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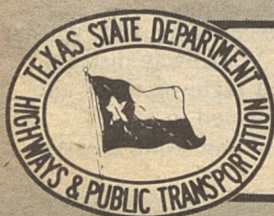
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TRANSPORTATION news

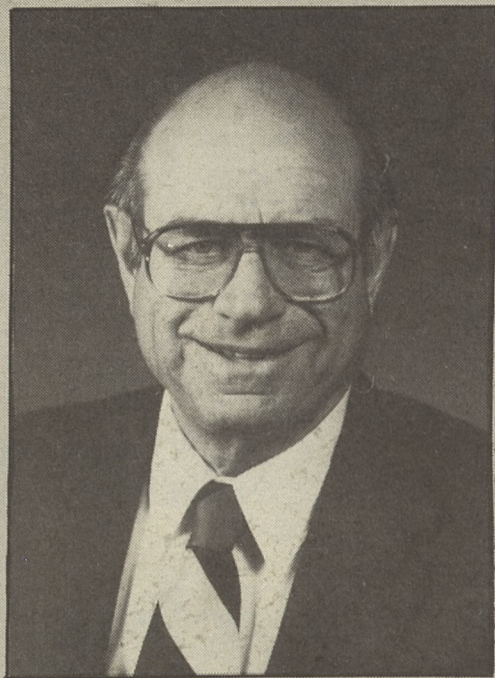


71st Legislature wraps up, p. 3

Summer program produces winning season, p. 11

Conversation with Franklin Young, pp. 4-5

July 1989



I am writing this at home as I recuperate from recent surgery and illnesses. During trying times such as Mary Ann and I have been going through recently, you really have an opportunity to sort out the truly important features of your lives.

I know that the friendship and bond I feel for my coworkers and friends in the highway department is an overwhelming emotion. During recent days the support offered by so many of you, as indicated by your cards, thoughts, and prayers, has been deeply heartwarming. The messages of hope and prayer from you have been so important in maintaining the spirit needed to get well.

As an example, a card from our Hebbronville employees brings tears and chokes me up every time I read the handwritten note that says, "May you recover with godspeed and rejoice in the Lord for honoring the prayers of his people."

Needless to repeat — but I will — thank you all from the bottom of my heart. Your kind thoughts and most of all your prayers have sustained us in these tough times.

What a great group of people to work with!

R.E. Stotz, Jr.
Engineer-Director

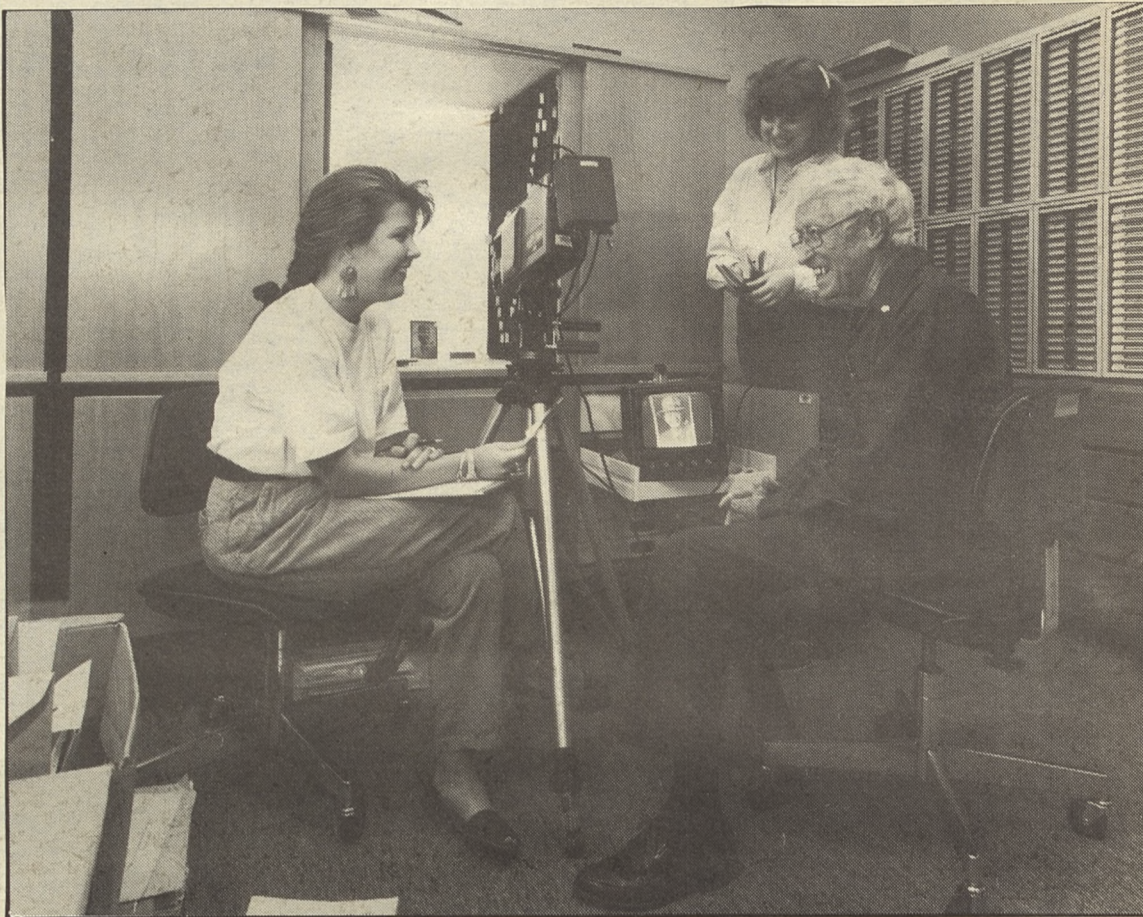


Photo librarian Anne Cook, standing, audiovisual intern Nancy Simonieg, and retired district engineer Mulkey Owens work on identifying old photo negatives, aided by a video camera.

Retired DE brings names to photos

By Gina McAskill

Among the neat files in the Travel and Information Division's Audiovisual Branch lie crates and boxes full of black-and-white photographs and negatives.

The photos depict people, places, and events in the history of the highway department — but they remain useless since their documentation has long since disappeared.

But a recent project undertaken by the branch and Mulkey Owens, former district engineer for Austin, has produced the identification of hundreds of those puzzling pictures.

Owens visited the photo library about 10 times over two months this spring. He identified 75 to 125 photos each time.

"Only about 80 percent of the old photos are really identifiable," said Nancy Simonieg, a University of Texas urban geography student who undertook the project while working as an intern for the section. "On

most of the construction scenes, it's really hard to tell where the project was."

"But most of the people (in mug shots) Mr. Owens knew right off," Simonieg added.

Viewing negatives was made easier by a system rigged by Al Rubio, video producer for the branch. The negative is placed in front of a backlit screen, and a video camera is trained on it. The camera has a little-known function that will display the negative as a positive on its monitor.

Geoff Appold, manager of the Audiovisual Branch, said that although this phase ended with the departure of Simonieg, the division's photo librarian, Anne Cook, wants to continue the project.

"People like Mulkey are often the only ones who can identify these old photos, and we need to take advantage of their knowledge," said Appold.

Simonieg said that no one really knows how many pictures remain to be examined, but that the number is probably in the thousands.★

Crossings, highway maintenance get nod

Twenty accident-prone railroad intersections will get signals, and state highways will get \$145 million in maintenance funds, under programs approved by the highway commission at its May meeting.

The \$1.5 million 1988-89 City-County Railroad Signal Program is mandated by the Texas Legislature. The 18-year-old program covers only streets and roads off the state highway system. The state highway fund pays 80 percent of installation costs, and local governments and railroad companies each contribute 10 percent.

Intersections are selected using a priority index based on the number and speed of trains, the amount of vehicle traffic per day, what warning devices are in place, and how

many train-involved accidents have occurred there in the past five years. The protection installed follows federal guidelines, and is usually of the gate-arm type.

"Right now there are about 14,000 railroad crossings in Texas, and 9,500 of those are unsignalized," said Roger Welsch, the highway department's deputy director for design and construction. "This program, along with federal assistance programs, allows us to improve safety a little more each year."

The program will improve crossings in the following counties: Austin, Bell, Brazoria, Brazos, Cass, Cherokee, Dallas, Hall, Johnson, Liberty, Tarrant, Waller, and Wichita.

A program that provides \$145 million to

protect Texans' investment in their roadways was also approved by the commission at its May meeting.

The 1990 Preventive Maintenance Program will prevent major deterioration of roads and bridges by continuing a planned cycle of repairs. The program includes resurfacing, cleaning and sealing pavement and bridge joints, painting bridges, and related work.

As much as 20 percent of the program funds can be spent on nonpreventive maintenance, including signal work, bridge repair, and landscaping.

The \$145 million allocated for 1990 will be distributed among the 24 highway districts based on the number of highway miles and the number of miles traveled in each district. ★Gina McAskill and Lona Reeves

Lawmakers send department no 'surprise'

By Jim Bisson

Texas tradition was in full swing at midnight on Memorial Day as Rep. Ernestine Glossbrenner sang "Thank God and Greyhound, We're Gone," to close the 71st Texas Legislature.

"This session held few surprises for the department," said Byron Blaschke, deputy engineer-director. He noted that the department had, for the first time, entered the session with a clearly defined set of legislative issues considered beneficial to the department: an employee pay raise, relocation assistance for employees, early possession of right-of-way and right-of-way enhancement, and changes to motor vehicle laws.

Not all of the department's concerns were passed by the Legislature, but all were considered.

Recommended changes to permit early possession of property by the department for right-of-way, as well as to provide a mechanism for considering, in the appraisal, the enhanced value of property adjoining highway right-of-way did not pass. A bill to restrict the use of right-of-way by itinerant vendors also failed.

Employee pay raises did pass, as did increases in the state's contributions to insurance premiums. Employee relocation assistance did not pass. Motor vehicle laws were changed to not require the notarization of vehicle transfers, to permit the department to annotate department title records when a vehicle is sold, and to give disabled persons from other states and countries the same parking privileges of disabled Texans.

Additional legislative concerns of the department covered employee liability, road utility districts, high-speed rail, and a state Department of Transportation. Legislation permitting county road districts and road utility districts to build toll roads, and legislation establishing the Texas High Speed Rail Authority and directing that authority to grant a franchise for the construction of a high-speed rail facility in Texas, were passed. A bill forming a state Department of Transportation, combining the department and the Texas Aeronautics Commission, did not pass. A bill that would give governmental employees additional protection from liability related to their employment also failed. This bill was supported by the heads of all major state agencies.

During the session, the Legislature introduced 5,750 bills and passed 1,338. The department's Planning and Policy Division monitored about 20 percent of the bills introduced.

Some legislative items of interest follow. (SB stands for Senate Bill and HB for House Bill.)

SB 222 - Appropriations Bill

The department is appropriated \$2.5 billion in fiscal year (FY) 1990 and \$2.6 billion for FY 1991. The bill includes a 5 percent pay raise, effective September 1, 1989, for both classified and exempt personnel, with a minimum increase of \$60 per month. Paychecks due on Oct. 2 should reflect the change.

The state contribution for monthly insurance premiums also will increase. For employee-only coverage, the contribution will increase to \$130 in FY 1990 and \$150 in FY 1991. For employees who carry

dependents on their insurance, the state will contribute an amount based on the increase in Blue Cross/Blue Shield premiums. The intent is to cover all but \$10 or \$20 of the increase for basic health and life insurance.

The amount of the state contribution is not affected by an employee's election of HMO coverage rather than the Blue Cross/Blue Shield program.

Some travel benefits will also increase. Per diem for meals will increase from \$15 to \$25 a day. Reimbursement for mileage will increase to the current rate allowed by the Internal Revenue Service, which is now 24 cents per mile.

HB 121 - Collegiate License Plates

This legislation creates a new special license plate depicting Texas college insignias or mascots. For an extra \$30, a vehicle owner can purchase a collegiate license plate for most Texas institutions of higher education, with \$25 of the fee going to scholarships at that school. This bill becomes effective on January 1, 1990.

HB 162 - Insurance Coverage for Dependent Grandchildren

This legislation allows dependent grandchildren of an employee or Employees Retirement Service (ERS) member to receive certain health care coverage after January 1, 1990.

HB 180 - Reduction in Registration Fees for Engineers

This legislation reduces the registration fee for professional registered engineers who are at least 65 years of age. The state registration board may by rule adopt the reduced fee for registered engineers. This bill becomes effective September 1, 1989.

HB 188 - Health Insurance Benefits for Adopted Children

This legislation ensures that a health insurance policy that provides coverage for a family does not exclude or limit coverage of adopted children. This bill becomes effective September 1, 1989, and applies to policies and contracts delivered, issued for delivery, or renewed on or after January 1, 1990.

HB 827 - Service Credit Earned in the ERS for Accumulated Sick Leave

This legislation entitles members who retire based on service or disability to service credit in the retirement system at the rate of one month of service credit for each 40 days of accumulated sick leave. This bill becomes effective September 1, 1989.

HB 1147 - Exemption from Hotel Occupancy Taxes

This legislation exempts a state agency, a state officer, or an employee when traveling on or otherwise engaged in official state business from state, county, and municipal hotel occupancy taxes.

HB 2409 - Special License Plates

This legislation creates six new special license plates: Capitol, U.S. Civil Air Patrol, U.S. Armed Forces, U.S. Armed Forces Reserve, Pearl Harbor survivors, and Purple

Heart recipients. The Capitol plates will be \$30, in addition to the regular registration fees, \$25 of which goes to a special fund to help improve the Capitol. These plates will feature a Capitol symbol. The legislation also allows mobile amateur radio operators to have the same license plate number (their official amateur call letters) for all of their vehicles. Finally, the legislation allows owners of personalized prestige license plates to get a new set of plates within the six-year period for an extra \$50.

SB 328 - Optional County Motor Vehicle Registration Fee

This legislation allows counties to set the current \$5.00 optional county motor vehicle registration fee at any amount not exceeding \$10.00. This could significantly increase the amount of funds counties have for roads and bridges. This legislation becomes effective August 28, 1989.

SB 357 - Creation of Agency Sick Leave Pool Program

This legislation requires each state agency to establish a program to allow an employee of that agency to voluntarily transfer earned sick leave time to a pool. An employee is eligible to use the sick leave pool because of a catastrophic injury or illness or because of previous donation to the sick leave pool. The sick leave pool created by this legislation can be incorporated with the current extended sick leave program now administered within the department. The department would need to include the new procedures in the Human Resources Manual. Orientation for managers and employees will be held through normal correspondence. This bill becomes effective September 1, 1989; however, state agencies have until February 28, 1990, to establish rules and procedures for the program.

SB 1480 - Child Care Facilities

This legislation provides authority to develop and administer a program for child care services for state employees working in state-owned buildings. Any state-owned building constructed after September 1, 1989 with at least 100,000 square feet of space may include a child care facility. The department will provide child care information to department employees. The department may be affected if a headquarters building of more than 100,000 square feet per building is constructed. This bill becomes effective September 1, 1989.★

Pharr recognizes safety records

More than 250 employees of the Pharr District received awards at the district's 35th Annual Safety Awards Meeting.

Awards for 25 years or more of safe driving went to seven men: Reymundo Sanchez of Edcouch, 25 years; Tomas Benavidez Jr. of Edcouch, 26 years; Juan Rodriguez of Brownsville, Guadalupe Garza of San Benito, and Anastacio Luera of Mission, 28 years; and Benigno H. Rodriguez of Laredo and Jose H. Vivanco of Hebbronville, 30 years.

District Engineer G. G. Garcia also recognized the district's sign shop, warehouse, and radio shop, as well as maintenance sections at Falfurrias and Raymondville, for completing a year without lost time due to an accident.★ **Mary Bolado**

Young still 'enthusiastic' about each day

A conversation with . . . Beaumont District Engineer Franklin Young

For half of his 40 years with the highway department, Franklin Young has headed the eight-county Beaumont District. Young joined the department in 1949 as an engineering assistant in San Antonio, after receiving his civil engineering degree from Texas A&M University. He has been named Engineer of the Year by the Sabine Chapter of the Texas Society of Professional Engineers, and is active in number of community groups. Young reflected on his highway career in this conversation with Marcy Goodfleisch.

It's unusual that you have a law degree as well as an engineering degree. Why did you study law, and how does your legal education relate to what you do?

When I started to work for the department, there were three law courses that I wanted to take: Workmen's Comp, Contracts, and Real Property. They didn't offer Real Property without the prerequisite of Personal Property. While waiting to take Contracts, I took Torts. There was always just one more course that I wanted to take, and I finally realized I had enough to get a degree with the exception of the criminal law and appellate procedures courses. So I took those and got the law degree. I have never taken the bar exam because I didn't intend to practice.

I have found it to be a really good background for any position with the department.

You had a good deal of experience as a resident engineer before you became district engineer. Was working as an RE a good stepping-stone?

I started in the district office and then opened up a residency in Kendall County shortly after I received my engineering license. I think the resident engineer is the backbone on which the department is built. The best job in the department, and the most important, is that of resident engineer.

How is it the best job?

Because you're out-front, you're making the decisions, and you're doing the work. The way that we're set up now — with the objectives of the department being to design, build, and maintain a highway system — it's all done at the residency level, by the resident engineer and his forces. The district office supports the resident engineer and the residency setup. In turn, the Austin office supports the district offices. The residency gets the work of the department done. All the rest of the department is there strictly to support and help the residencies do the job of the department.

Isn't organizational management something you take an interest in?

Yes, going right back to the same philosophy of the residency and the backup. I feel we basically have two types of employees: We have the leaders and we have the workers. We have people who don't want to be leaders. They don't want responsibility. But they're the good workers, and they're the ones who get the work done. And the



Beaumont District Engineer Franklin Young, a 40-year veteran of the highway department, still looks forward to each day's work with enthusiasm. When the day comes that he doesn't, he says, it will be time to think about doing something else.

You can't predict problems; you just have to be prepared to solve them when they come up.

best way to identify your leaders is to give people a challenge. Those who are leaders will rise to the occasion — take the challenge and run with it and get the job done. Right now, I think we're so very fortunate that the young people we have want a challenge, and I have found that all you have to do is give them a challenge, then get out of their way, or they're gonna run over you.

That's worked well for you, hasn't it?

I think the young people we have now, coming up, are much more qualified than I was. I have so much confidence in the future of the department that I just get real enthused whenever I look at the accomplishments of our young people.

How are they more qualified than you were?

I think the young people today are more qualified because of the education they have, the automation they have learned, and the self-confidence that they have. The only

thing they lack is the judgment and experience, and I think those are developing faster today because of the responsibility our young people are being given.

Let's talk about how you got here. What would you say were the accomplishments and experience that led to your selection as a district engineer?

I think it was some good early training that I had with the department. The resident engineer and then the district engineer that I worked for believed in giving you a challenge and letting you fulfill the challenge. They followed the theory that people are going to make mistakes, and they will have to make mistakes in order to accomplish anything. But correct the mistakes and learn by them. I think that's helped me and is something I have tried to follow. I find our people making fewer mistakes all along and getting more accomplished.

Who was your first district engineer?

When I started in San Antonio, it was Frank Maddox, and then he moved to Austin to become the deputy state highway engineer. F. M. Davis was the district engineer who moved me into a residency and then into the district right-of-way position.

Something about that era spawned a lot of the leaders in the department. Can you shed a little light on this — was that just an accident or were there special things going on in management and leadership?

I think there were two things. I say that F. M. Davis was a great part of it. There was a philosophy of good, honest, hard work. And you look at those who have come out of San Antonio, and there are a heck of a lot of durn "hard-headed Dutchmen." Well, I'm over half Germanic! It's the work ethic, that there is no substitute for good hard work,

that you don't expect anything for nothing. You just need to be willing to put out the effort necessary to get the job done. None of that group worked from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., or five days a week. They worked whatever it took, with pride in the accomplishment of doing a good job.

Rumor has it that you and (Engineer-Director) Raymond Stotzer are good friends.

We have been since I started to work for the department. We had adjoining residencies, and he was appointed district engineer shortly after I was. We've done a lot of conferring over the years. Our basic philosophies are identical, and our basic beliefs are identical. At times we might travel different paths, and certainly the conditions would warrant different paths. To me, it's very easy to know what he wants and to get along with him. He always wants the job done right and he wants our work to be in the best interest of the state and our citizens.

From your experience in managing a district, can you pass on some "one-minute" pointers that would help people taking on a job of this nature?

When someone comes to you for a decision, in nearly every case he knows more about the background of the situation than you do. So first, find out what his recommendations are and then see if there is anything wrong. If there seems to be, point it out and let him consider it. It shouldn't necessarily change his recommendation, but he should have a chance to consider it. When a person wants to do something a certain way, it's better to let him do it his way than to force some other way, because usually he'll end up doing a better job the way he wants to do it. And in a lot of cases, he may prove that his way was better. That's giving people the challenge and letting them run with it. As we tell a lot of people, you feed your own monkey. That's what you're being paid for. I'm not going to feed your monkey.

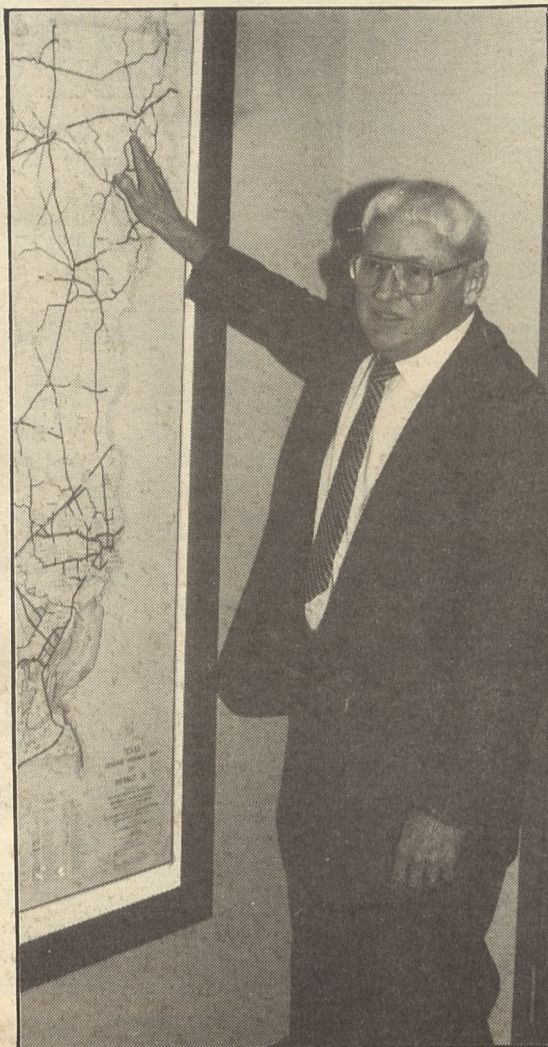
One of the challenges that you have is a very heavily traveled district. Your roads, particularly Interstate 10, take a heavy beating, and you also have unique soil composition here. How do you meet those kinds of challenges in engineering?

In the lower half of our district is a soil condition known as the Beaumont clay, which is a very poor soil condition. Add to that a 55-inches-a-year rainfall, one of the highest in the state, and you do have unusual conditions. And as Travis Long, a retired Austin district engineer who travels the state out of the Construction Division looking at construction jobs, recently said after looking around here, "The good Lord just didn't intend for you to build roads in this country." Having been district engineer in Corpus Christi before Austin, he realized that this area is entirely different from the rest of the coastal areas. And we have a lot of areas that do not drain. You simply have to get up out of the water table and find something to build the road on.

I was looking yesterday at a price list of materials because we do not have a natural rock source within the district — everything has to be shipped in. On this particular price list, limestone was \$2 a ton. We have to add \$18 a ton onto that for freight. Ninety percent of the cost is in the freight. So we look at things a little bit differently than where I was resident engineer.

What is your favorite thing about being a district engineer?

I think it's the feeling of accomplishment.



Young: "People ask me, 'Are you working hard?' My stock answer is, 'They don't pay me to work, they pay me to worry.'"

The goals and objectives of the department haven't changed in 40 years . . . to design, build and maintain the highways.

I think it's the people and the roadways.

Do you have a least favorite thing?

Some personnel problems where you might have personal sympathy, but still your responsibility is to represent the department. You have to make the decision on what's necessary for the good of the department, and not what's best for some individual or group.

Would you go into the same career again?

I wouldn't hesitate a minute to say this, because I don't know of anything that I would have enjoyed more over the years. The goals and objectives of the department haven't changed at all in 40 years. We still work for the same people. We still have the same objectives and goals to design, build, and maintain the highways.

When you look at the results of Proposition One (the "Good Roads Amendment" last November), almost 90 percent of the people told us that they want a good highway system and are willing to pay for it. To me, it is a vote of approval

of what we have done over the years, and a mandate that the people we work for want us to continue. I think it puts a burden on us as the department to give the people what they have told us that they want and are willing to pay for. That's why we need to show a little extra effort in doing the job they want because they have given us their approval.

We have come a long way with the districts and divisions working together and cooperating with each other. For a while, we had a problem where if you sent something to the wrong division, forget it. But now it would get forwarded over to the right one.

What specific goal have you set either personally or professionally for the next few years?

I guess the professional goal would be to recognize that our Interstate highway system has really gone through its first generation of life. And we're now looking at the second generation of the Interstate highway system. It is necessary to rebuild so much of it, and it's the first time in our history where we are rebuilding at the same location under traffic, where there is an opportunity to salvage a great deal of our first generation and it is a relatively new experience.

You can't predict problems; you just have to be prepared to solve them when they come up. You have to have people on the job who have the experience to recognize the problems and the tools to solve them, and who are not afraid to stick their necks out to get something done.

What is your management style? What particular techniques work for you?

I'm very fortunate here to have an assistant district engineer of Richard Cardwell's ability. We get together every morning, and under the guise of getting a cup of coffee, we generally go over what happened yesterday and what we expect today. He keeps me informed. I keep him informed, and we have the other staff members — maintenance, design, construction — usually come in there and sit down and have a cup of coffee. This morning we probably discussed four or five different things and by doing that in the coffee shop, it's more of a relaxed feeling than doing it in the district engineer's office or in the conference room. It lets everybody be more free to express opinions, and it removes a lot of the restraint on some of the things they might have to say.

Now I was careful not to say there were four or five decisions made, because there have not been many decisions made in the coffee shop. But if a person has something, it's discussed, and then he's better prepared to go on and make the decision himself. It's just a communication session, keeping the lines of communication open and knowing what each other is doing so that everybody can get their shoulder under the load and help push a little bit where needed.

That's the only coffee break you might say I take during the day because I don't drink any more coffee after that. The coffee is just an excuse to sit and talk and communicate.

So you're willing to delegate.

If I have to do it myself, then it's not being properly done. People ask me, "Are you working hard these days?" My stock answer is "No. I'm not working. They don't pay me to work; they pay me to worry."

Are you worrying hard these days? Oh, yes.

Spots of spring color sprout message

By Karen LeFevre

Wildflowers weren't the only things that sprang up this spring in Texas. All over the state, televisions bloomed with colorful new messages about the fight against litter.

In a record-breaking crusade, the "Don't Mess with Texas" campaign launched three commercials in just 53 days. They were designed by GSD&M Advertising to appeal to different audiences than most of the nine preceding spots, which targeted "habitual" litterers, men between 18 and 34 years old. "The emphasis for these is preventive, so people never even start littering," said GSD&M's Terri Botik.

The first to be released was an animated commercial for children ages 6 to 11 featuring the campaign's "spokesanimals" — Shamu, the star whale of San Antonio's Sea World, and the Texas Tuxedos, a trio of singing penguins. In a traveling gala, the spot premiered in three cities in as many days. Representatives from corporate sponsors Sea World of Texas and Texaco were on hand for the festivities — dressed, of course, in tuxedos.

On March 14, 200 people gathered in the foyer of the Capitol in Austin to greet first lady Rita Clements and her escorts — three tiny Magellanic penguins. Before the crowd of schoolchildren and other guests previewed the commercial, Clements said, "I've always thought men looked especially handsome in their penguin suits, but these guys have really won my heart. I am especially proud that our state's tough-talking antilitter message — 'Don't Mess with Texas' — is the most successful program in the nation. It is the first of its kind to talk directly to the people who trash our roadways."

Amid marble statues and oil paintings, a television screen came alive as the animated characters toiled along a highway in an icemobile singing, "You can help us make a

great big splash, if we all get rid of roadside trash!"

The next day, the premiere moved to Houston's Galleria where the campaign logo was painted on the ice rink and about 500 people viewed the spot on a giant screen. The final stop was at a gathering of 150 guests at the Dallas Independent School District headquarters on March 16.

The second spring spot featured the stars of the hit play *Greater Tuna*, Jaston Williams and Joe Sears. Dressed in outrageous cowboy costumes and brandishing absurdly large pistols, these "Road Rangers" aim to stop "accidental" litterers in their tracks.

Williams warns, "Next time you thow sumpum in the backa yer pickup whut could blow out . . ."

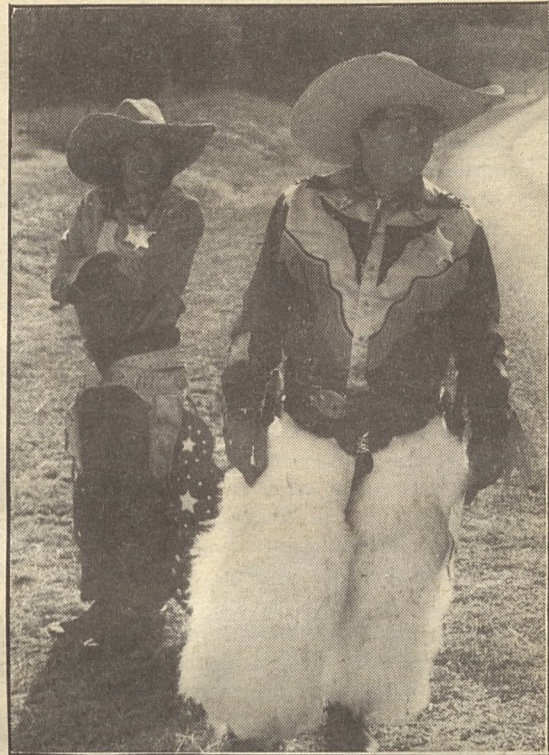
Sears finishes, "The Rooooooad Rangers'll be waitin' fer ya."

The third new entry this spring is the first Spanish-language television spot produced for the "Don't Mess with Texas" campaign. The 30-second commercial featuring Tejano music stars Little Joe y La Familia has a music video look, achieved by filming the band in black-and-white, then superimposing the images over colorful shots of wildflower-lined Texas highways.

"It's a fun spot, full of energy," says GSD&M's Luis Messianu, who targeted this commercial to Texas' growing Hispanic market.

The seventh annual Festival of Cinco de Mayo at Austin's Fiesta Gardens was a prime opportunity to premiere the spot. During the weekend of May 5, about 9,500 people attended the event and hundreds visited the highway department's display to view the Little Joe video, a Spanish version of the Shamu spot, and familiar favorites from the past two years. Passersby commenting on the new commercial gave it a thumbs up.

The bilingual spot introduces the campaign's new Spanish slogan: "En Tejas,



Armed against litter, the "Road Rangers" get tough with trash in one of the newest "Don't Mess with Texas" commercials. (Photo by Geoff Appold)

no queremos basura" ("We don't want any trash in Texas"). The lyrics also include a clever sound-alike phrase "No te metas con Tejas" ("Don't be messin' with Texas").

All three of the new spots will be aired as paid commercials at various times throughout the summer, and as free public service announcements whenever stations choose.

So far, the "Don't Mess with Texas" campaign has reaped about \$30 million in free air time. Talented music celebrities and sports figures continue to contribute their time and energy to the campaign. Stayed tuned for country music spots featuring Willie Nelson and Lyle Lovett. ★

'Rumors Are True' in new Dallas campaign

By Sharon E. Fox

"True Rumor No. 1: North Central Expressway is going to be great!"

A new public awareness campaign — "The Rumors Are True" — aims to emphasize the positive and dispel misconceptions about Dallas' biggest public works project since construction of the Dallas-Fort Worth airport.

The Dallas District took a lighthearted approach in preparing the campaign, which kicked off June 2-4 in a special exhibit at a shopping center. A brochure and videotape were combined with models and architectural renderings to provide an informative backdrop for the event. Engineers and public affairs officers teamed up to answer questions and visit with people studying the exhibit.

"The question asked most often was how long it would be before this 'study' would be approved by the highway department," said Stanton Foerster, North Central Expressway project engineer. "The public seemed relieved to find out that what they were viewing was the finished product, scheduled to begin construction the end of this year," he said.

During the project's troubled history, many rumors have arisen concerning construction and what the finished project

will look like.

"One misconception the public has is that we are going to double-deck the highway," said Iris Deutsch, North Central public affairs officer. "This simply is not true. Citizen input helped us decide whether North Central Expressway was going to be one story or two. Local citizens told us not to double-deck the highway as it would divide the city in half."

Other "rumors" confronted in the campaign involve the inconvenience of construction and fears of a "concrete canyon" where the freeway runs below the surface lanes. Plants and other amenities, the campaign assures, will soften the stark surroundings.

Because such rumors had gotten out of hand, a campaign was developed to educate the public. By presenting the facts with a light touch, engineers and public affairs officers hoped to dispel myths.

"Through research, we discovered that advance awareness was the best communicator," said Laura Moore, public affairs officer for the Dallas District. "We polled other states that had created public awareness campaigns for projects such as North Central, and we learned that the public's primary concern was being informed

before the project began."

Project engineer Rick Robles said the "Rumors Are True" event was well-received by shopping center patrons.

"It was a good attempt at informing the public," said spectator Stephen Szyskezewicz. "You should do it more often." David Duller of Dallas commented on the "excellent models, video, and staff on hand to answer questions."

"Many people had heard on TV and radio that we were going to be explaining North Central construction," said Robles, "and they appreciated being given the opportunity to learn more about the project. I believe we reached our objective of informing the public and doing away with misconceptions."

The reconstruction involves a 10-mile stretch of North Central Expressway, from downtown Dallas to LBJ Freeway, that will be upgraded from a nearly obsolete 1940s-style highway to a state-of-the-art freeway with double the vehicle capacity. Groundbreaking will begin by the end of 1989, with completion of the \$600 million-plus project expected in late 1996.

By then, North Central will be an eight-lane superhighway, complete with two-lane exit ramps, abundant greenery, median planters, new sign poles and lights, and inside emergency shoulders.

That rumor is true.★



"Kitty" Hobbs of Newton County has taken to heart the admonition "Don't Mess with Texas." Not content with simply cleaning up roadside trash, he has also built a roadside park on his land along FM 692. "It's a matter of pride," Hobbs says. (Photo by Jefferson Grimes)

Pride in clean community capped by park

By Jefferson Grimes

Newton County and "Kitty" Hobbs go together like catfish and cornbread or beans and rice.

Newton County, nestled between the Piney Woods and the banks of the Sabine in deep Southeast Texas, is a place of enchanting beauty where dogwoods and daffodils rest comfortably alongside live oak and longleaf, and where travelers can drive for miles on litter-free highways. It's also where R. L. "Kitty" Hobbs has taken to heart the message, "Don't Mess with Texas."

Hobbs, 69, is the driving force behind the county's claim to have less litter along its highways than any of the state's other 253 counties. Not content with simply cleaning up, he also built a roadside park with his own funds on his land along Farm-to-Market Road 692.

"It's a matter of pride," Hobbs explains. "Pride in oneself, pride in one's heritage, and pride in one's community."

Newton County boasts 90 consecutive miles of roads in the Adopt-a-Highway program from Bleakwood to Burkeville to Buckhorn. Sections of US 190, Texas 87, Ranch Road 255, and Farm-to-Market Roads 692, 1414 and 1415 make up this succession of highways kept clean by volunteer groups, with Hobbs as the catalyst.

"It all started two years ago when I was driving down the road and noticed the good highway department people putting up an Adopt-a-Highway sign. So I stopped to chat with the folks a bit, and when I drove away I told myself, 'I can do that,'" Hobbs recalls.

His Circle T Farms was the second organization in Newton County to adopt a highway. Hobbs then set out to involve as many citizens as he could. Soon the Toledo

"This is my chance to give a little back to the good people of my community and of this state."

Bend Lions Club volunteered, so did the Newton Volunteer Fire Department, VFW Post 8557, Sabine River Authority, residents of Pine Top Estates, and others.

No group escaped Hobbs' perseverance in his quest for a cleaner county. He takes it upon himself to ensure that the litter control agreement for each organization is promptly signed and returned to the highway department. He also makes sure the groups pick up their sections regularly — or he is apt to do it for them. Hobbs even goes so far as to make trash pokers of old broom handles and nails for the volunteers.

Hobbs doesn't go so far as coercion, though. "I don't have to! I just convince them they are a part of something special and positive for the community. I have never been turned down," he said.

Hobbs was the 1988 recipient of the Keep Texas Beautiful Inc.'s O. P. Schnabel Award for his role in recruiting volunteers.

"Kitty has proved to be an invaluable asset to all of Newton County, but particularly to us at the department," said Jimmie Poplin, Newton maintenance foreman. "Kitty is our biggest fan and we are

his. Every mile of highway he recruits a volunteer for results in less time and money devoted to litter control by the state — time and money which we can devote elsewhere."

During the annual Great Texas Trash-Off, Hobbs saves the department even more by encouraging volunteers to haul their own trash to the local landfill instead of setting bags by the side of the road for pickup by the department.

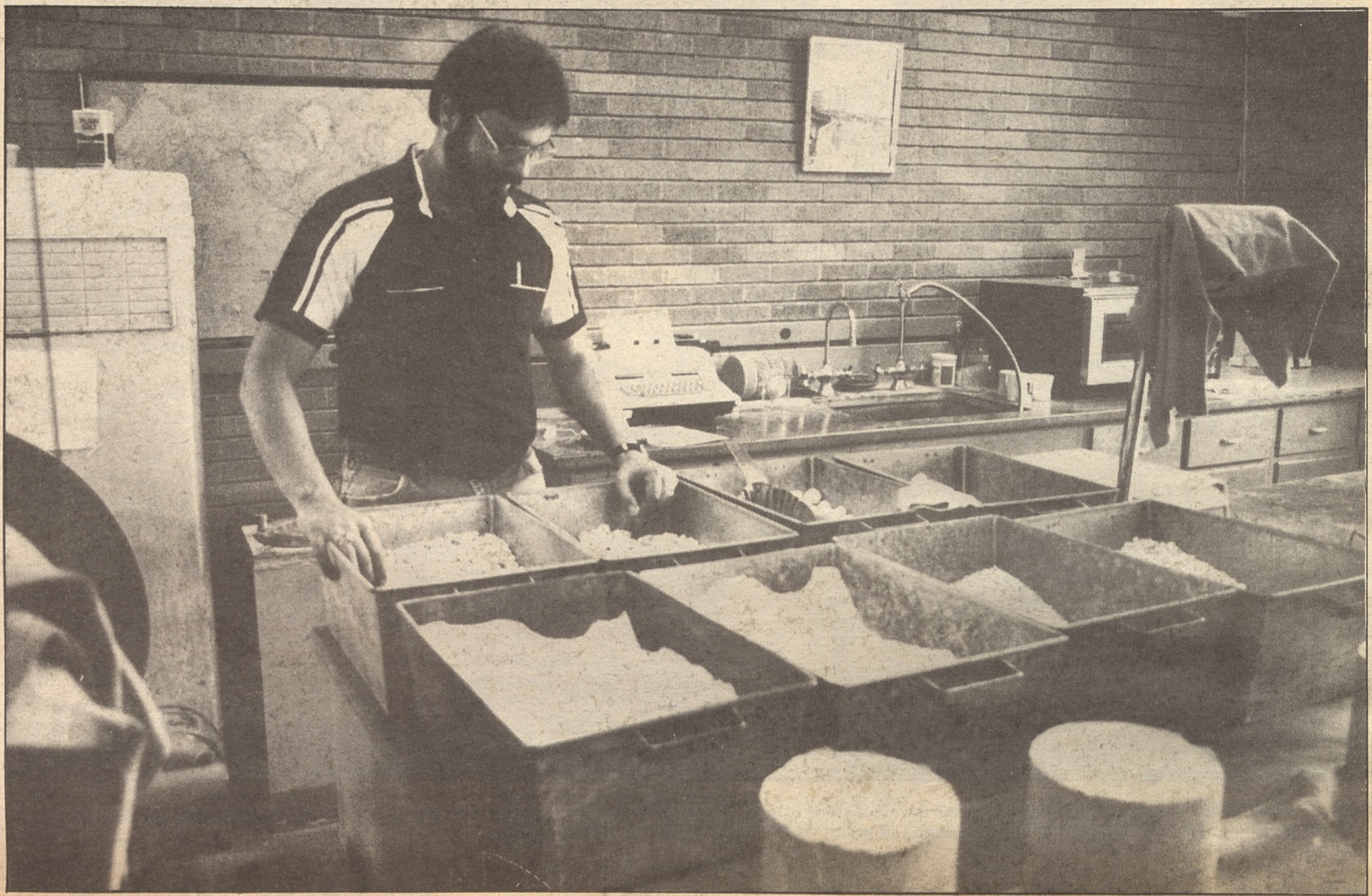
The last Trash-Off, April 1, also provided Hobbs the occasion to dedicate the roadside park he built in front of his Circle T Farms.

Trotti Park (named for his wife's family) has four picnic tables and a huge barbecue pit resting under 80-foot pine trees and the flags of the United States and Texas. Hobbs has installed solar-powered lighting that operates for about four hours at night. Flower beds, planted by his daughter-in-law, bloom with roses, azaleas, and pansies. Fruit trees and pampas grass dot the park. Even State Sen. Bill Haley got in on the act by donating purple plum trees, which were planted along the right-of-way.

Across the highway from Trotti Park, visitors can watch Kitty's pet longhorn steer, Eric, and his two Grand Canyon burros acquired through the Bureau of Land Management's Adopt-a-Burro program.

"This is my chance to give a little back to the good people of my community and of this state," Hobbs said. "This Adopt-a-Highway program has done more to pull together the citizens of Newton County than anything else I've seen. We want others to know we care."

Hobbs' dream is to see every mile of highway in Newton County adopted. And then what? "Well," he mused, "there's Jasper County, and Sabine County, and . . ."★



They may look like bins of grain from a health food store, but it's base material in the containers in front of Oscar Rodriguez. (Photo by Harvie Jordan, ABC)

Quality counts in districts' lab operations

By Harvie Jordan, ABC

Petri dishes, test tubes and Bunsen burners aren't required equipment in all laboratories.

In highway department district construction labs, you'll find the things roads are made of.

"Everything that goes on the road is tested," said Oscar Rodriguez, who supervises the Austin District lab. "Everything" includes such materials as asphalt, concrete, base materials, even paint.

"The tests we run are more job-control — the record tests and physical properties tests — versus chemical tests," Rodriguez said. "We can test the aggregate, we can test the sand. But when it comes to cement, Materials and Tests takes care of that for us."

The quality control testing of highway construction materials is a shared responsibility, closely coordinated between districts and the Materials and Tests Division (D-9). Whether a district or the division conducts a certain test depends on cost-effectiveness and efficiency.

"Anything that one producer will be supplying to a number of districts they (D-9) usually take care of for us. It's cheaper for them to do it than for four or five districts to set up at the facility or try to test it just before using it," Rodriguez explained.

Sometimes a district lab will do quality control testing for other districts on locally produced materials. The Austin District lab does that for base materials that come from area quarries.

Core samples from areas of new construction are analyzed to aid in designing roads and bridges that are appropriate for

the terrain both above and below "ground level." That information also helps contractors submit accurate bids, knowing whether they'll have to excavate solid rock or soft fill material.

If a problem develops on a construction project, an inspector may ask for the lab's help. Like the link between districts and D-9, this involves a close working relationship.

"We work well together," Rodriguez said. "When there's a question on materials, (inspectors) call. We help determine whether a problem is related to the material being used, and then work with them to help solve whatever the problem is."

In some districts, residency labs do most of the materials tests with the district lab checking and supporting that work. In other districts, like Austin, the district lab does much of the testing and contracts some to private laboratories.

Because this work deals with highway construction, technicians at labs throughout the state have construction experience.

Some brought it with them. Others, like William Beaver, learned from on-the-job training. "I used to be a milkman. I had a sales route for a dairy," Beaver said. Since going to work for the department 17 years ago, though, he's become one of the skilled technicians at the Austin District lab.

Jeff Logan also learned by doing during his 17 years with the department.

"I came here right out of high school and started on a survey crew," said Logan. He now spends much of his time supervising work at quarries in the capital area.

While most of the lab work is done on an 8-to-5 schedule, some involves late nights and early mornings.

One afternoon recently when both men

were at the lab, Logan said he would be working at one of those quarries until midnight. Beaver had to be at a plant at three o'clock the next morning to make quality control checks on concrete to be poured later that day.

The same afternoon, James Kirk was testing samples of base material. A 21-year department veteran who "took some time off to go back to school, and for the ministry," Kirk has been at the district lab since 1982.

With all this experience on tap, how did a civil engineer just five years out of school come to supervise a team of 11 seasoned technicians?

Rodriguez became lab supervisor about a year and a half ago, after 4-1/2 years with D-9, where he specialized in asphalt testing and developed close ties with Austin lab personnel.

"Our district was second only to Houston last year in the amount of hot-mix asphalt purchased," Rodriguez said. "One of the reasons I was offered this job was that I had experience in that area."

He is quick to point out that he relies on the technicians' experience to do necessary work "and keep me informed."

"I'm not like engineers who supervise labs in other districts who are strong in all areas. It takes time to get experience in those other areas," he said.

Oscar Rodriguez plans one day to go back to school, take a few courses, maybe work on a master's degree. But, that's somewhere down the road.

For now, he's concentrating on getting "experience in those other areas."

He'll do that in large part with the help of those in his lab and others who got it the same way — on the job.★

Testing, testing at Materials and Tests



William Beaver, of the Austin District Lab, tests the strength of a mini beam from concrete being used at a San Marcos project. (Photo by Harvie Jordan, ABC)

By Roger Polson

From the dirt under the highways to the lights above them, when it comes to quality in the state's highway system, the highway department comes to the Materials and Tests Division (D-9).

It has been that way almost since the beginning. Created in 1918, the division is one of the oldest in the department. There has been a lot of change in highway

construction since then, but one thing that has not changed is the department's demand for quality and reliability.

Division Director Billy R. Neely describes the scope of D-9's mission this way: "We're involved in painting, we're involved in asphalt, we're involved in concrete, signing materials, soils. Just about everything the highway department is involved in, we're involved in."

A walk through the headquarters

Other divisions play their parts in quality control

Not surprisingly, the Materials and Tests Division is not the only division scrutinizing highway department property in the name of quality control.

The Bridge Division (D-5) and the Maintenance and Operations Division (D-18) are among those most closely involved in assisting the districts with inspections. The reasons for division involvement on site are many, from administration of federal requirements, to backup at district request, to the sheer multitude of structures statewide. These inspectors fill a role different from that of field engineers, who visit sites and consult mainly as liaisons.

All traffic signals around the state must be

inspected before they are installed by district personnel, and four employees of D-18's Camp Hubbard signal shop accommodate. Related equipment — cables, signal indicators, poles, and so on — are checked as well, said Ernest Kanak, engineer of safety and traffic operations. Division employees will also assist the districts in special installation or maintenance of the signal equipment.

D-18 personnel have evaluated the state's 102 roadside rest areas semiannually for nearly two years.

Perhaps the thinnest-spread inspectors at the division level are those in the Bridge Division. Six inspectors must periodically

laboratory facilities finds technicians and engineers washing, baking, spinning, and analyzing all kinds of materials. "We've got a great staff with a real interest in materials," says Neely. "Our engineers are anxious to get their hands on something and find out what makes it tick."

The last 70 years have seen a revolution in materials, methods, and results. In 1918, labs at the University of Texas were used to conduct tests. Today, state-of-the-art facilities are in use from Austin headquarters across the United States and, when necessary, around the world.

A team of inspectors spent nearly two years in Korea during the fabrication of steel beams for the Pennybacker Bridge that spans Lake Austin on Loop 360. Another group has visas ready and bags packed for a stay in Monterrey, Mexico, when work begins on components for the new Houston Ship Channel Bridge. In fact, half of the 221 division employees are located away from the main lab at Camp Hubbard in Austin.

With technicians and inspectors scattered throughout many facilities, D-9 ensures that all instruments are calibrated and achieving the same results. "We have a calibration team that goes to each district and remote site once a year," says Kenneth Sandburg. He's a 42-year veteran of the highway department and currently serves as assistant director of the division. "They calibrate everything — scales, beam testers, sieves."

In addition to serving district offices, the division maintains several permanent inspection facilities at production sites in Texas and Oklahoma. Inspections are also done regularly in Mississippi, Georgia, Missouri, New York, and Illinois. These inspectors are located at plants that produce asphalt, bituminous materials, concrete products, and other construction elements. They are the front-line quality control team.

In San Antonio, Dickie Winters heads an office that includes 12 inspectors. "What we try to do is get the product that meets the plans and specifications so that when it gets to the job site they can erect the project and get on with their business. Our number-one priority in San Antonio is pre-stressed concrete products."

Sandburg says quality testing "assures that the material you're buying is what you specify and it tells the producers that if they are going to supply us with materials, they must meet our specifications. If they know we're going to test it, they'll ship quality material."

"Test technology must keep up with advances in materials," Sandburg said. ★

perform all underwater checks and "fracture-critical" inspections of as many as 500 bridges in the state, said bridge inspection engineer Paul Ysaguirre. The evaluations are required under the federal Bridge Inventory Inspection and Appraisal (BRINSAP) program.

Although the program requires the inspection of all 45,900 Texas bridges every two years, underwater looks at bridge supports can be made less frequently, Ysaguirre said.

In the construction section of the Bridge Division, four certified welders stay busy inspecting bridge erection and widening projects. ★Ronda Baker

Department inspectors construction 'referees'

By Marcy Goodfleisch

The bids are in, everything has been tallied, and the low bidder is awarded the contract. Okay, everybody can relax now. Right?

Wrong.

During construction, the ball may be in the contractor's court. But the highway department referees the action. At every step along the way, work under contract is inspected to ensure that the quality as well as specifications are being met. And it's a big job.

"We feel it's a significant part of administering the contract," said Delvin Dennis, assistant to district construction engineer Thomas Whitaker in Houston. "It takes a considerable amount of knowledge about the plans and specifications as well as engineering."

Dennis, who has been with the department for nine years, said the wealth of information in a set of plans sometimes leaves room for varying interpretations. It is the construction inspector's job to verify and check the work in comparison with the plans.

Two types of testing are done on the job site: job control and record tests. Job control tests are the responsibility of the inspector. These tests are made on a day-to-day basis and determine whether the quality of materials and the quality of work meet the specified requirements.

Houston's massive construction program, with \$1.4 billion dollars of work under contract, requires a considerable effort to monitor and inspect. Dennis estimates that a majority of the district's more than 400 people directly involved in construction are in some way supporting the inspection activity.

The large turnover experienced in the

department a few years ago took a heavy toll on inspection efforts, Dennis said.

"Experience is the best teacher for inspection," Dennis said. "It may take a new person one or two years to be exposed to all the possible variations in a construction situation or in plan specifications."

Dennis said the basic activity happens primarily at the residency level. If residency staff encounter a problem requiring additional help, they call the district construction office. Dennis serves as a liaison for the field as well as with the Construction Division (D-6).

"I'm their (D-6's) contact for any questions or problems they have," said Dennis. "On the flip side, field changes and other questions are channeled through the construction office. Our role is to support the residencies."

Bobby Templeton, D-6 division director, said his operation provides an additional layer of support.

"Our mission is to help with administrative matters such as the interpretation of specifications," said Templeton. "We see our role as supporting the districts, because they're the people on the ground, actually seeing the work and the quality of the materials."

Problem resolution can be the role of both the construction division and the district construction office.

"About 90 percent of the problems that aren't handled at the residency level are handled here in the district office," said Dennis. "Unique problems are referred to D-6."

Dennis said the Houston construction operation is so large and diverse that D-6 as well as other department offices occasionally calls on Houston when gathering research for

addressing problems. Often, similar problems will have occurred in the Houston District, and some solutions are available.

"A while back, several residencies had questions arise as to who is responsible for maintaining a section of roadway that is within project limits of a current contract," said Dennis. The district researched the problem through D-6. As a result, a memo was issued outlining what work should be paid for by whom in such situations.

"Our office also assists in resolving problems about the type of material to use, how to measure it, and whether a situation merits a variation of some sort. We also monitor for policy compliance," said Templeton. "We work with the district and the contractors so that together we have a clean bill of health, and we can ensure a good value of work for the tax dollars being spent."

Formal training is available through the Human Resources Division, which offers courses in construction inspection and in advanced bridge inspection. On-the-job training allows "junior" inspectors to work with more experienced employees to see what is needed to produce a quality product.

The result can have a significant impact on the department's image.

"Public perception is based on what the public sees, what they determine is the quality of the product," said Templeton. "Everything we do has a purpose. We try to see that the districts have the tools they need to get the job done. And, I must say, they do a marvelous job." ★

Helen Havelka, Public Affairs Officer in the Waco District, also contributed to this story.

Need for transportation policy cited

State and federal governments are standing in the way of progress in the public transportation industry, Marcus Yancey, deputy director of planning and policy, told a standing-room-only crowd at the Texas Public Transportation Conference May 31 in San Antonio.

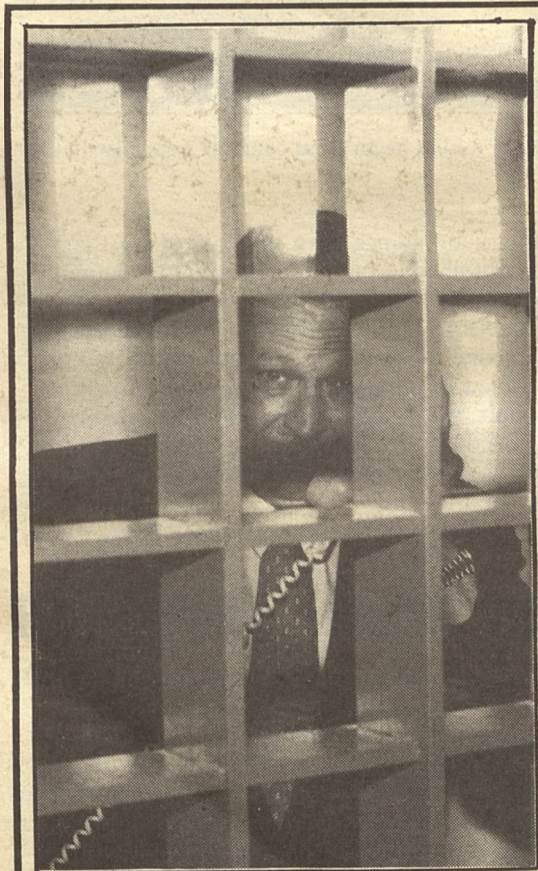
"There is not now and there has never been a national transportation policy," Yancey said. "There is not now and there has never been a state transportation policy."

The highway department is working to remedy the lack of a state policy, Yancey said. Providing good public transportation is too important for government not to be more involved. "No product you have did not involve transportation. That's how essential it is," he said.

The department launched its Public Transportation Division last September and recently proposed new administrative rules for the division's role in regulating funding and other aspects of the industry.

If government and public transportation officials take the reins in formulating new policies now, public support for funding will be less of a challenge, Yancey said.

The future of public transportation also hinges on its maintaining accountability, Yancey said. ★ **Ronda Baker**



From behind bars, Travel and Information Division Director Don Clark solicits bail money after his "cardiac arrest" May 10. While his employees paid \$20 to have him incarcerated in the American Heart Association fund-raiser, he raised \$602 worth of contributions to earn his release. (Photo by Geoff Appold)

Atlanta honors safe drivers

Atlanta District employees were honored May 6 at the sixth annual Service and Safe Driving Awards Banquet.

Service awards ranging from 10 to 35 years were presented to 47 employees with a combined total of 1,035 years of employment.

Leading the list of those honored was a 35-year veteran of the department, Alwin "Rip" Benefield, who serves as the district roadway maintenance superintendent in Atlanta.

Another 101 employees received safe-driving awards for 10 or more years without an accident. The group totaled 1,518 years of safe driving — an average of 15 years per driver.

Taking the lead with the longest safe-driving records were Clarence H. Allen of the Linden maintenance section and Roy C. Sullivan of the Mount Pleasant maintenance section. Each had a total of 23 years without an accident in a state vehicle.

Others with 20 or more years of safe driving included: Corbett E. Akins, 22 years, and Ovid B. Evans, 20 years, Carthage; Charles K. Thompson, 20 years, Gilmer; Walter Lindsey, 22 years, Marshall; Robert G. Agan and Marshall G. Cameron, both 20 years, Mount Pleasant; and Johnny W. Barron, 20 years, New Boston. ★

Marcus Sandifer

Hiring program produces winning season



Brad Lind and Travis Breitschopf, District 14 Maintenance Section, are two of about 2,500 students who have taken temporary jobs with the highway department under the "summer hire" program. (Photo by Randall Dillard)

By Jeff Carmack

More than 2,500 students are getting a taste of life in the fast lane, as well as life in construction and maintenance, through the highway department's "summer hire" program.

The summer hire program employs students to help with the season's increased work load. Since its inception decades ago, it has become the department's best recruiting tool.

Dick Jones, assistant director of human resources, said the student employees are used mainly in maintenance and cleanup positions. "The summer is a good time to spruce up the districts, and to let the full-timers take their vacation time and comp time," Jones said.

Not all the summer slots are in maintenance, Jones said. The department hires many civil engineering students to help out in construction inspection, as lab assistants, and even to help in design.

Now, Jones said, the department recognizes the program's value in recruitment, and encourages promising summer employees to consider a career with the department after graduation.

Both the department and the summer hires benefit from the program, Jones said. The students gain a steady job and an income for the summer, and the department gets a first-hand look at potential employees.

"The program exposes them (summer hires) to the department's mission," Jones said. "It gives them a realistic idea of what the department is trying to do; they realize it's more than just laying asphalt."

The program has met with some degree of success in this respect, Jones said. He estimated that 90 percent of today's district engineers started their careers with the department in the summer program.

Deputy Engineer-Director Byron C.

Blaschke is one summer-hire veteran who came back to work full-time for the department.

Blaschke began his association with the department in 1956, after he graduated from New Braunfels High School. He spent the four summers of his college career working for the department, two in New Braunfels and two in Houston. That gave him a taste of a wide variety of work in the engineering field, including surveying, lab work, construction inspection, and working in the design office.

After graduating from Texas A&M University, Blaschke worked for the City of Arlington before being called into the Army. While stationed at Fort Sill, Okla., he worked part-time for an engineering firm, and stayed with the firm for about a year after his military hitch. Then he decided it was time to come back to the Texas highway department, where he has remained since 1963.

Blaschke, a firm believer in the summer-hire program, considers it the single best recruiting tool the department has. It gives students a perspective of the "real world" that cannot be acquired in the classroom, he said.

"I feel that anyone who takes part in the summer-hire program, then comes back to work full-time for the department, knows exactly what he's getting into. At the same time, I think the department has a pretty good idea of what kind of employee it is getting," he said.

Most of the summer hires go to the districts, but a few work for the divisions. The Automation Division (D-19), for instance, will employ about 18 students this summer, said Scott Burford, manager of administrative services.

Burford said the summer hires are used to perform routine chores, which frees experienced hands to do more critical work.

"We feel this is using the department's money a little more wisely," Burford said.

Burford agreed that the program is a good recruiting tool. "We get to try them (summer hires) on, and they get to try us on," he said.

The makeup of the summer-hire group is changing with the times, Jones said. In 1984, the earliest year for which he had records, the department used 1,752 summer hires. Of these, 206 (or 11.8 percent) were women. This year, the department employs 2,532 summer hires, of which 340 (13.4 percent) are women.

Summer hires must be at least 17 years old, but they are not required to be from Texas. Pay ranges from \$5.12 to \$7.86 per hour, Jones said, depending on the type of position and the employee's experience and location.

In Dallas, 94 summer employees, including 29 engineering students, were at work by early June. The expected 1989 total of 140 is slightly higher than last year's roster of 122. Among this year's crop are four high school students recruited by the Texas Alliance for Minorities in Engineering (TAME).

The Beaumont District has hired about 100 summer employees, about equally split between engineering and maintenance sections. The number of engineering students applying is lower than usual, and Assistant District Engineer Richard Cardwell says this may be due in part to a recovering Texas economy.

"We haven't had the applications this year we've had in the past," Cardwell said. "Back in the days when private industry was picking them (engineering students) all up, we couldn't hire them at all." The slumping Texas economy cut back the number of students and graduates going into the private sector and freed them to look for summer work elsewhere, including the highway department.

For engineering openings, Cardwell said the district prefers junior- and senior-level engineering students.

Duane Browning, engineer for the Beaumont residency, has been a full-timer for about four years. He is a graduate of Michigan State University and first came to Texas as a summer hire in the summer of 1980.

"In my case, I was trying to get some experience in civil engineering," Brown said. "I had a job offer in my home town (Flint, Mich.), and a job offer in Jasper (Texas). So I loaded up and came to Texas, mostly as an adventure."

After graduating, Browning spent about 18 months working for a consulting firm in Charlotte, N.C. But, he said, he didn't like that as well as he liked Texas, so he came back in 1982. "Texas is home now," he said.

Browning said the main factors in his return to Texas were the friendships he developed while working as a summer hire and the on-the-job education he got from veteran engineers.

Mike Borden, human resources coordinator for the Austin District, said he is pleasantly surprised at how many summer hires return to become permanent employees. "In the past 10 years, we've had 30 to 40 come back and become full-time," he said. Borden said the district has about 70 summer hires this year, which he said is about its average. Of these, about 20 will go into engineering-type positions, about 10 will be clerks, and the rest will go to maintenance sections, Borden said. ★



Austin headquarters volunteers take a break from their duties at the Legends of Golf, where they ran booths April 27 in support of Special Olympics. From left are Mike O'Toole, Bridge Division; Bobby Killebrew, Finance Division; Diane Wacker, Division of Automation; Jean Johnson and Joan Lee, both of Finance. (Photo by Geoff Appold)

Divided 77 open

Officials from five counties gathered recently near the Kenedy-Willacy county line in South Texas to officially open 47 miles of four-lane divided highway on US 77 through Kenedy County.

About 250 people were on hand for the ribbon-cutting ceremony, which was organized by the Valley Chamber of Commerce to mark completion of a six-mile project that had upgraded the last remaining undivided section of US 77.

Ballenger Construction Company of San Benito completed the work of dividing this six-mile stretch in 95 working days, slightly under 40 percent of the allotted time.

Dignitaries at the celebration included state Rep. Eddie Lucio, area county judges and mayors, chamber of commerce representatives, Pharr District Engineer G. G. Garcia, and other district representatives.

Of the 47-mile, \$25 million project, Ballenger Construction Company did 70 percent of the work and Foremost Paving Inc. of Weslaco was responsible for the remaining 14 miles. ★ **Mary Bolado**

Heavy rains, flooding hit East Texas

By Laura Rayburn-White

Some East Texas maintenance employees will be getting extra duty this summer, after heavy rainfall in late March caused flash flooding in parts of the area.

Numerous roads and bridge approaches in Rusk and Gregg counties, in the Tyler District, received water damage when they were hit with more than a foot of rain during a 12-hour period March 28 and 29.

Floodwaters stranded several motorists and caused at least one death in the area. Area law enforcement agencies were kept busy with cars stalled in low water, particularly in low-lying, high-traffic areas in Longview and Tyler. In addition to rain and flooding, East Texas residents had to contend with tornados, lightning, and high winds.

More than 100 roads in the area, including state-maintained roads, were closed at one time or another during the period.

State Rep. Jim McWilliams conducted an aerial survey of Rusk County and estimated several million dollars worth of damage. "From the various estimates I have seen, there are 30-plus bridges and some 90-plus roads that are heavily damaged.

Floodwaters subsided throughout most of the area by March 30, but several roads remained closed due to roadway and bridge approach washouts. ★

Did you know?

The Bryan District recently donated its extensive rock collection to the Brazos Valley Museum of Natural Science. The collection, gathered by district laboratory employees and admired over the past 25 years by hundreds of schoolchildren and other visitors, will be cataloged and placed on permanent display at the museum.

Signs of times say 'when' to Beaumont motorists

By Jefferson Grimes

"When will this project be finished?"

Highway department employees may hear this question more often than any other, but Franklin Young, district engineer in Beaumont, has developed an idea that may decrease the question's frequency while answering it accurately.

Young's plan requires contractors to give their best estimate of the completion date of a project at its outset. The date is then posted next to the contractor's sign at the ends of the construction area.

"Hand in hand with the department's policy of openness to the public," Young said, "is the public's right to know how long construction and, hence, disruption of the flow of traffic, will be."

Seven projects in Young's district sport posted completion dates. "It will be interesting to see how both the contractors and the public respond to such information," Young said. "It is not our intent to put contractors on the spot; however, we do feel this type of information will fuel a positive public perception of the project." ★

Posting estimated completion dates at construction sites earns the Beaumont District points with the public. (Photo by Jefferson Grimes)



Construction gurus share unorthodox tests

By Lona L. Reeves

Why did the chicken cross the road? If you answered, "To get to the other side," you're part right.

But wiser department construction personnel know the chicken really was involved in the "Chicken Track Test."

Nick Turnham, staff services officer in the Bryan District, explains that sending a chicken across the road tests the stickiness of the asphalt. If the chicken makes the trip, the road isn't tacky enough. If the chicken gets mired in muck, though, the asphalt is just right.

Of course, the highway department doesn't raise chickens to test the consistency of asphalt. But this construction joke has its feet firmly entrenched in fact.

As Bob McKinney Jr., retired district laboratory engineer in Waco, recalls, the Chicken Track yarn began at an annual construction seminar bull session. The fellows were spreading the bull and trading secrets — a little of one, a lot of the other.

Bob Burns, retired construction engineer in Waco, is said to have originated this construction myth. But the 33-year department man shares the credit with other department employees. Another field test, he said, evolved into this tall tale at an asphalt seminar in the mid-1970s where Burns was explaining the Two Stick Method developed by Waco resident engineer Leighton Cannon

In those days, the Waco District shot a million to a million-and-a-half gallons of emulsified asphalt a year. Cannon, whom Burns calls the "best-ever," would drag sticks through the asphalt, deeming it ready for the aggregate layer when the sticks left a track.

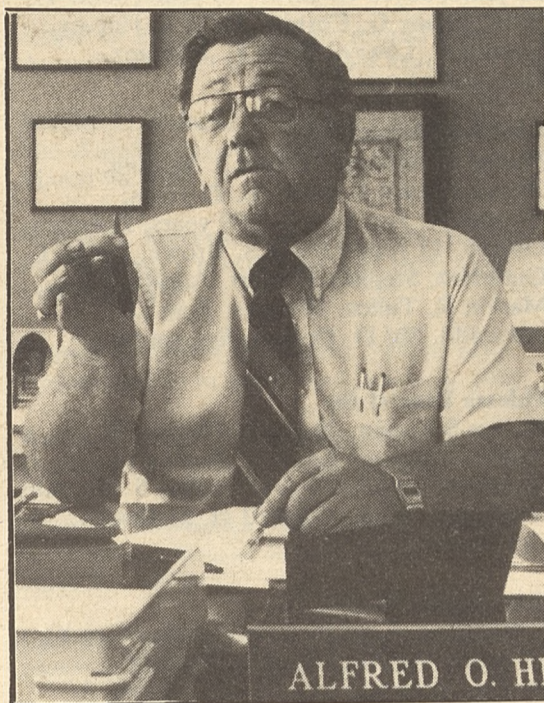
Burns says J. R. Stone, district engineer in Fort Worth, gave the test its mythical proportions when he speculated that Burns really "just grabbed a killdeer and drug its feet through the asphalt." As the test passed from district to district, it became known as the Killdeer or Chicken Track Test.

But seriously, folks . . .

Over the years, construction personnel have developed some unorthodox and not-too-scientific "folk" tests for rough field materials.

A keen sense of observation, sharp wits, and experience seem to be the tests' common denominators. Some developed over years of checking and cross-checking field materials. Others were handed down from mentor to novice or passed from expert to expert.

To test the moisture in embankment soil, for example, Burns suggests rolling dirt between the fingers. If the soil can be rolled to about 1/8 of an inch, or the size of a matchstick, it's good. A smaller roll means there is too much water, while a large roll



Alfred Hilgers, assistant district engineer in San Antonio, uses this knife to test the density of base material and hot mix. By pushing the blade into the asphalt surface, he can tell if it has been rolled enough. (Photo by Lona L. Reeves)

shows water needs to be added.

"Folk tests depend on observing what has worked — what did it sound like and what did it feel like," says Alfred Hilgers, assistant district engineer in San Antonio.

To some, an inspector's job may seem monotonous. But Hilgers sees it as a challenging position with the opportunity to fine-tune observational powers.

He said an inspector comes to know intuitively when to stop and check the placing of steel in culverts. "He can drive by at four to five miles per hour looking at the general pattern of the steel. When it doesn't look right, he stops to see why."

Hilgers can also give an asphalt roadway the Dance Floor Test. As he walks across the finished surface, he can hear if it's properly set. If it has the slap-slap sound you hear as you walk across the dance floor, it's OK. A dull thud calls for a closer check to find the problem.

And many pavement weak spots can be caught when the roller wheels pass over. The pavement is normally tested every 1,000 to 2,000 feet. But a good inspector can tell exactly where to test by watching the roller wheels for a slight dip. He can detect a problem area as small as the size of a card table this way.

As technology and world problems change the makeup of field materials, so do they alter the administration and results of folk tests.

In the earlier days of Hilgers' 34-year career, a rock would skip once across newly placed liquid asphalt and then stick.

Since the 1973 oil crisis, a rock may skip two or three times before sticking. "I thought we had bad asphalt" at first, said Hilgers. But the oil crisis had caused a change in the crude used for asphalt. So the Skipped Rock Test has been revised to allow two or three skips before the rock sticks, indicating the asphalt is still hot enough to add rock.

Another popular test used by Tyler District construction engineer Louie O'Neal, Hilgers, and others to test the readiness of the asphalt for aggregate is the String Test.

Take that same skipped rock and lift it out of the asphalt. If a "string" emerges, along with the hard-to-pull rock, then the latexed surface is ready for rock. If the surface lacks latex, or is too hot or too cold, the rock comes off the surface easily and without the thread of asphalt.

The oil crisis caused a revision in this test, too. Once again, because refineries are taking more out of the crude oil, the string is a lot shorter than it was before 1973.

In an attempt to compensate for refinery extractions, the department began adding its own special ingredients to crude. Hilgers said that when the additive was sulfur, it didn't take an expert to detect it. On rainy days, asphalt roads built with sulfur-enriched crude, in a word, stunk.

In another base material test, O'Neal uses a geology hammer (a small hammer with square end and pick end). If the material is at the correct hardness and blend, the hammer bounces back.

John Betts, district laboratory supervisor in Atlanta, has his own version of the Hammer Test, to check the hardness of rock. A good hard rock rings; a soft rock thuds. Betts said he "developed an ear" for good rocks while at Texas A&M University.

Through experience, he also learned to find sandy clay soil, by looking for a sassafras tree.

These days, Betts and others use aerial photography during the planning stages of roadway building. Experience has taught them that certain types of vegetation growing in unique patterns can be surface indicators of iron ore.

Other folk methods may be going the way of the missing crude ingredients — much missed but long forgotten. Thirty-plus-year men like Hilgers, Burns, and McKinney had the advantage of working with experienced engineers and inspectors during their early training. The mentors passed on their inherited, self-developed, or time-tested unorthodox methods to the new guy and encouraged him to develop his own special tests. ★

JULY					
4	Holiday, Independence Day	11-13	Underground Electrical Installation, Austin, D-18	25-27	Microcomputer Advisor Workshops, Austin, D-19
6-7	District Engineers/Division Heads Meeting, Austin, File BCB	17-21	Maintenance Management Information System Training, Amarillo, D-18M	26-27	Urban Mass Transportation Administration and Administration on Aging Conference on Coordination of Transportation Programs, Austin, D-11
10-14	Maintenance Management Information System Training, Childress, D-18M	19	Commission Hearing and Meeting, Austin		
11-12	Highway Construction Lettings, Austin, D-6	24-28	Maintenance Management Information System Training, Wichita Falls, D-18M	26-28	Transportation Planning Conference, Houston, D-10P

SERVICE AWARDS

Automation

James C. Holland, James Sommerfield Jr., Margaret H. Walter, 25 years; Tahar T. Boukhris, Linda W. Musick, Connie G. Parrott, 20 years.

Bridge

Mark J. Bloschock, 10 years; Keith L. Ramsey, five years.

Construction

Barbara G. Rode, five years.

Equipment and Procurement

Gary H. Love, Gene D. Turner, 20 years; Donald A. Tutt, 15 years; George B. Blackson, 10 years; Joan K. Clarke, Lloyd H. McAlpine Jr., Areland D. Stone, Glen C. Welch, five years.

Finance

Mildred H. Norment, 25 years; Connie J. Huntzis, five years.

Highway Design

Howard E. Johnson, 35 years; James E. Johnson, Robert R. Kovar, Larry J. Wood, 20 years; Clyde A. Bullion Jr., 15 years; Donald Robinson, 10 years.

Maintenance and Operations

Elizabeth L. Eiserer, 15 years.

Materials and Tests

Littleton B. Callihan, 25 years; Richard H. Lane, 20 years.

Motor Vehicle

Louis L. Riffe Jr., 30 years; Mary S. Witt, 25 years; Jonnye D. Ermis, Barbara G. Stolle, 20 years; Carolyn B. Graham, 15 years; Vera Lugo, Linda A. Stuart, 10 years; Martha K. Kovar-Proby, Rodella A. Williams, Elaine G. Wise, five years.

Planning and Policy

John L. Staha, 25 years; John S. Robey, five years.

Transportation Planning

Margaret L. Laforge, 30 years; Larry D. Kitten, 15 years; Karl R. Bierman, Stephen D. Simmons, five years.

Travel and Information

Doris K. Howdeshell, Cynthia S. Rizzotto, 10 years.

Paris District (1)

Jerry N. Norris, Charles D. Watson, 30 years; Jerry R. Knight, 15 years; Raymond D. Martin, 10 years; James R. Holland Jr., Phyllis M. Weir, five years.

Fort Worth District (2)

Yearby A. Shahan, 35 years; Rondell G. Fagan, 25 years; Clyde E. Cottongame Jr., Tanya L. Hynson, Wiley S. Martin, Frank R. McKay, Bernard K. Payne Jr., 20 years; Charles W. Carpenter, James B. East, Larry D. Martin, 15 years; Paul A. Dempsey, 10 years; Joseph W. Atwood, Denise J. Baxter, Victor B. Farrar, Joe Fulfer, John T. Thomas, five years.

Wichita Falls District (3)

Leiland L. Jett, 40 years; Selwyn Williams, Clyde E. Williford, 20 years; Charles E. Stout, 15 years; Carolyn H. Proffitt, 10 years.

Amarillo District (4)

Henry L. Gallegly, 40 years; Treva J. Ray, 20 years; Joyce U. Little, 15 years; John T. Byrd, Penny G. Corbitt, Todd T. Harvey, Everett P. Lowry, Maria E. Ramirez, five years.

Lubbock District (5)

Merlin O. Bennett, Elbert J. Sterling, 30 years; John L. Jackson, 25 years; Eugene A. Farnham Sr., 20 years; Eliodoro Orozco, 15 years; Barry S. Brown, Felipe L. Gutierrez, Stephen P. Hart, Adolph Parks, Marvin R. Tullos, 10 years; Juan D. Alvarado, Shi D. Dotson, five years.

Odessa District (6)

Ruben S. Lujan, 20 years; Thomas H. Garcia, 15 years; David V. Gonzales, Morris E. Leach, 10 years; Efren S. Agundis, Valdemar Garza, Winfred H. McQueen, five years.

San Angelo District (7)

Gilberto C. Sosa, 35 years; Louis Olenick, 25 years; Vicente Morales, 20 years; Nicolas S. Ortega Jr., 15 years; Mark A. Van Hoozer, 10 years; Gary J. Law, Patricia A. Messer, five years.

Abilene District (8)

Delton J. Jackson, 35 years; Billie A. Keeton, Ray J. Menges, 25 years; Jearldene T. Anderson, William W. Leach, 10 years; Thomas F. Rowe III, five years.

Waco District (9)

Rois Meador Jr., 35 years; Gilbert V. Foster, 30 years; Margie A. Petter, 20 years; James M. Gregory, Tommy J. Pechacek, 15 years; James E. Capps, Richard R. Reid, 10 years; Ned L. Reaux, Mark D. Wooldridge, five years.

Tyler District (10)

Billy J. Rushing, 40 years; J. D. Kirkpatrick, 30 years; Adrian D. Clark, Anthony D. Dike, Kenneth T. Hearon, Norman D. Williams, Charles R. Zimmerman, five years.

Lufkin District (11)

Bill T. Langford, Joe B. Vaughan, 30 years; Martha B. Ellis, 10 years; Michael J. Offield, Gary W. Oliver, five years.

Houston District (12)

Woodard L. Matthews, 40 years; Jason B. Franklin, 35 years; Donald J. Rejsek, Elgin Vogler, 30 years; Roy L. Matula, 25 years; Kirby G. Krancher, Homer S. Oatis, David P. Peeples Jr., Janis K. Roane, Helen V. Russell, Woody B. Thomas, 20 years; Henry E. Gentry, 15 years; Dan Johnson Jr., Joannie B. King, Lyna S. Stoerner, Joan M. Williams, Lorene S. Winston, 10 years; Larry J. Allen, Christopher R. Barnhart, David E. Baxley, Kenneth M. Bond, Brian P. Crawford, Francis M. DeBonis, Jerrold L. Graham Jr., Christine M. Halvorsen, Thomas J. Henk, Jhy-Chen Liu, Bennie H. Onken, Herbert P. Provost, Dennis M. Pumilia, Nelson Singer, Mike E. Van Winkle, Jeffrey W. Vogler, Agapito Ybarra, five years.

Yoakum District (13)

David E. Coldewey, 35 years; Ewald J. Blaschke, Eugene A. Valenta, 30 years; Julius R. Best Jr., Artie F. Fox Jr., 25 years; Roy E. Garrison, Fred Lerma III, Milfred R. White Jr., 10 years; Joseph M. Orr, five years.

Austin District (14)

Billy J. Dockal, Dan E. Ulrich, 40 years; Joe L. Barton, Roland E. Gamble, Billy L. Huggins, Edmond S. Tate Jr., 30 years; Jackie E. Headrick, 25 years; Dorman L. Estep, Danny L. Hays, 20 years; Aubrey E. Grumbles, John L. Karnstadt, Michael V. Pfullman, 10 years; Prentice L. Griffiths, Ricky D. Smith, five years.

San Antonio District (15)

Clyde D. Bennett Jr., Ottis N. Kirkland, Robert E. Magers, Melvin F. Siebold, B. R. Wood Jr., 30 years; James V. Carr, Jimmie L. Price, Domingo A. Sanchez, Dennis R. Tuch, Jimmy K. Walch, 25 years; Viola J. Doege, Frank E. Plocek, 20 years; Shirley W. Morris, 15 years; Lee J. Doffeny, Enrique C. Garcia, Regino A. Garza, Randy D. Marek, Linda C. Passailaigue, Karl R. Wilke, five years.

Corpus Christi District (16)

Mary S. Hamblet, Amando Sanchez, Thomas L. Shockome, 20 years; Reynaldo Galvan, 10 years; Rolando Barrera, Luz Rangel Jr., five years.

Bryan District (17)

Fred L. Heckmann, Ben F. Stutts, 30 years; Helen D. Ketchum, 20 years; Morris W. Eubanks, Danny W. Loehr, 15 years; Waylen G. Crossley, Glend O. Hightower, Billie J. Simmons, Richard D. Vansa, 10 years; David A. Goodrow, five years.

Dallas District (18)

David L. Duke, 20 years; Jackie S. Downs, Gary H. Grant, 10 years; James M. Allen, William A. Beard, Gary N. Blackman, Jack D. Bryan, William D. Dillon, Chris A. Johnson, Anna M. Mumma, Timothy M. Nesbitt, Mary B. Slate, five years.

Atlanta District (19)

Lawrence L. Jester Jr., Howard D. Moore Jr., 40 years; Richard W. Green, Neal W. Montgomery, 30 years; Ernest G. Childress, James B. Mitchell, 25 years; Michael L. Dupree, 10 years; Aaron A. Harding, Delbert V. Rachel, Michael W. Sharp, Gary L. Turman, Shan T. Wilkins, five years.

Beaumont District (20)

Billy J. Worden, 40 years; Willard A. Collier, Jimmy L. Graham, 30 years; Walter O. Crook, Fred A. Fowler, 20 years; Leon I. Celestine, Rush B. Fillyaw, David W. Hearnberger, 10 years; Michael A. Boyd, Thomas H. Caldwell, John T. Choate, five years.

Pharr District (21)

Ramiro Cantu, Renulfo Garza, Janice W. Kolberg, Ramon Patina, Efrain Reyna, Ricardo Villarreal, 20 years; Miguel Salazar, 10 years; Manuel R. Carreon, five years.

Brownwood District (23)

Truman F. Weeden, 25 years; Lewis Epperson, William E. Glaze, Noah G. Gutierrez, 15 years; Richard L. Walker, 10 years; Vernon E. Roberts, five years.

El Paso District (24)

Donaciano S. Celaya, 25 years; John D. Harvey, Manuel A. Morales, 20 years; Charles H. Berry Jr., Gloria Gomez, 10 years; Jorge M. Vargas, five years.

Childress District (25)

Dannie B. Tiffin, Gene P. Whitener, 15 years.

(May 31, 1989)

IN MEMORIAM

Employees:

John D. Bennight, San Antonio District, 29 years service, died May 16, 1989.

Retirees:

Lemuel M. Burkhart, Fort Worth, retired from Lubbock District in 1975, died Feb. 7, 1989.

Willard F. Childress, Waxahachie, retired from Dallas District in 1977, died March 15, 1989.

William R. Cloud Jr., Groveton, retired from Lufkin District in 1979, died May 4, 1989.

Merton M. Easley, Dallas, retired from Dallas District in 1976, died Nov. 26, 1988.

Roy H. Gregory, San Antonio, retired from San Antonio District in 1972, died April 27, 1989.

Paula P. Halsey, Fort Worth, retired from Dallas District in 1988, died April 11, 1989.

James Hamilton, Dallas, retired from Dallas District in 1960, died May 5, 1989.

Hobert E. Marshall, Corsicana, retired from Dallas District in 1977, died March 31, 1989.

Warren E. Moreland, Mount Pleasant, retired from Atlanta District in 1986, died April 27, 1989.

Lynn T. Newsom, Dilley, retired from San Antonio District in 1975, died April 23, 1989.

Edgar C. Payne, Canadian, retired from Amarillo District in 1973, died May 21, 1989.

Bennie L. Roberts, Stockdale, retired from San Antonio District in 1977, died March 16, 1989.

Walter L. Stevens, Buchanan Dam, retired from Corpus Christi District in 1975, died March 23, 1989.

Spence B. Taylor, Corsicana, retired from Dallas District in 1969, died April 13, 1989.

Arthur C. Teer, Rusk, retired from Tyler District in 1976, died April 7, 1989.

Henry J. Thompson, Schulenburg, retired from Austin District in 1979, died April 13, 1989.

Carl H. Triplett, Manvel, retired from Houston District in 1979, died Feb. 19, 1989.

Sammie Turner, Cedar Creek, retired from Equipment and Procurement Division in 1970, died March 15, 1989.

Willva C. Wylie, La Rue, retired from Tyler District in 1980, died April 2, 1989.

***Compiled by Bernice Kissmann,
Human Resources Division**

'Red' Wilson marker planned

By Cindy Noffsinger

Burnet County commissioners are working to raise money for a memorial marker to honor former Burnet County resident engineer Wilton G. "Red" Wilson.

Wilson drowned in May 1987 during a flash flood of the Pedernales River in Blanco County. He had worked for the highway department since 1950 and served as Burnet County resident engineer from 1969 until he retired in 1985.

Burnet County commissioners adopted a resolution in June 1988 naming the US 281/Texas 71 interchange in honor of Wilson. Now they have established a fund to purchase a memorial marker to be placed at the interchange. If the money raised exceeds the cost of the marker, the balance will go into the Wilton G. "Red" Wilson Memorial Scholarship Fund.

In naming the interchange for Wilson, county commissioners said he had "served the people of Texas faithfully and well." The resolution also called Wilson a "vital force in highway development in Burnet County."

Those wishing to make a contribution in Wilson's honor may make a check payable to the Wilton G. Wilson Memorial Fund and mail it to Katy Gilmore, Treasurer, County of Burnet, 220 South Pierce Street, Burnet, Texas 78611.★

Noffsinger is a summer employee at the Austin District.

RETIREMENTS

Administration

Frances K. Hendrix, Administrative Technician II, 16 years.

Maintenance and Operations Division

Thaddeus Bynum, Engineer IV, 19 years;
Betty K. Hobson, Administrative Technician IV, 15 years.

Fort Worth District (2)

William C. Garretson Jr., Engineering Technician IV, 23 years; Bruce W. Ross, Maintenance Technician II, 14 years.

San Angelo District (7)

Joe Gomez, Maintenance Technician II, 32 years; Nannette S. Harrington, Administrative Technician II, 23 years.

Waco District (9)

Daryl E. Sanders, Engineering Aide II, 10 years.

Lufkin District (11)

Dorothy D. Parker, Auditor II, 44 years.

Houston District (12)

Robert C. Lanham, General Construction Inspector, 35 years; J. L. Sales, Maintenance Technician III, 20 years; Nathaniel Virgil, Maintenance Mechanic IV, 23 years.

Yoakum District (13)

Nelson O. Muske, Maintenance Construction Foreman III, 35 years.

Austin District (14)

Richard M. Darr, Maintenance Technician III, 19 years; Vernon F. Rust, Roadway Maintenance Supervisor III, 20 years; Felix F. Till, Maintenance Construction Supervisor I, 33 years.

San Antonio District (15)

Jose A. Coronado, Maintenance Technician II, 32 years.

Corpus Christi District (16)

Dionicio Benavides, Maintenance Technician III, 18 years; Johnny L. Hamilton, Warehouse Superintendent, 25 years; Miguel Salcido, Assistant Foreman, 21 years.

Dallas District (18)

Johnnie S. Miklis, Maintenance Technician III, 14 years.

Atlanta District (19)

George W. Thornhill, Maintenance Technician III, 21 years.

Pharr District (21)

Teodoro De La Rosa, Maintenance Technician III, 20 years.

Brownwood District (23)

Leroy Dyer, Maintenance Technician III, 18 years.

(Mar. 31, 1989)

Blood drive scores

The highway department's Austin blood fund got a boost of 273 units during the May blood drive.

The Employees Advisory Committee and the Capital Area Blood Bank expressed thanks to employees who donated blood during the drive.

The blood fund is available to any employee or immediate family members who need blood, whether they have contributed to the fund or not.

A fall blood drive is tentatively set for Nov. 14-16.★

THIS MONTH IN HIGHWAY HISTORY:

Dewitt C. Greer was appointed state highway engineer on July 1, 1940.

* * *

The Texas Highway Commission authorized more than 2,000 miles of new farm-to-market road construction in its July meeting of 1949.

* * *

980th Engineer Construction Battalion completed two weeks training in Louisiana July 22, 1952.

* * *

First segment of the "Austin Expressway" (Interstate 35) opened July 22, 1953.

* * *

Motor vehicle title number 19,000,000 was issued July 15, 1957.

LETTERS

I don't know your name, but this letter is from a very grateful mother.

My son was coming home from Mount Pleasant during a rainstorm, and ran off the Interstate and landed in the ditch. You stopped and saw that he was OK, took him to a telephone to call me, and then took him back and stayed with him until his father got there.

My husband and I are very grateful to you and appreciate very much your help. Neither my husband nor son thought to get your name, so I hope this letter will reach you.

**Dottie Garretson
Mount Vernon**

This letter did find its way to Robert C. Agan, maintenance technician and gang foreman for the Mount Pleasant maintenance section, Atlanta District.

I am an automobile dealer in Fort Worth who had some misfortune on I-20 near Highway 69. I was driving a car home I had purchased in Marshall. The gas gauge was not far off, but enough so that although I should have had some fuel in the tank, I ran out.

My sincere thanks to William Suggs, who was driving behind me, pulled over, and at no charge put in about a gallon of gas.

Many times the only news we hear is bad news. A little good news is a welcome change.

**David Kinnaird
Fort Worth**

Suggs works in the North Tyler maintenance section in the Tyler District.

Driving the highways of your neighboring states, especially Arizona, I had forgotten how pleasant traveling could be.

I just returned from a trip across Texas, east on US 190 and Texas 29 and returning on I-10.

Your highways, both Interstate and secondary, are superb. The three days each way from El Paso to Livingston were most pleasant and the wildflowers were a real traffic stopper.

Congratulations and a big thank you!

**F. M. McClintock
Idleld Park, Oregon**

I had a wonderful experience at your office while I was trying to gather facts for my special volunteer project.

As a plaza supervisor for Harris County Toll Road Authority, I am trying in my off-duty time to help my organization generate more riders on our toll road by developing a promotional television package. To do so, I needed to see a bigger picture of the traffic surrounding the Hardy Toll Road.

Help started when I called your switchboard operator, who understood my need and switched me to Merwyn Hirsch. He gave me a wealth of information over the phone. I didn't believe that anyone cared enough to help me like he did. He even invited me over to get more information. He made me feel like a big shot.

Yesterday I visited your office and met two wonderful women working there. They listened, heard my questions, and went into action to help me. They realized I needed more information and called Roger Gillaspy. He came and got me so quickly that it felt

like I was walking on red carpet.

I want to congratulate you for putting together such a fine team of professionals.

**DeWitt P. Garth Jr.
Houston**

Hirsch is manager of urban traffic studies, and Gillaspy is a planner in the planning section. Nancy Shaw and June Johnson are administrative technicians in the Houston District's public information office.

I write to commend Aladdin Hernandez and Francisco Cordero and several others, including the yard supervisor from Fort Hancock who assisted me almost immediately after my left rear wheel came off my car due to a broken axle. I was fortunate not to have been hurt but a trailer I was towing was completely demolished.

I want to thank you for your immediate help and especially for your real, personal concern for me.

Continue the good, kind action for us visitors in Texas.

**Betty L. Robertson
Oceanside, California**

Hernandez and Cordero are maintenance technicians in Fort Hancock. The yard supervisor Mrs. Robertson commended is Manuel A. Colmenero.

BUCKLE UP.

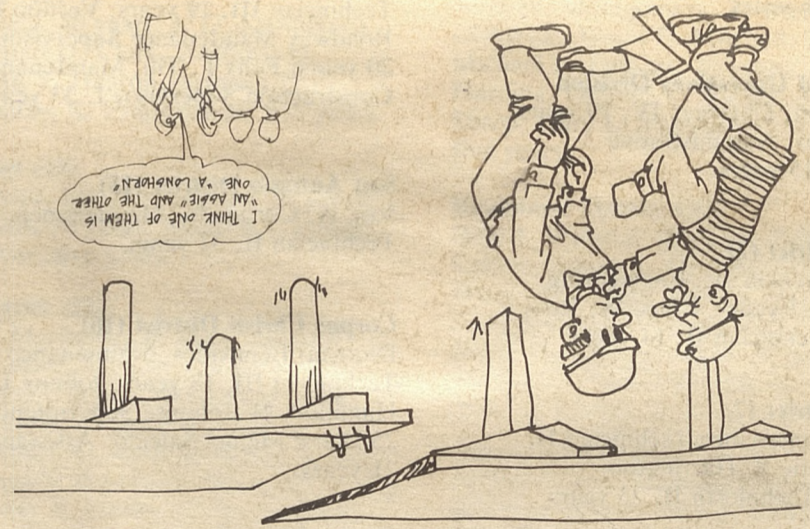
ON OUR COVER:
Quality is "job one" at district labs, part of the department's network of quality control operations. At the Austin District lab, James Kirk, preparing base samples with a soil compaction hammer, is one of the many highway department employees who make sure it all turns out right. (Photo by Harvie Jordan, ABC)

A newsletter published monthly by the Department of Highways and Public Travel and Information Division of the State Transportation, at 11th and Brazos Streets, Austin, Texas 78701-2483.
Manuscripts, photos, news tips invited. Send submissions to above address or telephone the editor at (512) 463-8612 or Tex-An 255-8612.
Editor Rosemary Neff
Associate Editors Jeff Carmack
Gina McAskill

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Volume 14
Number 11

TRANSPORTATION NEWS

Cartoon by: Olumide Eyikogbe, District 12 Bridge Design Section



HIGHWAY HUMOR

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