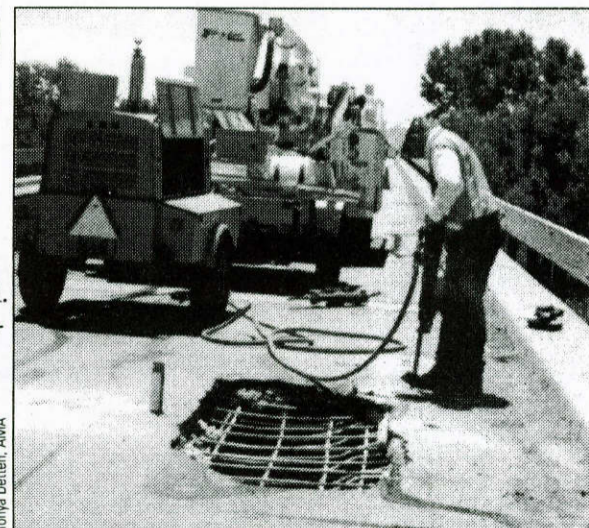
"Holes in bridge decks are not that unusual," said Martin Rodin,

the district's director of Transportation Planning and Development. "It is the size of the hole that made this event unusual. The 3-foot-by-10-foot hole occurred overnight, too. I drove over the bridge the day before the hole appeared and noticed nothing unusual. The next morning, the hole was reported. It was repaired within a week."

Amarillo District Bridge Inventory, Inspection and Appraisal Program (BRINSAP) coordinator James Ford said his job can be routine, and it's a big responsibility, too.

"We look at every inch of a bridge," said Ford. "We had been watching the 'braided' ramp bridges for years."

Ford said he and his partner, Gene Schrauner, visually inspect the deck, superstructure, substructure, alignment, approaches and even the channel under the bridge. If they suspect a problem, they request more tests, and in extreme cases, close the bridge.★



A 3-foot-by-10-foot hole appeared in an Amarillo District bridge deck overnight. It was repaired within a week.



## Sulphur Springs office builds community spirit



Volunteers from the Paris District's Sulphur Springs Area Office helped bolster a sense of community when they pitched in to build a wooden playscape at a local park.

**Audrey Andrews**  
Paris District

Several Paris District employees recently demonstrated that TxDOT can build more than roads and bridges. And the children of Sulphur Springs couldn't be happier.

Ten Sulphur Springs area employees — David Blouin, Prospero Donan, Eric Fisher, Jesse Fleming, John Noe, Brian Orr, Rafael Riojas, Kim Shipp, Robert "Bud" Slider and Tim Taylor — volunteered to build a wooden playground structure in Sulphur Springs City Park.

The employees began work on a 150-foot-by-150-foot Kid's Kingdom playground April 7, and completed the project within six days. The community donated materials, money, equipment and additional labor.

"The scene was similar to an old-fashioned barn-raising at times with more than 100 people on site contributing their skills to the various tasks. One of the reasons it's been so great working for TxDOT is the sense of family and community that extends beyond the workplace and working hours," said Fleming, engineering assistant in the Sulphur Springs Area Office. "We are customer-driven because we are a part of the community we serve."

Although rain and cold weather threatened to dampen the work, the attitudes of the crews remained enthusiastic and upbeat.

"We have a lot of kids that come into town from surrounding school districts and communities to have outings at the park," Fleming said. "This project will not only benefit the children of Sulphur Springs now, but thousands of children for years to come."★

## Road leads Jabbour to American citizenship

**Marc Shepherd**  
Beaumont District

Charles Jabbour has lived a life most would choose not to. He's also enjoying a privilege many take for granted. The Beaumont District information system administrator joins millions of others who claim the title of U.S. citizen. On May 2, in a formal ceremony before Federal Judge Joe Fisher in Beaumont, Jabbour took the oath that officially made him an American. But the road to becoming a citizen wasn't easy.

Life for him began in Beirut, in the midst of a civil war that took its toll on hundreds of thousands of people.

"I remember running from shelter to shelter trying to dodge the bombs," said Jabbour.

What was once a great resort city on the Mediterranean soon became a ghost town. Large luxury hotels soon became heaps of smoldering ruin. There wasn't a day that would go by without bombs and artillery shells pounding Beirut. Back in the states, televisions broadcast pictures of families searching for loved ones in the rubble.

The country's civil war took a toll on Jabbour and his family. Fortunately, his family escaped physical harm. "My home was hit three times. The schools were closed half of the time. It was pretty scary," said Jabbour.

In a civil war, everybody is a combatant. Jabbour's turn came when he was 15 years old.

"I was drafted into the army on weekends and the summer. I didn't have to go to the front lines because I was the only male in the family," he said.

So Jabbour served in noncombat-related positions. "It was basically keeping an umbrella over my head," he said.

In 1983, he'd had enough. "Everything (in Lebanon) seemed like a dead end. I decided enough was enough and left the country," Jabbour said.

Attending the University of Houston, Jabbour received his degree in computer science. He later earned a master's degree in computer science from Lamar University. That took him to a teaching position at Kelly High School, where he taught physics, chemistry and computer science. After marrying his wife, Alison, and a brief stint in Louisiana, Jabbour joined TxDOT in 1995.

Today, life in the United States is different than Lebanon — and much more peaceful.

"You have more opportunities and more freedom to move about. The freedom to travel and to visit my family — this time as

a citizen," he said.

Home is still a long way away. With all of his family still in Lebanon, Jabbour often thinks of them. "It's my birthplace, where all my childhood memories are from scouting, school and friends," Jabbour said.

Those memories have left an impact on Jabbour. They've helped shape him into the person he is.

"As you grow up seeing people suffering and buildings demolished, it made me later in life stronger and able to take anything that comes," he said. Now, comes a brighter future for him, his wife and his two young daughters. It's a future he can look to with hope.★

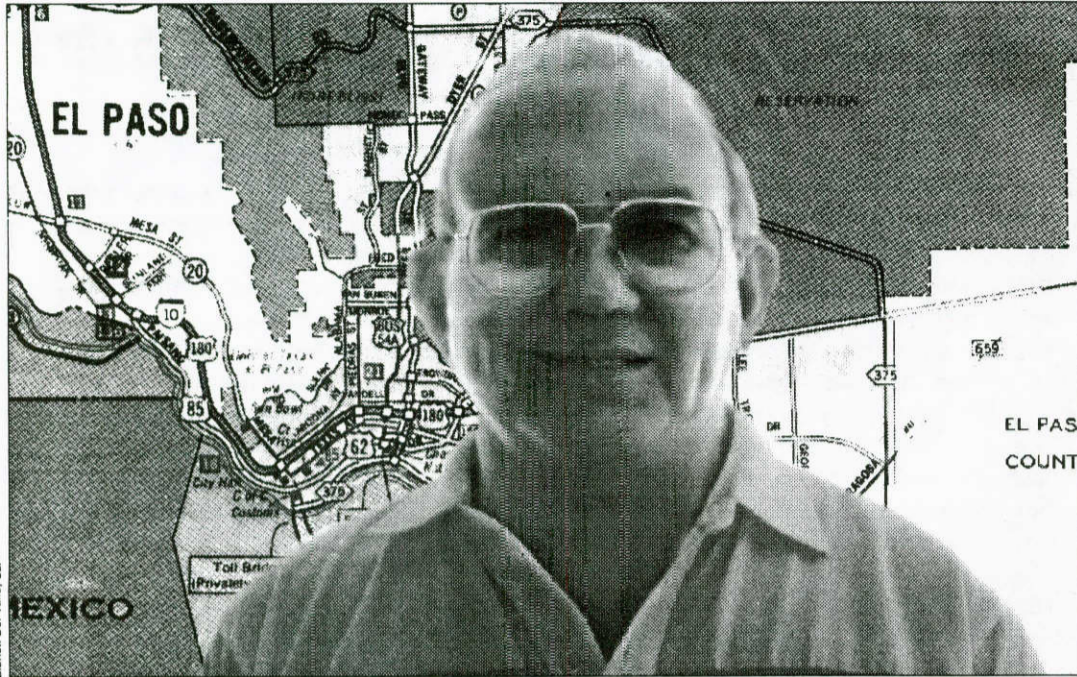


Marc Shepherd, BMT

Beaumont District Information System Administrator Charles Jabbour grew up in Lebanon. He left the country and its civil war and came to the United States, where he went to college, got married and joined the department. He became a U.S. citizen in May.



# El Paso employees drive while author rides shotgun



El Paso Project Engineer Jim McDonald showed author Mike Bryan around Interstate 10. Bryan repaid the favor by including McDonald in his book, "Uneasy Rider."

**Linda Ribble**  
Public Information Office

When author Mike Bryan's book, "Uneasy Rider," appeared on bookstore shelves this spring, two TxDOT employees of the El Paso District discovered they were among the book's depiction of life along Interstate 10.

Project Engineer James (Jim) McDonald and Chief Inspector Rogelio "Rocky" Rodriguez never expected to be featured in the book, but both remember the author well.

Before meeting Bryan, neither McDonald nor Rodriguez had ever guided a tour for a private citizen. Giving guided tours is not a frequent part of their jobs, but both men have given them. Usually, a guided tour is of a proposed construction site, given to contractors who intend to bid on work at the site. Tours are also given to media personnel.

But on Texas Independence Day, March 2, 1994, McDonald walked into the East Area Office to find Bryan waiting, and he was left wondering how he had been picked to be Bryan's tour guide.

"He said he was there to accompany me on my daily tour," McDonald said. "I just said, 'OK,' and gave him a hard hat. It wasn't until later that I found out the district's public information officer had put him in touch with us."

According to Bryan's explanation on page 171 of his book, McDonald and his crew, including Rodriguez, were selected after a nationwide search for a representative highway department team along Interstates.

McDonald was responsible for I-10 east of El Paso to the Brewster County line. He remembers Bryan as an easygoing man, as he showed the author I-10, along with some Farm-to-Market roads in the area.

The stretch of I-10 Bryan toured included more than six miles of 25-year-old highway, east of El Paso and west of Sierra Blanca, being repaved with steel-reinforced concrete. On page 170, the author described the old asphalt-paved section of highway, between mile markers 31 and 37,

as having "done the public treasury proud."

McDonald spent two four-hour visits with the author, and Rodriguez toured with Bryan during one of the four-hour visits. The visits were about a year apart.

Bryan had worked in highway construction, and the questions he asked about El Paso and the construction project seemed to have a purpose. Although Bryan identified himself as a writer to McDonald and Rodriguez, he took no notes.

"I never saw him take notes or use a recorder. He must have a good memory. The discussion was conversational, low-keyed - like shooting the breeze with someone. He asked questions about the weather, the population, the border town of Juárez and how much traffic it generated, and other construction-related topics," McDonald said.

Similarly, Rodriguez described the writer as intelligent, observant, inquisitive, mild-mannered and laid-back.

"He picked up everything around him, asking questions about the number of personnel needed, and the construction and the laying process of concrete pavement," Rodriguez said.

"He wanted to know about life on the border, the linguistics and the customs. He asked about the form of language being spoken. I explained to him that it was Spanglish, a mix of Spanish and English spoken by the locals of the area.

"I thought it was strange. Here he was from New York, but he wasn't in a hurry." It turned out Bryan is actually from Texas, Rodriguez said.

The focus of his book, Bryan wrote, is on the role Interstates play in American culture today. The book is a collection of conversations with people and events Bryan encountered as he traveled along the Interstates.

"I say we see a great deal more on and near the Interstates: America as it is and as it is becoming: the real thing, like it or not. The back-road journeys purporting to discover the real America are actually running away from the carnivorous beast,"

Bryan wrote.

Bryan had an interesting slant to his journey, McDonald said, and offered his opinion about the role Interstates play in the American culture.

"We are a people that expect roadways in good order and tend to take these for granted. Movement by car has been bred into us, and this freedom of movement is very important. The characters the Interstate attracts are interesting people trying to make a living," McDonald said.

Even though McDonald was disappointed that Bryan's depiction of his crew and their work didn't go far enough to dispel negative perceptions the public sometimes has of department employees, he said Bryan gave a good description of the work being completed.

"I would have liked more emphasis on the dedication and professionalism of highway workers. We sacrifice for our jobs," McDonald said.

Bryan described the paving process, including information about a profilograph or bump meter, hot-mix asphaltic concrete, microsurfacing, fine aggregates, problems of asphalt versus concrete, traffic control and even soil containment measures.

When asked what he thought of "Uneasy Rider," Rodriguez said it held his interest and that Bryan has his own interpretations and philosophies about various aspects of life along the Interstate.

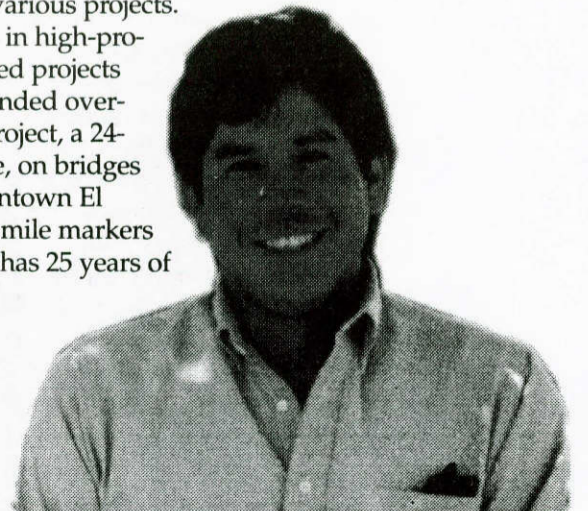
"But he lets the reader draw his or her own conclusions," Rodriguez said.

Both employees enjoyed giving a private citizen a tour and wouldn't mind doing it again, although they haven't been asked to do so.

Seeing construction projects from the public's eye made an impact on Rodriguez, a TxDOT employee of nine years in the East Area Office. "They really don't know what we're doing, that we must build the substructure first and compact the ground before we can put anything on it," he said. "They just want to know about the length of time, how long is the road going to be torn up, and how are they going to be inconvenienced. But when you explain what we have to do, they understand why it takes so long."

McDonald now works in El Paso's West Area Office, supervising construction inspection of various projects.

He specializes in high-profile, complicated projects such as the bonded overlay concrete project, a 24-hour work site, on bridges of I-10 in downtown El Paso between mile markers 19 and 20. He has 25 years of service with TxDOT.★



El Paso Chief Inspector Rogelio "Rocky" Rodriguez hosted a tour around Interstate 10 for author Mike Bryan.



# 1980s characterized by Goode times

## Despite a few setbacks, decade saw dramatic projects, unique finds

As his last assignment, Travel and Information Division staffer Hilton Hagan wrote a history of the department. In celebration of the department's 80th anniversary this year, Transportation News is running excerpts from that work. This is the sixth chapter.

### Hilton Hagan

Travel and Information Division

Someday, Mark Goode promised himself, he is going to drive to Houston on old U.S. 75, just to see what it's like now. His first assignment, after joining the department in 1947, you see, was working on a section of that highway in south Dallas County. It was a few years before the advent of the Interstate system and Goode's project predated Interstate 45, which is how most people drive between Dallas and Houston now. To a great extent, Goode's career paralleled the development of the Interstate system. In fact, later, Goode worked on I-45 in the same area of that first job.

When Luther DeBerry retired, he and the commission left things in pretty good shape for Goode when he took over as engineer-director on July 1, 1980.

"They had gone out and convinced the people and the governor and the Legislature that there was a serious financial problem in the highway program. By the time I came in, we were ready to follow through and put the new financing to work," Goode said.

It was fitting. Goode and DeBerry had worked closely for 20 years. DeBerry appointed Goode his assistant district engineer in Dallas in 1960. Later, Goode served as district engineer in Lufkin, a post DeBerry had held a few years before. When DeBerry took over from Dingwall in 1973, he called Mark Goode to Austin to be one of his two top assistants. Goode was in charge of operations and Marcus Yancey was in charge of administration.

In 1980, there was lots of work under way on Texas highways. The biggest push, of course, was on the Interstate system and the department was getting around to taming some of the more notorious routes. I-45 between Dallas and Houston was one of them, and I-35 between the Metroplex and San Antonio was another. The gaps were closing and more important jobs were going under contract.

Some of the old bottlenecks were being eliminated or bypassed. One of these was Lancaster Hill, or, as some people called it, Sheffield Hill. Really, it was the same hill, and an experience

to drive no matter which name you called it.

Sheffield/Lancaster Hill is on U.S. 290 in Crockett County, just before the highway crosses the Pecos if you are headed west. The old highway takes a sudden drop from what seems like the edge of a mountain. It is a steep drop that caused most drivers to downshift automatically and forget any idea of traveling at highway speed. Drivers nervously checked their rearview mirrors — when they could spare a glance from the road — worried that someone's brakes, or theirs, would fail.

On the uphill grade, trucks and RVs strained to make the grade while smaller vehicles more or less patiently tagged along behind.

Potential Texas visitors used to write to the Travel and Information Division asking if they would still have to traverse Sheffield/Lancaster Hill. "If I do," one wrote, "I'm not coming through Texas!"

You can still travel up or down the hill if you want, but in the early 1980s, as part of I-10 construction, the main route through the area shifted most of the through traffic to a new road a few miles north of old 290. Thanks to a judicious route selection and a lot of dynamite, I-10 has a maximum grade of 3-1/2 percent, compared to 6 percent on the old hill.

To make it that way, one of the cuts is 151 feet deep, 2,600 feet long and has a maximum width of 280 feet. About 1.25 million cubic feet of dirt and rock were removed and used for fill on other parts of the project.

Resident Engineer Bill Dixon cautioned the contractor about the blasting. There were several producing oil wells nearby, plus oil storage tank batteries. A little carelessness could have sent waves of crude spilling out. It is a tribute to this environmental con-

cern and to the skill of the powder men that the whole project was completed without spilling a drop.

While not typical of much of the construction, it does dramatize what highway engineers throughout the nation say and feel about the construction of the Interstate.

"I feel very fortunate to have had a part in it," Goode said. DeBerry said it was the greatest public works effort in history. Most of the engineers of their generation will automatically put their contributions to the Interstate high in their career highlights.

Goode, along with Commission Chairman Bob Dedman, was able to cut a ribbon by October 1981 on the last section of I-37 between San Antonio and Corpus Christi. The remaining gaps in the system at that time amounted to less than a dozen.

There were some other dramatic jobs in the early 1980s. Clearwater Constructors, the contractor for Austin's landmark bridge on Loop 360 over Lake Austin, chose a Korean fabricator for the steel components.

But the first of the lovely steel arches failed the department's high quality standards. Several other attempts were vetoed, and only after the Korean company reorganized its management, changed quality control procedures and requalified all its welders did the work meet specs. Nine Texans, headed by Kenneth Sandberg of the Materials and Tests Division, eventually served as inspectors and impromptu welding instructors at the Korean plant. The graceful bridge in its dramatic setting is a tribute to them, the contractor and, yes, the fabricators.

In 1982, Goode presided over a unique event in the history of the department. A district was disbanded. "They had run out of significant construction work and the full district office was no longer needed," Goode said.

Gone was District 22, headquartered in Del Rio and the center for highway activity in eight southwest Texas counties. Actually, a lot of the old district organization remained in other forms. The residency in Del Rio was kept open, and the maintenance forces stayed put. Four of the counties, Val Verde, Edwards, Real and Kinney, with the local highway department establishments, were transferred into the San Angelo District. The rest, Uvalde, Maverick, Zavala and Dimmit, went to San Antonio.



Throughout the past 80 years, teamwork has been the common factor in the department's success. Dedicated employees such as this group from Design, who work well together and with the public, represent TxDOT well.



"It didn't seem to make sense to haul disabled equipment all the way to San Angelo for major repairs," Goode said, "so we left a large shop operation in Del Rio. The same is true for the warehouse. We left a sub-warehouse there, too."

Goode recalls that many of the 30 employees who were displaced, the district administrative staff mostly, were able to find jobs elsewhere. Some went to East Texas with District Engineer Bobby Evans, who took over the Tyler District when W. H. Potter retired. Others took jobs in other locations. "I understand that there were some people who were unhappy," Goode said. "But we did all we could to place them in other jobs in the department." The move had been carefully explained to the area legislators and to local business leaders, "and they seemed to understand the problem," Goode said. For the most part, it was vocal civic boosters who raised a ruckus about the move.

At the same time as the Del Rio District was closing, March 1, 1982, two rural counties, Austin and Matagorda, were transferred out of the largely urban Houston District into the Yoakum District, with their maintenance sections and resident engineer offices intact.

Internally, the department began to be concerned about its aging managers. Most of the people in the top jobs were getting up into their 50s and 60s. The department put new emphasis on training. Under the urging of the governor's office, the Management Development Center was opened in March 1981 with employees from 27 state agencies participating in first-line managers and manager-of-managers training. In August 1981, an administrative order was issued expanding the department's program. In June 1983, the department began its own management training program because there weren't enough slots available in the governor's program. Also, at the urging of Deputy Director Marc Yancey, it began sending young engineers, not the balding old-timers, out to colleges and universities to recruit, working on the theory that folks of same age or near, can relate better.

In the fall of 1982, a federal judge dismissed charges by the Justice Department that the department was discriminatory in its employment practices. The charges had been brought earlier against several state agencies, including the department. Most of them settled quickly with the Justice Department, in effect putting the federal government in charge of personnel matters in those agencies.

But the highway department didn't settle. Many who thought they had a beef with the department over employment practices filed charges. "After our investigation, we determined that only three had even dubious validity," Goode said. Given that information, the department told the Justice Department, in effect, "we'll meet you at the courthouse."

One thing, though, the courthouse was at Pecos, a long way from Austin, and the headquarters of most of the potential witnesses.

District engineers and division heads, plus the administration and numerous other

managers in the department were subpoenaed.

That put a tremendous logistical burden on the Equipment and Procurement Division, the Odessa District and the highway establishment in Pecos, not to mention the town itself. An informal airlift was organized using department pilots to shuttle people and the daily ration of paperwork between Austin and two dozen other Texas cities to Pecos. The phones at the residency and maintenance offices stayed hot all day

long as the out-of-town visitors burdened the TexAn telephone system, checking on things back home. To provide for instant information access during the trial, the Automation Division installed a special computer terminal in the residency.

The trial lasted four days and saw more than 200 exhibits, weighing more than 500 pounds, introduced. In the end, a lot of the folks called to testify didn't. Some who waited out the whole trial had made only brief appearances when Federal Judge Lucius Bunton decided he had heard enough and closed down the testimony.

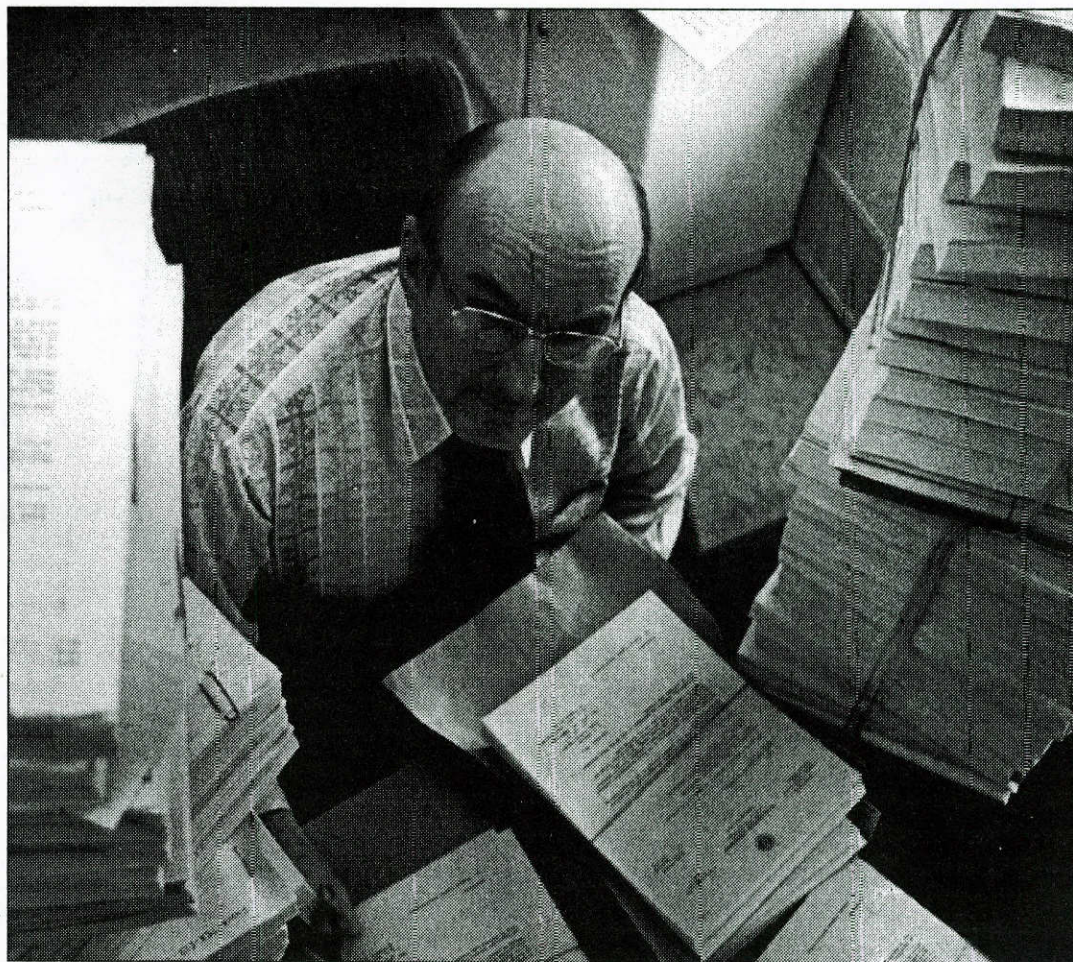
Bunton dismissed all charges against the department, ruling at the same time that the Justice Department should reimburse the state for all its costs.

"We didn't feel we were guilty," said Watson Arnold, head of the highway division of the Attorney General's Office, who led the defense. "We responded ... that we investigated discrimination charges more diligently and speedily than did the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission."

Incidentally, the special computer terminal installed in the residency at Pecos was left there. Later, it came in handy when the residency helped prepare plans for the Houston District. Using the computer network to spread the work load in urban districts

to less busy highway designers elsewhere was just one of the steps that were being taken in the early 1980s to spread the work loads of urban areas. Thanks to automation, many sets of plans were developed in West Texas and other locations by engineers and technicians without them actually setting foot on the project site.

Starting in 1982, regional computer centers were set up in Odessa, Fort Worth, Dallas, Austin, San Antonio and Houston. They provided better district and residency service for engineering and administrative



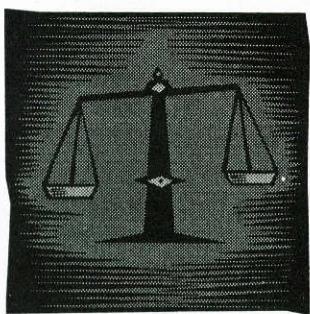
After the layoffs of the 1970s, department employees were introduced to the philosophy of doing more with less. Despite the voluminous amount of work the department took on, transportation in Texas flourished.

functions.

And a lot of computer support was needed, too. Texas was the bright spot in the highway contracting picture. By late 1982, a third of the prequalified bidders listed with the Construction Division were from out of state, twice as big a percentage as 10 years before. "If you are going to play ball," a Connecticut contractor remarked, "you have to go where there's a game." Some of the players got caught cheating. The commission barred 24 firms from bidding on highway jobs in Texas for bid-rigging in 1982.

More gaps in the Interstate were closing. In October 1982, the last detour on I-35 in Texas disappeared with the opening of 16 miles of freeway north of Laredo. But the surge of activity was not confined to the Interstate. The Loop 360 bridge in Austin opened, an instant landmark for the city. San Antonio was gearing up to start rebuilding the downtown freeway loop using "winged tee" structures. The enormous Fratt interchange on the city's northeast side was close to completion.

Meanwhile, another activity of the department got some worldwide attention. In December 1982, Mike Davis of the Archaeology Section was exploring the bottom of an excavation in the right of way of a proposed expansion of FM 1431 near Cedar Park and Leander, north of Austin. His trowel cut through some hard material, which he immediately knew was bone, later identified as tips of two fingers. Thus, the highway department made the archaeological find of the decade, the 9,000-year-old skeleton of a woman, later to be dubbed by the press as the "Leanderthal Lady." (Ironically, the site is not far from another discovery made by the department. In the mid-1960s, a highway department drilling crew was coring in preparation to build an overpass on I-35, just south of Georgetown. Suddenly, the drilling tools dropped out of sight down the hole. They had drilled through the





## Goode

Continued from page 9

roof of a previously unknown cavern. Adjoining landowners now have developed it as Inner Space Caverns.)

In the 1982 dig, archaeologists, under Dr. Wayne Young, already had unearthed more than 200 dart points of the Plainview type, among the oldest known artifacts on the continent. The darts indicated the area had been inhabited continuously for about 7,000 years.

Then the woman, a young adult, about 5 feet 3 inches tall, was discovered. She had been buried with some ritual because a shallow grave had been dug and ornaments, a grinding stone and other items were buried with her.

Removal of the skeleton became a media event, and the department's chief archaeologist, Dr. Frank Weir, did little but talk to the media for the next six days. Plans to display the remains in the Capitol rotunda were scrapped after State Sen. Tati Santiesteban of El Paso objected. His district included the Native Americans of the Tigua tribe who objected to the display of remains of what might have been one of their antecedents.

In other matters, things were going better with the Legislature. By 1984, the situation had changed and House Bill 3 no longer was the answer to the department's chronic financing woes. The commission was a dynamic trio, consisting of Chairman Bob Lanier, newly appointed by Gov. Mark White, and Bob Dedman and John Butler, who had been appointed by Bill Clements in his first term.

Like their predecessors, they hit the chicken-and-green-pea circuit, speaking to civic clubs, calling on editorial boards of news media, talking one-to-one with legislators and local officials across the state. When the smoke cleared, the Legislature, in a special session in the summer of 1984, passed the first increase in the gasoline tax in 13 years.

Gov. White had promised legislators quick results. Goode immediately sent out

the word to the districts to get cracking and get the plans into Austin. The goal was to put \$2 billion under contract by the end of 1985. By December, contracts for highway construction were being let at a \$200-million-a-month clip.

The Legislature also mandated a management audit and the firm of Price Waterhouse was engaged to make it. By 1985, the company had made its study and released its report. The administration named a task force to implement the findings. Predictably enough, the study resulted in two other studies: A study of the department field organization and the functional review study of Austin divisions. Both studies used department people drawn from throughout the state. The field study was completed relatively early, and the functional review continued until 1991. Many of the recommendations made by the three reviews have changed ways of doing things in the department.

In 1985, Bob Dedman's term on the commission was up. The remaining Bill Clements appointee, John Butler, was a Houstonian like Lanier. Although there is no statutory requirement for geographical balance on the commission, strong tradition has it that there should be a reasonable representation of all areas. The Legislature was in session, and a plan to increase the commission to six members cropped up.

The governor, who would have four appointments to make instead of just one, naturally was favorable, and it looked like an expanded commission might become reality. Before any action was taken, however, Butler stepped aside to let White appoint his successor, too.

That allowed White to appoint Ray Stoker Jr., unquestionably a West Texan (from



A \$30-million-a-year cleanup bill necessitated the "Don't Mess with Texas" campaign in 1986.

Courtesy TRV

Odessa), to a full term and replaced Dallasite Dedman with another Big D resident, Tom Dunning, to fill the remaining two years of Butler's term. Thus, the geographically diversity of the commission was maintained and the bullet of an enlarged commission was dodged, to the relief of many connected to the highway program.

Lanier later paid tribute to Butler and Dedman:

"It has been a bipartisan commission. You could not ask for two better public servants. I don't think we had a dissenting vote. I don't think we had a cross word. I would occasionally rebuke them for being Republicans, but that was well-deserved."

On the highways, the dirt was flying. By January 1986, there were 8,224 miles of highways under construction in Texas, thanks to the nickel-a-gallon gasoline tax increase and significant increases in registration fees. The number of projects went from 559 in 1983 to more than 1,000 in 1986. In the first eight months of 1986, contract volume passed up the entire year of 1985.

About that time, Texans also were being introduced to a new slogan aimed at the state's \$30-million-a-year litter cleanup bill: "Don't Mess with Texas." The commission had gotten fired up about the problem and long-time homegrown efforts done in-house

just didn't seem to be getting a lot of results. So, the commission earmarked \$2 million a year for a meaningful antilitter attack.

The department went out to private industry seeking an ad agency to create and manage the campaign.

After a search and an elimination process, GSD&M got the first year's contract. They came up with the "Don't Mess

with Texas" slogan. A lot of people didn't like it. Too aggressive, they said. Lots of garden club-type folks felt they didn't need to be reminded of the need to keep the highways clean in such strong terms.

"Exactly," was GSD&M's response. "You don't litter anyway." After some market research, the agency concluded that the chief group doing the littering were young males in their late teens and early 20s — the "bubbas" of the world. The slogan did speak to them.

Apparently they were correct because within a year, a scientific litter survey by an outside consultant was able to report that, on control sections he had identified, litter was down a whopping 29 percent.

Meanwhile, "Don't Mess with Texas" was well on its way to become part of Texana, a phrase that will live a long time in Texas' folklore.

About the same time, a truly homegrown litter abatement effort was taking off in the state. The Adopt-a-Highway program was the brainchild of Billy Black, public affairs officer in the Tyler District. Under the program, organizations adopt a section of highway, usually a two-mile stretch.

The idea is to actively involve the public while assisting the department in keeping the roadsides free of litter. The Tyler Civitan Club was the first organization to participate in the program. They adopted a two-mile section of U.S. 69 north of Tyler. There were some people within the department who did not think it was a good idea. A few old-line maintenance people grumbled about the risk of having "civilians" out there on foot along the highway, always a potentially dangerous environment. But things like providing safety vests and a program to train the volunteers in roadside safety overcame a lot of the objections — that and the fact that public acceptance was enthusiastic beyond anyone's wildest dreams. It was almost



Courtesy TRV

Travel conditions improved immensely for Texans — such as Don and Judy Veach, above — in the 1980s as gaps in the Interstate system closed.



instantly successful. Adopt-a-Highway not only has been embraced by Texans, more than half the other states have copied the program for their own use.

The Commission was enthusiastic. Bob Lanier and his wife, Elyse, are enthusiastic beautifiers. Their own gardens at home in Houston are breathtaking. They also adopted a small square in the city, had it landscaped and beautified, and foot the bill for its upkeep.

They also provided plants, including 155 red and white rosebushes, to beautify the grounds around the Greer Building in Austin. In 1990, they threw open their own gardens to host the annual highway beautification awards begun 20 years ago by Lady Bird Johnson.

The Laniers' impact on the department was significant and visible in many other ways. People who worked with him admit he could be a difficult man to work for. But Lanier infused the department with some of his own great personal energy. He rattled a lot of cages and kept things buzzing in his four-and-a-half years on the commission. Goode praise him as a tremendous asset in dealing with the Legislature and state officials. "He'd make a good governor," Goode said.

His service on the commission changed

Lanier, too. The transportation bug bit him hard, and he went on to chair the board of METRO in Houston and worked on the "bullet train" scheme, to provide high-speed rail services between Dallas, Fort Worth, San Antonio and Houston.

Early in 1986, Goode told the commission he was going to retire when he turned 65

**By January 1986, there were 8,224 miles of highways under construction in Texas.**

later that year. Goode could look back at his tenure in the top job with pride. He had presided on the biggest and fastest growth period in terms of work under way in the history of the department. The department basically doubled its work load in about two years with substantially the same number of employees.

In his farewell column in *Transportation News*, Goode cited four achievements he was proud of:

The increase in state and federal funding and the setting of long-term goals for the department; development of employee training programs; a positive recruiting program; and development of automation techniques which brought the department

national and worldwide prominence.

Goode said that during his time in the top job, Houston and the department started making progress in solving some of the city's horrendous traffic problems. The local people worked closely with the department and others to give the area some relief. The effort there is cooperative and well-coordinated, Goode said. He said now things are better in Houston and he is proud of having a hand in that.

In his own hometown, Dallas, it is a somewhat different story, he feels. Houston had a more unified vision of what was needed, he said. Dallas has so many different entities to deal with that it's hard to get consensus and the local support needed. Besides Dallas, there are a half-dozen other cities of over 100,000 population and many smaller ones in the county. In addition, there is DART, the area transit authority.

Lanier talked over Goode's impending departure with the other commissioners and, in a departure from previous times, they decided to bring a successor on board early. In May it designated Raymond Emil Stotzer Jr. as the next engineer-director.★

## After ice, rain and wind, Stoker finally sets sail

**Norm Wigington**  
Houston District

**O**n June 6, bright gold letters blazed on the green hull of the Ray Stoker Jr. as TxDOT's newest ferry joined Galveston's fleet at Bolivar Roads, which was hidden by a hazy screen of rain in the distance. Closer at hand, water spouts danced nervously close to the shrimp boats in the bay as honored guests, excited by the recognition given to a trusted and genuine friend, gathered under eaves, umbrellas and ship-board overhangs to determine whether or not the rain would disrupt the scheduled ceremony.

Originally scheduled for Jan. 13, then canceled after an ice storm swept over Texas, some participants wondered aloud if the Stoker's bad luck would continue. But at 11 a.m., the appointed time for the ceremony, it was obvious that only a small delay to wring the water out of the mops was needed for the ceremony to begin on a brilliant Friday morning.

A friend of the department, the honored guest was gracious to the members of the staff that had gathered and humble in his appreciation of his own efforts. With a hefty swing of the champagne bottle, former Transportation Commission Chairman Ray Stoker Jr. joined other illustrious former commissioners in dedicating a ship of the departmental fleet.

"What a waste of champagne," Stoker said as he readied his aim. After banging the champagne bottle several times against the steel post, the bottle finally broke, dousing both Stokers: the vessel and the man.

"If I had not worked with the department," he said, "I would never have met half of the people gathered here today. I truly feel that TxDOT is the best state agency in Texas and it is with a real sense of gratitude that I dedicate the Ray Stoker Jr."

State Rep. Patricia Gray of Galveston served as master of ceremonies for the festive occasion. With the posting of the colors by the U.S. Coast Guard Color Guard and the singing of the national anthem by the duet of Ruth Finkelstein and Daniel Traber, the solemnity of the occasion was tempered by the humanity of the man celebrated. Stoker served as the chairman of the commission during a key transitional phase from the old Highway Commission to the new Transportation Commission, when the department underwent a critical sunset review to emerge a stronger and larger state agency. In his remarks at the ceremony, current Transportation Commission Chairman David M. Laney recognized the challenges confronted by Stoker during his tenure as chairman.



Former Transportation Commission Chairman Ray Stoker Jr. addresses the crowd aboard the Ray Stoker Jr., the newest addition to the department's Galveston ferry fleet. The ferry has a capacity of 500 passengers and 70 automobiles.

In addition, former commissioner and now mayor of Houston, Robert C. Lanier, TxDOT Executive Director Bill Burnett and Houston District Engineer Gary K. Trietsch attended the ceremony. Following the dedication a luncheon was served at The Fisherman's Wharf Restaurant on nearby Pier 22, near the Elissa and the recently opened Hurricane Museum.

The Ray Stoker Jr. is very similar to the Robert C. Lanier and the Dewitt C. Greer, members of this generation of ferry vessels with a capacity of 500 passengers and 70 automobiles. The Stoker is 265 feet long and 66 feet wide. Its draft is only 11 feet, shallow enough to maneuver through the waters of Bolivar Peninsula and Galveston Harbor. The Stoker cost \$8,285,176 and is painted green with gold trim as a reminder of his alma mater, Baylor University.

The state ferry system is a part of Texas 87 and crosses Bolivar Roads, the mouth of Galveston Bay. The crossing from Galveston to the Bolivar Peninsula takes 15 minutes and is a distance of 2.7 miles. Visitors to the island are encouraged to park their vehicles in the lot adjacent to the ferry landing and cross over as walk-on passengers.

The Stoker has been in service since January. The ferry was designed by Schuller and Allan and built by Moss Point Marine Inc. in Escatawpa, Miss. Powered by twin German cycloidal propulsors, the Stoker will replace older vessels. A fourth ferry will be awarded in July 1997 and will be delivered in 1999.★



## Employees boost SECC donations

Both TxDOT employees and charitable organizations were winners in the 1996 State Employees Charitable Campaign (SECC), as contributions from department employees amounted to \$54,783 - more than double 1995 contributions.

The average gift from TxDOT employees in 1996 was \$52.93, an increase from the 1995 average of \$33.27. The department's employee donation rate per capita increased from \$2.06 per person in 1995 to \$3.77 per person in 1996, while the employee participation rate increased from 6 percent in 1995 to 7.1 percent in 1996.

Abilene - Norton County reported a 55.6 percent employee participation, with a 393 percent increase in the dollar amount donated. The highest employee participation rate occurred in Amarillo - Canyon, 85 percent, more than double the rate of 38 percent in

1995. With an increase in the amount of total pledges from \$30 in 1995 to \$280 in 1996, Wichita Falls had the largest percentage increase in dollar amount of contributions at 833 percent.

Austin employees contributed the largest amount, \$13,242.04, an increase of 166 percent from 1995. San Antonio employees contributed the second largest amount, \$7,917.96.

SECC is the only statutorily authorized workplace campaign among Texas state employees. Since it began three years ago, contributions have increased from \$2,027,761 in 1994 to \$3,393,664 in 1996.

The 1997 SECC runs Sept. 1-Oct. 31. An employee can contribute via payroll deduction, cash, check or bank draft. Donations are voluntary and tax-deductible.★



## Familiar squads claim softball championships

**Helen Havelka**  
Public Information Office



Kevin Stillman, TRV

**The ball takes a bad bounce and gets by Vic Cabello.**

The heat and the winners took top billing at this year's annual TxDOT softball tournament.

With temperatures soaring near the century mark, Wolf Pack/Lady Blue (WPLB) from East Ellis County captured its fifth consecutive co-rec title, and the Houston District's Texas Thunder recorded their fourth championship in men's play.

Ten co-rec and 15 men's teams took to the fields for TxDOT's 9th annual softball tournament in Austin, July 26-27.

WPLB capitalized on a strong second inning to defeat Materials and Test, 12-8, to earn the team an impressive fifth title.

MAT held a 4-2 lead after the first inning, but WPLB pushed across nine runs in the second to take a commanding lead. The

Austin division fought back with three runs in the fifth, but the rally ended on a spectacular diving

catch down the third-base line by WPLB shortstop David Montelongo.

Montelongo was named the most valuable player, and MAT's Brian Marak, son of MaryLu Fitzpatrick, received the Best Defensive Player trophy.

Bruce Jones, a contract inspector from the East Ellis County maintenance section, said this trophy is headed for Waxahachie. "Since this is the first year we combined the Ennis and Waxahachie sections, it (the trophy) will probably go to Waxahachie," he said.

TDM, largely represented by employees from TPP, claimed the consolation title with a 10-1 win over the Bulldozers.

In men's action, Texas Thunder needed only six innings to capture its fourth TxDOT title with a 14-2 win over the Austin District's Under Construction.

The Houston team scored in all but one inning,

while Under Construction mustered its two runs in the first inning in the final game of the double-elimination tournament.

Pitcher Rick Henderson, who works in the Houston District's right-of-way office, was named the most valuable player. Austin's Danny Spivey earned the best defensive player honor.

Both teams emerged undefeated after Saturday's play, and knew each other well after Sunday, meeting three times.

Texas Thunder won the first game, 14-11, and sent Under Construction to the loser's bracket. The Austin team earned another shot at the title with an 18-3 win over GSD's Rat Tones, who finished third in the tourney.

In the first championship game, Under Construction took advantage of a nine-run fourth inning to defeat Texas Thunder, 21-15, forcing the second and final game.

Denton Maintenance worked its way through the loser's bracket to claim the men's consolation trophy with a 16-13 win over Mat Testers.

Gino Wermes, tournament director for the Pleasant Valley Sportplex, said the participation was low, but he was pleased with the TxDOT tournament. "We had only one bad injury, a guy who was sliding into second hurt his ankle and was carried off," he said.

"A lot of ice packs were going out for bruises."

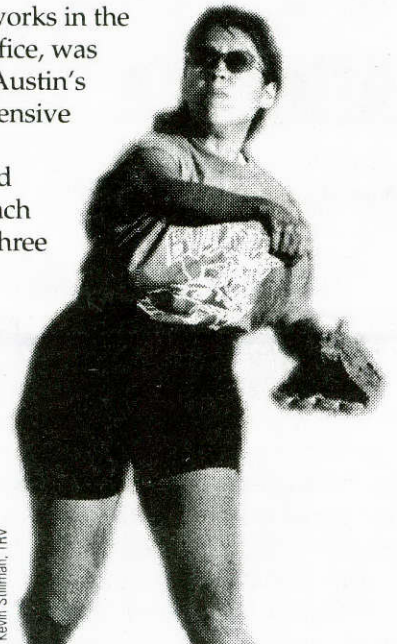
TxDOT tournament organizer, Zach Graham, felt the weekend went well, but is concerned about the future of this event. "All in all, I thought the tournament went well," said Graham, a program administrator for TPP.

"The way it is, it can't keep going. I don't think the Sportplex will continue to give us the entire complex with so few teams."

As many as 40 teams have participated in this statewide tourney, according to Graham. This year's 25-team turnout is the fewest in nine years.

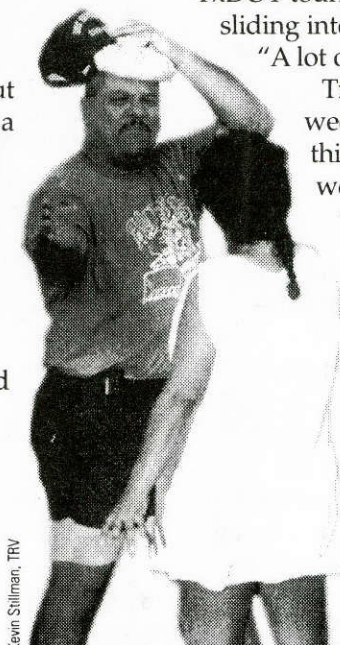
"If the number of teams continues to decline, we may have to cancel it or go to a one-day tourney," added Graham. "I, as well as many employees who participate, hope that it continues in its existing or some similar format."

Graham would make no predictions about next year's tournament, but there are two teams from East Ellis County and the Houston District that would probably like to defend their titles.★



Kevin Stillman, TRV

**Zita Hernandez shows a strong arm in her relay to homeplate.**



Kevin Stillman, TRV

**Robert Elizondo finds an ice pack to beat the July heat.**



# Donated trees first step in rebuilding for Barrys

**Meredith Whitten**  
Public Information Office

When Danny Aylor learned of the destruction the May 27 Central Texas tornadoes wrecked on a TxDOT employee's home, he knew the person he had to tell was Darla Dike.

As Dike's boss, Aylor knew Dike well enough to be certain that she would be spurred to action to help a fellow department employee.

He was right.

When Dike, office manager in the Tyler District, heard about the plight of Dee Barry, licensing supervisor in the Motor Vehicle Division, and her family, she wasted no time in devising a plan to help.

"I called Gail Anderson, who works with Dee, and asked what Dee wanted - not needed - because by this time they had received so much in the way of clothes and necessities," Dike said.

Anderson's suggestion was simple: Barry and her family missed the towering 100-year-old oak trees that had shaded their yard. The May 27 tornado not only leveled the Barry home, it left the once-wooded land barren as well.

"Dee was very blue about losing her beautiful trees. So, I called four or five nurseries around town and got 16 trees donated," Dike said.

Dike also got the use of a Ryder truck donated, and on June 19, she personally delivered the Spanish oak, silver-leaf maple and pear trees to the Barry family.

Barry joined TxDOT when the Texas Motor Vehicle Commission merged with the department six years ago. She and her 10-year-old son Parker were home the afternoon the deadly tornado hit. They sought shelter in the first-floor bathroom. Barry put Parker in the bathtub, covered him with towels, then laid on the floor next to him.

Not much of the first floor was left standing, with the exception of the bathroom walls. Barry's husband, Nathan, and her son Tanner were not at home during the storm.

Barry said the tornado hit so fast that there wasn't much time to react.

"It's not like the movie 'Twister' where there was time to run out to a storm cellar," she said. "It happened so fast that there's no way we could have made it. By the time I got into the bathroom, the roof was already off. The whole thing lasted about 30 seconds."

Next door, Barry's sister's home was leveled, accentuating the randomness of the tornado. "There's nothing left of my sister's house," Barry said. "Basically, we're alive because we knew what to do." Barry's sister and her family were not injured in the storm.

In addition to the trees, the Tyler District also sent the Barrys money raised by employees and a package of clothes, soap and "things you don't think about until you need them," Dike said. Barry's co-workers from the Motor Vehicle Division also spent their own vacation time the day after the tornado clearing trees and helping Barry salvage anything she could.

"Everybody at TxDOT has been great," Barry said.

She added that the trees are very appreciated. "It was definitely something different," she said. "You used to be able to drive by on the highway and you couldn't see our house, but now it's just a bald spot. It looks like a bomb site."

The Barrys currently live in a rental home, but they plan to rebuild on their lot in the Hazy Hills subdivision off Texas 71. They should move in around March 1998.

While Dike was delivering the trees, the Barrys took her to the lot where their house once stood.

As she stood in the ruins of the Barrys' home, Dike said, she admired the family's



The home of MVD Licensing Supervisor Dee Barry and her family was leveled by the fatal May 27 tornadoes that struck Central Texas. The twisters also uprooted the oak trees. Thanks to TxDOT employees, the Barrys already have new trees to plant.

attitude in the wake of the tragedy.

"I went out to the damaged house on Saturday, and it was pouring rain," she said. "But they were great. They were so thankful. It was the best thing I have ever done in my life."★

*On May 27, 1997, our lives changed forever, but thanks to God and TXDOT employees, we will be stronger and better human beings. Your kindness, generosity, hard work, thoughts and prayers have touched us greatly and restored our faith in humanity. Please keep us in your thoughts and prayers for the long road ahead, but be assured we will survive because of people like you.*

*Dee, Nathan, Parker and Tanner Barry*

# RTS trainers receive Star Search Award

**Mike Viesca**  
Vehicle Titles and Registration Division

They have spent long hours in the classroom and even longer hours on the road. Some of them have traveled 24,000 miles in the past two-and-a-half years. They have been to every corner of the state and seen towns most of us have never heard of. They are the Registration and Title System (RTS) trainers from the Vehicle Titles and Registration Division.

In July, the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators named them winners of the Star Search Award in the Team Category for Region II. They competed against teams from Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Tennessee, the Virgin Islands, Virginia and West Virginia.

"We are very proud of the RTS trainers," said VTR Division Director Jerry Dike. "They have been the department's ambassadors during RTS implementation and are largely responsible for user acceptance."

The \$40 million RTS was created by a 1986 study and provides an electronic link between VTR and its statutory agents, the county tax assessor-collectors. This point-of-sale system also does away with many of the repetitive steps that were once necessary to get a customer out the door.

The next step was to get the equipment to the 400 locations and

train the personnel.

"It became obvious that the most qualified people for the job were the employees within our own division," said VTR Director Jerry Dike. A logical choice for the task seemed to be the Field Auditors from VTR's 17 regional offices because they were highly knowledgeable about registration and titling processes and procedures. They also had experience working closely with county staff.

The RTS trainers each spent approximately 900 classroom hours learning RTS. Statewide RTS implementation began in the fall of 1994.

"No two experiences were ever the same because each county had its own personality," said Barbara Bates, lead RTS trainer, who has logged more than 24,000 miles on her assignment. "Some of the counties were big-time operations that processed hundreds of thousands of transactions annually and others barely registered 1,000 vehicles. There were also many counties that had never been automated before, including personnel who had never used a computer in their life. The trainers did a very good job of adjusting to the skill level in each office."

RTS implementation is almost complete; only seven of 254 Texas counties remain.

RTS is already the largest statewide automation project ever in Texas state government. It provides accounting of \$160 million each month and a record of \$1 billion inventory in license plate and registration indicia.★



## Service Awards

### Abilene District

**35 years**  
Billy R. Tarter  
**20 years**  
Alfonso B. Vasquez  
**10 years**  
Jerry N. Kincheloe  
Glover L. Miller III

### Amarillo District

**25 years**  
Salomon J. Aragon Jr.  
**15 years**  
Emmitt L. Henderson  
**5 years**  
Lih Jen Lan  
Vic W. Lincoln  
Juan M. Lozano  
Edwardo Olivarez

### Atlanta District

**20 years**  
Oliver W. Sparks  
**15 years**  
Charles L. Derrick

### Austin District

**20 years**  
James E. Wilhelm  
**15 years**  
Paul D. Meinke  
Joe Robert C. Nino  
**5 years**  
Shawn A. Campbell

### Beaumont District

**20 years**  
Oliver L. Crumedy  
**15 years**  
Lawrence R. Dirden  
Martin Flood

### Brownwood District

**20 years**  
Jimmy D. Field  
**15 years**  
Joseph W. Hudby  
**10 years**  
Jimmy D. Hendricks  
**5 years**  
Gary D. Underwood  
Merlin T. Harrington

### Bryan District

**10 years**  
Kenneth W. Wilson  
**5 years**  
Jason S. Parks

### Childress District

**5 years**  
George A. Cothier  
Ricky M. Diggs  
Maximillian Gerhardt  
Delbert R. Glover  
Rhonda G. Thane

### Corpus Christi District

**40 years**  
George F. Walleck  
**20 years**  
Joann S. Mireles  
Jorge A. Salinas  
**15 years**  
Braulio C. Carvajal Jr.  
**10 years**  
Curtis E. Crothers  
**5 years**  
Joel F. Longoria

### Dallas District

**35 years**  
Kenneth D. Powers  
**25 years**  
Mary M. Bush  
Jay R. Nelson  
**20 years**  
Terry L. Franks  
**15 years**  
Lawson B. Gambrell  
Gary L. Stegall  
**5 years**  
Jason W. Barton  
Christopher P. Briggs  
Albert E. Garrison  
Rudy Medellin

### El Paso District

**30 years**  
Miguel A. Fresquez  
Andres J. Pacheco  
**15 years**  
Hector R. Granado  
Joseph W. Hudby  
**10 years**  
Mary M. Brown

### Fort Worth District

**30 years**  
James N. Thackerson  
**20 years**  
Ray E. Caudle  
**15 years**  
Perry G. Burnett  
Jerry D. King  
**10 years**  
Robert P. Glidewell  
Clayton C. Hubbard

### 5 years

Alex G. Bell  
Jock A. Jones  
John M. Rooney

### Houston District

**35 years**  
John A. Bench  
**30 years**  
Reynaldo Villarreal  
**25 years**  
Joel S. Griner  
Gilbert Perez Jr.  
**20 years**  
Felix R. Bartholomew  
Howard W. Chopp  
Mary M. Wilson  
**15 years**  
Michael J. Christley  
Willie Goff  
Michael J. Montalbano Jr.  
Scott E. Scholz  
Charles L. Simmons  
Lynn E. Whittington  
**10 years**  
Marc-allen Coppock  
David E. Fink  
William L. Gasper  
Michael Hobbs  
Charles A. Neuman  
Lucio F. Ortiz  
**5 years**  
Tamala H. Austin  
Viera A. Spakovsky  
Leslie W. Thompson  
Junxiong Wang

### Laredo District

**20 years**  
Eduardo Garcia

### Lubbock District

**20 years**  
Tommy J. Barclay  
**15 years**  
Daniel D. Putman  
Hector Serna Jr.  
**5 years**  
Stanley B. Aldrich Jr.  
Carl Smiley

### Lufkin District

**25 years**  
Garland P. Brooks  
**15 years**  
Joyce G. Gray  
Robert W. Hutto  
**10 years**  
Robert A. Bailey

### Odessa District

**25 years**  
Adan R. Luna  
**15 years**  
Clyde D. Goodson  
**10 years**  
Gonzalo Guzman Jr.  
Juan M. Urias  
**5 years**  
Lennerd Byrd  
Joel S. Griner  
Javier Lozano

### Paris District

**30 years**  
Frank J. Gray  
**25 years**  
Jerry D. Palmer  
**10 years**  
Eva N. Flenniken  
**5 years**  
Billy M. Meador

### Pharr District

**30 years**  
Jose Borrego  
**25 years**  
Ramon S. Rodriguez Jr.  
**20 years**  
Agapito L. Cantu  
Alfredo Robledo  
**15 years**  
Sandra B. Tillman  
**10 years**  
Alfredo Abrego  
Reynaldo Avila  
Emilio V. Duenez  
Mario Guerra  
Stephen P. Walker

### San Angelo District

**25 years**  
Gary D. Bilbrey  
**20 years**  
Armando S. Dominguez  
Kenneth V. Flemming  
**15 years**  
Ricky E. Williams  
**5 years**  
Chris A. Gorbett

### San Antonio District

**25 years**  
Carlos R. Vinton  
**20 years**  
Jeffery L. Howard  
**15 years**  
Glenn P. Grisham  
Schelly S. Radcliff

### 10 years

Glen R. Biermann  
Abelardo S. Casas  
Claude L. Cosgrove  
Rodolfo Gonzales  
Louis Heimann III  
Terry G. McCoy  
Paul M. O. Bar

### Tyler District

**30 years**  
Marshall R. Corley  
**20 years**  
Jesse Crowder Jr.  
**15 years**  
Arnold Gonzales  
Eugene M. Oates  
Cedric W. Pierson  
**10 years**  
Terry D. Williams

### Waco District

**35 years**  
Edward R. Zettler  
**25 years**  
Depriest Allen  
**20 years**  
Ronald R. Houston  
**10 years**  
John F. Obr  
**5 years**  
Ervin L. Middlebrook Jr.  
Donna G. Mills  
Bennie Neal Jr.

### Wichita Falls District

**15 years**  
Haskell P. Roberts Jr.  
**10 years**  
Jimmy F. Bruton  
Wallace S. Slaggle  
**5 years**  
Jerry L. Fairchild  
Eliazar G. Salinas

### Yoakum District

**40 years**  
Jerome F. Dvorak  
**35 years**  
Sherman L. Teeler  
**25 years**  
Frank F. Cisneros  
Ronald J. Roecker  
**20 years**  
Garland A. Emerson  
**10 years**  
Wilbert E. Wendt Jr.

### Audit Office

**5 years**  
Brian Chamberlin

### Aviation Division

**20 years**  
Nona D. Gold

### Construction and Maintenance Division

**5 years**  
John T. Vawter

### Design Division

**10 years**  
Jon T. Ries  
Leon D. Wegele  
Lloyd M. Wolf

### General Services Division

**30 years**  
Edgar D. Fortune  
**25 years**  
Douglas M. Peoples  
**20 years**  
Mary Marciel  
**15 years**  
Raymond M. Hodson Jr.  
Martin E. Lindenblatt  
**10 years**  
James D. Markle  
Joe Ybarra  
**5 years**  
Ibrahim Q. Fashho

### Human Resources Division

**5 years**  
Cheryl A. Caldwell  
Timothy J. Cook  
Thomas T. Dellinger  
Deborah A. Parkansky  
Paul E. Summerbell

### Information Systems Division

**25 years**  
James E. Schwerdtfeger  
**15 years**  
Ricardo Castillo Sr.  
**10 years**  
Amber M. Allardyce  
Karen D. Dunn  
Brian R. Wetzig

### Materials and Tests Division

**35 years**  
George B. King  
**30 years**  
Charles L. Moore  
**20 years**  
Bruno C. Voigt

### 10 years

Ronald D. Medlock

### Motor Carrier Division

**5 years**  
Tanya S. Diaz

### Motor Vehicle Division

**10 years**  
Brett G. Bray  
Janice M. Maynard

### Occupational Safety Division

**5 years**  
Rose Ann Lulewicz

### Public Transportation Division

**5 years**  
Mary N. Bennett

### Senior Management Team

**5 years**  
Mary A. Criss

### Traffic Operations Division

**10 years**  
Jacob K. Moore

### Transportation Planning and Programming Division

**25 years**  
Craig R. Alsobrook  
Deborah A. Hansen  
**15 years**  
John R. Sifton  
**10 years**  
Victor G. Hernandez  
**5 years**  
George W. Petrek III

### Travel and Information Division

**20 years**  
Virginia O. Garcia

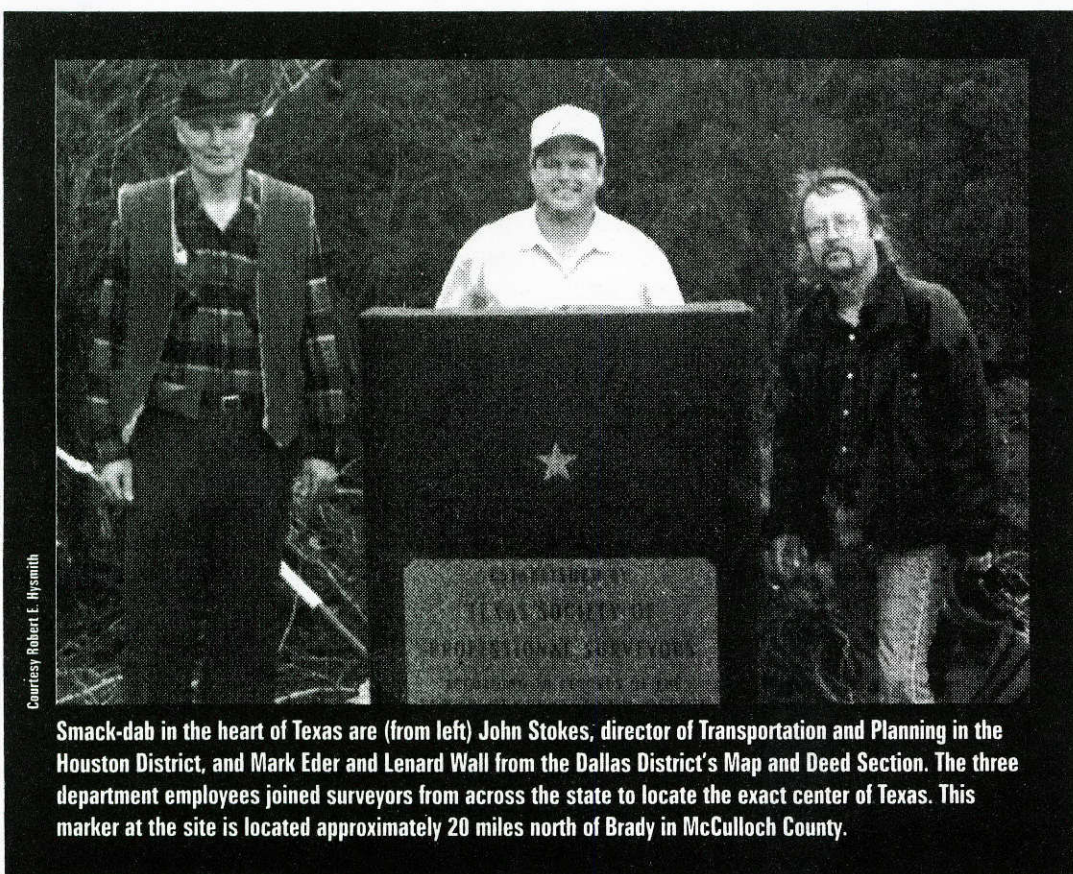
### Vehicle Titles and Registration Division

**30 years**  
Deborah S. Kruse  
**25 years**  
Morris J. Butts  
**20 years**  
Joyce B. Lancaster  
**10 years**  
Kathy F. Graves  
Stanley J. Wegner  
**5 years**  
Benjamin C. Abattam  
Laura L. Camp



Texas Department of Transportation

## "80 Years of Service the TxDOT Way"



## October issue of T-News to celebrate past 80 years

*Transportation News* will culminate its 80th anniversary reflections with a special issue in October.

From the first days of "getting the farmer out of the mud" to the verge of the 21st century, the people, actions and events from the past eight decades will be spotlighted.

The special issue of *Transportation News* continues the department's anniversary theme, "80 Years of Service the TxDOT Way."

Because of the theme of the special issue, usual features such as Ask Bill, A Day in the Life, service awards, retirements and letters will not appear next month. But never fear, we will pick up where we left off in the November issue.

The October issue of *Transportation News* will be out on schedule, during the first week of October. ★



## Conference to address Human Resources Management issues

Human Resources Management professionals in any organization deal with a kaleidoscope of people and services. TxDOT is no different.

With a customer base of more than 14,000 current employees -- plus retirees from the past eight decades -- employees in Human Resources Management must contend with personnel issues, retirement questions, benefit policies, federal and state regulations and laws, and much more.

To focus on the commitment to creating synergy between the services it provides, and the customers who receive these services, Human Resources Management is holding its second conference, Nov. 4-7, at the Doubletree Hotel in Austin.

Under the theme "Kaleidoscope of People and Services: Creating Synergy," the conference will bring together employees from across the state, including human resources officers, training and safety coordinators, mediators, recruiters, equal-employment opportunity officers, civil rights investigators, facilitators, trainers, directors of administration division administrative managers -- anyone under the Human Resources Management umbrella.

Conference coordinators foresee a conference even more successful than the first one, which was held in 1995. Because the Legislature typically deals with many human resources issues, the conference is held every other year after the session.

"A lot of changes take place during the session that impact HRM and our programs, so having our conference after the session provides our participants with information and updates on the changes," said Daffney Henry, assistant executive director for Human Resources Management.

"Since 1995, we've made a lot of improvements in the area of Human Resources Management," Henry said. "We've had our HR 2000 project, where we looked at improving services we provide our employees. We've really concentrated on human resources."

Since the last conference, HRM has automated the 102 process, allowing human resources professionals to process promotions from the field instead of sending them to Austin; developed TEAMS (TxDOT Employee Achievement Management System), which replaces the old performance evaluation process; created the Training, Quality and Development Division to coordinate training initiatives; revised and automated the human resources manual, which will be distributed before the conference; developed a new job design program which is scheduled to be implemented by March 1, 1998 reducing the number of functional job titles in the department from 1,700 to approximately 350 job descriptions; and made pay structure changes approved during the legislative session.

"The staff has worked hard the past two years to make improvements where we feel

they'll have the greatest impact on employees and the department. We're just excited to see the work that we have put into it come to fruition," Henry said.

Henry said HRM's achievements have been customer-driven. "Employees gave us input, told us what was broken and how to fix it. For example, employees who used the human resources manual were the driving force behind the new manual."

Conference coordinators expect about 500 employees to attend. In addition to workshops and speakers, social events and entertainment are scheduled. Also, the statewide Roadeo coincides with the conference, and winners will be announced during the Thursday General Session.

Workshop topics run the gamut and include workers comp, family medical leave act and ADA, Continuous Improvement, team building, benefits, substance abuse, classification system, mediating and safety.

"We're hoping that conference participants will feel like they felt in '95 -- that it was time well spent, that they learned a lot professionally and personally, and that they leave enriched, motivated and with more energy and zest to go back to their workplace and continue to implement and initiate programs that will benefit our employees and their families," Henry said.★

For more information, contact Pat Callahan in the Human Resources Division at (512) 706-6345.

## Calendar

### SEPTEMBER

- 1 Labor Day (holiday)
- 3-5 Texas/Mexico Border Conference on Border Safety, South Padre Island, PHR
- 9 Traffic Signal Preemption at Highway Rail Crossings, Arlington, MMO
- 10-12 NIGP Professional Development Class, Austin, GSD
- 15-19 Public Relations Certificate Program, Austin, PIO
- 17-20 Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE)/Historically Underutilized Business (HUB) Conference, Austin, BOP
- 25 Commission Meeting, Austin

### OCTOBER

- 13-15 Transportation Conference, College Station
- 15-17 NIGP Professional Development Class, Austin, GSD
- 22 District Open House, Statewide, ENV
- 30 Commission Meeting, Austin

### NOVEMBER

- 3-4 NIGP Professional Development Class, Austin, GSD
- 3-7 Research Management Committee Meeting, Austin, RTT
- 4-7 Human Resources Management Conference, Austin, HRM
- 5 80th Anniversary Banquet, Austin, ENV
- 5-7 NIGP Professional Development Class, Austin, GSD
- 7-8 AASHTO's SDMS Users Group Meeting, San Antonio, ISD
- 11 Veterans' Day (holiday)
- 20 Commission Meeting, Austin
- 27 Thanksgiving (holiday)
- 28 Holiday

### DECEMBER

- 18 Commission Meeting, Austin
- 24 Holiday
- 25 Christmas Day (holiday)
- 26 Holiday

### JANUARY 1998

- 1 Holiday
- 7-8 Management Team meeting
- 19 Martin Luther King Jr. Day (holiday)
- 19 Confederate Heroes Day (holiday)
- 29 Commission Meeting (Victoria)

### FEBRUARY 1998

- 16 Presidents Day (holiday)
- 24-25 1998 Total Quality Initiative Conference, Fort Worth, FDO
- 26 Commission Meeting, Austin

### MARCH 1998

- 2 Texas Independence Day (holiday)
- 26 Commission Meeting, Austin

## Retirements

### June

**Houston**  
Weldon E. Ray  
Maintenance Tech IV  
34 years

### August

**Fort Worth**  
Tommy J. Bird  
Roadway Maintenance Supervisor I  
26 years

Jerry D. Livingston  
Roadway Maintenance Supervisor I  
25 years

### Houston

Melvie Corliss  
Maintenance Tech IV  
25 years

Margie O. Corbin  
Administrative Tech III  
16 years

### Lufkin

Weldon L. Thomas  
Maintenance Construction Supervisor I  
30 years

### Odessa

Thomas C. Hamilton  
Engineer Tech IV  
31 years

### San Angelo District

Pedro M. Lombrana Sr.  
Maintenance Tech. IV  
31 years

### Yoakum

Jo Nell M. Taylor  
Administrative Secretary  
28 years

Alfred O. Flessner  
Program Administrator II  
31 years

### Materials and Test Division

D. Leo Neely  
Engineering Tech V  
28 years

## BOP to host DBE/HUB conference

TxDOT's Business Opportunity Programs Office (BOP) is hosting its second Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE)/Historically Underutilized Business (HUB) Conference Sept. 17-20 at the Austin Convention Center. The theme of the conference is building profitable partnerships for the 21st Century. The objective of the conference is to enhance working relationships with the following BOP customers: DBEs/HUBs, TxDOT personnel, small businesses, prime contractors, state agencies and corporations.

Held in conjunction with the 10th annual Business Opportunity Symposium Series (BOSS), the conference will spotlight current issues and trends affecting small, disadvantaged or historically underutilized

businesses. Conference participants include Maynard Jackson, former mayor of Atlanta, Ga.; Gordon Linton, Federal Transit Administrator for the U.S. Department of Transportation; motivational speaker Dennis Kimbro; TxDOT officials; and representatives from the business community.

James Dossett, director of TxDOT's Business Opportunity Programs Office, is serving as chairman of the conference, which will include workshops addressing TxDOT's procurement process for Construction and Maintenance, Professional Services, Goods and Services, an expo/trade fair and an awards banquet. For more information, contact the Business Opportunity Programs Office at (512) 936-0929.★



## Letters

Texas public servants continue to make the Lone Star State a better place by supporting the State Employees Charitable Campaign (SECC). Last year, state employees contributed \$3.4 million to the SECC — an increase of more than \$600,000 from 1995.

Thank you and your employees for your generosity. Your contributions provided relief for families after floods, tornadoes, supported nutrition programs for our children and older Texans, and helped improve the quality of life for many people. Your leadership and enthusiastic volunteer campaign coordinators were key factors in the success of the 1996 campaign.

Efforts are under way for another successful campaign in 1997. Your active involvement and endorsement of SECC are important in encouraging everyone to participate. I urge you to support the 1997 SECC and provide each of your employees the opportunity to make voluntary contributions.

Congratulations on making the 1996 SECC campaign such a great success, and thank you for your help in making Texas a beacon state.

**Gov. George W. Bush**

*The 1996 SECC raised \$3,393,664.26. TxDOT employees contributed \$54,783. For more information, see story on page 12.*

.....

Since I retired from teaching after 22 years, I have been doing a lot of traveling across Texas. I have thoroughly enjoyed the beautiful Texas wildflowers this spring and early summer.

I know that delaying mowing caused some hardship. Please let those responsible for the planning, planting and care of this special treasure know that it has been appreciated. I also appreciated the friendly manner in which **Anita Sifford** helped me get your address.

I mostly travel between here, in Keller, to San Angelo and Huntsville. The sheer beauty of these roadside flowers has brought joy to my heart as I travel. Thanks.

**Connie Hutchens**

**Keller**

*Helen (Anita) Sifford works as the office manager at the Northeast Tarrant County Maintenance Office, Fort Worth District.*

.....

I've been the transportation coordinator for the Collin County Committee on Aging for a little over a year, and I just wanted to take this time to thank you **Chris Anderson** and **Eric Saxon** for all the help during the past year. Your patience and understanding has been beyond the call of duty. If I can ever help you in the future, please don't hesitate to give me a call. Thanks again and best of luck to you, both now and in the future.

**Bob Baebekuhl**

**Collin County**

*Chris Anderson is a public transportation coordinator and Eric Saxon is a grants coordinator assistant. Both work in the Dallas District.*

.....

I can't say enough to praise the two attendants who worked in the I-10 visitors center in Orange on May 15. They were very con-

siderate and caring. We appreciate that. Thank you.

**Dean and Ruth Jewell**  
**Warren, Ohio**

*The employees were Christine Jones and Staci Powers, travel counselors at the Travel Information Center, Beaumont District.*

.....

I am writing to express our appreciation and thanks to TxDOT, and especially to **Neal Billings**, manager of the Judge Roy Bean Visitor Center at Langtry, for our recent trip home from Alpine. I discovered that I left my handbag at the motel — what a sinking sensation the travelers checks and all those little cards we need to identify ourselves. When we explained our plight to Mr. Billings, he immediately began in the most efficient way to contact the motel and made every effort to comfort and reassure us. He really cared!

How fortunate we were that your department discovered a true gem out there in that beautiful Big Bend country and put him where he could help travelers like us. We encountered many friendly people on our trips, but Mr. Billings wrote the definition of "Texas friendly."

**Mr. & Mrs. Philip Worchel**  
**South Padre Island**

*Vernon (Neal) Billings works at the Travel and Information Center in Langtry, Laredo District.*

.....

I want you to know how grateful I am for the professional advice and assistance my office received from **Blanca M. Del Valle** and **Frank de Santos III**. Your El Paso Public Information Office was the foundation for our Vinton bridge-opening ceremony.

The ceremony was very impressive and instrumental to informing residents from the village of Vinton and the upper valley of the bridge opening. Everyone commented that this was a very important event. The opening of this bridge will add to the quality of life for the residents of the upper valley.

**Daniel R. Haggerty**  
**Commissioner Pct. 4**

**El Paso**

*Blanca M. Del Valle and Frank de Santos III work as public information officers, El Paso District.*

.....

I want to offer my sincere thanks to **Dan Bray**. On June 3, my friend, my little girl and I were driving from Seabrook to Tulsa, Okla. On U.S. 75 between Dallas and Sherman, my front right tire blew out. Before my van quit rolling, Mr. Bray had stopped to help us. This was a double blessing, because Honda had not included the tools to use the jack or change the tire, along with the spare tire where they should have been.

In a matter of a few minutes, Mr. Bray changed my tire and gave me directions where to get a new tire in Sherman. I offered to pay him for his trouble, but he refused. He definitely was my knight in a shining hard hat. Chivalry, may it never die. Thanks so much.

**Cindy Forsyth**

*Dan Bray is an engineering technician in the Sherman Area Office, Paris District.*

Thanks for keeping us informed of current events, comments, news, etc. We enjoy reading the paper here in the Amarillo District each month.

I would like to draw your attention to an article in the August 1997 issue. On page 8, there is a picture of an employee working to clear the roadway of rocks that fell in Palo Duro Canyon State Park. I am sure that employees of the El Paso District work diligently to clear any hazards that block their roadways, however, Palo Duro Canyon is located in the Canyon Section of the Amarillo District.

We have been trying to identify the employee in the picture, but have been unsuccessful. Could you tell us where the photograph originated? Possibly it is also a parks employee. In any case, the scene of rock slides being cleared from the park roadway has remained the same in the ensuing 34 years since the picture was taken.

Thank you, and keep up the good work.

**Ken W. Prestidge**  
**Roadway Maintenance Supervisor**  
**Amarillo District**

*In the August issue of Transportation News, we mistakenly identified Palo Duro Canyon as in the El Paso District. The park is, and always has been, in the Amarillo District.*

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