

TRC Employees Worked Around Hurricane Alicia

Though many Houston and Galveston area TRC offices were without power for 10 days or so, no TRC employees were injured and commission property sustained little damage as a result of Hurricane Alicia.

The storm pummeled the Texas Coast with high winds in late August and damaged the roofs of the Galveston and Pasadena offices. But the biggest problem was the lack of electricity, making it impossible for some employees to work, according to Jim Muhlhauser, program director for the Houston Regional Office.

"Even though the power

was out, many employees continued to come to the office, working out of the trunk of their cars and using flashlights in the office to find case files," Muhlhauser said.

Employees also helped move files and drawers to prevent records from being damaged by flooding.

"There was no equipment damage," he said. "Our staff did a good job of protecting TRC equipment and I think they can be congratulated for that."

Muhlhauser said some staff members were without electricity at home for two weeks or more. "They continued to

come to work even though they had tough situations to face at home," he said. "They were real troopers."

Frankie Watson, administrative officer for the Houston Regional office, said her fence at home was blown down. More damage was done to the home of Versie Blackmon, supervisor of the Houston Field Office Southeast. Though the Blackmon family is fine, their home lost part of its roof and several windows were blown out. To Blackmon the more devastating damage was done to her yard, where her fence, all her roses and a large magnolia tree were uprooted.

New Performance Appraisal System to take Effect

On January 1, 1984, TRC's new performance appraisal program will take effect, with fiscal year 1984 being a transition period from the old system to the new one.

"The heart and soul of the new program is communication between supervisors and employees. Employees have the right to know what's expected of them," said Mike Mericle, personnel director and chairman of the performance appraisal committee which has been working on the new system since September, 1981.

Mericle said the new evaluation method should help employees develop to their fullest potential and allow them to "know just what their job is so that there are no surprises at the end of the year."

One of the major differences between this system and the old one is that much subjectivity will be removed from the evaluation process. "We're not so naive as to believe we'll eliminate all subjectivity," Mericle said,

"but it's going to eliminate a large amount."

New functional job descriptions will be the foundation of the new evaluation system. "We will have new descriptions completed for all classified employees by the end of FY 84," Mericle said. These descriptions are being prepared through joint efforts of the positions' incumbents and supervisors.

Five statewide training sessions on the new method are planned for September and October.

Equipment Helps Ft. Worth Client Be Competitive

For all the lights, controls and noises, Ron McClanahan might well be in the cockpit of an airplane. Instead, the knobs, dials and gadgets he turns and switches link him, via the airwaves, to his job.

From the bedroom in his home in Fort Worth, McClanahan, a TRC client, works as a subcontractor for Burg Communications. The company sends its customers' two-way radios to him for repair. As a part of his job, McClanahan adjusts radios so that their signals are within the limits established by the Federal Communications Commission. To do this, he watches radio transmissions on the screen of an electronic field monitor. The device picks up radio signals from a transmitter and converts them to a pattern of wavy lines of light on the screen of the monitor.

Without the monitor, McClanahan would not be able to do this job. He has the monitor thanks to the gump-tion of Linda (Boone) Laughinghouse, counselor in the Fort Worth Field Office Southwest, and the generosity of Cushman Electronics, Inc., an electronics test equipment firm based in San Jose, California.

McClanahan's interest in electronics and fixing things dates back to his childhood. "I just learned how to do it as I went along," he recalls. "I used to fix broken toys. I even put headlights on my go-cart."

In the summer of 1981, McClanahan's life-long interest in electronics led him to a job at Motorola in Fort Worth. Two weeks after he started that job, however, his life changed drastically. In

trying to break up a fight in the bar where he worked at night, McClanahan was stabbed in the back. The injury resulted in incomplete paraplegia. Because he has only limited use of his legs, McClanahan uses a wheelchair.

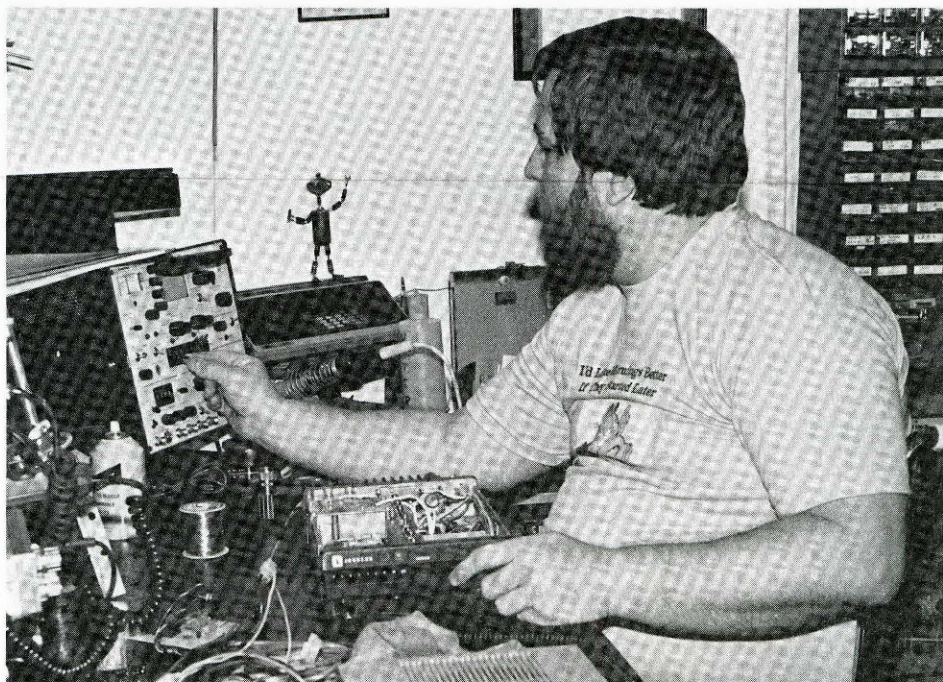
Following his injury, McClanahan lost interest in working outside his home. With all the two-way radio equipment he already owned, he felt he could earn a living by servicing radios in his home. To be competitive, McClanahan knew he would need an electronic field monitor in his shop. And, he knew it was an expensive piece of equipment.

He talked to Laughinghouse, his counselor, about it. When she learned that this one piece of equipment could cost more than ten thousand dollars Laughinghouse began to look for ways to get around spending that much money. On a long shot, she

wrote a letter to Cushman Electronics to see if they might assist her client. The firm's response was more than Laughinghouse might have expected.

The company offered to sell a field monitor for McClanahan's use for one thousand dollars--an estimated 90% discount. It took several weeks for all the paperwork and logistics to be resolved--but, finally, the monitor arrived.

The arrival of the monitor seemed to accomplish more than getting McClanahan set up for business. According to Laughinghouse, it also changed, for the better, his outlook on life. "Ron kept saying, 'It will never work--it will never work,' when I told him about my letter," she says. "Now that the monitor's here, he sees that there are people in this world who have a generous concern for other people."



TRC client Ron McClanahan of Fort Worth uses an electronic field monitor in his home-based radio repair business. Cushman Electronics, Inc., of California, sold the monitor to TRC for McClanahan's use for one thousand dollars--a 90% discount.

TRA Conference

This year's TRA Annual Conference had an appropriate theme for the 1980's: "Human Concern vs. Economic Realities--The Challenge." The conference was held July 17-20 in Houston.

Following is a list of conference award winners.

Special Recognition

Anna Marie Posey, TRC counselor, Victoria Field Office

Research and Demonstration Project

Sandra Blackwell, TRC counselor, Garland Field Office

Physician of the Year

Wilma B. Hogg, M.D., Dallas

Handicapped Person of the Year

Kathleen De Silva, TRC client, Houston

Extra Mile Award

Milton Washer, San Antonio

Orville C. Bridges, TRC senior counselor, Corsicana Field Office

President's Meritorious Service Award

Margaret O'Malley, Dallas, TRA staff

Texas Rehabilitation Counseling Association

Dixie McLeod, TRC counselor, Beaumont Calder Field Office
Counselor of the Year

Texas Association of Rehabilitation Secretaries

Lon Young, TRC Region II Director
Boss of the Year

Marilyn Padgett, TRC supervisor, San Antonio Field Office Central
Special Recognition Award

Joyce Cooley, rehabilitation technician, Houston Field Office Central
TARS Service Award

Texas Rehabilitation Administrators Association

Les Lovell, Region I Director
The Giant Step Award

Dallas Rehabilitation Institute Award

Ted Thayer, TRC program specialist, Central Office
N-Emmy Award

TRC Field Staff

Max Arrell, Commissioner
Appreciation Plaque

From **DDD**



DDD's Lisa Peyton can now add a college diploma to her office wall.

Peyton Earns Psych Degree

Lisa Peyton said it best herself: "It took me 25 years but I finally did it."

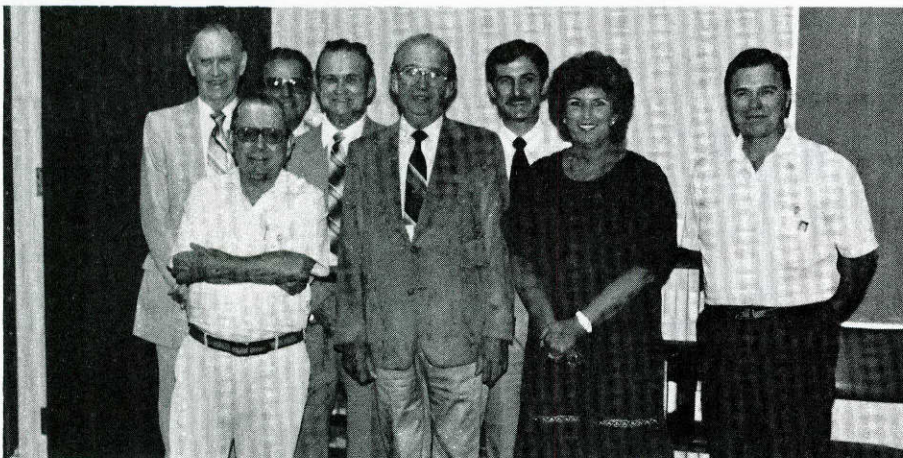
What DDD's Medical Development Unit clerical supervisor did was to earn her bachelor's degree, a degree she began more than 20 years ago after she graduated from high school. At that time, she attended college for 3½ years as an English major but quit school to get married.

A year and a half ago she enrolled at St Edward's University in Austin with a different major and this summer finished her bachelor's degree in psychology.

Despite a hectic class schedule, she continued to work fulltime, juggling classes and her work schedule. "The staff has been very supportive," Peyton said.

Now her ambition is to become a disability examiner.

Open House Held to Honor Thurman



DDD medical services staff got together on August 19 to attend a reception for Jack Thurman, medical-professional relations officer from the Lubbock DDD Field Office. Thurman retired on Aug. 31. Pictured in the back row from left are W. E. Crosby, retired TRC medical services director, Austin; Myrton McDonald, retired medical relations officer, Dallas; Larry Cummings, medical relations officer, Austin; and John Wright, medical relations officer, Austin. In the front from left are W. O. Smyth, medical relations MHMR liaison officer, Austin; Jack Thurman; Patricia Gibbs, medical relations officer, Dallas; and Dale Place, deputy commissioner.

De Silva Beats Odds to Obtain Career and Independence

She wasn't expected to live past those first few moments after the accident. During gymnastics' practice, the 16-year-old girl had fallen from the uneven parallel bars, broken her neck at the highest part of the spinal cord and instantly was unable to feel or move from the neck down.

Most people sustaining this kind of injury die at the scene of the accident because they are unable to breathe.

And though she was resuscitated and survived surgery in which electrical pacemakers were inserted to enable her to breathe, she wasn't expected to have what many would consider an independent life or a fulfilling career. At best, she would spend the rest of her life in an institution or lead a sheltered existence being cared for at home.

But the word "best" has to be redefined when it is applied to Kathleen De Silva. The 31-year-old Houstonian's accomplishments would be exceptional even if she had not had to overcome a catastrophic disability.

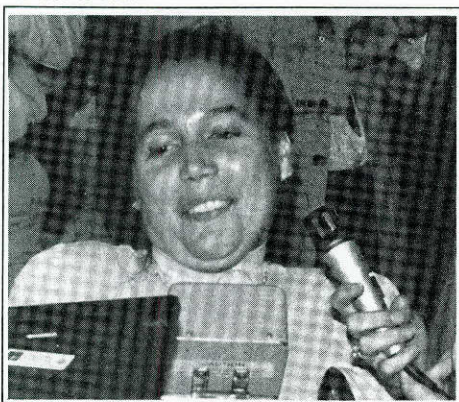
After a lengthy rehabilitation at The Institute for Rehabilitation and Research (TIRR) in Houston, De Silva graduated from high school and entered Rice University with the help of TRC. After graduating from Rice with honors, she enrolled at Bates Law School, Houston, graduated and passed the Texas Law Board with high standing.

Before finding her present job as legal counsel for TIRR, she operated her own business—a shop for women.

De Silva's achievements were recognized this summer

when she was named "Handicapped Person of the Year" by the Texas Rehabilitation Association and was given the Meritorious Service Award by the Harris County Committee for Employment of the Handicapped.

"Kathleen De Silva is the most exceptional individual that I have ever had the privilege to work with," said Terry Smith, supervisor of TRC's Houston Field Office Central.



Kathleen De Silva

De Silva, who can move only her neck and facial muscles, is dependent upon a chin-operated, motorized wheelchair, mouthsticks to perform many tasks and a workplace and home that have been adapted for her use. She has, however, achieved a degree of independence once unheard of for complete quadraplegics.

"She represents the spinal-cord-injured person who formerly, and all too often today, is considered to be hopeless and better off left to die," said Dr. William A. Spencer, president of TIRR. "As strong as this statement may seem, her extraordinary personal accomplishments, self-development and now independence and our great

need for her services refutes so poignantly the extraordinary pessimism and cynicism accorded such severely disabled persons."

De Silva lives in her own condominium and is part of a group of disabled young adults called Independent Lifestyle, Inc., whose members share attendant care.

She revels in the freedom this lifestyle has brought her. "The privacy you gain, the independence you gain, is remarkable."

She said she enjoys her work and the people she works with at the Institute. Her biggest obstacles now are the attitudinal ones. "The physical barriers are not the hard ones," De Silva said. "The attitudinal barriers are the toughest because you can't see them but you can feel them."

People make assumptions about her, she said, simply because she is in a wheelchair. For instance, a waitperson at a restaurant might talk to her attendant and not to her. "Because I can't do for myself, they assume I can't speak for myself."

That is certainly not the case. De Silva is glad to talk to people about herself or her disability.

"I don't mind if people look—I know they're curious. And I want them to ask me questions. I try to be open."

De Silva was a TRC client for 13 years. "One of the things I've admired most about the TRC counselors I've worked with is that they listen," she said. "They really bother to find out what you need—that isn't always easy. And they take a personal interest."

Letters . . .

(Editor's Note: The following passages are excerpted from a letter written by Paula Istre, client of the Fort Worth Field Office Southeast, to Lon Young, Fort Worth regional director.)

"This is a letter of appreciation for the wonderful opportunity that the Texas Rehabilitation (Commission) is giving me.

I would like to state my sincere appreciation for the help and guidance that my counselor Louise Wagner has given. She is a tremendous inspiration to me personally and has really given me encouragement for my chosen profession.

Last, but certainly not least, I would like to make some comments about my instructor at TRC, Perry Allen. He has had a very positive hand in helping me understand my assets and my weaknesses and helping me to realize that I can personally overcome any problems that may be put in my path.

The knowledge that I have gained at TRC I shall certainly benefit from throughout my life."



At a VR staff development workshop held in Austin on Aug. 10-11, Mary Valentini (left) and Marilyn Padgett discussed management issues relating to serving catastrophically disabled clients. Other topics were new equipment and technology, centers for independent living, vehicle modification and driver training, innovative employment situations, and referral development and early contact issues. Workshop participants included counselors, senior counselors and supervisors from all six TRC regions.

(The following letter was written by Buddy Fields, printshop superintendent, about his dedicated staff.)

"I wanted to write this letter to "News and Views" because I think my staff deserves a pat on the back. My employees really take pride in their work and since their work is seen by all employees, there is no way to hide mistakes.

I've found also that my staff is loyal to TRC. The turnover rate at the shop is

low, with everyone but the new secretary drawing longevity. The previous secretary had been with the printshop for 7½ years and left because her husband accepted a job outside of Austin.

The staff is willing to work overtime when needed--the shop consistently does work for two other state agencies--and the quality of the work is always high.

Let this letter stand as a tribute to the printshop employees."

Merit Budgets to Be Allocated Annually

As a result of work by the DDD Merit Increase Advisory Committee, all TRC employees will benefit from a new system of allocating merit raise money.

Committee Chairperson Bruce Rollman said that supervisors now will receive an entire year's merit budget at the beginning of each fiscal year, rather than receiving one twelfth of the merit budget each month.

"This way, some employees who've qualified for merit pay don't have to wait around for three or four months to get that raise," Rollman said.

Though the committee of 18 employees was formed to evaluate only DDD's merit system, this suggestion was approved by Commissioner Max Arrell to apply to all TRC employees.

Other suggestions of the committee have not yet been

acted upon but include developing merit criteria for some jobs that don't have them, beginning an education program about the merit system and supporting any efforts to bring about legislative changes that would extend the state employee salary scale beyond step 8 or legalize cash bonuses or compensatory time to meritorious employees at step 8.

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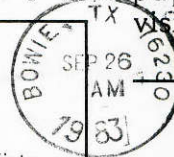
It may have been a heated battle, but all was quickly forgotten as the two teams posed for this postwar photo. The event was the second annual softball game between DDD's Computer Data Management folks and the staff of Program Evaluation Services-Technical Reviewers. In this summer's game the PES-TR staff lost but they're already looking forward to a rematch. According to staffer Adela Dominguez, the players don't have to worry about any major league scouts pounding at their doors. In fact, she said some team members seemed bewildered to discover they could even hit a softball.

NETH Week Coming Up

National Employ the Handicapped Week will be October 2-8. To help plan local activities and generate publicity about NETH Week, all regional offices and supervisory units will receive a press packet in mid-September from the public information office. The packet will contain public service announcements, press releases and camera-ready newspaper advertisements which can be distributed to local newspapers and radio and television stations.

Calendar of Events September/October 1983

11 - 16	Managers of Managers Training	Lago Vista
13 - 14	Pre-Vocational Instructor/Evaluator Workshop	San Antonio
13 - 15	Employee Performance Appraisal and Development	Dallas
15 - 16	Technical Training for Ad. Techs.	Waco
21 - 23	CPR Training	DDD
22	Telecommunications Management	Austin-C.O.
25 - 30	Supervisory Management Training	Lago Vista
25 - 30	Managers of Managers Training	Lago Vista
27 - 29	Employee Performance Appraisal and Development	San Antonio
28 - 30	Medical Training (Phase II)	San Antonio
5 - 7	On the Job Again II	Dallas



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