

# TODAY

# UPHOLDING THE LAW

Paul Guillote is gritty, proud and realistic. He first broke his leg when he was two years old. Because of a degenerative bone disease, he broke 70 bones and endured 15 surgeries over the next

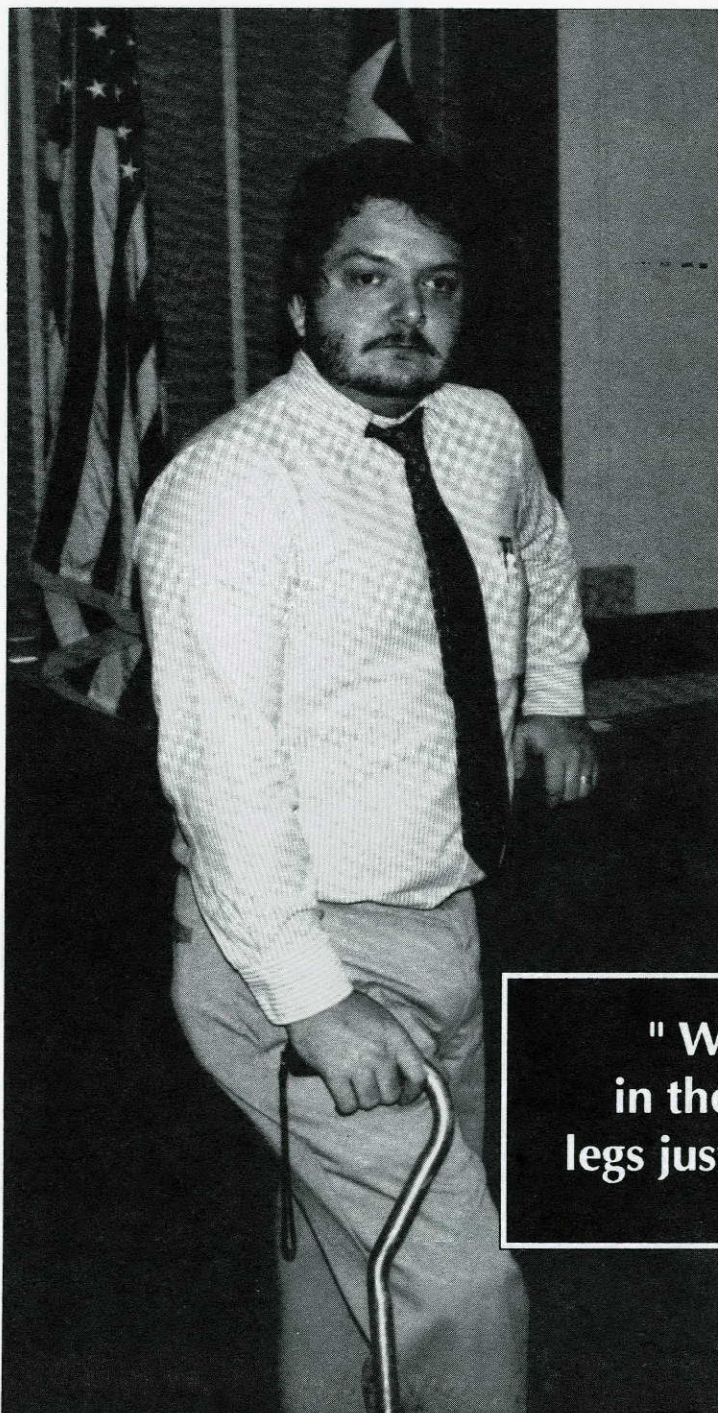
15 years. He requested and received amputation of both legs before he was 18 years of age.

"That was the best decision I ever made," says Guillote. "Like it or not, they never served me very well."

Referred to TRC from Beaumont's Forest Park High School, Guillote attended Loyola University Law School in New Orleans under TRC sponsorship. "I had never heard of TRC until I met a counselor in high school. I was sure glad there are people out there like you," says Guillote.

While at Loyola, he improved campus accessibility and dramatically heightened the awareness of students with disabilities.

Guillote is now a prosecutor in the District Attorney's Office in Gatesville, Texas. "I love it," he says. "When you're in the courtroom, legs just don't matter."



**" When you're  
in the courtroom,  
legs just don't matter."**

TRC TODAY is a newsletter for the employees of the Texas Rehabilitation Commission.

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## Auditing the auditors

Who audits the auditors? That has been a perennial question asked by those who have been put through this stressful, painstaking process. Well, in 1992, you get your answer.

Due to the Texas Internal Auditing Act, all internal audit departments are expected to "take part in a comprehensive external peer review." The State Auditor's Office expects all agency internal auditing offices to complete this review by September 1, 1992.

TRC will conduct a two-phased management audit, giving the best review possible. First, Management Audit staff will perform a self-assessment, comparing operations to the standards given by the Institute of Internal Auditors. This will be followed with an external peer review conducted by internal auditors from other organizations.

"Management Audit staff has never undergone an examination of this depth," says David MacCabe, acting director of Management Audit. "We believe this is an opportunity to find out how we compare to the Institute's standards and we look forward to this process."



## Breaking stereotypes

Bureaucracy typically has a stereotype of being non-caring and unresponsive to individual needs. People such as Robert Garza break this mold.

Garza, DDS examiner was recently honored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) for his outstanding contributions on behalf of people with AIDS.

Garza was cited for helping improve the speed and accuracy of disability claims involving AIDS and HIV.

He was also noted for his volunteer work in AIDS. As a "buddy" for a person with the disease for the last five years, Garza assists in grocery shopping, household chores and is an advocate for that person. Garza also serves as a caregiver and board member at the only hospice for AIDS in central Texas called *Project Transitions* in Austin.

"My first hand experience with people who have AIDS helped me in handling AIDS claims," says Garza. "I now understand the disease and how it affects people. I can ask questions about specific activities that surround the disease that help expedite the case."

"I'm not surprised by this," says James L. Jackson, administrator for DDS. "Many examiners care about the claimants and go beyond job requirements to help any way they can. Garza really cares and his professional and volunteer work shows that."

## TRC Library back in business

Beginning in March the TRC Library will be offering full service. During the restoration of the Brown-Heatley Building circulation was limited to video tapes. Again all library resources will be available for use and for loan. Call 512/483-4240 to request materials or to learn more about what is available.

# ADA It's here !

We have been hearing about the coming of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for some time now. Well, as of January 26, all activities conducted by state or local governments became subject to ADA regulations.

Regulations call for non-discriminatory hiring practices and for all government facilities, services and communications to be accessible.

"In terms of implications, ADA has a major impact on TRC as an employer, TRC as a service provider, and TRC as a consumer advocate," says John Fenoglio, deputy commissioner. "But, we've been preparing for this well before ADA was signed into law."

First, ADA Texas, a special focus unit, was

created in 1990 to develop an awareness of the act and get training of TRC personnel in place. A top planning board was also formed with representatives from every TRC department to identify principal issues and develop a strategy for ADA implementation.

As part of the strategy, the planning board developed 16 decision records through which ADA can be carried out. These records suggest consideration by each agency planning board regarding appropriate actions for that board. The decision records also form a special planning board that informs different departments of appropriate duties; and at the same time, informs all of where each activity is taking place. "We felt it best to take small, coordinated steps," says

**TRC as an employer ...** Currently, TRC is in the process of reviewing job application forms and other employment related forms to make sure that all are in keeping with ADA regulations. Special planning is also underway to insure reasonable accommodations are available and that these accommodations effectively meet the needs of the employees.

**TRC as a service provider ...** TRC purchases services from over 40,000 vendors for more than 250,000 clients and claimants each year. It is important that all these vendors know of our compliance with ADA and of our expectation of their compliance. Informing these vendors, however, is a big job. A special committee has completed work on a strategy for implementing and achieving this communication on an ongoing basis.

**TRC as a consumer advocate ...** Unintentionally, ADA causes a delicate balance for TRC as a consumer advocate. When approaching prospective employers for our clients, by the sheer fact of our name, we may inform these employers that the applicant has a disability. Steps are being taken to minimize possible discrimination.

Fenoglio. "First you crawl, then you walk ... TRC should be walking by July."

## Medical services pulls together

Medical consultation is a core function of both rehabilitation programs and determination of disability for the Social Security Administration. All medically related activities will now be coordinated by the new Director of Medical Services, Dr. James E. Payne.

Dr. Payne, the administrative medical consultant to TRC programs since July 1988, brings considerable experience to his new duties. As a former Commander of Keesler USAF Medical Center in Biloxi, Miss, the Air Force's second largest medical facility, and as

Surgeon General for the Air Force Military Personnel Center at Randolph AFB in San Antonio, Dr. Payne is sensitive to the need for cost effective and timely medical services.

With the responsibility for technical supervision for doctors at DDS and the office for medical professional relations, Dr. Payne will be in a position to evaluate all TRC medical services.

My charge is to update and improve medical programs and services, in DDS as well as in rehabilitation programs," say Dr. Payne. "We will be keeping an eye on rising medical costs and recruiting the best medical advice available for our clients and claimants."

## DDS Unit 22

is a perfect example of taking a bad situation and turning it around.

A little over a year ago, a San Antonio advocate for persons who were HIV positive filed a class action suit against TRC because he felt HIV applicants for Social Security benefits received disparate service from other applicants. Becoming aware of this problem, DDS found that, because of the nature of the disease, HIV positive applicants had problems processing claims that other applicants did not have.

**So, what's the key to their success?**

**Greater access is the key...we call people on the phone daily.**

*Marcy Sprott*

**Our motto has been "just do it."**

*Skip Frazier*

To satisfy this increasing population, DDS formed a special unit, made up of seasoned examiners, whose sole purpose is to process AIDS and HIV related claims. Since its creation April 1, 1991, this unit has made remarkable headway.

"It was smooth from the very beginning," says Robert Touchet, supervisor of the unit. "Our clerical staff was very supportive. They adapted quickly and helped for an easy transition. We made effective use of interactive planning. The examiners got in gear by reading available literature, they attended training seminars and still enjoy ongoing training on the latest in HIV treatments."

Because of achievements Unit 22 has made, they received the "Extra Mile" award given by James L. Jackson, administrator for DDS, for special service.

So, what's the key to their success?

"One thing is that by being together as a unit, we talk together and work closely with one another," says Pat Ryan, examiner. "It helps a great deal to be able to put all of our heads together to do what's best in a particular case."

# Making it happen



*Pat Ryan*



*Robert Touchet & Sylvia Honeycutt*

**I let them vent and then ask "what can we do to help you?" and ask myself "what can I do to turn this around?"**

*Pat Ryan*

"Since this is all so new, we have relied on good judgment in most of the cases," says Skip Frazier, examiner. "And, we've been lucky to have a supervisor that trusts us to make those decisions."

"Greater access is the key," says Marcy Sprott, examiner. "We call people on the phone daily. You're talking about people that have probably been rejected by family, close friends and society as a whole. We become not only examiners but also a support group. At first they think you're just another rejection. And when you're not, doors open up. Many times, we are the first people to give them any kind of warmth and support."



(left to right:) row 1: Jane Ramsey, Carrie Mozingo, Donna Goodenough, Sylvia Honeycutt, Robert Touchet. row 2: Doris Davis, Pat Ryan, Marcy Sprott, Mark Terranella, Steve Stump. Not shown: Skip Frazier and Sandra Woodford.

Access to applicants is not only an advantage but a great challenge. "Some applicants remain hostile," says Ryan. "The best thing you can do is listen. I let them vent and when they're finished, I ask them 'What can we do to help you?' and then I ask myself, 'What can I do to turn this around?'"

Another challenge is that AIDS is an unpredictable disease. "Some live five or more years after diagnosis, others live only six months," says Sprott. "We need to have an awareness of a variety of things. Every day, we find new infections that are HIV related. If you don't

handle the same types of cases, you don't catch the connections. We learn something new everyday."

A big obstacle in processing the cases is that, because of the stigma, many people wait until the end to tell anyone. They get AIDS related medical problems taken care of without facing the source of the disease. When this happens, time is critical.

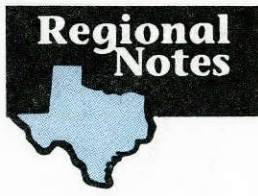
Another obstacle is receiving medical reports from doctors and medical facilities in a timely manner. "Many people are afraid of law

suits, so they drag their heels in getting medical records to you," says Sandra Woodford, examiner.

Regardless of the obstacles the unit encounters, they maintain a positive attitude. "Our motto has been 'just do it.' We are hoping that as a result of our efforts, some of the misconceptions that AIDS affects only the gay community will diminish," says Frazier. "The population as a whole can be affected by this disease and better education is the best weapon against it."

## DDS Unit 22 Highlights of Achievement

- Reduction of complaints by the public.
- Reduction, by half, of the average time required to process a claim.
- Better working knowledge of HIV resources such as advocacy groups and facilities that specialize in HIV treatment.
- Better focused training and knowledge of staff on the unique issues surrounding HIV infection.
- More sensitive client relationships due to better understanding of socio-political issues involved.



## Regional Notes

### Region III

Patrick King was selected as a counselor for the Galveston Field Office. King has been a counselor in the Dallas Central Field Office and has served as an ERS program manager in the Dallas Goodwill Field Office.

Christie Bishop was selected as counselor in the Port Arthur Field Office.

### Region V

Cookie Juarez was selected as RST in the San Antonio Northeast Field Office.

### Region VI

Patricia Stevens Williams, former RST in the Dallas Northeast Field Office, passed away on December 25.

Paula McLerran was selected to fill the MSS position in the Longview Field Office.

### Central Office

Johnny Weddington was selected as regional program specialist for Regions III and IV. Weddington has over 18

years experience working in vocational rehabilitation, most recently as VR counselor in the San Antonio Field Office West.

Jacelyn Murphy was selected as grant/contract specialist-auditor in the Special Services Office. She will be responsible for assuring the agency is in compliance with its subrecipient single audit requirements.

Chuck Bailey, director of the Office of Civil Rights, resigned to fill a similar position with the Department of Highways and Public Transportation.

Vernon Dement was selected as a program specialist to fill the Independent Living and Rehabilitation Technology position. Dement has experience writing grants and proposals for independent living organizations and knowledge of assistive technology through his association with two residential programs.

D.L. Fugler, Jr., deputy commissioner for Special Operations, retired after 27 years of service with TRC.

## TODAY

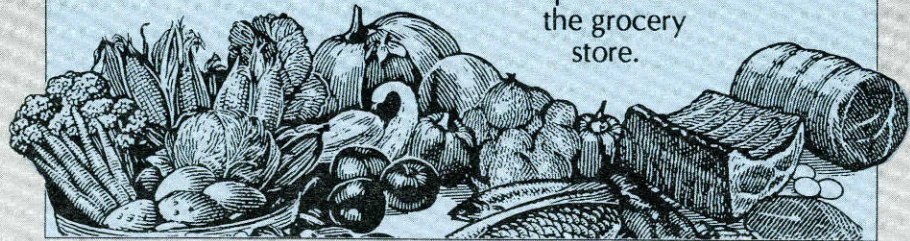
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### What does it cost to feed a family?

The answer is a lot. According to the USDA, a family of four with elementary school children spends between a thrifty \$82.20 and a liberal \$157.50 per week on healthy, well-balanced meals and snacks. These estimates do not include alcoholic beverages, pet foods, cigarettes, paper goods, and other non-food items that may also

be purchased at the grocery store.



## Cause for Applause

*The following are portions of letters received by TRC employees from claimant/clients:*

*Anita Davis, DDS examiner received this letter from a claimant:*

We want to thank you for your kindness and assistance in our application for SSI benefits. We still do not know if our application was approved. Either way, we appreciate your efforts and respect your decision. We greatly appreciate your patience and kindness with us when we called you. Thank you so much.

*Here is a letter written to Commissioner Arrell regarding DDS Examiner Mike Jones in Unit 10:*

He did an outstanding job on my husband's case. He was honest and up front with me from the very beginning. He went out of his way to help us. In our case it was a success. Even if it had not been, I would have known deep down that he had done everything he could. He treated us as an equal and I'm very grateful for that. I though you should know this. Thank you so very much.

*Here is a letter sent to Counselor Lan Rainey in the Commerce Field Office from a client:*

I am currently teaching at The Briarwood School in Houston as an art educator. I decided to accept the position at Briarwood because I really enjoy teaching younger children and I hope that my background and experience as a dyslexic will benefit the students at the special education school.

I greatly appreciate the opportunity afforded me by TRC to further my education and for all of your encouragement, understanding and assistance during my years at East Texas State University. It has provided me with the tools to support myself, and hopefully, to give back to others a helping hand that was given to me.

*The following is a letter a client sent to Rudy Martinez, area manager, in the Dallas Northwest Field Office:*

This is a letter of commendation and appreciation for the services I received as a client of the Texas Rehabilitation Commission. I would especially praise my Counselor, Kay Sitton, for her genuine concern and encouragement throughout my five year transition from injured material handler to satisfied court reporter.

When state economics offered me only grim prospects to ever again be a useful and productive citizen, your agency and Ms. Sitton gave me the guidance, support and direction to find and fit my new niche. Throughout the rigorous training for court reporting and sometimes discouraging obstacles, Ms. Sitton's concern and understanding was often just the push I needed to keep striving.

*A letter by a claimant praising Disability Examiner Effie Harris' work was received by Connie Miller, operations director, Directorate 03, DDS:*

I want to highly commend Ms. Effie Harris, disability examiner, for her very astute and careful work. She is outstanding in her competence, courtesy, and in maintaining a positive image of the Agency.

*A letter sent by a claimant thanking Jessie Wilborn, DDS Unit 10, for her service:*

The purpose of this letter is to express my appreciation for the professional services your staff has provided me recently. Ms. Wilburn has been very helpful when I was in an extremely stressful and depressed situation. Ms. Wilburn has been courteous, prompt and understanding. I am very thankful our state government is staffed with such talented and responsive people. Please convey my appreciation of her good work!

## Letters



### January 1992 Service Awards

**Region I**  
10 years

Karen Miranda

**Region II**  
20 years

S. J. Ellison, Jr.  
Perry Allen, Jr.

**Region III**  
20 years

Lee D. Lindsley

**Region IV**  
20 years

Henry Etta Collier

**Region V**  
20 years

Frances Creech

**DDS**

10 years

Trinidad Fabian

15 years

Mary Hayes

20 years

Teresa Lopez

**Central Office**  
20 years

Celia Gutierrez

# AND REPLY

LETTER

Dear Mr. Vernon M. Arrell:

Hi, I'm Greg Fredericks. I'm a student at Mitchell. I would like learn about commissioning a little more. If you have any free samples I would like to have some. Thanks.

Sincerely,

*Greg Fredericks*  
Greg Fredericks

ing". That's a big subject for a short letter; but I'll do my best.

As a commissioner, it is my job to provide guidance and direction to the entire agency. This is a big job. We have more than 2,000 employees working in offices all over the state (and you know how big Texas is!).

I think it takes several qualities to be a good commissioner. First, you have to be able to communicate your vision to a lot of other people. Also, you have to have faith in the people who work with you. And, you have to have a sense of humor — and be able to laugh at yourself a lot! Even commissioners make mistakes.

Obviously, there are many other qualities of good commissioners. These are just a few. I'm sending you a copy of one of my favorite essays, "All I Ever Wanted to Know I Learned in Kindergarten," by Robert Fulghum. I think if more people followed the advice it contains, "commissioning" would be a lot easier.

Dear Mr. Fredericks:  
It is good to hear from someone as far way as Wisconsin!  
You wrote that you would like to hear a little more about "commission-

*Max Arrell*  
Vernon "Max" Arrell  
Commissioner

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