

## Accurate road info just a phone call away

Automated system allows TxDOT to answer more calls, provide more timely information

**Meredith Whitten**  
Associate Editor

When heavy rains pounded East Texas in December 1989, 626,000 callers wanting road conditions flooded the department's toll-free travel information number over a nine-day period. But, with the road condition reporting system that existed, answering the calls efficiently and providing accurate information was almost an impossible task.

Bobby Johnson, assistant director of travel services, said the old system — called Road Condition Report, or RCR — was "too cumbersome and time consuming."

"There were so many different users, nobody was really getting what they needed. Road conditions was always just a murderous time," he said.

Johnson said finding specific information meant TxDOT operators had to dig through mounds of unrelated text or call districts for information — all while the caller was on hold. "There was no way you could possibly serve the public," he said.

TxDOT's first Continuous Improvement (CI) team was formed in 1992 to address the mainframe computer application of the system, as well as how the calls were answered.

"The two complaints that we had were that the information was not getting put in, and we just didn't have the capabilities to handle the volume of calls that we were getting," Johnson said.

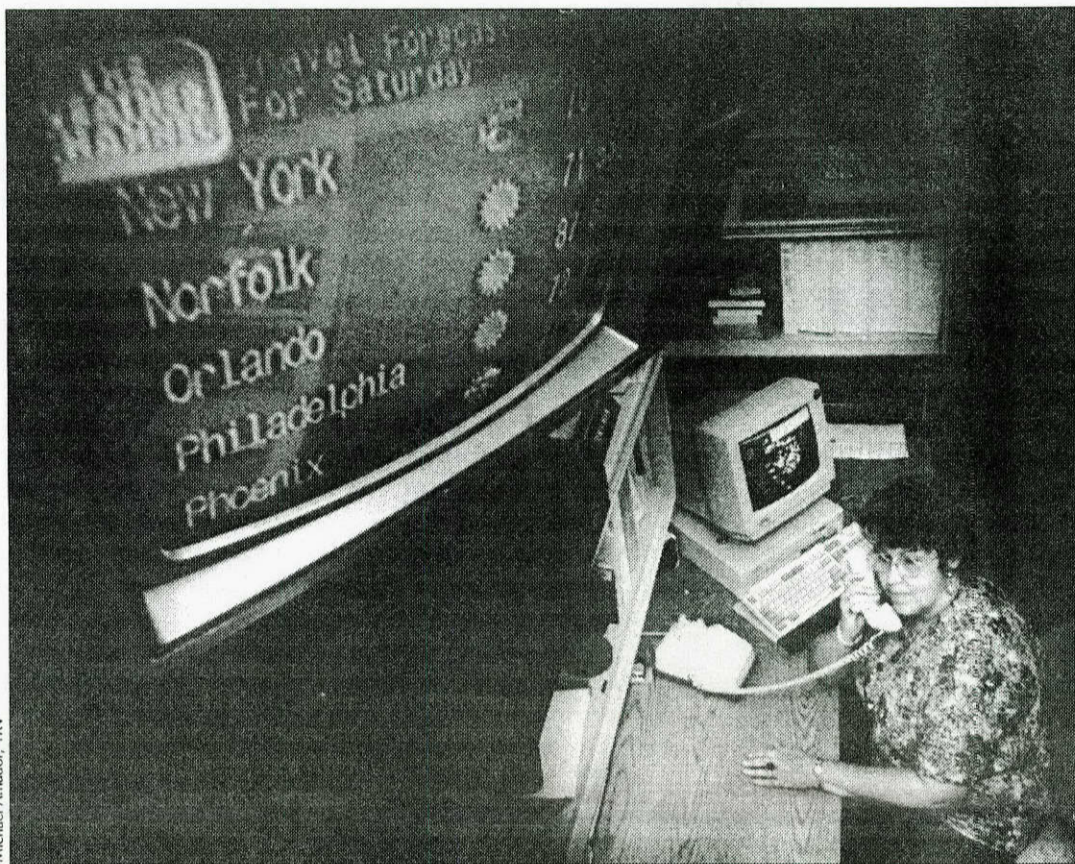
As a result, the department implemented an automated answering system that allows TxDOT to answer more calls and provide more accurate information. It also minimizes TxDOT's liability by providing current data. Now, if all operators are busy, calls roll to an automated system that provides information about seven regions of the state, giving recorded road conditions on whatever region the caller chooses.

The new system — called Highway Condition Reporting System, or HCRS — relies on a team effort. TxDOT policy, recommended by the CI team, requires each district to update its road condition information by 8:05 a.m. daily. Johnson stressed the importance of getting the reports in on time.

"Most districts are really good about putting the reports on; there are some districts where it is a lower priority, but it's a high priority to us because whether or not they update it, we still get calls," he said. "And it's not just a bad-weather-day service anymore. We have people who call every day for other road conditions, such as construction projects, residual flooding or accidents."

Calls ring in the information center in Austin and at 11 travel information centers across the state. On an average day, 15 to 20 employees around the state answer calls.

Juan Barrientos, manager of the phone center, estimates that the department received an average of 3,500 calls per week last year. Barrientos said that during the recent floods, the automated attendant proved its worth: 73 percent of the calls that came in concerned



Travel counselor Brenda Moum answers calls at TxDOT's phone center in Austin. The department receives an average of 3,500 calls per week on the 1-800 travel information line; the volume of calls drastically increases during severe weather.

road conditions, and half of those were answered by the automated attendant. "We basically put every person we had on phones," he said, "but we still wouldn't have been able to answer as many calls."

Johnson said this demonstrates the urgent need to have timely and up-to-date information. "We need the information early so we can get it to our employees when the phones start ringing at 8 a.m.," Johnson said. "It's something that we use daily and the public expects to be accurate."

Heidi Zetty, assistant manager of the phone center, said HCRS has made operators more responsive to callers' needs.

"We're able to catch a lot more calls," she said, "and it's an easy system to update and keep current, so we're able to help more people get more specific information."

Not all of the calls are for road conditions. Travelers also use the number, 800.452.9292, to get wildflower and fall foliage reports, travel counseling and travel literature. Because many callers receive

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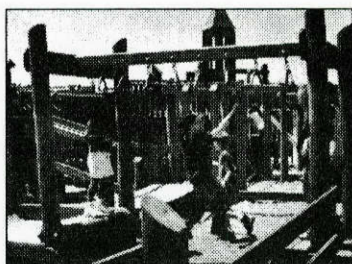
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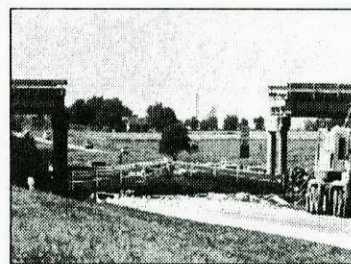
The Aviation Division marked 50 years of supporting general aviation at the Texas Airport Operators Conference. **Page 4**



TxDOT was well represented at an environmental safety seminar at Texas State Technical College in April. **Page 4**



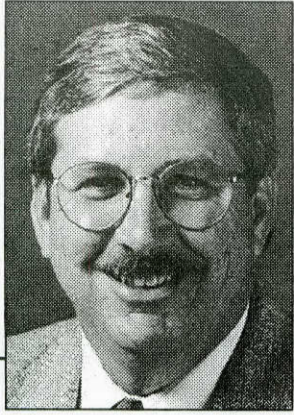
More than 2,600 people helped build a playground in memory of Ellis County Area Engineer Scott Morrow's son. **Page 6**



A section of an overpass on Interstate 35 north of Austin collapsed April 21 after a crane hit the structure. **Page 8**



## Ask Bill



We have been wondering about the "staffing reduction effort." If there is such a problem with too many government employees, why is the department paying for summer hires this summer? Why couldn't the department do away with the program, and start it again once the need for reducing government was over? The money the department would save from not using summer hires could go towards giving TxDOT employees a salary increase, or could go to the sections in TxDOT that need to hire full-time staff.

Thanks for taking the time to listen to us.  
*Missy Johnson, Sam Reyes*  
*General Services Division*

Thanks to you both for your questions about TxDOT's staffing reduction efforts. This is a subject I know many employees are concerned about.

The straight answer to your question is that the staffing reduction effort is not about money. It's about the size of state government.

The Texas Legislature believes, and I agree, that state government can be leaner, more efficient and still provide the high level of service that taxpayers have come to expect. To this end, we are trying to trim state government and increasingly go outside the department for as much work as possible.

Your suggestion to cut the summer employment program is one approach; fortunately it will not be necessary this year. It is my understanding at this point that the summer employment program will not count against the FY '96-'97 FTE cap the Legislature is now discussing.

Again, thanks for taking the time to ask questions on a subject that concerns many employees.

.....

I found your "staff reduction" memo of April 26 confusing on a number of points. First, the second paragraph says that TxDOT will begin evaluating staff reductions on May 1. Yet, the very next paragraph indicates that this effort actually began last year through various task forces. Second, I fail to see the difference between downsizing the staff and cutting back the work force. After all, don't staff people constitute the work

force? Finally, if no need for alarm exists, why even issue a letter to that effect? Meteorologists don't post tornado watches unless conditions for such storms are present. So, should TxDOT employees prepare for the worst? Are layoffs pending? As the 1970s song says, please "tell it like it is."

*Scott McMillan*  
*Houston District*

Thank you for your letter regarding the Executive Director Newsletter that was sent to each department employee on April 26. I will try to clarify some points.

As I said in the newsletter, TxDOT began its staffing reduction effort May 1. This does not mean downsizing or layoffs are pending. Through initiatives such as those mentioned in the newsletter, TxDOT began looking at ways the department could operate more efficiently as early as September 1994. The efforts that began May 1 take what we've learned from these initiatives and put them into action. For example, when a position opens, we want to take a good look at the functions of that position and determine if they can be combined with other duties, divided among current employees, deleted or the position needs to be filled as it is.

My intention is to keep all employees informed of our activities. All state agencies — including TxDOT — are facing a reduction in our legally authorized full-time staff positions. All efforts will be made to ensure that TxDOT's staffing reduction is as painless as possible because employees are our most valued resource.

With the cooperation of employees and a willingness to accept changes in the way we do business, it will be unnecessary for employees to "prepare for the worst," as you put it. I'd rather we all prepare for the best.

.....

After having read the article in *Transportation News* about the department's new DWI policy, I feel compelled to write. Please do not draw the conclusion that I advocate driving while intoxicated; I do not. However, using one's driving record in one's own personal vehicle on one's own time to affect the terms of one's employment is a gross invasion of privacy. What I do on my own time is none of your business. I am employed by the state; I do not belong to it. As long as the state of Texas sees fit to let me hold a valid driver's license, I don't see how the department can limit me to nondriving duties, much less fire me. I can see applying DWI convictions for driving a state vehicle while drunk against an employee, but not convictions for DWI on private time. I think that one DWI in a state vehicle should be grounds for immediate dismissal, but two DWIs in a privately owned vehicle should have no effect on one's employment at all. In the article in *Transportation News*, Cheryl Anderson is quoted as saying "We're not trying to regulate what employees do on their time off." This is an obvious lie. What kind of fools do you take us for? Regulating

what employees do on their on time is exactly what this policy is all about. Next you will be telling us what kind of food we can eat, or what church we can go to. You seem to have forgotten that as American citizens we have certain rights guaranteed by the Constitution. For that matter, the policy that requires an employee to notify his supervisor within one day of receiving a DWI conviction is a clear violation of our constitutional rights. You are in effect requiring the employee to bear witness against himself. Please explain to me how you think you are justified in enslaving department employees in this way.

*Gregor A. Biediger*  
*San Antonio District*

I am sorry that you are unhappy with the department's DWI/DWI policy. As you know, we have had a driving safety program for a number of years. The purpose of the program is to ensure that all employees who drive department vehicles have a good driving record and are not a safety risk. If an employee accrues three or more points due to accidents or other driving violations, on or off the job, the employee is not allowed to drive TxDOT vehicles. The DWI policy is an extension of this program. You also voiced a concern about the department "regulating" off-duty activities.

I want to assure you this isn't our intent. However, the department does have an interest in off-duty activities which could negatively affect safety. An off-duty DWI falls within this category, just as an off-duty speeding ticket would. I understand that this may appear to be "regulatory" on our part, but we have an obligation to ensure that employees who drive for the department aren't a risk to other employees or the traveling public.

You also mentioned that you felt it was unfair to ask someone to report DWI convictions to the department because you felt the department is requiring a person to bear witness against himself. This isn't our intent. We made this requirement of our policy in an effort to take quick action in dealing with driving problems which could result in safety risks. TxDOT would eventually become aware of such a conviction, whether or not it was reported by the individual, because we conduct yearly driver record checks on employees who drive for the department.

Thanks for your concern and your comments.

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Got a question for Bill? Send it to "Ask Bill," c/o Transportation News, Main Office. We will forward it to the man himself and print your question and his answer here. Include your name and work location. We will withhold your identity if requested but Bill doesn't respond to anonymous letters.

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 Texas Department of Transportation



A Day in the Life of ... Julia Smith

## Wichita Falls woman TxDOT's biggest fan



Eloise Lundgren

If you've got a mind to complain about the Texas Department of Transportation, don't do it in front of Julia Smith. She'll set you straight, and in no uncertain terms.

"When people complain to me about the department," said Smith, a purchaser in the Wichita Falls District Office, "I try to get them to look at what really bothers them. Most times, it isn't really the department, but something personal."

Smith, who hails from Detroit, Texas, started with the Wichita Falls District 15 years ago as a parts runner. Five years later, her supervisor began giving her contract purchasing assignments. In 1986, she took her first purchasing course with the National Institute of Governmental Purchasing and is looking toward achieving status as a Certified Professional Public Buyer (CPPB).

"I like my job," Smith said. "I like to get up in the morning and come to work. I've had other jobs where I didn't like to get up and go to work."

"You can't go out in the private sector and find a good place to work like the Texas Department of Transportation," she emphasized. "We've got all good people here."

Smith said she feels like the department gave her a chance. "I think it's a fair place. And that's all I ask," she continued. "Nothing in this life is perfect. If you work hard enough at something, you can make it work."

And if all that sound advice doesn't convince department detractors that they don't have any real complaints, then Smith simply tells them, "Why don't you just go work somewhere else if you don't like it here? If I didn't like my job, I'd do something about it."

Smith has spent much of her life "doing something about it." When she was 5 years old, her hands were badly burned in a fire at her mother's home in Detroit, Texas. Her mother, brother and sister died in the fire, leaving Smith with memories that still bring tears to her eyes.

During her early years of physical therapy, Smith met a nurse named Julie Belbert who took Smith home with her on weekends and afternoons.

"She would read to me," Smith recalled fondly, "and she and her husband would take me out for ice cream. She was the first person who really motivated me."

Smith had to wait to start school until she was 7 because of the accident, but she was then able to skip the first grade because of Belbert's early intervention.

"She really helped me," Smith said. "I knew my ABCs and I knew how to read."

Smith spent several years working as a nursing assistant in hospitals and as a maid.

"I've done everything," she said proudly. "I had lots of disappointments and I fell down, but I always picked myself back up. I kept thinking, 'I can do whatever I want to do — there's nothing I can't do.'"

That attitude paid off later when Smith applied to the department for the parts runner position.

"There were some people who were convinced I couldn't lift the 40 to 50 pounds required for the job," she said with a smile. "I decided to stick with it and see what came out."

What came out, according to Dale Terry, Wichita Falls District public information officer, was a reputation that makes Smith one of the district's most popular employees.

"You can look all over this district," he said, "and never find anyone who doesn't like her."

"In fact, when she moved from the warehouse to purchasing," he continued, "we had vendors calling to complain because she wasn't picking up parts anymore."

Smith's boss, warehouse superintendent Jim Pierson, heartily concurs.

"It would take me about a week to tell you about Julia," he said. "And all of it would be good. No matter what I assign her to do — she puts everything she's got into it."

Smith passed the compliment right back to Pierson. "Jim is the kind of boss who is so good at it that you don't even realize he's the boss," she said.

"She was my No. 1 star in the warehouse," Pierson said fondly. "I

hated to lose her to go into purchasing."

Smith continues to make her mark here. Bill Holderman, one of the vendors whose contract she handles, claims Smith is "as delightful a person as I've ever met. She gives me an uplift every time I'm here."

Smith is modest about her popularity. "I'm just me — just myself," she said. "I treat others like I want to be treated. I just feel that no matter what I do, I should try to be the best I can be."

"And I'm still trying," she laughed. "I haven't given up yet."

Smith's days are filled with handling contract stock receipts, issues, invoices, contract purchasing, regular purchasing and service contracts. And all this involves everything from tire repairs, to office supplies, to propane and gasoline.

The result? "You get good, quick service," Terry maintained.

Although she admitted she misses meeting the public in her warehouse job, Smith said her purchasing position is a continual



Eloise Lundgren, PIO

**Julia Smith, a purchaser in the Wichita Falls District, started with the department 15 years ago as a parts runner. She is now working towards becoming a Certified Professional Public Buyer.**

learning experience. She's taken classes in general public purchasing and public purchasing and materials management, and is looking forward to the challenges of state and national certification.

"I want to be certified more than anything in the world," she said.

In her spare time, Smith reads novels and fishes. "I'm the worst fisherman in the world," she claimed. "But I like to go; I don't care if I catch anything. I'm always reading a book and laying the rod and reel down and forgetting about it."

But let's don't forget about her favorite hobby — spending time with her children and grandchildren. Her son, Bernard, 25, lives with Smith, and her daughter, Tonjua, 24, and her three children live in Paris, Texas, and she's proud of all of them.

Who gets the credit for Smith's positive outlook?

"I really believe in God," she said. "If it weren't for God, I wouldn't be here. And if I didn't pray to God, I wouldn't be as strong as I am."

"I pray to God all the time. I thank Him for everything — my job, my family, my friends."

It's refreshing to be around someone who isn't reluctant to express herself. And I think I will keep in mind Smith's simple formula for happiness.

"I just believe in doing what I feel," she explained. "I'm proud to work for the Texas Department of Transportation. I don't think anybody can tell me any different."

You know, I don't think anyone can either.



# Conference marks AVN's 50 years of service

**Bonnie Adams**  
Associate Editor

Optimism was in the air in 1945 as Texans embraced the end of World War II and the dawn of the aviation age. TxDOT's Aviation Division recently celebrated 50 years of supporting and promoting general aviation at its 13th Annual Texas Airport Operators Conference.

The three-day conference April 26-28, co-sponsored by TxDOT and the Texas Association of Airport Executives, celebrated the state's aviation heritage and its future as a multimodal link with the rest of the state and country.

**"Anything that is 50 years old and still works great should be celebrated."**

David Fulton  
Aviation Division Director

"This conference provides an opportunity to discuss aviation topics that are specific to the needs of general aviation airports and local officials. It's a productive way to seek solutions to common problems," said David Fulton, Aviation Division Director.

The conference featured workshops, presentations and award presentations. "Giving awards each year allows us a chance to show our appreciation for the efforts of individuals and communities as they work to improve or maintain their airports," Fulton said.

Texas Transportation Commission member Anne Wynne presented TxDOT's first Career Contribution to Aviation Award to

Herb Kelleher, founder and CEO of Dallas-based Southwest Airlines.

"The recipient of this award is a man who has made a significant impact on aviation, not only in Texas, but nationwide as well," Wynne said. "Mr. Kelleher had close ties with TxDOT's Aviation Division's predecessor agency, the Texas Aeronautics Commission." It was the commission that granted Southwest's certificate of public convenience and necessity in 1970.

Fulton said the conference offered the opportunity to recognize other aviation achievements. They included: Most Improved Airport of the Year Award to Andrews County Airport in the Odessa District; 1995 Airport Manager of the Year Award winner Evelyn Gould of the Llano Municipal Airport in the Austin District; and the Airport of the Year Award went to the Orange County Airport in the Beaumont District.

"Looking back over the 50-year history of being a state agency for aviation, one sees all the adjustments that have been necessary to continue to provide for the aviation needs of a changing environment and the growing population of Texas," Fulton said. "Besides, anything that is 50 years old and still works great should be celebrated, don't you agree?"

That history started with the Texas Aeronautics Commission, founded in 1945. The commission first studied the state's aviation needs and drafted an amendment authorizing counties, cities and other political entities to establish and operate airports and to obtain financial assistance from state and

federal government. The 50th Legislature enacted that amendment.

When the United States and Texas entered the aviation age in the 1940s, the cost of building a small airport in the state was about \$10,000, less than the price of a new car today. Today, there are 260 general aviation airports statewide that depend on state and federal grants. Meeting their needs of approximately \$48.5 million annually is an ongoing challenge for the Aviation Division which must prioritize airport projects for funding.

The TAC educated the public about aviation and worked with a growing number agricultural aviation interests. By the mid-'50s, there were nearly 1,200 airstrips in Texas and most pilots and communities with airports were familiar with TAC's helping role.

The Aviation Division continues public education efforts through instruction and refresher courses for pilots.

From 1966 through 1986, TAC helped local governments build and improve their general aviation airports with state funds. The Texas Department of Aviation replaced TAC in 1989. It inherited TAC's duties and also became the federal grants administrator for general aviation airports in Texas. In 1991, the Aviation Division was created and became part of TxDOT.

"Our division is committed to doing whatever we can to ensure that cooperative efforts between the Aviation Division and the districts are successful in maintaining the best statewide airport system we can for Texas," Fulton said.

## TxDOT highlight of environmental safety seminar

**Margaret Sanders**  
Waco District

A newspaper story about an environmental safety seminar at Texas State Technical College in April sparked a joint effort by three TxDOT districts to meet more than 200 professional and student safety and materials experts.

Clarence Hobbs, the Waco District's hazardous materials coordinator and a graduate of TSTC's program, realized that the seminar presented an opportunity for the department to showcase its achievements and meet safety and materials experts of the future. He contacted the faculty at TSTC and arranged for the department to have two adjacent booths inside the exhibit hall.

TxDOT was also given an area outside the building to set up several large displays and demonstrations. The Fort Worth District sent its bio-remediation equipment, which sprays petroleum-eating microbes onto diesel spills and other hazardous materials.

The Waco District brought propane and compressed natural-gas-powered trucks and information on the department's alternative fuels program. Dallas brought its hazmat (hazardous material) response truck, complete with "moon suit," which has a self-contained air supply and looks like a space suit. Paul Duvall and Paul Cooper, both of the Dallas District's environmental team, drew crowds each morning demonstrating how the suit was put on.

"This was one of the most popular features of the seminar," said Waco's Safety Coordinator Jim Busby, "because few people — even professionals in the field — ever get to see one of the suits close up."

Inside the center, the TxDOT booths were packed with videos, brochures, publications, slides and hands-on demonstrations. Hobbs set up unlabeled boxes of toxic chemicals and household ingredients and asked seminar participants to guess the contents of each bottle.

Slides featured last year's pesticide spill on Interstate 20 in Balch Springs where 5,000 people were evacuated after a truck hit a bridge abutment and burned. Cooper showed videos of courtesy patrol crews training to clean up diesel spills. "Nearly 95 percent of the hazardous materials incidents we deal with are diesel spills," he

said, "and 80 percent of those are less than 20 gallons." The training helps these crews concentrate on stopping them using dried peat

moss to absorb any liquid on the roadway.

While the TxDOT team showcased the department's leadership in technology, each stressed that hazardous material response was not the department's main objective. "We're not the primary response team, but we are often the first people on the site because we are out on the highways," Cooper said. "We are trying to protect the driving public, our own personnel and the highway system."

The biggest advantage of the fair, all agreed, was



**Paul Duvall helps Paul Cooper into the Dallas District's "moon suit," which is worn by district personnel responding to hazardous material spills.**

that students and professionals in the field got a chance to visit and share ideas. "People don't get to talk to each other on a day-to-day basis," Hobbs said. "This fair gave us the opportunity to show current and future professionals what we do."



# Waco's Wilson enjoys life on the fast track

Margaret Sanders  
Waco District

D.L. (Donis) Wilson's work with the department focuses on straight lines – but after hours he's going in circles.

Wilson, leader of the Waco District's survey crew, has been racing stock cars since 1987, the year he joined the department. But last year, his part-time career took a right turn in a new direction when a limited partnership sponsored him and his car.

Most Friday nights between March and October, you'll find Wilson driving his orange-and-yellow racer around the dirt track at the Heart of Texas Speedway not far from the district complex in Waco. It's dirty, messy and expensive, but Wilson loves it. In fact, he's been passionate about racing since he was a child.

"My mother, Joan, loved the sport and took me to the races with her," he said. "I can remember standing on the fence watching the drivers and wishing that I could be like them."

As he grew, Wilson never lost his enthusiasm, and now it's become a family thing. "I met my wife at the tracks," he said. "She

year, his racing picked up speed when he began driving a new car and racing in street-stock events, finishing in the top three 18 times. He was also named the local street car champ, winning about \$3,900 in 16 races. "It wasn't a lot of money as prizes go," Wilson said, "but it showed consistency in winning."

That consistency attracted the attention of several business owners who wanted to sponsor an up-and-coming local driver. Jerry Cowan, a fan whose lifelong dream was to be involved in racing, had seen Wilson race and suggested a meeting to discuss sponsorship. "I didn't want to go," Wilson said, "but thankfully, my wife, Mary, talked me into it."

Within three weeks, the group had formed Wilco Racing Limited Inc. and invested enough money to buy a new car and trailer and put together a crew with more than 50 years of experience. That support helped Wilson move into the International Motor Contest Association (IMCA), a higher league of racing that attracts approximately 7,000 competitors each year.

The partnership also began marketing Wilson and his racing crew in hopes of attracting additional sponsors and money. They produced a video of his wins, and Wilson's wife developed a brochure.

The efforts have worked. This year, Wilson's racer is emblazoned with the names of original investors as well as new sponsors.

Racing skill and determination are important, Wilson said, but money fuels most racers' success. Even after the initial investment of approximately \$50,000, it costs about \$10,000 a year to keep the car running and the team together.

During 1994, its first year out, the Wilco team hit its share of bumpy track, including rained-out races and mechanical problems with the car. By the time the 1995 season started in March, however, Wilson and the crew were eager to get rolling. During the first three times out, Wilson qualified for the main event twice

by finishing in the top three. He hit an all-career high in early May, when he not only qualified, but won the main event.

Wilson has set his goals higher. As do most other racers, he would love to qualify for the Winston Cup Circuit.

"It's the Super Bowl of stock car racing," he said. "This year's leader has only won four races this year and he's already netted more than \$400,000."

But his dreams also extend beyond the dirt and speed on the track. Ultimately, Wilson said, he'd like to build and sell cars for other racers. "That's a long time away," he said, "but who knows? Anything could happen."



D.L. Wilson, leader of the Waco District's survey crew, gets ready for a Friday night race at the Heart of Texas Speedway in Waco. Wilson has been racing stock cars since 1987.

and my mother make all the races." His 9-year-old son, Coty, has even gotten into the act by racing go-carts. "He's already hooked," the proud father said.

Wilson's first race was a 6-mile enduro event. That doesn't seem so long until you realize that the race was held on a track that was only a quarter-mile long. "That's where the 'enduro' part comes in," Wilson said. "I drove around that track 50 times." He did well enough to earn \$600 on that showing. Even more, he was hooked for life.

He bought a car of his own and continued racing. Each year from 1990 to '92, he was named one of the top seven contenders. The next

## Repair turns into Texas-sized job for Amarillo District Sign Shop

Amarillo District Sign Shop employees recently learned the hard way just how big the state of Texas really is.

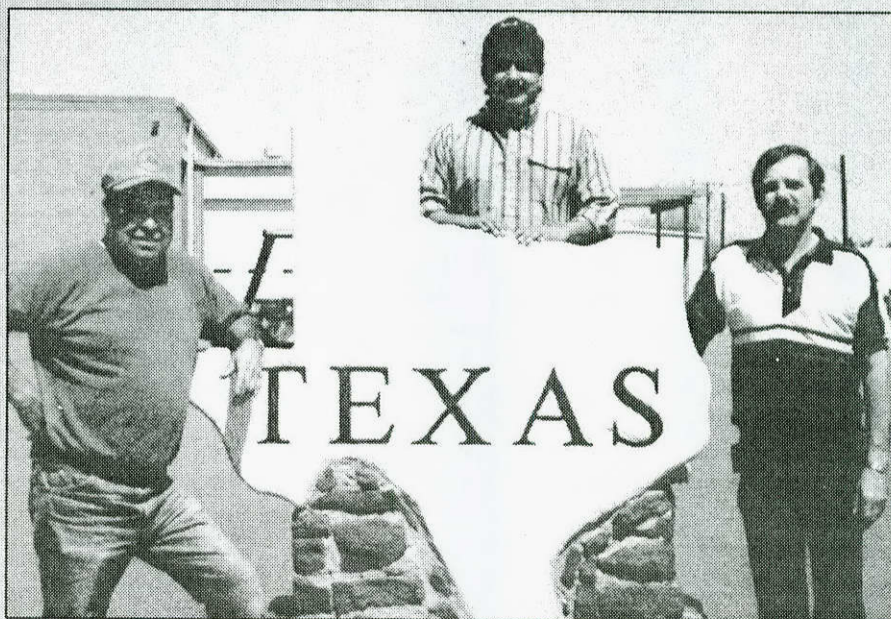
They were charged with recreating a large cement state line marker on US 54 near Nara Visa, N.M., that had been vandalized. The sign was built by Work Projects Administration workers in 1941.

Channing maintenance supervisor C.L. Layman called Amarillo Sign Shop supervisor Bob Smith to ask if the antique sign could be repaired. It took some ingenuity, but Smith, Eli Riojas, J.R. Perales, Chris Caldwell and Rita Young came up with a plan to build a new one.

The original sign was a concrete silhouette of the state with the word "TEXAS" stamped in it.

The sign shop team built a tin mold in the shape of the state and stamped the word "TEXAS" into the wet concrete. The new marker was erected in April and the old one was donated to an area museum.

Tonya Detten, Amarillo District



Amarillo District Sign Shop employees J.R. Perales, Eli Riojas and Bob Smith replicated a 1940s-era state line marker that was destroyed by vandals.



# Community builds park in child's memory

**Sharon Fox**  
Dallas District

It was grueling work, but it was rewarding work. Over a five-day period in April, more than 2,600 people came together — overcoming tornado and thunderstorm warnings — to build a playground in memory of Ellis County Area Engineer Scott Morrow's son, David. David was killed last year when he was hit by a truck while crossing the street. He was 8 years old.

"Talk about building a playground for the kids started surfacing a few days after David's death," said Morrow. "My wife, Gina, had planned to go to a meeting on a Friday about getting more playground equipment around the elementary school. David was hit the Wednesday before the meeting. After his death, David's friends decided they wanted a playground built in memory of him."

The Morrows had heard of a park in Duncanville built by the community. Their research revealed that an architectural firm in New York, Leathers and Associates, had designed that park.

"What sets this firm apart from other

architectural firms is their community-build concept," said Morrow. "They come up with the design, concept and inspection, and you come up with the volunteers and money."

When Morrow found out that he needed about 3,000 volunteers, he knew he had a big job ahead of him.

"Maypearl only has a population of about 800," he said. "In fact, when Dan (of Leathers and Associates) came down, he told us we probably wouldn't be able to get everyone and everything we needed. That just made us all the more determined to do it."

As part of their responsibilities, the architectural firm sends someone to the project site — in this case Dan — who spends about two days planning the playground.

"They really try to get to know the community," said Morrow. "They come down and stay in someone's home, tell you how many committees you will need and how to go about getting donations. They're very helpful."

"I guess what interested us most about this project was how it was designed," Morrow continued. "Dan met with the kids in the area and asked them what they wanted in a playground. The kids pretty much designed their own park."

Many people signed up to work and the Morrows had received many donations. Then Mother Nature stepped in.

"It stormed all but about one day," said Morrow. "We started on Wednesday around 8 a.m. Around noon, it started pouring and we were under all kinds of tornado watches and warnings. We kept on working, but got under a tent and did what we could there."

"By late afternoon, when the storms hit again, no one went under the tent. We just kept on digging holes and erecting structures. And that continued to happen for the rest of the week."

Morrow said he is constantly amazed at the outpouring of help they received. Some people worked all week, from 8 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. daily, and never stopped.

"We had one guy that was there on a work-release program," said Morrow. "He only had to work one shift, but he came back every day. And he worked — hard."

On Sunday, when the playground was completed, Morrow said he saw the man showing the park to his son.

Donations are still needed to retire the \$6,500 debt still owed for the project's lumber, materials and other costs. To make a contribution, contact Morrow at 214.938.1570.

## 13 current, former employees honored for service to state

Thirteen current and former TxDOT employees were recognized in the sixth annual Outstanding Women in Texas Government Awards, which were awarded in eight categories by the State Agency Council to the Governor's Commission for Women in February.

Bernice Bludau of the San Antonio District received a Special Recognition honor for her 44 years of service with the state. Bludau, an administrative technician, joined TxDOT in 1951. The Special Recognition category was added to the awards program this year.

TxDOT's other Outstanding Women nominees were: Contributions in a Leadership Role: Cassie Carlson Reed, Senior Management Team; Barbara Stockein, Environmental Affairs Division; Contributions in a Management Role: Cathy Oatman, San Antonio District; Michele Bibby, Vehicle Titles and Registration Division; Outstanding Customer Service: Jacqueline White, Fort Worth District; Eva N. Flenniken, Paris District; Outstanding Community Involvement: Phyllis R. Chandler, Paris District; Outstanding Professional Development: Bonnie Loeht, Bryan District; Shelby Peoples, Lubbock District; Helen V. Thompson, Wichita Falls District; Margot D. Massey, Public Transportation Division; State Pioneer Spirit Award: Daphne W. (Tommie) Pinkard, retired from the Travel and Information Division.

The awards were established to recognize and honor the accomplishments of women in Texas government and to provide an opportunity to showcase the service state agencies provide to the people of Texas.

All 13 employees received certificates of appreciation for their achievements. *Meredith Whitten, Associate Editor*

## Ribbon-cutting ceremony marks completion of Texas 71

More than 100 people gathered in the historic West Point picnic area near La Grange on April 11 to celebrate "A Partnership of Accomplishment."

The ribbon cutting marked the end of almost 20 years of work to reconstruct Texas 71 from a two-lane roadway to a four-lane divided highway from Interstate 10 near Columbus to the Bastrop County line.

The reconstruction of the almost 49 miles of roadway cost approximately \$75 million and took 13 projects to complete. More than 1,000 acres of right of way were acquired to accommodate the widening of the existing route as well as the new additions around Columbus and La Grange. The cost of the additional land was \$16.5 million. The cost of the projects ranged from approximately \$400,000 to \$18 million.

Of all the projects, the most well-known is the part affectionately called the "Plum Tree Job." This section involved saving several large live oaks by dividing the roadway with a concrete barrier wall instead of the wide grassy median originally planned.

The result of the reconstruction is a safer roadway where fatalities have dropped from 10 in 1982 to one in 1994 and one in 1993.

*Pearlie A. Bushong, Yoakum District*

## PIOs take part in certification program

The demand for information affects every aspect of TxDOT and its operations.

The department's public information officers (PIOs) work to meet this demand made by TxDOT's three publics — local communities, the media and department employees. In an effort to continue to improve how they serve these publics, many of the department's PIOs participated in the Public Relations Certification Program in May.

The program, which is part of the Continuing Education Program at the University of Texas at Austin, taught PIOs new techniques, current trends and fresh skills in the field.

Areas covered by the program included media relations, community relations, speechwriting, management, special events, writing, ethics, employee communication and crisis management. Public relations and communication professionals taught the sections. Many of the instructors had experience working for state or other governmental agencies. *Meredith Whitten, Associate Editor*



## Signs of the times



Cliff Best, COR

Highway signs, like the one above, alerting motorists of Ozone Action Days have been placed in several high-traffic locations in Corpus Christi. The signs can be changed to read "tomorrow" or "today," allowing Corpus Christi commuters to take ozone-reducing steps. On days when ozone is not expected to be a problem, the signs can be folded, hiding the ozone alert message and displaying a reminder that motorists have a major role to play in reducing air pollution.

Houston/Galveson, El Paso, Dallas/Fort Worth and Beaumont/Port Arthur are already designated by the Environmental Protection Agency as non-attainment areas, meaning that they do not meet federal air quality standards. Corpus Christi is a near-non-attainment Texas city, as are Austin, San Antonio and Tyler.



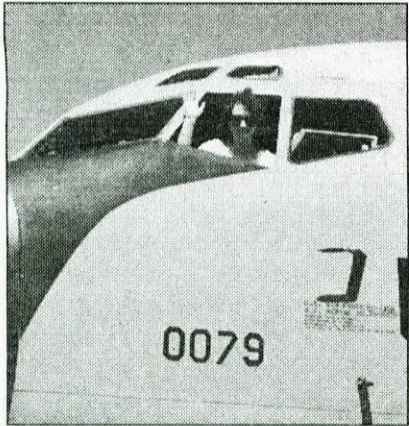
Cliff Best, COR

### Here are the top 10 ways you can help clear the air

- 1 Limit your driving. Try not to drive at all and especially before 10 a.m., and for short trips consider riding your bicycle or walking. On Ozone Action days, carpool or ride the bus. Reduced transit fares may be available on these days.
- 2 Minimize cold starts by combining trips. Most vehicle emissions occur when the engine and catalytic converter are cold.
- 3 Avoid jackrabbit acceleration. It uses more fuel than your car engine can efficiently burn.
- 4 Avoid excessive idling. Drive during off-peak hours to avoid congested traffic. Avoid highway construction projects and lines at drive-through windows.
- 5 Drive your lowest emission vehicle. This is usually your newest or most fuel-efficient car.
- 6 Refuel carefully and in the evening when it's cooler. Avoid spilling gasoline, don't top off the tank, and check to make sure your gas cap seals properly. Always refuel at stations that have installed vapor recovery systems.
- 7 Maintain your vehicle according to the manufacturer's engine tune-up and emission control standards. Get a summer tune-up.
- 8 Keep your car in the garage when it's not in use. This reduces the day-night temperature swings that can cause gasoline vapors to escape from your tank into the atmosphere.
- 9 Don't mow your lawn or use gas-powered lawn equipment during the mornings of Ozone Action days. And keep your equipment in top running condition. Lawn-care machines produce more pollution than you might think — one hour of operation equals about 50 miles of car driving. Use electric or hand-powered models.
- 10 Limit your chores on Ozone Action days. Try not to use oil-based paints, varnishes, degreasers, or lighter fluids.

## Not just another day at the office...by a long shot

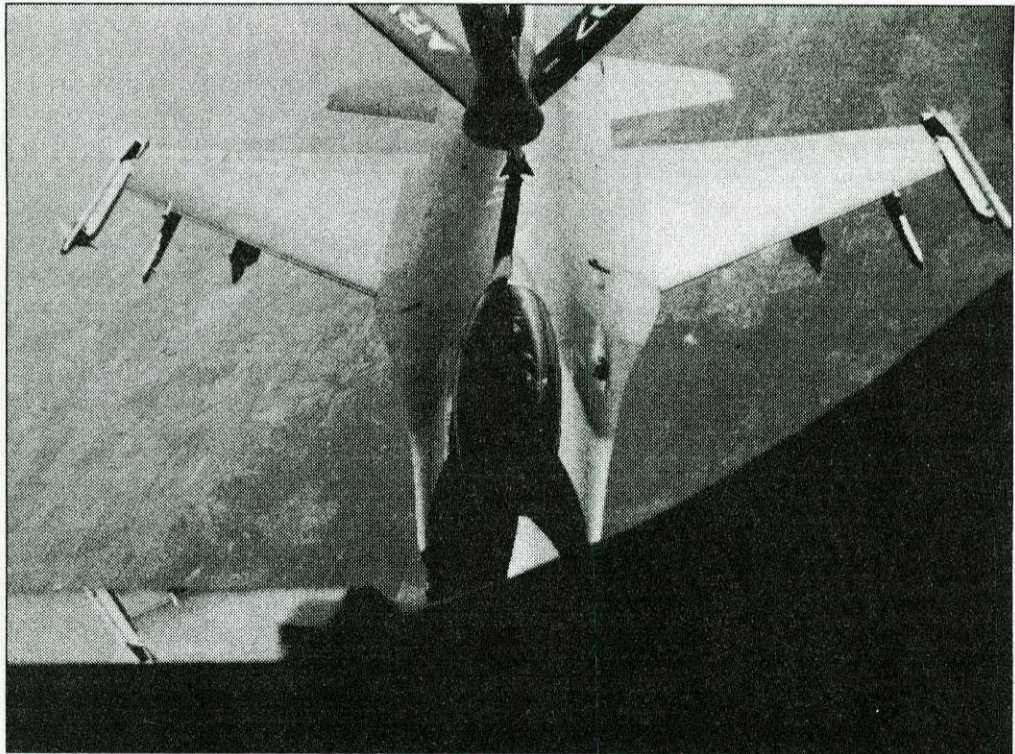
It wasn't a normal Friday on the job for the Public Information Office's Kerry Kutch, community relations director. She sampled the Air Force Reserve's hospitality on an air-to-air refueling mission in the skies above Texas on April 14.



**Kerry Kutch, above, of the Public Information Office, was treated to a ride in an Air Force Reserve KC-135 in April. She took part in an air-to-air refueling mission, during which the KC-135 refueled an F-16 over San Antonio, right.**

"We appreciate the support TxDOT and other employers in the Austin area give our reservists when they need to be away from their civilian jobs to perform military duty. This is just a small way to say 'thank you' and give you a glimpse into what we do," said Capt. Joe Wiggins, chief of public affairs for the 924th Fighter Wing at Bergstrom Air Force Base. Kutch was nominated for the ride by employee Janie De La Cruz, an Air Force Reservist.

"What a trip," said Kutch. "I lay belly down in the back of this



Kerry Kutch, PIO

gigantic tanker, flying tandem with F-16s, connected by this 40-foot fuel boom. I stood in the cockpit, watching the pilots as we did a low flyover above San Antonio." Kutch and approximately 30 other reservists' employers were on the flight.

Kutch said it was a great experience to ride on a KC-135 and watch as the plane refueled F-16 fighters.



# I-35 overpass collapse prompts quick response

## Central Texas' primary north-south route reopens 15 hours after crane hits structure

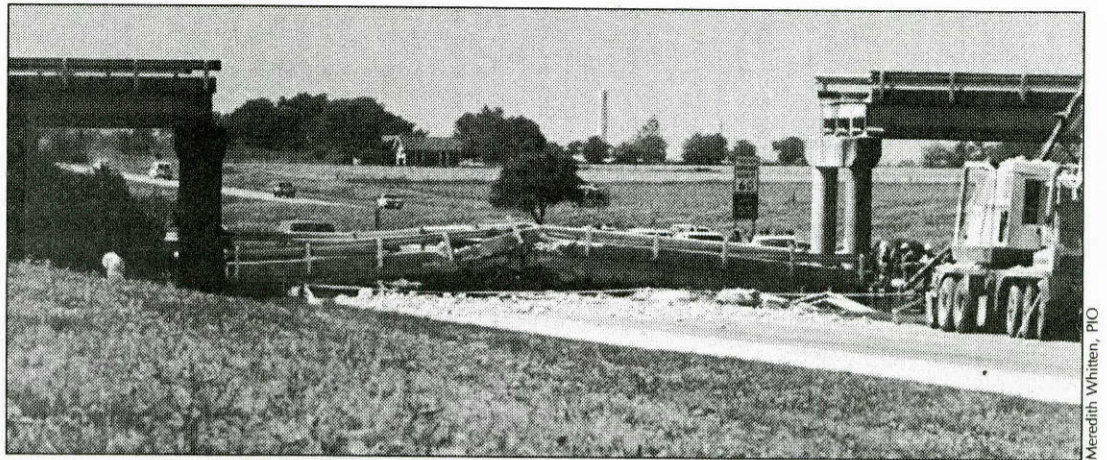
**Meredith Whitten**  
Associate Editor

A section of an overpass on Interstate 35 about 43 miles north of Austin collapsed April 21 after a mobile construction crane hit the structure.

The accident, which occurred at the County Road 312 overpass in Jarrell, critically injured one motorist and caused traffic delays of up to 10 miles and one hour on Central Texas' primary north-south corridor.

Although the accident occurred on San Jacinto Day, a state holiday, TxDOT employees, along with other state and local officials, responded quickly and efficiently to secure the site, keep traffic flowing and begin cleanup efforts.

The crane's hydraulic system apparently malfunctioned, causing the arm to rise and hit the overpass like a "battering ram," John Hurt, public information officer in the Austin District said. The truck had just cleared an overpass about a mile south of the accident, but by the time it attempted to



**A section of an overpass on Interstate 35 in Jarrell collapsed April 21 after a mobile construction crane hit the structure. Both north- and southbound lanes were open 15 hours after the accident.**

pass under the CR 312 overpass, the crane had risen to 19 feet 6 inches. The CR 312 overpass had a clearance of 16 feet 2 inches.

One of the four concrete sections that made up the bridge shattered on impact, sending chunks of concrete up to 30 yards from the site. The crane came to rest about 20 yards from the bridge.

A split second made the difference between life and death for an Austin motorist driving behind the crane in the northbound lanes. Jolene Duggan didn't have a chance to brake before her car slammed into the 500,000 pounds of concrete that fell and barricaded both lanes

**Please see Overpass, page 11**

## Program helps department while helping engineers

**Bonnie Adams**  
Associate Editor

What benefits the individual also serves TxDOT when it comes to its engineering pool. That's why the department offers engineers the chance to continue their education at the graduate level.

The master of science in civil engineering degree program allows TxDOT engineers to work on department projects and to specialize in an area such as structural, geotechnical, and environmental engineering, among others.

"They enhance their knowledge and translate that knowledge to TxDOT operations," said Roger A. El-Khoury, P.E., engineering professional development coordinator. "It's open to our engineers and our assistant engineers who would like to improve their technical skills." While students, the engineers work on department research projects at the universities' research centers.

El-Khoury said that since the program's inception in 1988, 25 TxDOT engineers have earned master's degrees and 10 are now in college.

Engineers such as Floyd Scurry, P.E., complete the 18-month program then return to the department. Scurry, a design engineer with the Houston District, graduated May 12 from Texas A&M University.

"My eyes have been opened to all the research that's being done in transportation," Scurry said. The 31-year-old said graduate school was a "maturing process" for him as an engineer. He was introduced to the latest transportation technology and to the information highway.

"The bachelor of science degree gets you started and the master's makes you more specialized in your field," El-Khoury said.

Scurry's graduate studies focused on design engineering. His bound thesis rests on El-Khoury's bookcase and the program coordinator said he reads each one from cover to cover. Scurry's thesis compared the economic effects of elevated versus depressed freeways on property owners.

Jacqueline Cato, P.E., is assistant area engineer with the Amarillo District's Canyon Office. "I'm a proponent of the master's program. It exposes you to the industry as a whole. TxDOT does a lot of things for research," she said. Cato earned her master's from the University of Texas at Austin in 1993.

Her thesis examined fuel and oil consumption related to road construction delays. Cato said the research skills from her graduate study will be applied to her work for the department.

Gregg Crowell, an engineer with the Transportation Planning and Programming Division, is earning a master's degree at U.T.-Austin. He's chosen the construction engineering and project management engineering speciality.

Crowell said earning a master's as an engineer is critical and allows students to focus on a speciality that benefits the department. One project he's working on is an automated pavement crack sealer for roadways.

The 24-year-old said graduate engineering study has increased his team skills by allowing him to participate in group projects. That skill, he said, will carry over into his work as a department engineer when he graduates in December.

TxDOT engineers interested in the program must first be accepted by U.T., A&M or Texas Tech University. El-Khoury said engineers may then apply for the TxDOT program. The student continues to draw a salary while a full-time student and the department pays for tuition and books.

He has undergone the rigors of graduate engineering work and holds three engineering degrees, all from U.T. "I know what the obstacles are to the student. If a student stumbles along the way, we can help him," he said.

The student also has a Senior Management Team member mentor who reviews performance evaluations.

Assistant coordinator Marilyn Dell said she and El-Khoury are the engineers' main link to TxDOT while in school. "The students work really, really hard and earn what they receive down the road in their career progression," Dell said.

El-Khoury said preference is given to professional engineers who have been with TxDOT for at least four years. That helps ensure that they're "rooted" in the department, he said. Applicants are interviewed by three Senior Management Team members to determine their suitability for the program.

Until now, the graduate program required full-time study, but El-Khoury said a part-time option is being offered this school year.

He said graduate school is an option for continuing education in engineering. His office handles the TxDOT continuing education curriculum which offers 13 courses and National Highway Institute courses. Ten new courses are also being developed. "We try to emphasize our continuing education by being proactive," El-Khoury said. "Especially with the adoption of the Continuing Professional Competence Program by the Board of Registration for Professional Engineers." His office also assists graduate engineers in the professional engineers registration process.

Engineers interested in applying for the program may contact El-Khoury at 512.305.9036 or Marilyn Dell at 512.305.8621. The deadline for the spring 1996 semester is Sept. 8.



## TxDOT participates in annual alternative fuel symposium

Each year, people from around the United States and several foreign countries converge on Austin to participate in the Alternative Vehicle Fuels Market Fair and Symposium April 27 — May 2.

TxDOT participation in this General Land Office sponsored event is a team effort. The Austin District provided a state-of-the-art message board and towing vehicle, and publicized the event to Interstate 35 commuters using the traffic control message boards. Personnel from the General Services, Environmental Affairs, and Travel and Information divisions, and the Public Information Office also participated.

In the past year, TxDOT has improved the quantity and quality of fleet alternative fuel usage and systems. TxDOT surpassed state legislative requirements by having more than 30 percent of the department's 9,000-plus on-road vehicles converted by Sept. 11, 1994. Districts have improved the use of alternative fuel to the extent that many vehicle operators are using either liquified petroleum gas (LPG, commonly referred to as propane) or compressed natural gas (CNG) 100 percent of the time.

Other accomplishments in the past year are the Houston District's unique leasing arrangement with American Natural Gas to install a public access CNG station on TxDOT property, and TxDOT's participation in the Texas Project, a 27-month research project managed by the University of Texas at Austin. It determines the exhaust emission characteristics of aftermarket alternative fuel conversion systems. TxDOT's alternative fuel programs have displaced traditional fuels with more than 859,000 equivalent gallons of alternative fuels in 1994.

TxDOT is working with conversion vendors and manufacturers to speed conversion system installation, improve the quality of these installations and encourage the development of the statewide alternative fuel refueling infrastructure. *Keith Davis, General Services Division*

## HCRS

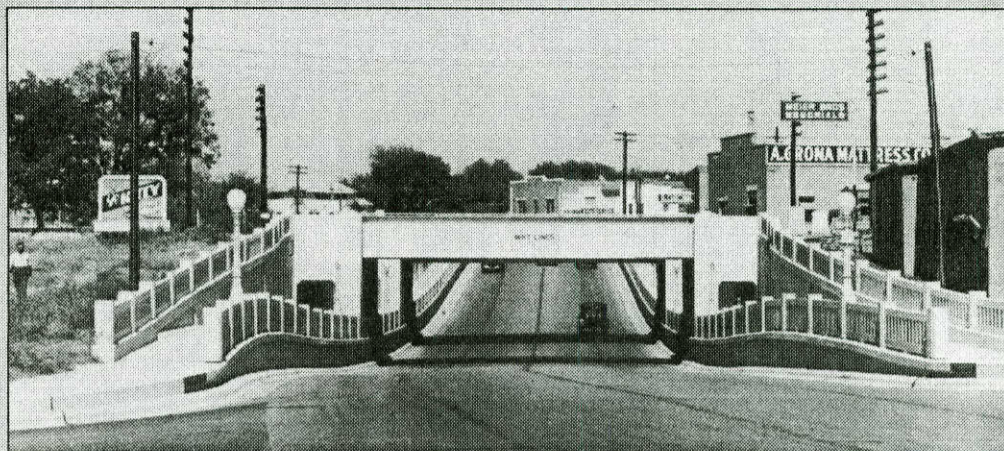
Continued from page 1

the information they want from the recordings, the automated service has cut down on the number of road condition calls that end up in the centers. It has also allowed TxDOT to provide bilingual services for Spanish-speaking callers. And it allows operators to serve tourist calls — which had been neglected during severe road conditions. With each tourism call representing a potential \$100 a day to the state's economy, answering those calls is a high priority.

Johnson said the data organization on HCRS is one of the biggest improvements.

"RCR was just free text; this is a database program, so you can create different reports," he said. A statewide query produces a report that is ordered by highway type and highway number. An operator can also query the roads in just one district, making the information entered by the districts essential. When a call comes in, an

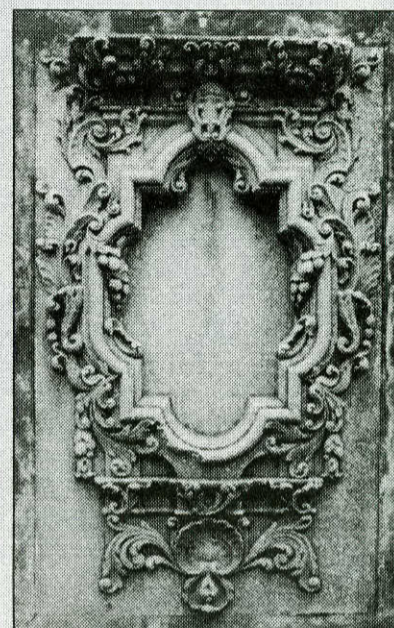
## Then & Now



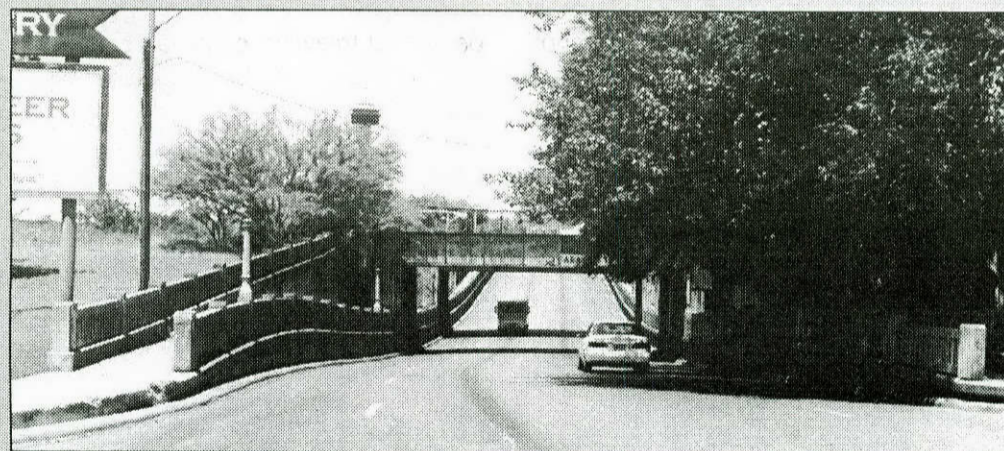
File photo

**The Missouri, Kansas & Texas railroad underpass on South Saint Mary's Street in San Antonio (above and below) was built between May 1936 and May 1937. That underpass and a second one received Works Progress Administration grade crossing funds which required the use of laborers from unemployment rolls and hand labor construction methods whenever possible. It was part of Texas 66, which later became US 281.**

**The underpass still has the original decorative features consisting of 16 wrought iron emblems in the side walls (right). They are replicas of the rose window of San José Mission. Compiled by Anne Cook, TRV and Barbara Stocklin, ENV**



Michael Amador, TRV



Michael Amador, TRV

employee can easily find the information, with roads appearing in the order the caller would encounter them. An operator can tell a caller the affected district, county, roads and lanes, if there is a delay or a detour, and any additional comments, such as if the road is narrowed to one lane.

Johnson said that before the new system, "this kind of information wasn't on there."

Steve Bowen, district contract manager in the Abilene District, inputs road conditions daily for his district. He said that while there are still improvements that can be made, HCRS is "very responsive to the public. They seem to appreciate what we're doing," he said.

When there is a major problem, that priority information is placed first on the automated system. "The system allows wherever we're having the biggest problem to go first. If it's flooding in Southeast Texas, they'll be the first section on the menu, so more people will get in and they'll get in quicker."

Johnson praised the CI team's efforts. The

team worked on the project for about one year, culminating with the distribution of Manual Notice 93-1, which came out in March '93.

"You always hear about the synergy, and it really did work," Johnson said of the team concept. "Someone would say something, but instead of shooting it down, someone else would say, 'Well, yeah, that might work' and add to it. It allowed people without expertise in doing road conditions to look at the system in a real practical sense and offer input. They would ask, 'Why make it so complicated?'"

Johnson concedes that the system is not perfect, but it is far better than just two years ago. With HCR, TxDOT can help callers travel more safely, effectively and efficiently.

"I'm not going to say it's the greatest thing since sliced bread," Johnson said. "There are some problems, but for what we do, the volume of calls we handle and the type of information our callers want, the system is working."



# Service Awards

## June 1995

### Abilene

**20 years**  
Wayne V. Mize  
**5 years**  
Bobby J. Henley Jr.

### Amarillo

**20 years**  
Royce J. Howell  
**15 years**  
Darrell J. Gililand  
**10 years**  
Jerry W. Betzen  
**5 years**  
Brian K. Pope  
Harold E. Whaley

### Atlanta

**25 years**  
Boyd W. Daniel  
**10 years**  
Mickey W. Davidson  
Gilbert R. Herndon  
Shannon D. Smith  
**5 years**  
Edward W. Reddic

### Austin

**25 years**  
James D. Schuchardt  
**15 years**  
Jeffery D. Tolson  
**10 years**  
Christophe E. Grose  
Richard D. Hull  
Wanda L. Melton  
Thomas J. Rickard  
**5 years**  
James E. Schneider

### Beaumont

**25 years**  
William F. Leopard  
**10 years**  
Shelly J. Rider  
Leanna F. Sheppard  
Clinton H. Smith  
**5 years**  
Karl W. Hall

### Brownwood

**30 years**  
Lucy B. Roden  
**25 years**  
Victor O. Ortegon  
**15 years**  
Odis R. Holsenbeck  
Rickey C. Payne  
**10 years**  
Bruce R. Ransberger  
**5 years**  
William M. Bradshaw  
Ricky W. Jones  
Karen L. Mustard

### Bryan

**10 years**  
Steve F. Brown Jr.  
Henry C. Hubnik  
Dina D. Splane  
**5 years**  
John S. Byrd  
Charles G. Clark

### Childress

**15 years**  
James S. Heath  
**10 years**  
Bluford D. Booth

### Corpus Christi

**30 years**  
Don L. Mixon  
Manuel L. Salinas  
**25 years**  
James G. Sexton  
**10 years**  
John R. Kelly  
**5 years**  
Thomas W. Redding Jr.  
William A. Steger

### Dallas

**35 years**  
Paul D. Hollabaugh  
**30 years**  
Milton R. Gurecky  
Raymond J. Huschke  
James B. Taylor  
**25 years**  
Addison E. Oliver  
**20 years**  
Claude S. Jones Jr.  
**15 years**  
Rodney Judge Jr.  
Lloyd G. Petty  
Woodroe T. Portley  
Hulen Whitfield  
Charyl E. Williams  
**10 years**  
John A. Babovec  
James K. Barnes  
Chris W. Behnke  
Steven W. Chambers  
Brenda N. Stefka  
**5 years**  
Nicolas Argueta  
James R. Brummett  
Clay E. Chambers  
George Edinbyrd Jr.  
Steven W. Lancaster  
Tina J. Malone  
Alan S. Radaydeh  
Susan S. Saghian  
Manizheh Vassigh  
Jason C. Womack

### El Paso

**30 years**  
Manuel S. Colmenero  
**10 years**  
Hector Chanez Jr.  
Thomas M. Hughes  
Roberto P. Saenz  
Ruben G. Valenzuela

### Fort Worth

**20 years**  
Perry G. Bailey  
**10 years**  
Jimmey F. Bodiford  
Richard L. Sessums  
**5 years**  
James R. Goolsby

### Houston

**25 years**  
Billy W. Wilson  
William T. Wycoff  
20 years  
Louis Hawkins Jr.  
Ronnie L. McCrimmon  
**15 years**  
William J. Beichner  
Delvin L. Dennis  
Sara A. Eliaz  
Clyde D. Moss  
**10 years**  
Sharmarion E. Brown  
Cleo Gates  
Mark E. Holt  
Patricia G. James  
Ella B. Kidder  
Carlos M. Olmos  
Hughlon L. Painter  
David P. Peebles III  
Issam C. Talje  
Adrian O. Tamayo  
**5 years**  
Brett C. Bowen  
James L. O'Neal  
Steven L. Pollard  
Martin L. Seets

### Laredo

**20 years**  
Jesus M. Jimenez  
**15 years**  
Martha P. Medina  
**5 years**  
Luis Flores Jr.  
Vicente B. Menchaca Jr.

### Lubbock

**20 years**  
Bobby G. Long  
**15 years**  
Oura B. Clare  
Harold W. Roller  
**10 years**  
Frank A. Vaughn  
**5 years**  
Sherry Z. Turner

### Lufkin

**20 years**  
Shirley L. Reynolds  
**5 years**  
Juan R. Molina  
Travis D. Rogers  
W. T. Thomas

### Odessa

**10 years**  
Daniel L. Dalager  
Rosario S. Munoz  
**5 years**  
Robert C. Watts  
Laurie G. Williams

### Paris

**25 years**  
Jimmy N. Hardy  
**10 years**  
William F. Englutt  
Robert C. Slider  
**5 years**  
J. L. Crow

### Pharr

**15 years**  
Ramiro Cano  
**10 years**  
Robert W. Delafuente  
Velma N. Garcia  
Reynaldo G. Nino  
Eduardo Pedraza  
Arnoldo H. Trevino  
**5 years**  
Pedro Dela Rosa Jr.

### San Angelo

**10 years**  
James A. Bates

### San Antonio

**25 years**  
Joe E. Bird  
Charles R. England  
Arturo R. Gutierrez  
Norman D. Phinney Jr.  
20 years  
Sandra T. Jackson  
**15 years**  
Mary S. Nelson  
Martin M. Rocha  
Victoria G. Zambrano  
**10 years**  
Enrique M. Carrales  
Samuel C. Moss  
**5 years**  
Brenda L. Barden

### Tyler

**25 years**  
Robert A. Carlile  
Larry R. Tiner  
20 years  
Dale E. Talley  
**10 years**  
David M. Boyd  
Sherri C. Ralson  
Edith S. Watson  
**5 years**  
Willie G. Akin Jr.  
Kevin L. Harbuck  
Hubert D. White Jr.

### Waco

**25 years**  
Angie G. Cook  
Allin L. Tipton  
**15 years**  
Thomas C. Myers  
**10 years**  
Paul J. Plant  
**5 years**  
Pamela K. Smith

### Wichita Falls

**30 years**  
Jimmy N. Glenn  
**25 years**  
Elmer H. Adkins Jr.  
Clifton W. Bell  
Jerry B. Davis  
James D. Terry  
**15 years**  
Davis L. Powell  
**10 years**  
Phillip Lujan  
Jerry L. Martin  
**5 years**  
David L. Navarro  
Cathy K. Wadkins

### Yoakum

**30 years**  
Emilio Barrera Jr.  
James A. Caddell  
**10 years**  
Randy C. Zimmerman

### Budget and Finance

**5 years**  
Casey D. Bordovsky  
Thomas A. O'Connor  
Elsa P. Pina

### Central Permit Office

**5 years**  
Ryan A. Callaham  
Joseph R. Fealy  
Patrick G. Klier  
Ashley E. Vest

### Construction and Maintenance

**5 years**  
Billie S. Howell

### Design

**30 years**  
Audrey W. Laster  
Charles C. Terry  
**15 years**  
Peggy S. Chandler  
**10 years**  
Mark J. Seerey

### Environmental Affairs

**25 years**  
Frank A. Weir

### General Services

**15 years**  
Linda E. Moos

### Human Resources

**5 years**  
Jeanne Richard

### Information Systems

**30 years**  
Jon B. Hall  
**15 years**  
Douglas C. Herold  
Neil E. Powell  
Jeffrey C. Woodard  
**10 years**  
Thelma Garcia  
Leonel Saenz Jr.  
**5 years**  
Robert L. Brown  
Troy W. Jungmann  
Randall K. McKenzie  
Nicholas R. Osborn  
William K. Stroman  
Linda J. Walker

### Materials and Tests

**15 years**  
Antonio R. Gonzales Jr.  
**10 years**  
Roy F. Collins Jr.  
Eugene E. May Jr.

### Motor Vehicle

**10 years**  
Wanda K. Anderson

### Occupational Safety

**15 years**  
Edwin M. Sims

### Senior Management Team

**25 years**  
Josephine W. Pellegrino

### Travel and Information

**10 years**  
Thelma L. Herwig  
**5 years**  
Staci L. Powers

### Vehicle Titles and Registration

**30 years**  
William E. Bryant  
**20 years**  
Susan E. Devries  
**15 years**  
Lisa M. Coy  
**10 years**  
Carmen G. Vasquez  
**5 years**  
Carmen Ford  
Michael K. Hayes

### Traffic Operations

**15 years**  
Karl A. Burkett  
**10 years**  
Henry H. Wickes

# Retirements

## November 1994

**Fort Worth**  
Carl R. Cole, 4 years  
Maintenance Technician II

## April

**Austin**  
Luther W. Toungate, 30 years  
Roadway Maintenance Supervisor V

## Beaumont

James Tomplait, 30 years  
Roadway Maintenance Supervisor II

## Fort Worth

Eddie E. Raby, 30 years  
Engineering Technician V

## May

**Amarillo**  
William D. Webb, 30 years  
Engineering Specialist I

## Atlanta

Billy B. Peace, 30 years  
Maintenance Technician V

## Bryan

Wayne Bosse, 30 years  
Engineering Technician V

## Corpus Christi

Dexter C. Turner, 28 years  
Engineering Specialist II

## Dallas

Philip Navarro, 14 years  
Motor Vehicle Mechanic II  
Arthur B. Pylant, 13 years  
Engineer Technician IV

## Houston

Raymond Sanders, 35 years  
Engineering Specialist II

## Lufkin

Alena H. O'Neill, 10 years  
Clerk II

## Paris

Jerry Simpson, 30 years  
Maintenance Technician

## Pharr

Antonio Flores Jr., 30 years  
Roadway Maintenance Supervisor III

## Central Permit Office

Dan Vera, 26 years  
Permit Unit Manager

## General Services

Thomas D. Brown, 27 years  
Reproduction Equipment Operator III

## Transportation Planning and Programming

Merlene W. Kouba, 25 years  
Staff Services Officer I

# Transitions

## Effective April

Bryan L. Nash, Area Engineer, Gilmer Area Office, Atlanta District.  
David L. Paine, Assistant Director for Operations, Systems, and Telecommunications, Information Systems Division.  
Carolyn A. Yarbrough, District Traffic Engineer, Odessa District.

## Effective May

Steve Ekstrom, Area Engineer, Paris Area Office, Paris District.

## Adams, Sanders call it quits

*Transportation News* says goodbye this month to a couple of old and dear friends.

Bonnie Adams, associate editor and staff *Yankee*, suffers from chronic homesickness and is returning to her native Pennsylvania.

Margaret Sanders, Waco District assistant public information officer and a frequent and valued contributor (see pages 4 and 5), is the new public information director at McLennan County Community College in Waco.

The staff of *Transportation News* wishes Adams and Sanders the best in their new pursuits. They will be missed.



## In Memoriam

### Retirees

O. A. Akin, Everman, retired from Fort Worth District in 1986, died April 1, 1995.  
 Felipe M. Dominguez, El Paso, retired from El Paso District in 1985, died March 8, 1995.  
 Charles E. Doncaster, Florissant, retired from El Paso District in 1973, died March 11, 1995.  
 B. B. Freeborough, Granite Shoals, retired from Austin District in 1954, died Feb. 25, 1995.  
 Lorenzo H. Garza, San Antonio, retired from San Antonio District in 1993, died March 5, 1995.  
 J. C. Harber, Abilene, retired from Abilene District in 1977, died Feb. 14, 1995.  
 Jasper N. Harris Jr., Crockett, retired from Houston District in 1993, died Feb. 27, 1995.  
 Archie A. Harris, San Angelo, retired from San Angelo District in 1976, died March 10, 1995.  
 Engelbert A. Jelinek, Whitney, retired from Bridges and Structures Division in 1969, died Dec. 21, 1994.  
 William E. Kelly, Odessa, retired from Odessa District in 1968, died Feb. 11, 1995.  
 George M. Kerbow, Commerce, retired from Paris District in 1976, died Feb. 19, 1995.  
 John T. King, Dallas, retired from Dallas District in 1984, died March 22, 1995.

Irwin E. Luedke, Bellville, retired from Yoakum District in 1982, died March 14, 1995.  
 Charles W. McAdams, Dodd City, retired from Paris District in 1993, died March 27, 1995.  
 Clyde E. McKandles, Midland, retired from San Angelo District in 1979, died March 20, 1995.  
 Lawrence J. McNamara, Alpine, retired from El Paso District in 1976, died March 8, 1995.  
 Oscar H. Oakley, Woodson, retired from Wichita Falls District in 1990, died March 26, 1995.  
 Lester W. Richter, Columbus, retired from Yoakum District in 1980, died April 10, 1995.  
 Edwin P. Rothen, South Houston, retired from Houston District in 1982, died March 20, 1995.  
 Francisco C. Rodriguez, Baytown, retired from Houston District in 1982, died March 8, 1995.  
 Billy B. Tinkle, Otto, retired from Dallas District in 1988, died February 23, 1995.  
 Ferrel D. Waren, Brownwood, retired from Brownwood District in 1974, died March 13, 1995.

## Overpass

Continued from page 8

of northbound I-35. Duggan, 24, was airlifted to Scott and White Memorial Hospital in Temple with head and chest injuries. She is expected to make a full recovery.

The truck's driver suffered minor injuries and was released from Scott and White.

Bill Garbade, Austin District Engineer, was on the site all day, overseeing the stabilization and repair of the bridge. Hurt said having the district engineer on the site expedited crews' efforts to clear the highway, obtain purchase acquisitions and secure the bridge to ensure the safety of the traveling public.

Motorists were diverted onto the frontage roads after the 9:15 a.m. accident for about two miles on each side of the overpass. Crews removed rubble from the fallen bridge, shored up the damaged bridge columns and installed barriers to steer traffic away from the columns. One northbound lane was opened at 6 p.m., and the other opened shortly before 10 p.m. Southbound lanes were opened after TxDOT officials inspected the bridge's support beams, which were holding up the remaining section of the overpass. Both north and south lanes were open by 12:15 a.m. Saturday, just 15 hours after the accident.

The Texas Department of Public Safety provided traffic control. Local businesses voluntarily supplied workers with soft drinks, bottled water, ice and other supplies.

## Seventh annual softball tourney set July 29-30

The Seventh Annual TxDOT Championship Softball Tourney will be held July 29-30 at the Pleasant Valley Sportsplex in Austin. Teams may sign up for one of three divisions: men's competitive, men's recreational or co-recreational. The entry fee is \$130 per team.

One change this year is the "e-rule" that prevents competitive teams from entering the men's recreational division. Any batter who hits a home run will be called out and the run will be awarded to the defensive team in recreational play.

For additional tournament information or entry forms, contact Zachary Graham in the Transportation Planning and Programming Division at 512.467.3812.

## Calendar

<b>June</b>	
5-9	CAiCE Training, Austin, ISD
6-8	11th Annual Internal Audit Conference, Austin, AUD
12-13	District Pavement Engineer/Pavement Management Information System Coordinators Meeting, Austin, DES
19	Emancipation Day (state holiday)
20-22	Traffic Operations Conference, Austin, TRF
21-22	Public Transportation Semi-Annual Meeting, Austin, PTN
28-30	Biennial Radio Communications Conference, Austin, AUS
29	Commission Meeting, Austin
<b>July</b>	
4	Independence Day (holiday)
10-12	Management Team Meeting
11	Center for Transportation Research/TxDOT Symposium, Austin, RTT
27	Commission Meeting, Austin
<b>August</b>	
27	LBJ Day
31	Commission Meeting, Austin
<b>September</b>	
4	Labor Day (holiday)
28	Commission Meeting, Austin
<b>October</b>	
16	Management Team Meeting, College Station
16-18	Transportation Conference, College Station
26	Commission Meeting, Austin
<b>November</b>	
6-10	Annual Human Resources Management Conference, Austin, HRM
30	Commission Meeting, Austin

## TxDOT Recycles



### Building Construction & Maintenance

- ❖ Recycled paper insulation
- ❖ Recycled plastic lumber
- ❖ Salvage building materials
- ❖ Recycle light ballasts
- ❖ Recycling space in building designs

### Roadways

- ❖ Fly ash concrete
- ❖ Paper-based hydraulic mulch
- ❖ Explore uses for fly ash
- ❖ 100% of TxDOT generated RAP
- ❖ Recycle plastic goods

### Equipment Fleet

- ❖ Retreaded tires
- ❖ Recycle antifreeze
- ❖ Rerefined oil
- ❖ Non-wood trailer decking materials
- ❖ Remanufactured mechanical parts

### Break Area/Cafeteria

- ❖ Ceramic coffee mugs
- ❖ Permanent lunch bags
- ❖ Recycle aluminum cans
- ❖ Provide mugs for guests
- ❖ Recycled napkins & paper products

### Office

- ❖ Recycle white office paper
- ❖ Reuse office supplies
- ❖ Refillable pens/pencils
- ❖ Reduce paper flow
- ❖ Remanufacture toner cartridges

Every day is Earth Day.  
Please Recycle!



# Letters

My wife and I wish to commend to you Mr. **Josh Logan** for his kindness to us. As we were traveling through a construction site near Longview, we ran over a piece of metal and had a blowout.

As I was taking off the defective tire, Mr. Logan drove up. He surveyed the situation and offered to help put on the spare — which he did. I was certainly grateful for his help. After things had been replaced in the trunk, Mr. Logan said he would lead us to a tire center in Longview so that we could soon be on our way again. In just a short time the tire had been purchased and put on. A lovely restaurant was recommended by him where we ate our breakfast.

It is so rare to meet someone like Mr. Logan, who went out of his way to turn a bad experience into a pleasant one because of his concern and interest in helping travelers stranded on the Interstate. My wife and I both work for the state of Tennessee and surely are thankful for the help and support given to us by an employee of the state of Texas.

**John R. Bostic**  
**Smyrna, Tenn.**

*Josh Logan is an equipment mechanic in the Tyler District.*

.....

We want to express our appreciation to Mr. **Preston Thomas** and the Texas highway department for their help on Sept. 1. We had run out of gas on US 82 between Gainesville and Sherman and within 15 minutes Mr. Thomas had brought us gas, at no cost and we were on our way.

Thanks again to Mr. Thomas for his kindness and the Texas highway department for the gas.

**Ben & Irma Gene Wiggins**  
**Bennington, Okla.**

*Preston Thomas is a maintenance technician in the Sherman Maintenance Office, Paris District.*

.....

We are the couple in the Cavalier wagon who had the blowout west of Spicewood on Texas 71 last Sunday. You were so kind as to stop to give assistance. If we had more people of your caliber the world, let alone Texas, would be a much better place in which to live. We, too, have attempted to pass on such treatment. It really is satisfying and contagious.

Thank you for placing your truck in a precautionary position to help avoid some of the risk of changing a tire so close to the road's edge. Thanks to you, we were on our way again very quickly.

We took your advice, too. We purchased four new tires. The old ones proved to be original equipment, about five years old or more, were showing faint signs of cracks and very close to legally bald.

We completed our business and successfully returned to Austin, the entire balance of the trip made on the tiny spare. We checked the tire pressure in Llano and traveled at relatively slow speeds.

Thanks again for taking the time and for your thoughtfulness and caring.

**Herb and Polly Schwartz**  
**Austin**

*The man in the truck was William "Little*

*Bill" Kohutek, a welding inspector in the Bridge Construction and Maintenance Section of the Construction and Maintenance Division.*

.....

We'd like to mention **Arturo Gonzales** of Iraan, Texas, for his help and kindness to us when we had vehicle problems at rest-stop 308. We appreciate it very much. Thanks!

**H & L Sybouts**  
**Bellingham, Wash.**

*Arturo Gonzales works as a maintenance technician out of our Iraan Maintenance Section, Odessa District.*

.....

My wife and I were recently on a trip to Texas and while returning home to California on I-10, about 20 miles east of El Paso, we had a blowout. I pulled to the side of the road and attempted to change the tire.

While I had a spare tire and jack, etc., to change this tire I came to the place where I just did not have the power to loosen the lug nuts. I struggled with this for about a half-hour and did manage to loosen two of the five lug nuts.

While struggling with this, one of your Texas Department of Transportation trucks pulled up behind me with his yellow light flashing and Mr. **Reymundo Sepulveda** came over to ask what the trouble was.

Within minutes Mr. Sepulveda loosened the remaining three lug nuts and put the spare on and had us on our way again. Not only did he get us on our way but he had us follow him to El Paso where he showed us where we might purchase a new tire.

I wish to call this kindness by Reymundo Sepulveda to your attention and commend him as a good representative of your Texas Department of Transportation. Thank you.

**Stanley G. Brown**  
**San Lorenzo, Cal.**

*Reymundo Sepulveda is an engineer technician with the El Paso Rural Area Office, El Paso District.*

.....

On Dec. 28, 1994, while driving south on an overpass on Interstate 35, I experienced a near blowout on my vehicle's right rear tire. I was, however, very fortunate to receive assistance from **Juan Luis Garza** and **Pedro Mosqueda**, both employees of your agency.

Their concern and determination to see that I was safe and that my vehicle was operational was noteworthy. Please express my gratitude to them as well as to your agency who trains their personnel to react in such a responsible manner.

**Ruby Smith-Gonzalez**  
**Laredo**

*Juan Luis Garza and Pedro Mosqueda are maintenance technicians with the Laredo Maintenance Office in the Laredo District.*

.....

On Nov. 30, my husband, Walter B. Collier, a retired maintenance engineer from the San Antonio District, and I went to our fishing lease just off Interstate 37, south of Campbellton, for a day of relaxation and fishing when we suddenly discovered that we had a dead battery in our pickup. Even though we had our cellular phone, we were

unable to reach any of our relatives in the area for assistance. While Walter wondered just what we could do, I decided to take a contemplative walk up to I-37. Thinking about the many times I have read in Transportation News of someone needing help and some wonderful highway employee just happening along, and voicing a prayer like that, what should appear before my wondering eyes—a beautiful yellow highway truck slowly traveling south right before my eyes on I-37 and stopping there to adjust a "Watch for Ice on Bridge" sign! My shout for rescue and help soon aroused a very helpful employee who came to our rescue and helped us start the truck. His name is **Scott Baldeschwiler** from the George West Maintenance Section. What a fine young man who truly is representative of the service from the highway department, and Walter and I would both love to commend and thank him for his kind assistance. He is an asset to your district!

**Lucille Collier**  
**San Antonio**

*Scott Baldeschwiler is a maintenance technician, Corpus Christi District.*

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