

TxDOT helps when flood hits

Laredo District assists authorities in relief efforts after tropical storm

Cristina Flores Guevara
Laredo District

Overturned vehicles, shattered homes and debris is what the San Felipe Creek left the residents of Val Verde County after the wall of water generated by rains from Tropical Storm Charley overwhelmed Del Rio on Aug. 24, taking with it lives, memories and dreams of the future.

More than 150 volunteers from the Texas Task Force of the Texas Engineers Extension Service of Texas A&M University searched homes for bodies. Volunteers marked homes with one large red "X" to inform rescuers that homes had been searched once. Two red "X's" meant a home had been searched twice.

Residents tell stories of rescues and lives lost. Jim Palmer, Water Works superintendent for the city of Del Rio, and Richard Fernandez, a Texas Department of Public Safety trooper, didn't think twice when they climbed into a front-end loader and risked their lives to rescue 18 flood victims.

Jane Schumann, manager of TxDOT's Del Rio Area Office, described what happened to her stepdaughter, Debbie Pyatte, Debbie's mother, JoAnn, and husband David. Rushing water washed a mobile home into JoAnn's back yard. The noise was so loud it scared everyone so they exited their home and as they stood at the doorway, water swept Debbie, JoAnn and David down the San Felipe Creek. Debbie was found clinging to a tree. David's body was found not far from JoAnn's body. "He was



Father and son watch the waters of the Nueces River rise following heavy rains from Tropical Storm Charley in August.



Del Rio Area Engineer Bob Parker discusses loading the emergency water with Army National Guard Officer Eucebio Gonzalez.

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trying to save JoAnn's life because she didn't know how to swim." Schumann said. "My stepdaughter was lucky to survive. She is doing what she can to recover from the loss of her husband and mother."

Another story that touched many hearts involved a married couple who was leaving

their home when the wife turned back to get her medication. Their bodies were later found miles apart after the flood waters receded.

Fernando Abrego, Del Rio center-stripe crew chief for TxDOT, lost his home. No children lost their lives as a result of the flood.

The initial phone call to the DPS Division of Emergency Management in Austin was made by Kelly Smith. Calling from the DPS office in Del Rio, Smith reported that a wall of water had just hit the San Felipe Creek area and was heading towards the Rio Grande. This initial phone

call put the wheels in motion for all federal, state, and local officials. Within six hours, an emergency command center was established.

On Aug. 24, the first day of the deluge, the National Guard rescued more than 51 residents from buildings and trees. At the

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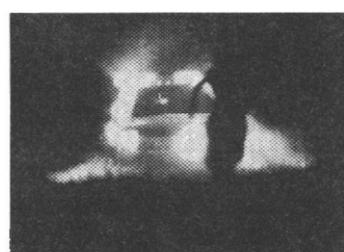
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Switching to metrics an unnecessary move

As you are probably aware, Executive Director Wes Heald has decided that for at least the next six years, the Texas Department of Transportation will not convert to the use of the metric system.

The federal mandate to convert all road and bridge designs to the metric system was made optional by TEA-21, the most recent highway funding bill. And while Mr. Heald believes the metric system is the way of the future and TxDOT will eventually have no choice but to join the ranks of those entities using the metric system, that time has not yet come.

This decision was not made lightly. All the factors were examined and weighed, and Mr. Heald made the decision that he believes is the right one for this department at this time. Let me give you a little background on what went in to making this decision. For one thing, TxDOT looked at what other state DOTs are doing about the switch to metric. We also sought input from the divisions that would be most affected by a switch to the metric system. We also asked for input from the construction industry.



Mike Behrens
Straight talk

of the rest of the country is not.

For example, the construction industry, which is one of our biggest partners, is still not comfortable with the metric system. Yes, you can buy soft drinks in liter bottles, but construction materials are still manufactured and sold according to the old English system of measurement. And design and construction entities still, for the most part, are using the English system. Switching to the metric system at this point can only mean big headaches for everyone involved.

And while we have software that will easily convert English to metric, people don't adapt as well. We all learned the English system growing up, and this is the system we are most comfortable with. Some of us, especially those with backgrounds in the sciences, are familiar and comfortable with metrics, but most of us are not. We think and speak in the English system: "Give him an inch and he'll take a mile," or "the whole nine yards" are more than expressions. They, and dozens more, are reflections of the fact that we "think" using the English system.

TxDOT has spent time and money trying to convert to the use of metric, but this is not money wasted. Projects now "in the pipeline" will be completed using metrics, but any new projects will now be initiated using the English system.

Saving the energy and resources required to make a premature switch to the use of the metric system can be spent more wisely now on the business at hand. When the conversion must be made, we're confident that TxDOT employees all will join in to make this mission, when necessary, a success. ★

Mike Behrens is assistant director for Engineering Operations for the Texas Department of Transportation.

Monroe returns to lead Office Of General Counsel

Richard Monroe, who served as TxDOT's deputy general counsel from 1989 to 1996, returned as the head of the Office of General Counsel in September.

Monroe spent the past two years as an attorney for the Texas Workforce Commission and Texas Railroad Commission. He gave legal advice to the commission and department management.

Monroe has worked in the public and private sectors, including 10 years as deputy regional coun-

sel for the U.S. Department of Energy. He has also served as Lubbock assistant district attorney, Internal Revenue Service attorney and Abilene assistant city attorney.

A native of Dallas, Richard earned a bachelor's degree in business administration from Southern Methodist University and doctor of jurisprudence from SMU School of Law. Richard and his wife, Judy, live in Austin. ★

Texas Highways gift shop moves to easy-to-find spot

Cynthia M. Kosel
Travel Division

Texas Highways sells Texas.

Although the magazine started as a highway department publication in 1953, representing the department's accomplishments in design, construction, maintenance, and personnel matters, its total devotion to travel began in 1974. At that time *Texas Highways* began selling subscriptions and copies of its back issues.

In April 1975, the Texas Legislature valued the magazine so much that legislators adopted a House concurrent resolution naming *Texas Highways* the official travel publication of Texas.

Since 1993, a scenic wall calendar has been published and sold each year, along with a variety of scenic prints, historical maps, note cards, and holiday greeting cards. However, there was no official store available for customers. Then, in December 1994, the *Texas Highways* gift store opened for the first time at the TxDOT Training Center Building, 1101 East Anderson Lane, Austin. Even though the location was difficult to find, the magazine still received a steady stream of customers.

This year, for the first time, TxDOT employees will receive a

In April 1975, the Texas Legislature valued the magazine so much that legislators adopted a House concurrent resolution naming *Texas Highways* the official travel publication of Texas.

product supplement enclosed with their copy of the November issue of *Texas Highways*, which will give color descriptions of *Texas Highways* most popular gift items. And, again this year, current TxDOT employees will be able to purchase the 1999 *Texas Highways* scenic wall calendar for a special price of \$5 (no limit), even though the price will be \$8.95 in the supplement.

The *Texas Highways* gift store has moved to 150 E. Riverside, along with the entire Travel Division, and is located on the first floor. You'll find all of the products (including the 1999 calendar) and back issues for sale in the store, as well as free travel literature, such as the official state travel map and the quarterly Calendar of Events.

Julie Provost, the store's manager, is expecting to see more visitors come to the store now that it's in a more accessible location. ★



Transportation News is published for employees and retirees of the Texas Department of Transportation. Contents are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, TxDOT.

Trouble getting *Transportation News*?
Call (512) 463-8588

Published by the Public Information Office, 125 E. 11th, Austin, TX 78701-2483. Circulation: 17,850

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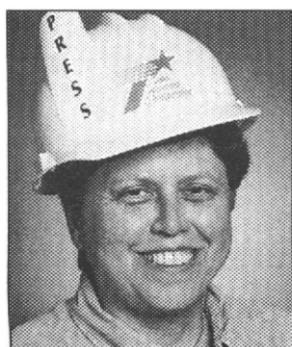
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The bridge doctor is in

BRINSAP branch manager credits his crews with keeping the state's network safe

When Mike Lynch talks about the deterioration of a bridge, he sounds for all the world like a dermatologist or a plastic surgeon describing a patient's skin condition or need for reconstructive surgery.

There's a big difference, though. Dermatologists and plastic surgeons do their work in the enclosed environment of antiseptic hospital treatment or operating rooms. Lynch, TxDOT's BRINSAP (Bridge Inventory, Inspection and Appraisal Program)



Eloise Lundgren

A Day in the Life

branch manager, and his team of engineers, divers, technicians and inspectors, often perform their handiwork underwater or dangling from the top of a bridge during high winds. In fact, the day we spent together started out with frustration for Lynch and a

team of consultants who were trying to finish their inspection of the Lavaca Bay Causeway.

"We want to see if we can repair it and extend its life span," he explained. "Seventy million dollars is a lot of money, and that's what we'd spend if we rebuild it."

"We may not finish the inspection today, though," Lynch said regretfully. "It seems neither the tide nor the wind is with us."

Of the 48,000 bridges scattered throughout Texas, 33,000 are on the state's system, which translates into a lot of work for Lynch and his staff.

"Texas has about 10 percent of the country's bridges; we're almost double any other state in total numbers," he said. "For example, the Dallas District has more bridges than New Mexico and Wyoming and half as many as Arkansas."

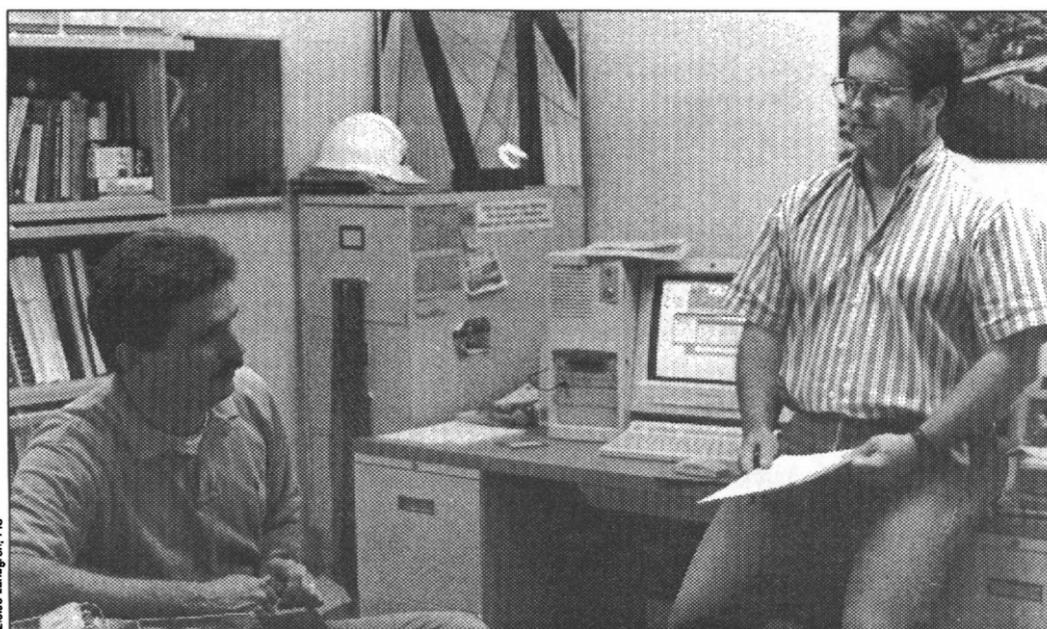
That's a pretty big patient load for 19 employees, in my humble opinion, I told Lynch. He grinned, "Most of our bridges are older than the average TxDOT employee, but most of our on-system bridges are in good shape. It's the off-system bridges that are getting old."

TxDOT turns up only a handful of bridges each year that need serious rehabilitation. "Usually the deterioration rate is slow," he said, "so finding sick bridges is like looking for a needle in a haystack."

Although most bridge problems pop up after flooding, "old Mother Nature has a way of doing strange things to these structures over a period of time," Lynch said. "It's hard to predict exactly at what point a bridge will fail."

But believe it or not, that's exactly what drivers, particularly truckers, want Lynch to do — make predictions. Strange, I teased him, you don't look like Jeane Dixon.

"We'll finish our inspection and then post a bridge as unsafe for certain loads," he said.



Mike Lynch, left, discusses plans with Joe Starkey, an engineer who works for Lynch in the BRINSAP section.

"A trucker will go over it anyway and it holds up, defying all logic. The trucker thinks we don't know what we're talking about."

"When we decide a bridge is unsafe for certain weights, we consider a combination of factors — like material, thermal conditions, load standards — as we test the structures to see how much strength is left," Lynch continued. "Science only takes us so far."

Ninety percent of bridge inspections are performed by consultants, Lynch said, which are part of a pool he manages. "This pool consists of all types of bridge inspectors, to include underwater and other specialized experts," he said. "We send these consultants out to the districts to perform inspections, but some districts still have their own employees doing inspections."

Lynch generally travels to districts a couple of times a month. "I've been pretty busy in the Houston District lately, but I'm always reminding myself that just because my time's taken up in one district doesn't mean I can afford to neglect any of the others," he said.

Although he sincerely believes he has the best job in the state, Lynch originally planned to be a Navy pilot.

"I had never thought much about college," he recollected. "I came from a farming family in the Panhandle. But flying intrigued me."

Discovering that the Navy wanted a lot of their pilots to be engineers, Lynch decided if that was the only way he'd get to fly, he'd major in civil engineering at Texas Tech.

"But by the time I was ready to graduate, the Navy decided it had too many pilots," he said and laughed, "so I went to work for the Air Force as a civilian engineer."

While working around B-52s, Lynch got his pilot's license and an Air Force reserve slot, but "I met a young lady (his wife, Julie) when I started here at the department," he said. "Her parents had survived a plane crash. Let me just say that Julie was extremely influential in getting me away from flying. I don't have a current pilot's license now."

After working in bridge design for eight and one-half years and then bridge construction for a year and a half, Lynch was hired for the BRINSAP job.

"I love dealing with people and this job gave me the opportunity to work with the districts, other state DOTs and the Federal Highway Administration," he said. "I tell everyone I work for 25 district BRINSAP coordinators."

Lynch worries TxDOT is losing too many good employees, though. "We've got engineers and technicians," he said, "but our inspectors are in short supply. We keep losing them to the private sector because the pay is too tempting."

So why are you still here, I wanted to know.

"This branch is better off than it was two years ago," Lynch said, "but we're nowhere near where I want to be. I like what I'm doing; I feel like I can do more for the citizens of Texas here than I can working for a consultant."

"You know, Eloise," he chided me, "it's about more than money."

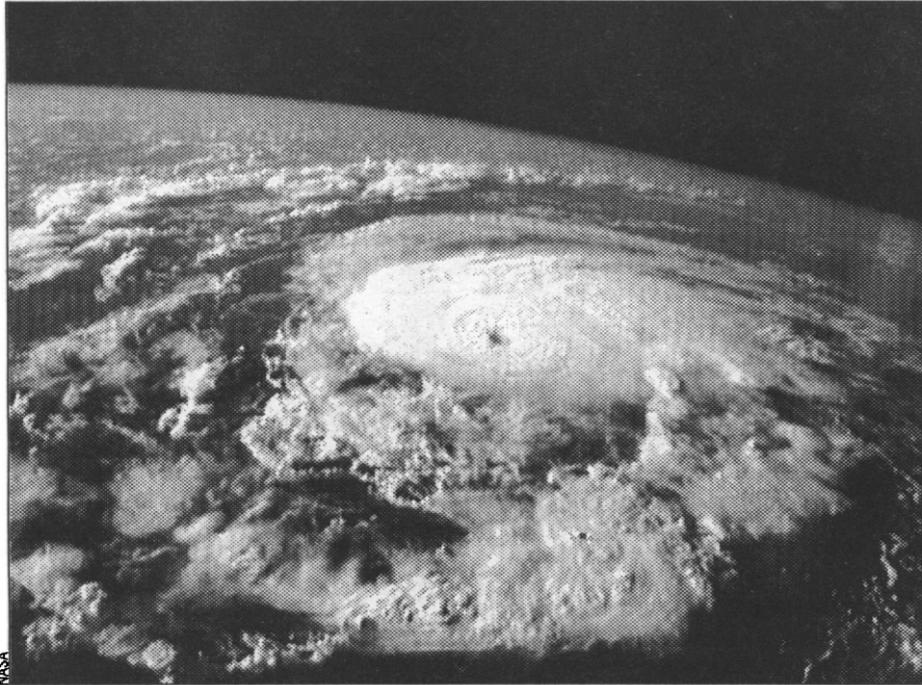
He is adamant about his admiration for the district BRINSAP coordinators. "They are the most important people we've got," he said. "If we didn't have the district folks, we couldn't do our job up here. We count on those people in the field; that's why it's important, from the division perspective, to try to build consensus among the districts."

Lynch also thinks his boss is the top, to borrow a line from Cole Porter.

"Robert Wilson (head of the Design Division) supports us completely," he said, "but the main thing is he allows us to do our job...I wouldn't have the job satisfaction I have if it weren't for his good leadership."

The Lynches enjoy spending time with their children, Andrew, 2; Elizabeth, 6; and Ella, 9. "I enjoy camping and hunting on some family property and sometimes I work in a little golf," he said. "I enjoy any quiet time I can squeeze in because I need the opportunity to recharge."

I can understand that, because Mike Lynch doesn't operate at anything but warp speed. ★



Hurricane Bonnie, photographed from space, 500 miles northeast of Bermuda on Sept. 9, 1992. Bonnie may have been small, but in her prime the storm had a well-defined eye, a tight spiral gyre indicating high wind speeds, and numerous thunderheads.

Deadliest U.S. storms

1. **6,000* dead:** Galveston, 1900
2. **1,836 dead:** Lake Okeechobee, Fla., 1928
3. **600 dead:** Florida keys, S. Texas, 1919
4. **600 dead:** New England, 1938
5. **408 dead:** Florida Keys, 1935
6. **390 dead:** SW Louisiana, N. Texas 1957
7. **390 dead:** NE United States, 1944
8. **350 dead:** Grand Isle, La., 1909
9. **275 dead:** New Orleans, 1915
10. **275 dead:** Galveston, 1915
11. **256 dead:** Miss./La., 1969
12. **243 dead:** Miss./La./Fla., 1926
13. **184 dead:** NE United States, 1955
14. **164 dead:** SE Florida, 1906
15. **134 dead:** Miss./Ala./Fla., 1906
16. **122 dead:** NE United States, 1972
17. **95 dead:** S. Carolina/N. Carolina, 1954
18. **75 dead:** SE Fla./SE La., 1965
19. **60 dead:** NE United States, 1954
20. **51 dead:** SE Fla./La./Miss., 1947

* Fatalities could have been as high as 10,000 to 12,000

Source: <http://www.storm97.com>

'Everybody did whatever they could to save lives.'

Flood

Continued from Page 1

same time, local residents used boats and other equipment to help with rescue efforts. At first count, more than 150 people were reported missing.

More than 600 men, women and children turned to the Del Rio Civic Center for shelter. Three other shelters were opened at local schools and churches to accommodate residents. As of Sept. 22 more than 2,100 Del Rio residents had registered as homeless. More than 936 homes have either been totally destroyed or must be destroyed due to safety reasons.

Water service was lost immediately. Pallets of bottled water were donated by Coca-Cola and H-E-B, and bought for local residents and distributed by the National Guard and TxDOT. More than 300 truckloads of water have been distributed. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers purchased water from Ozarka and any other company that could get bottled water into Del Rio.

Bob Parker, Del Rio Area Engineer, was at the scene along with Joe Graff, Maintenance Division director, and other TxDOT personnel. "They did an amazing job throughout the crisis," Parker said. "Everyone did what they had to do to save lives. I couldn't ask for a better group of people to work with. They have been outstanding."

Del Rio Shops Superintendent Carmen Gutierrez and her staff, Kinney County Maintenance Supervisor Juan Hernandez and his staff and Del Rio Area Office personnel operated forklifts and worked with the National Guard to distribute water. Emeterio Salinas, Del Rio Maintenance Supervisor and his staff kept people out of flooded areas and helped clean up debris.

The El Paso and Fort Worth districts and Bridge Inventory, Inspection and Appraisal Program staff of the Design Division also assisted post bridge inspection to ensure that bridges were safe.

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice bused in several trustees to help clear debris around the San Felipe Creek area. "They have been a great help and have gone above and beyond," said Parker.

Rosa Trevino, Laredo District maintenance engineer, and Daniel De Luna, district construction engineer, also assisted with emergency relief efforts on behalf of the Laredo District. Trevino assisted with road inspection maintenance needs and answered telephones in Del Rio. "I was impressed with the way everyone came together. When I was at the command center answering phone calls it was interesting to receive calls from New York, Tennessee and Arizona," Trevino said. De Luna managed the emergency command center at the DPS office in Laredo, evaluated necessary road closures and



TxDOT employee Luis Villanueva loads water for distribution in flood-ravaged Del Rio onto Army National Guard Truck.

fielded phone calls. "I am very grateful to all the TxDOT employees who volunteered to work after hours to answer the emergency telephone lines at both the district office and the DPS office in Laredo," he said.

There were many calls from flood victims, all with heartbreaking stories, but there was never a shortage of volunteers to listen with compassion and understanding.

And in the midst of tragedy, there were a few bright spots of comedy. Ofelia Noriega, a TxDOT emergency volunteer, said, "The funniest call I received was from a woman who just had to know what bridge into Mexico was opened because she had to go

shopping."

When the flood hit, the Laredo District immediately established a 24-hour hotline to respond to questions and concerns from the traveling public. District office employees rotated shifts so that someone was always available to answer questions regarding road conditions. The Highway Condition Report was updated continually to provide the latest travel information.

All roads and bridges leading in and out of Del Rio were shut down, and the local airport was shut to commercial air traffic.

After the water had receded in Del Rio, it headed towards Eagle Pass and Laredo. Both cities established emergency command to respond to citizens' concerns. Luckily, no lives were lost. However, residents in low lying areas suffered property damage.

The city of Del Rio emergency command center remains on standby. Every morning personnel from TxDOT, the Department of Public Safety, and city and county officials meet to discuss cleanup efforts.

At press time, the toll in Del Rio was nine dead and six missing. Tropical Storm Charley has affected many lives. Residents continue to look with disbelief at the wrath that Mother Nature has left behind. The task of rebuilding and healing is now on everyone's mind.

"I am very proud of the efforts of all the employees of the Laredo District, and grateful to the Odessa, San Antonio, Yoakum and San Angelo districts, and also the divisions that assisted," said Laredo District Engineer Luis Ramirez. "The department is fortunate and has employees that come together without any hesitation during a crisis. Employees quickly went where they were needed in both Del Rio and Laredo. There are many hidden heroes and the district is grateful to everyone." ★

Waco District responds to emergency

McLennan County town left without water during heat wave after water pump breaks

Bill Powers
Waco District

Water is a precious commodity in Texas, and the lack of it is an emergency. And where there's an emergency, there's TxDOT.

When Mart, a city of 2,000 in McLennan County, saw its well pump break on a blistering August afternoon, Mayor Paul Thronburg quickly notified the Texas Department of Public Safety's Division of Emergency Management.

That's when TxDOT's Waco District Safety Coordinator Jim Busby was called. Mart needed water — fast. Due to the stifling 100-plus degree heat, the city's water tanks were nearly dry.

And fast was the response from TxDOT. Busby had crews from seven of the nine maintenance sections in the district rolling their water trucks into action.

Less than four hours after being notified, the trucks began a 24-hour continuous convoy of water.

"Our guys responded quickly," Busby noted. "I'm proud that we were able to get into action to help."

The nearest hydrant to fill the 2,000 gallon trucks was at the intersection of Loop 340 and Texas 6, 28 miles from the Mart water tank.

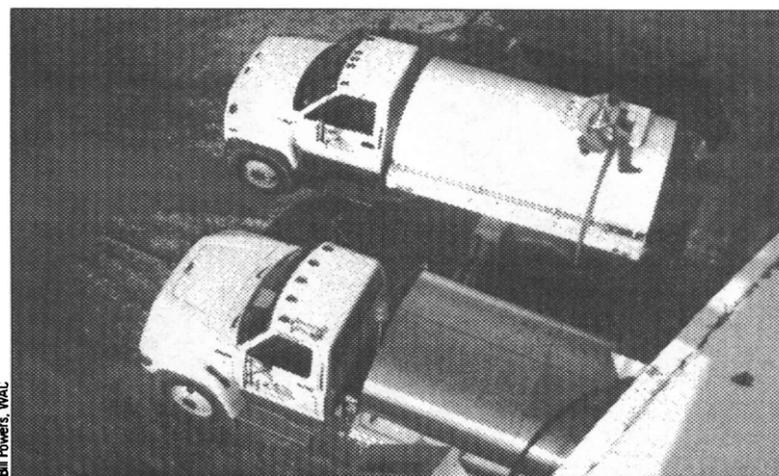
After traveling the distance, then the water had to be pushed up hoses 40 feet into the tank.

A city fire truck and one TxDOT truck were used to push the water up the hoses, while the other six made the constant circle on Texas 6 and 164.

For five days from 8 p.m. on Aug. 8 to midnight on Aug. 13, Waco District crews ran 12-hour shifts to help keep the town in water.

For the drivers, it wasn't an easy assignment, either. Each truck had to make 10 loads during the 12-hour shift. It was the equivalent of driving from Dallas to San Antonio per shift.

"We like helping out," said Gary Proctor of the Coryell County



Bill Powers, WAC

Seven TxDOT water trucks hauled water 24 hours a day, joining with two National Guard tankers to keep the city of Mart supplied with water.

maintenance crew. "It's nice to know we're doing something important for this community."

TxDOT crews drove nearly 15,000 miles to bring more than a million gallons of water to Mart while the city fixed its pump.

"Folks from the town really appreciated what we're doing for them," Proctor added. "They've brought food and drinks for us and treated us really nice."

The Mart water haul occurred while the Waco District continues to help the Texas Forest Service and U.S. Forestry Service fight wildfires in central Texas.

The district has formed a special crew that is staged with the fire-fighting team at Waco's TSTC Airport to assist by transporting water to assist that effort. ★

ETHICAL QUESTIONS

Beware the consultants bearing gifts

Question: Turkeys at Thanksgiving, a tray of brownies during the winter holidays, snazzy lapel pins, and caps emblazoned with a company's logo. May the gifts be accepted? After all, this is the little stuff of life, simple rewards for hard-working state employees who deserve much more, isn't it? If the employee cannot accept the cheese basket with the miniature yellow bulldozer tucked inside, can it be taken home to the children? Why is it that people are always trying to feed state employees?

Answer: Whether a gift, benefit or favor may be accepted depends on the giver and the gift, no matter how hungry that three-hour meeting makes an employee. Sure Speedy Roads Consultant, Inc. thinks TxDOT employees are great, but Speedy Roads Consultant, Inc. would not remain in business long if it gave gifts to every person who was nice.

Speedy Roads wants something in return, even if it is just a smile when the employee answers the telephone. That is human nature — when someone is nice, we like to be nice back. If all the consultants in a district give employees gifts except for Slower Roads Consultant, Inc., does that mean Slower Roads is not nice? Of course not, but Slower Roads may feel it is at a disadvantage.

Employees may not accept or agree to accept gifts, benefits or favors for themselves

or others from any person or other entity that could or could reasonably appear to influence them in performing their duties, does business with the department, could be reasonably expected to do business with the department in the future, or is regulated by the department.

So, the turkey from the trucking industry has to go. It and the accompanying pecan pie may be returned to the donor or given to a non-profit organization. But what sane person turns down chocolate? Luckily, the chocolate was hand crafted by Meals on Wheels volunteers who wanted to thank TxDOT employees for their participation in that program. Since Meals on Wheels will never get a contract from or be regulated by the department, the chocoholics survive.

Employees may accept ordinary business lunches. An expensive lunch is not "ordinary." An evening meal is not "lunch." An employee can accept token items that do not exceed an estimated value of \$25 where there is no connection between the donor and the employee's job assignment, and where the items are distributed generally as a normal means of advertising. For example, if you attend a seminar, you can collect the kuzees, key chains, and coupons from the Pepsi booth because Pepsi does not do business with the department and the trinkets are offered to all attendees of the conference (assuming this is not a TxDOT-only

conference).

An employee may also accept a gift if the employee has a relationship with the person that is separate from his or her job. For example, an employee may accept football tickets from a college roommate who has remembered the employee's birthday for the past 20 years, even if the college roommate is now a mowing contractor.

An employee can visit dining or hospitality rooms or similar facilities in conjunction with a conference, meeting, or other event approved by the department unless the only invitees are TxDOT personnel and a person/business that does or may do business with the department.

Any exceptions to this policy must have the prior approval of the Executive Director as requested by a DE/DD/OD through the General Counsel's office. A district, division or office may set a more stringent standard. For example, OGC does not allow its employees to accept any gifts allowed under department policy. Please note that the gifts, benefits and favors that may be accepted under department policy are little stuff. If you are in doubt, please call this office for advice or simply do not accept it. Why risk disciplinary action for little stuff? ★

(Editor's note: This is the fourth in a series of columns by Jennifer Soldano of the Office of General Counsel.)



Nellie Nunez, San Antonio District Information Systems, explains the traveler information kiosk program to onlookers.

SAT fetes Transguide advances

Betty Taylor
San Antonio District

What began as a vision and goal in 1996 became a reality in San Antonio when the Texas Department of Transportation rolled out the final implementation of several new TransGuide technologies in July.

TransGuide is an intelligent transportation system (ITS), operational since July 1995, that uses cameras, electronic message signs, sensors and computers to warn drivers of highway lanes blocked by accidents, congestion, construction, weather and debris on the road.

Two of the programs implemented under TransGuide will directly enhance San Antonio's VIA Metropolitan Transit System. The Automatic Vehicle Location system helps with location and scheduling of buses. The Bus Incident Monitoring System enhances driver and passenger safety by placing TransGuide cameras on VIA buses.

The formal ceremony was followed by demonstrations of each of the new TransGuide technologies. Other programs include AWARD, or Advance Warning to Avoid Railroad Delay – designed to alert motorists of potential railroad operation delays near freeway exits; the travel tag program – radio-beam activated tags distributed to volunteer drivers in San Antonio to help determine average travel speeds in San Antonio; and the city of San Antonio traffic signal integration project – allowing for adjusted signal timing along city streets for traffic diverted from major highway corridors during emergencies.

The LifeLink program, which initially includes 10 ambulances and University Hospital, has received the most attention from both worldwide and national perspectives.

TransGuide's project partners include the Texas Department of Transportation, the city of San Antonio (police/fire/EMS/traffic) and VIA Metropolitan Transit.

As part of the Model Deployment Initiative program, San Antonio was one of four sites in the United States chosen by the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) to receive national funding. The other three sites were Phoenix, Seattle and the greater New York area.

New TransGuide Technologies

■ **LifeLink** – An emergency medical system which allows two-way video, audio and data teleconferencing between hospitals and San Antonio Fire Department EMS units. Doctors can see patients and start medical treatment on site.

■ **Bus Incident Monitoring System and Automated Vehicle Location** – Cameras on VIA Metropolitan Transit buses provide added security for bus drivers and passengers. Personnel at the TransGuide center can monitor on-board incidents, detect bus locations and gather other real-time travel information.

■ **In-Vehicle Navigation Units (IVN)** – TransGuide can tell IVN equipped vehicles the best way to get from point A to point B, based on real-time traffic conditions. Nearly 600 IVN units have been placed in city, county, state and federal vehicles in the San Antonio area.

■ **Advance Warning to Avoid Railroad Delay (AWARD)** – Designed to alert motorists of potential railroad operation delays near freeway exits.

■ **Traveler Information Kiosks** – Interactive

touch screen units featuring traffic conditions, turn-by-turn directions, VIA bus schedules, San Antonio airport information, current weather conditions and five-day forecasts and points-of-interest maps. Forty kiosks are located indoors and out at VIA Park and Ride locations, downtown San Antonio, college campuses, malls, hotels and military bases.

■ **Internet Current Traffic Conditions Map and Data Server** – Visitors to TransGuide's Web site can get current traffic conditions, including accidents and road construction delays, in San Antonio.

■ **Travel Tag Program** – About 78,000 radio-beam activated tags are being distributed to volunteer drivers in San Antonio to help determine average travel speeds and times in the San Antonio area.

■ **City of San Antonio Traffic Signal Integration** – This program will allow for adjusted signal timing along city streets during emergencies when traffic must be diverted from main highway corridors onto city streets.

DOT Deputy Secretary Mortimer Downey helped kick off the event highlighting nine new programs – including in-vehicle navigation units, traveler information kiosks, a real-time traffic conditions Web site and LifeLink (two-way video, audio and data teleconferencing between ambulance units and hospitals).

Other benefits from TransGuide include:

■ A 15 percent decrease in the number of accidents in the areas where TransGuide is operation; and

■ A 20 percent decrease in emergency care response time.

■ TransGuide warns motorists of changes in road condition due to accidents, weather, debris on the roadway, construction and congestion.

■ TransGuide operators assist Courtesy Patrol drivers by notifying drivers of exact locations of stranded motorists.

■ LPTV UHF Ch. 54 allows news media to access real-time TransGuide maps and

data and allows motorists and emergency response crews to view highway conditions before leaving their homes.

■ San Antonio Police Department traffic operations dispatchers work alongside TxDOT operators in the TransGuide Operations Room allowing for quicker response to traffic emergencies

■ The VIAtrans Dispatch Center gives VIAtrans dispatchers direct access to all TransGuide video and data, enhancing VIAtrans operations.

■ VIA will also move its heavy bus operations dispatch to the TransGuide Operations Room.

■ TransGuide houses San Antonio's emergency 911 backup center and traffic management system, offices of Southwest Research Institute and Texas Transportation Institute, and the Ice Plan Command Post. ★

Pharr District barbecue benefits kids

TxDOT 'guardian angels' raise funds for girls at orphanage across the border

Mary Bolado
Pharr District

The Casa Amparo a la Mujer Orphanage in Reynosa, Tamaulipas, Mexico speaks of TxDOT volunteers as "guardian angels," according to Celia Munoz-Badiozzamani, orphanage volunteer and wife of deputy district engineer Behrooz Badiozzamani, P. E.

Munoz-Badiozzamani believes guardian angels take care of people. Being married to the deputy district engineer, she was aware of TxDOT's vision and mission statement. Her interpretation of that statement was "we are public servants and we take care of people."

TxDOT's relationship with the orphanage started nine years ago when Munoz-Badiozzamani attended a church meeting. She heard of the orphanage just across the border from the McAllen/Hidalgo area. She learned that the all-girl orphanage existed on proceeds from the sale of goods baked by the 10 resident Sisters of Charity and on food salvaged from trash cans.

Most of the 56 girls at the orphanage, who range in age from 2 to 19 years, had been abused and abandoned. Keeping them in a safe environment was the sisters' main purpose and soon became Munoz-Badiozzamani's cause, as well.

As she sat and listened, she decided that she had to do something. She realized the security and existence of this orphanage and its children could only happen if others took them under their wings. She thought of her immediate family, her work family and that of her husband's, and how blessed they were to have so much compared to others. It was time to take action.

She started by getting her immediate family, co-workers, and friends involved. Her husband Behrooz, children Aron and Aisha, and a few close friends organized the first fund raiser, a barbecue at a local church. The barbecue agenda included getting TxDOT employees and retirees involved. This task was easily accomplished. They eagerly committed to cutting wood and cooking.

This first barbecue was the hardest. Behrooz and the other cooks prepared the barbecue at a ranch 20 miles away from the church where the actual barbecue sale took place. "Talk about testing your faith — those 20 miles seemed more like 200 hundred miles," remembers Behrooz. "It's a lot of responsibility, for health purposes, to trans-



TxDOT fund-raising volunteers are front row, from left to right: Behrooz Badiozzamani, Sister Natl, retiree Mike Garcia, Adam Guerra; second row: Arnoldo Cortez, Ricardo Gallaga, retiree Nino Gutierrez, Mario Jorge, Dick Buchon, Rosendo Garcia, Roberto Garza; and back row: Jody Ellington, Albert Quintanilla, Jacinto Garza, Homer Gutierrez, retiree Lupe Camargo, and Gilbert Guerra.

port food properly and have it ready to be served with 20 miles between you and the buyers. The success of this barbecue was in our hands and we knew there was no room for error."

In the second year of the fund raiser, the Badiozzamani family decided something much bigger than a barbecue sale had to take place. The money generated by the barbecue sale was not enough to meet the food and housing needs of the orphanage. This is when the friends of Casa Amparo decided to have a garage sale. They realized it would take more than a handful of family and friends to generate the money needed by the orphanage's weekly food expense. They agreed to continue with the barbecue on Sunday and have a garage sale on Saturday and Sunday.

Ernie Rodriguez, TxDOT retiree, secured the Palmer Pavilion for both events, which are now held every July. Behrooz sought out TxDOT employees and retirees for cooking services. The entire family and friends of Casa Amparo contacted volunteers to solicit donations for food, wood, items to store and package food, clean up materials, as well as garage sale items. The entire community responded favorably to the idea and TxDOT cooks and wood cutters were the foundation of the barbecue.

The volunteers now have multiple fund-raiser challenges. They donate and cut wood, cook, clean up, sell tickets, deliver plates, and donate garage sale items.

Munoz-Badiozzamani's claim to the barbecue's success is the TxDOT volunteers' commitment and involvement. What started as a 600-plate sale the first year has grown to a 2,500 plate or more in the past five years. "What does a 2,500 plate sale mean in terms of children," Munoz-Badiozzamani calculates, "well, it means a total of \$12,000 to \$15,000 for food, repairs to the existing facility, a new dorm, no more salvaged food, and a safe place for the children. The cooks are the core of any barbecue and this one is no exception. The day TxDOT cannot help us any more is the day we will have to stop."

She believes TxDOT employees are committed to being public servants. Being volunteers for such a worthy cause expands their commitment to participate in a worthy and rewarding charity project. The "adoption" of Casa Amparo a la Mujer Orphanage by TxDOT employees and retirees is a small way of saying thank you for being our "guardian angels." As Munoz-Badiozzamani said, "It doesn't matter what religion or beliefs you have - we all believe that children are our most precious resource and TxDOT's family characteristics identify with helping the least of our brothers — the children. We must all do our small part to save the children."

As Munoz-Badiozzamani sees it, TxDOT's act of volunteerism is plain and simple: "Casa Amparo's children are now part of the TxDOT family."★

Litter Gitter awards presented to TxDOT employees, volunteers

Uinda Levitt
Travel Division

If Adopt-a-Highway volunteers in Hood and Somervell counties are looking for "service with a smile," Sharon Makarwich has them grinning from ear to ear. Makarwich, who manages the Adopt-a-Highway program in the Fort Worth District's Hood/Somervell maintenance office, is the winner of the 1998 Litter Gitter award.

By nomination from district engineers,

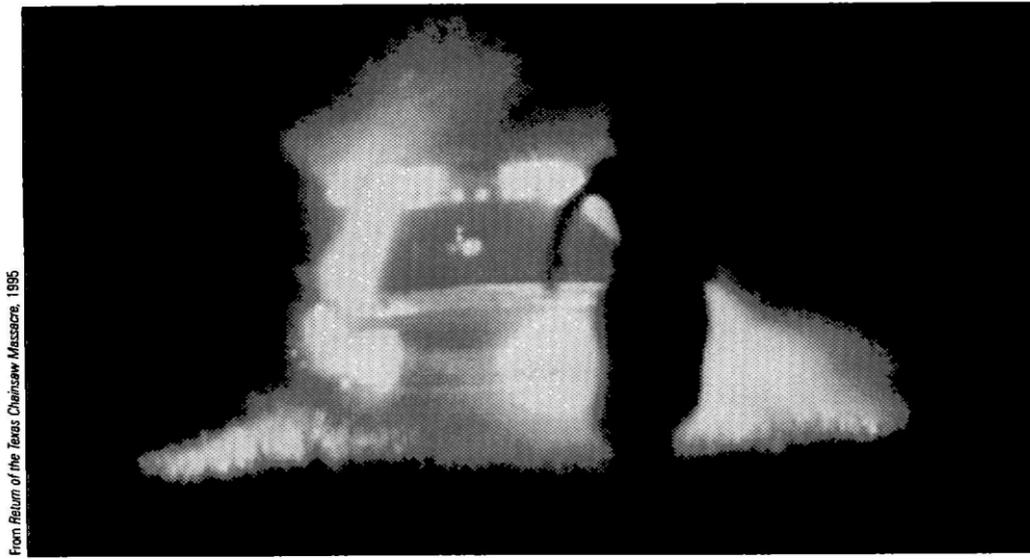
the Litter Gitter is awarded to the state's outstanding Adopt-a-Highway group and to the outstanding TxDOT employee working with Adopt-a-Highway groups in their maintenance section.

Makarwich's dedication to Adopt-a-Highway has a significant impact. In addition to recruiting 12 new groups during 1997, she renewed contracts for five of six eligible groups. Although one group dropped out of the program, another group added a new two-mile stretch when Makarwich renewed

their contract.

Forty percent of the state's Adopt-a-Highway groups participated in the 1997 Great Texas Trash-Off. Thanks to Makarwich's encouragement and ongoing contact with the groups in her section, 75 percent of them participated in the 1997 Trash-Off. During the event, she met and visited with the groups, presenting them with certificates of appreciation and photographing their

See Litter, Page 13



From Return of the Texas Chainsaw Massacre, 1985

TxDOT crews take a walk on the wild side

Horror movies or the stuff of horror movies, districts brave the unusual

Lisa Trow

Public Information Office

The accident had drawn spectators — such as a couple of Austin District employees — to the Montopolis bridge on U.S. 183.

They watched as the careening car climbed a retaining wall, spilling its wounded passengers, who were attacked by men with chainsaws.

"It was interesting," said Mark Ball, now the Dallas District public information officer, "but it wasn't scary. Without seeing the scene in the movie, you lose the effect. It just looked like a minor car accident to me."

What was frightening was the number of cars and trucks piling up around the "accident," which would become the opening scene to the second sequel to "Texas Chainsaw Massacre." Austin District employees closed the roads and, with the cooperation of the film crew, reopened them every 15 or 20 minutes to allow traffic to get through.

The 1976 original "Texas Chainsaw Massacre" is the "Gone with the Wind of Horror Flicks," according to Internet postings. The series tells the story of "Leatherface" and his family, who invite their human prey for "dinner," and prepare their meal with chainsaws rather than the usual kitchen cutlery. These virtually plotless gorefests have featured actors such as Matthew McConaughey and Renee Zellweger.

Ball has seen none of the "Massacre" movies, even the one he watched being filmed for a day at the Montopolis bridge, his first experience as a TxDOT employee assigned to assisting a movie crew.

"Of all things it was a horror movie, something I don't particularly like watching," Ball said of his first film shoot. "I'm not too interested in gore."

Huge publicity surrounded the making of the sequel, which drew attention to the work of the Texas Film Commission and Austin as a viable filming location. Feature film production is now commonplace in Texas. Dallas District employees cater to the almost weekly needs of the crew of the CBS TV show "Walker, Texas Ranger."

While "Massacre" filming once absorbed Ball, he has only ventured to the site of "Walker, Texas Ranger" a few times.

"In all honesty," said Ball, who has also watched filming for "Nadine," a 1980s movie starring Kim Basinger, and two "Don't Mess With Texas" spots featuring the Fabulous Thunderbirds and the Tyler Longriders Motorcycle Club, "I've become jaded. It happens so much."

Childress may not have served as backdrop for a horror film, but district employees have their own "Texas Chainsaw Massacre" story.



Leatherface led a Texas family of chainsaw-murdering cannibals in 'Texas Chainsaw Massacre' and its sequels, filmed in Central Texas.

In one of the "Texas Chainsaw Massacre" movies, someone drives to Childress to report the murders. "This started a myth that the actual massacre occurred in Childress at a farmhouse between Kirkland and Lazare in Childress County," said Barbara Seal of the Childress District.

"I don't think that is true. I have heard — hearsay again — that the actual murders took place in Pflugerville. Anyway, Childress being in that movie was our claim to fame, and has caused many an eerie night around the campfire telling the story."

Murder scenes for the movie were filmed in Pflugerville.

"They used an abandoned amusement park on the west side of I-35," Ball said. "The film crew couldn't believe their luck to find a fake mountain, empty buildings and a weather-worn midway where murderous games could

be played."

But reports that the murderous family of cannibals portrayed in "Massacre" movies is as true to Texas as Nolan Ryan and chicken fried steak is a myth, however.

Leatherface, the head of the fictional family of chainsaw murderers, is based on a real serial killer, who plied his sick trade more than 40 years ago in rural Wisconsin, rather than Texas. Ed Gein, who flayed his female victims and then made masks, belts, lamp shades and clothing from their skins, was a recluse. He lived for years in his dead mother's rural farmhouse and got his kicks without the help of any mutant clan members. Gein also served as inspiration for slasher Norman Bates in "Psycho," and serial killer Buffalo Bill in the less sanguineous and more critically acclaimed "Silence of the Lambs."

Childress may be spooky enough without associations to "Texas Chainsaw Massacre," however.

The district's welding shop in Childress has been the site of annual visits from bats, which, mysteriously, would leave right after Halloween. "They came back this year in early spring, left again and so far this fall have not showed up. They guys in the welding shop are very thankful for this," Seal said.

If you think bats in the welding shop belfry are scary, consider hauntings by former supervisors. Ronnie C. Bell, a maintenance technician in Mitchell County in the Abilene District, said the former office manager once alerted employees to a noise in the supervisor's office — which they thought was empty.

"I went to that office and the chair was rocking all by itself! Every hair on my body stood to attention, and we figured we had been visited by our deceased supervisor from the past, Paul Logsdon," Bell said. "That incident never happened again, so I guess Paul was happy with what he found!" ★

Grave relocation careful process

TxDOT archeologist: Accidental discovery of burial sites now rare

Lisa Trow

Public Information Office

There may have been a time, archeologist Nancy Kenmotsu acknowledges, that Texas road builders unexpectedly unearthed human remains while working in the right of way.

TxDOT old-timers recall a variety of apocrypha involving such finds, including a story about a Confederate soldier whose coffin turned up in the right of way of a Fredericksburg project. The story includes specific and intriguing detail — reportedly, the buttons of the soldier's uniform were still lined up on the sternum of his skeletonized remains.

While Kenmotsu believes these reports may only be the stuff of legend, some district employees differ.

"It has happened that construction and bulldozing starts and we uncover bones," said Mark Ball, public information officer in the Dallas District. "With the ruralness of Texas, bodies were often buried where they fell and there were no records."

Ball, previously public information officer in the Austin District, recalls such an incident in the early 1980s in the Onion Creek area of Austin. A highway department contractor on a road grader "just pulled up some bones, and we had to stop construction temporarily."

But Kenmotsu, head of the Archeological Studies Branch of the Environmental Division (ENV), can remember only one time since she began working for TxDOT in 1980 that a project has been interrupted by the accidental discovery of human remains. The painstaking preparation process TxDOT observes prevents such discoveries, she said.

"We try to get ahead of the game to make sure we don't run across anything accidentally," Kenmotsu said.

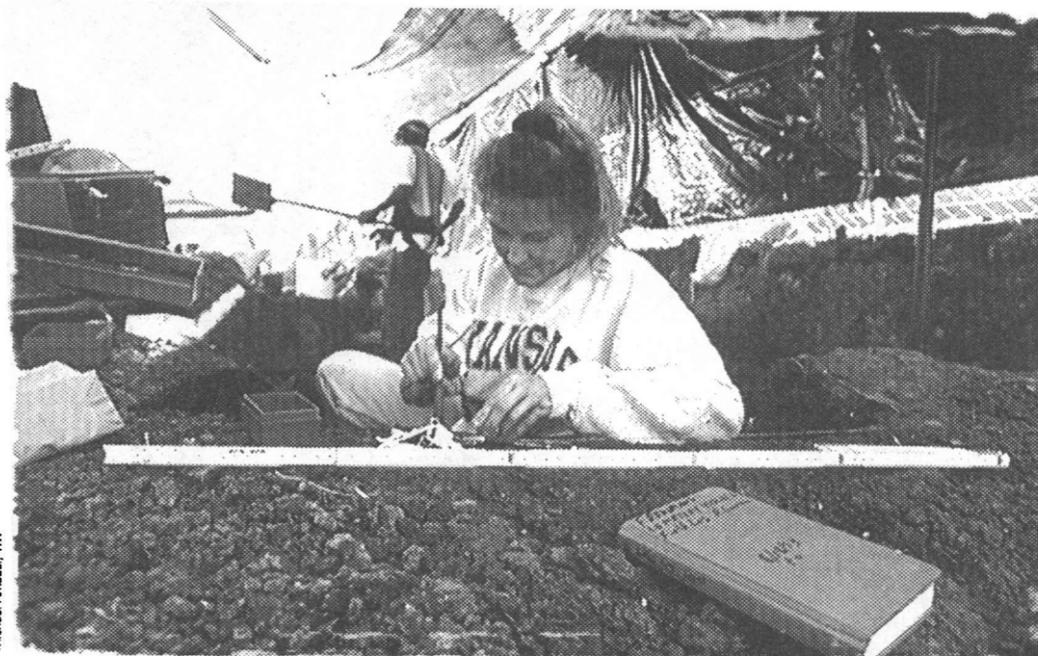
A project in El Paso's Central Business District was interrupted briefly recently when a contractor's crew found an unexpected grave. Work stopped; an archeological contractor reported to the site within a couple of hours; police officers arrived to guard the site until the situation was resolved, "and the grave was removed in accordance with the law," Kenmotsu said.

"Everything went exactly as it was supposed to. Construction was not held up at all."

TxDOT, Kenmotsu said, has had regulations in place since the late 1970s for the proper and sensitive handling of gravesites and cemeteries. Cemetery laws have been in place since the 19th century. Although many years ago highway crews may not have been well versed in the various laws that regulate cemeteries and their lawful excavation, "that's not really how we do things today," she said.

Road work includes preparation of environmental documents by the districts before work on a construction project can begin.

Part of that process involves checking records and maps for cemeteries that might be affected. Aside from looking for visible evidence of cemeteries such as tombstones and fences, archeologists check documents — highway department right of way maps,



TxDOT employees and archeological contractors perform the painstaking work required to relocate the Freedman's Cemetery in downtown Dallas.

courthouse records, and U.S. Geological Survey maps. Archeologists also go into the field with shovels and screens to dig for evidence of cemeteries.

Once a cemetery has been located in the right of way of a construction project, someone other than the state must petition to have the remains relocated.

TxDOT uses morticians and archeologists to move graves. The individual coffins are disinterred and reburied in new coffins — provided by TxDOT — along with pieces of the original coffin and artifacts found in the grave or coffin.

Relocation is an emotional process for descendants and for those whose job it is to carry it out.

"It's something you do with some solemnity," said Kenmotsu, who has witnessed the excavation in South Texas of prehistoric human remains.

"The scientific aspects are intriguing, but as a member of society, it's not something that is undertaken easily."

One of the biggest projects undertaken in recent years was the relocation in 1994 of a portion of the Freedman's Cemetery to accommodate the expansion of the Central Expressway in downtown Dallas.

"We thought we had a few graves," Ball said. "And we had hundreds."

Some of the graves of the city's freed slaves had been paved over by city construction projects before laws prevented such "insensitivity," Ball said. "It was left to TxDOT to put it right."

Archeologists also uncovered artifacts that did not belong to any one grave. After their analysis and interpretation is complete, those will sent for display to the city's African American museum, Kenmotsu said.

Recovery of artifacts is a typical byproduct of excavation. Buttons, toys and shells were found in Freedman's Cemetery, according to Ball. Shells are often left on tombstones in the cemeteries where those of African and European extraction buried their dead, Kenmotsu said.

Marbles are a common find in cemeteries where children were buried in the earlier

part of the 20th century. Along the Rio Grande, families erected concrete crosses adorned with marbles. Iron crosses, broken dishes and porcelain vases also commonly are found during excavations, Kenmotsu said. The ancient grave she excavated from a sand dune in South Texas was about 2,000 years old, but no artifacts were discovered that could help date the remains.

TxDOT and its contractors also use the excavation process for scientific analysis, which are described in reports prepared by the department.

Osteologists — bone specialists — will work with archeologists at the upcoming relocation of a small cemetery in the Beaumont District. The cemetery contains the graves of two, possibly three, people buried around 1850. Two of the three are believed to be the remains of children. Their bones will be studied for the presence of trauma and disease and to determine what their diet and nutrition had been before death.

"If children experienced robust nutrition or poor nutrition, the bones tell that story," Kenmotsu said.

The findings from this excavation will be published under Texas Historical Commission guidelines and will be made available to interested groups and distributed to the libraries of major universities.

Kenmotsu believes that although most TxDOT employees know ENV is charged with overseeing the relocation of cemeteries, most may not be familiar with the painstaking manner in which these projects must be executed before construction work begins.

She also would like to encourage district employees to give the division as much time as possible to handle the relocation of graves before work begins.

"Because of the emotional nature that surrounds cemetery relocation, it is important TxDOT employees recognize the cultural and individual sensitivities that may be encountered as well as making sure all the T's are crossed and the I's are dotted," Kenmotsu said. "The bottom line is: I think TxDOT is doing an excellent job dealing with cemeteries."★

District, division PIOs vie for awards

Winners in the Public Information Conference Award of Excellence competition last month made good use out of TxDOT's 80th anniversary.

Winners in three of five categories at the Sept. 16-18 conference, held this year in Killeen, were selected for their work educating the public and community about the role of the Texas Department of Transportation during this historic observance.

Penny Mason, public information officer for the Lubbock District, won first place in the publications category for her 80th TxDOT anniversary advertising supplement.

"Great idea. A super community involvement product," judges said of the winning entry, one of 10 in this category. "An innovative approach to 'telling the story.' A good tool that could be used for other major departmental programs or activities."

Mason also won an Award of Excellence in writing for her features release, "How Well Do You Know the Rules of the Road?"

"A perfect example of educating the public through a partnership with the local media," judges said of Mason's work. "This is well organized and easy to understand and firm without being 'preachy.'"

Tonya Detten's media/community relations project to commemorate the department's 80th anniversary in the Amarillo District earned her an Award of Excellence.

"What a fantastic accomplishment!" the judges said of this entry, one of 11. "Congratulations for herding more than 1,000 fourth graders through your operation. The planning, preparation and teamwork is a testament to your district's pride and community involvement. It's certain the community is



Award winners include, from left, Uly Flores, Janelle Gbur, Penny Mason, Bill Frost, Tonya Detten and Mike Viesca.

now more knowledgeable and appreciative of TxDOT's mission."

The winning audio-visual entry submitted by San Antonio's Bill Frost also made use of TxDOT's historic celebration.

His winning entry, according to the judges, is "an exceptional account of this district's history - cost-effective, enjoyable and brief enough for civic clubs and other presentations. This is a great keepsake for past and current employees and a motivational tool for newcomers."

This year a fifth category was added to the judging this year to acknowledge the work districts, divisions and offices are now doing on the Internet. Mike Viesca of the Vehicles, Titles and Registration Division won an Award of Excellence for his division's web site.

"Vehicle registration has been one of those most frustrating aspects of owning a

car - until now!," said judges of the first winning web sites entry. "Your web site is clear, user friendly and extremely helpful for vehicle owners. Great work!"

Winning Director's Choice Awards were Uly Flores, Maintenance Division; Janelle Gbur, Houston District; and Al Glasscock, Public Information Office.

Annual Fourth Estate Awards also were presented at the conference. Winners were *The Clarendon Enterprise*, for its support of the rehabilitation of U.S. 287 in the Childress District; Shane Hollinger of KSTV AM/FM for his commitment to covering transportation in the Stephenville area; *The Killeen Daily Herald* for its commitment to covering transportation in Bell and Coryell counties; and KLDO Laredo for its support of TxDOT's 80th anniversary celebration.★

— Lisa Trow, Public Information Office

STATEWIDE APPEAL

Yoakum's retired district engineer is the father of several ideas adopted by TxDOT

Pearlie Bushong
Yoakum District

Retired Yoakum District employee Earl Wyatt recalls many significant events in his 37-year career with the Texas Department of Transportation.

As the district's maintenance engineer, he dealt with the aftermath of two hurricanes — Carla in 1961 and Beulah in 1967 — which destroyed roads, bridges, and buildings. Getting repairs done quickly and efficiently after each of these storms was a major undertaking.

"The new Lavaca Bay Causeway in Port Lavaca received quite a bit of damage from Carla. Several concrete slabs were moved as much as 7 feet out of place on the south side nearest the Gulf," Wyatt recalled. "We were still able to allow traffic across the bay on the north lanes after some approach work was done."

"A tornado resulting from Hurricane Beulah destroyed our brand new resident engineer and maintenance building in Port Lavaca. Even the walls left standing were cracked. The concrete slab was the only original thing used in rebuilding. But our biggest problem with Beulah was the flood-

■ See related column, Page 12

ing."

Wyatt realized that a good working relationship with the media was essential on the district level. Even though Austin's Travel and Information Division put out most of the press releases for the districts, Wyatt started doing his own. He also wrote articles during the 1960s for *Texas Highways* magazine.

The format of the magazine at that time was similar to *Transportation News* today.

The public affairs program in the districts was not established until Administrative Order 33-83, which set the guidelines for appointing a PAO and the duties assigned to that job.

In 1966, Administrative Engineer Wyatt realized that management training was needed for the supervisors in the Yoakum District. Using a very simple course outline, Wyatt taught management principles to the district's maintenance supervisors. Some other districts soon adopted his course, which provided guidelines for handling people in difficult situations, which included handling one's self, managing employees, and dealing with the public.

"At the time, there was no training for managers; and with the blessing of my District Engineer H. C. Veazey, I put together a seven-page course outline with the aid of magazine articles and management textbooks. All of the questionnaires sent to the men who attended the course came back with favorable comments," Wyatt said. "One man wrote, 'I wish I'd taken this course 20 years ago.'"

Another of Wyatt's ideas was adopted statewide in August 1981 when his recommendations for mailbox supports gained Commission approval.

"I had help in researching the problem we were having with mailbox supports killing motorists," Wyatt said. "Byron Blaschke and John Nixon encouraged me to find safer mounts for single boxes as well as multiple units. Crash tests were used to determine the safest supports. We found the new metal supports would crush down and pass under the vehicles instead of breaking and going through the windshields."

One of Wyatt's favorite pastimes is history and archeology. In 1964, while Supervising Maintenance Engineer, he received an

See Wyatt, Page 12

Dallas District crew battles blaze

Dangerous conditions at Possum Kingdom Lake make work harrowing

Michelle Releford
Dallas District

James Morris, Steven Lawrence, Martin Brookhart, Norman Thompson and Frank Jett took their heavy equipment but no suitcases to fight a five-day fire at the 101 Ranch near Possum Kingdom Lake in August.

No bed, no clean clothes and no showers. It was a lot like a camp-out, but the fire was too big.

Because a small crew from the Dallas District had the knowledge and equipment to move the earth, they were called into action in late July by the Fort Worth District to help fight a fire with an unquenchable thirst. The blaze threatened 10,000 acres of prime ranch land nine miles west of Palo Pinto County near Possum Kingdom Lake.

The fire broke out on July 28, and the Dallas team was tagged to cut firebreaks — swaths of fresh earth wide enough to stall the fire.

The crew of five — James Morris, Steven Lawrence, Martin Brookhart, Norman Thompson and Frank Jett — started out about 11 a.m. that day, not knowing what to expect. After five days and several brushes with death, they wondered if they'd ever see the comforting corrugated metal of the Dallas Special Maintenance Office again.

"Most other sections don't have the 'dozers,'" said assistant maintenance supervisor Norm Thompson. "Most only have track loaders."

What the crew expected to be a short trip,



Dallas District employees who helped fight the Possum Kingdom fire are, from left, James Morris, Steven Lawrence, Martin Brookhart, Norman Thompson and Frank Jett.

three days at most, turned into five days of sleeping outdoors, recycling clothing and infrequent eating at best.

"They had been out there a day or two ahead of us," said Steve Lawrence, referring to every volunteer fire department with a water truck or garden hose in the area and the U.S. Forestry Service mobile unit.

"For the first round, I sat in a 'dozer 17 and a half hours before I got an hour-long break, and then we went at it again," Lawrence said.

That's how the day started when Dallas

special maintenance crews turned firefighters in late July. They didn't see their beds again until the calendar page had turned to August.

The rough terrain, while proving no deterrent to the licking flames, was daunting to the 'dozer operators and firefighters alike.

"The terrain was really rocky," Thompson said. "We'd be going along, clearing some brush and come up on a big old gorge, 200 to 300 feet straight down," he said.

"I tried to go up one mountain with the

See Fire, Page 16

Invention makes life easier for 'Lefty' in Childress

Barbara Seal
Childress District

"Where there's a will, there's a way. I've got the will and you find the way."

That's what Delbert Love and Bobby Crabtree in the Childress District welding shop were told by their supervisor, Bill Trospen, shortly after they started working for TxDOT.

"Sometimes it's hard to find a way, but we both still have jobs, so I guess we must have satisfied him," Love said.

When Charles "Lefty" Flemmons started working for Childress Area Office on Dec. 16, 1997, Love and Crabtree were called upon to find a way to help him. Lefty was born without a left hand.

Ronald Hatcher, Childress District laboratory supervisor, put him to work getting samples of rock out of stockpiles. This seems like a simple job, and it would be for most two-handed people. But for Lefty, holding the bag open and pouring the samples from his shovel into the bag were almost impossible tasks. Hatcher asked Love and Crabtree to find a way to build a stand to hold the canvas sample bag. What they came up with was a stand just the right height to hold the bag and have enough room left over to twist shut for easy access for Lefty.

Although Lefty needed some help with this one challenge, no other modifications have been made for him. "There has been no need to," Hatcher said. "Lefty has the best attitude of anyone I know. He's one of those guys that will do whatever you ask him to do. All Lefty has to do is look at anything for a while and will figure out how to do it. I haven't had to make any concessions for him and he does everything on his own. He has even figured out a way to run the hot mix press."

Hatcher has certified him in various levels of several different



From left, Delbert Love, Charles 'Lefty' Flemmons, and Bobby Crabtree display their invention.

tests in the lab. He has not had to modify any of these tests because Lefty adapts to any challenge.

Lefty does not feel he has a disability. "I had a strong family," he said. "They supported me in everything I did, but kept me on top of things. I had to learn to think fast."

This way of thinking has been with him throughout his life. He says he had some negative feelings about being born with a disability when he was younger, but not now. "Sometimes something comes up that I need two hands for," Lefty said, "but not very often." ★

Retirees keeping busy this fall

Travel, civic obligations and grandchildren occupy former TxDOT employees

I received a card from **R.S. "Bubba" Williamson**, who is no stranger to *Transportation News*. He is a former contributor to this newsletter, and has even been the topic of a story or two.

Bubba has been busy since retiring from the **Design Division** in 1994. The 35-year veteran has served as master of Colorado Masonic Lodge and is now the treasurer. He is a member of the Ben Hur Shrine Chanters, Texas Shrine Chanters Association and Shrine Chanters Association of North America.



Helen Havelka

The Good Life

in 1990 with 31 years of service.

John Willis has a long list of activities that occupy his time since he retired from the **Amarillo District** in 1993. In addition to playing racquetball three times a week, this 33-year veteran enjoys traveling and restoring his Corvairs. He planned a trip to St. Louis, Mo., to show one this summer.

Francisco Cordova from the **Odessa District** has been working on various projects around his home. Since retiring in 1995, he spend some of his time baby-sitting his granddaughter. Francisco worked for the department 25 years.

Traveling, spending time with family and hunting tops **Harry Johnson's** retiree schedule. Harry worked for 33 years in the **Austin District**, and retired in 1985.

Since retiring in 1990 with 40 years of service, **Allen Steves** has been singing and having a good time as a member of the Austin Saengerrunde, Austin's oldest ethnic organization. He worked in the **Bridge Division** and enjoys visiting with a group of division retirees once a month.

Church is where you will find **San Antonio** retiree **George Mays**, who sings in the choir.

Wyatt

Continued from Page 10

inquiry about covered wooden bridges in Texas. After doing a little research, he found an article in a 1937 issue of the *Gonzales Inquirer* with pictures of a covered bridge that once spanned the San Marcos River near Gonzales. The bridge was built in 1854 and was 100 feet long. The pictures of the bridge showed a southern-built bridge as indicated by the slope of the roof. Northern-built bridges had steep slopes to allow snow to slide off the roof. Wyatt discovered that

George also plays dominoes, helps his niece with her catering business and takes time to fish and travel. He retired from the district shop in 1982 after 22 years of service.

Stella Bolen from **Vehicle Titles and Registration Division**, **William Hughes** from the **Odessa District** and **James Wilson** from the **Materials and Tests Division** all dropped us a card. Stella left the department in 1992 after 37 years. William and James both retired in 1993 with 33 and 32 years of service, respectively.

Volunteer work occupied much of **Ben Strauss'** time after retiring from the **Houston District** in 1974 with 35 years. Open-heart surgery may have slowed Ben down a bit, but he still does some charity work and enjoys his hobby of buying, selling and trading guns. Is that good for your heart?

We heard from **Dale Marvel** and **Marshall Goolsby**, both from the **Houston District**.

After retiring in 1978 with 26 years of service, Dale has enjoyed traveling and reading. He is also active in AARP, providing tax assistance and serving on the state legislative committee.

Marshall left TxDOT in 1994 after 30 years of service. He is a Christmas tree grower and a Texas Public Employee Association member.

Amarillo District's Leo Ledbetter spends a lot of time with his family and church activities. Leo was the district construction engineer, retiring in 1987 with 38 years. He enjoys gardening, golf and watching sports.

James Knox Jr. and **George "Wesley" Henry** from the **Atlanta District's design office** dropped us a line. James is a registered professional land surveyor and has been busy working since leaving the department in 1993 with 35 years. He is also an active member of his church.

After retiring in 1986 with 34 years of service, Wesley has traveled to 48 states and abroad. He attends wood carving and wood turning shows and seminars around the country.

Woodworking is also one of **Clayton Perry's** retirement activities. This **Lubbock District** retiree is also busy fishing, doing yardwork and working at church. Clayton completed his 35-year career in 1989.

John Lipscomb from the **Houston District** went back to work after retiring in 1984. For nine years, he continued doing traffic engineering work, but the 30-year retiree now does volunteer work, square dancing and bicycling. In addition, John planted five acres of pecan trees. Hope you have a good

the Gonzales bridge was one of two covered bridges built in Texas. The other having been located in McKinney at one time.

Today, Wyatt enjoys many hobbies. Two of his favorites are carving birds and entertaining 4-year-olds at a local day care center with stories.

"I never know what the children will say. I always try to do a story about Nature, and one time I was telling them about the eating habits of elephants. I explained how an elephant consumes a very large amount of hay, cabbage and lettuce in one day. When I asked the children why having an elephant as a pet at the day care was not a good idea,

crop this year, John.

Paul Wright turned his attention to ranching after retiring from the **San Antonio District** in 1981 after 40 years. Paul no longer ranches, but does a little traveling and is especially proud of his five grandsons.

Taking it easy is what **William "Rod" Clawson** is doing since retiring from the **Waco District** in 1986. Rod spends time fishing and traveling and, after almost 35 years of service, enjoys relaxing and shopping.

William "Everett" Bryan from the **Amarillo District** has also been traveling in and out of the state since retiring in 1991. He worked for the department for 35 years and now spends most of his time working around the house.

Also, spending time at home is **Amarillo's Charles Bright**. After retiring in 1993, Charles and his wife Jane jumped into their recreational vehicle and traveled around the country. Illness has slowed this 40-year veteran, who now spend time with his family.

Gardening and fishing topped **James Wood's** list of activities. James retired in 1980 from the **Tyler District** after 30 years of service. James' biggest catch on the Red River has been a 54-pound blue catfish. He also enjoys hunting and watching sports.

Handpainting keeps **Paris District** retiree **Jerry Dudley** busy. Jerry left the department in 1993 after 40 years. This former district lab employee also retired from the U.S. Army and the Texas National Guard.

Childress' Willie Gragson spends some of his time playing golf and bass fishing. This 36-year retiree was recently elected to his 11th term on the Wellington City Council. Willie retired as the district's right of way administrator in 1993.

San Antonio's Walter Collier took time from his busy schedule to send us a card. He and his wife, Lucille, have been fishing, hunting, traveling, spending time with the family and staying active in church functions since retiring in 1990. This 42-year retiree quoted another retired maintenance supervisor, writing, "How sweet it is."

In closing, I want to remind retirees that to continue receiving *Transportation News* next year, you must send us the renewal on page 15. It's the law.

We have had a lot of retirees subscribe this year, and, if you are one of these recent subscribers, consider the renewal automatic.

Happy Halloween! ★

TxDOT retirees can find "The Good Life" contributor's cards at TxDOT district and division offices.

a little girl answered, "Because it would mess all over our playground." "

Wyatt's other hobbies include bird watching, teaching hunter education classes, making knives, woodcarving, and photography.

In 1996, Wyatt received the Paul Gustwick Award from the Yoakum Chamber of Commerce for his community service.

Wyatt and his wife, Darlene, have three sons and six grandchildren. ★

Timing saves SJT motorist after heart attack

Patsy Maddux
San Angelo District

Being at the right place at the right time proved to be perfect timing for one motorist on US 67 in the San Angelo District. In fact, perfect timing saved his life.

Around 12:50 p.m. on Aug. 30, 57-year-old San Angelo resident Claude Lacy Jr. had a heart attack 7 miles west of Ballinger. Lacy's two passengers, his wife, Pearl, and friend Jackie Reed, learned that they were not by themselves that day in trying to revive the victim.

This perfect timing on the highway involved two TxDOT employees, a paramedic and an emergency medical technician en route to San Angelo with a stabilized patient, and a nurse on her way to work. These "good Samaritans," as Pearl describes them, were all trained in CPR.

Only moments before the heart attack struck, Claude was talking to his two passengers. Without warning, Pearl said, her husband slumped forward onto the steering wheel and his foot jammed the accelerator, forcing the car to accelerate.

While Reed, who was sitting in the back seat, reached over Claude to grab the steering wheel, Pearl reached to the floor to remove his foot from the accelerator.

As the car swerved through traffic in the eastbound lanes, Pearl said the car "floated" across a ditch, crossing the median to "float" across another ditch next to the westbound lane.

"The good Lord was with us," Pearl said. Not only did the car miss two poles before stopping, they did not have to dodge any traffic while going the wrong way in the



Anchor/reporter Sara Zeller of NBC3 interviews Good Samaritan David Killingsworth as John Villarreal waits his turn. Killingsworth and Villarreal helped rescue a motorist.

westbound lanes. After the car stopped, Pearl spotted two men in orange TxDOT vests, waving to them for help.

Maintenance Technician John Villarreal said that he had already started toward the car after he saw it go into the westbound lanes and head the wrong way on the road. He knew someone was in trouble and needed assistance. His co-worker, David Killingsworth, had also seen the car swerving in traffic but thought nothing of it because "we see this every day on the highway," he said. But when he saw an ambulance make a U-turn, he climbed off his equipment to see if there had been an accident.

Paramedic Bob McDaniel, who was driving the ambulance toward San Angelo, also saw the car swerving in traffic. After the car passed, McDaniel looked in his rear view mirror and saw the car jump the median head into the oncoming traffic. He immediately turned the ambulance around.

As Killingsworth, Villarreal, and Lydia Luz, a nurse who was the first driver to turn around, arrived, they found Pearl trying to administer CPR to her husband in the car. Killingsworth checked Lacy for vital signs, then offered to move him to the ground when he did not find a pulse. The paramedic agreed and rushed to the ambulance for a respirator.

Villarreal and Killingsworth tilted Lacy's

head back as the nurse initiated chest compressions. When McDaniel returned with the respirator, the two TxDOT employees took over the compressions and respirator procedure. McDaniel's passenger and co-worker EMT Anita Martinez waited in the ambulance with the stabilized patient, handing equipment to McDaniel during the CPR process.

"The victim was in total cardiac arrest," McDaniel said. The team continued CPR until a second ambulance arrived. After Lacy was stabilized, he was transported to Ballinger Hospital before being transferred to the intensive care unit at Shannon Hospital.

A day later as Pearl waited outside ICU, she praised the efforts of all the good Samaritans who saved her husband's life.

"Many people would have kept on going," she said. But the nurse, two medical professionals and two TxDOT employees chose to assist someone who needed help. Their efforts will be recognized by the American Heart Association at the Oct. 24 American Heart Walk event in San Angelo.

Donna Crumpler, AHA's executive director, described the recognition at this event as "perfect timing" to recognize the importance of individuals learning a life-saving skill. The team of good Samaritans will be awarded the AHA's Heart Savers Award. ★

Litter

Continued from Page 7

cleanup efforts.

An honorable mention goes to Cheryl J. Waid of the San Antonio District's Bandera maintenance section. The number of Adopt-a-Highway groups in Waid's section — 40 — is even more impressive considering Bandera has fewer than 1,000 residents, and the county has only 11,000. Even though she is the office manager and the only clerical staff in the Bandera maintenance section, Waid stays in close contact with the groups in her section.

"Many of the member of the Adopt-a-Highway groups in the Bandera area are senior citizen volunteers, and Cheryl enjoys talking and working with them," said John Kelly, San Antonio District Engineer. "Cheryl does not just take time to communicate with the groups, she makes time — even though her daily work schedule is very busy and demanding."

Copper Breaks State Park and Volunteers in Quanah (Childress District) received the Litter Gitter award as the state's outstanding Adopt-a-Highway group. This group is contracted to pick up litter along two miles of Texas 6, adjacent to the park entrance. In



Travel Director Doris Howdeshell, left, and Fran Coppinger, 1997-98 President of Keep Texas Beautiful, right, celebrate Sharon Makarwich's award with her.

addition to the contracted section, the group picks up litter on five miles of road from the highway to the park entrance and nine miles of park trails. That's a total of 1,933 acres, which the group cleans at least once a month.

David Turner, who is the park superintendent and Adopt-a-Highway contact, plans extra activities the day of trash pickups. Volunteers are invited to camp in the park that night and participate in a "Starwalk," a

naked-eye exploration of stars, planets and constellations.

The Clean Team, which won an honorable mention, has adopted two sections of highway in Rockport, which they clean every other week, even though the contract requires only four cleanups a year. Through community programs, the group takes responsibility for being part of the solution to the litter problem. They have recruited new groups to join the Adopt-a-Highway program in Aransas County and host an annual "Litter Glitter" celebration to show their appreciation for the adopting groups in

Aransas County.

"Every single person who devotes time and energy to Adopt-a-Highway — volunteers and TxDOT employees — should be commended for the work they do," said Doris Howdeshell, Travel Division director. "The individual efforts of so many people bring us closer to a litter-free Texas."

The 1998 Litter Gitter awards were presented July 9 at the Keep Texas Beautiful convention in Houston. ★

Service Awards

October

Abilene District
35 years
 Robert E. Hallford
30 years
 Sue P. Eaton
 Don L. Lunday
 Charles S. Morris
5 years
 David L. Foster
 Charles D. Wilson

Amarillo District
30 years
 Carl W. Robertson
20 years
 Kenneth J. Oliver
10 years
 Ernesto Garza Jr.
 Tommy B. Lane
5 years
 John H. Dulaney

Atlanta District
5 years
 Toby A. Whitehorn

Austin District
25 years
 Myron L. McKelvey
20 years
 Samuel E. Holland
 Gene C. Rice
 David A. Till
5 years
 Daniel S. Bridges
 Mark I. Olsen
 Keith K. Schneider
 Lisa A. Sharp
 James M. Shaw II
 Gwen C. Stockbridge

Beaumont District
10 years
 Kenneth R. Stephens
5 years
 Donna L. Phillips
 Kedrick A. Williams

Brownwood District
20 years
 Ben A. MacKey

Bryan District
15 years
 Michael M. Greig
 Alford Hardwick

Childress District
5 years
 Refugio Benavidez
 Stephen R. Martin
 Presliano G. Rocha

Corpus Christi District
40 years
 Harold G. Franke
20 years
 Jesus B. Lopez Jr.
15 years
 Grace L. Greenlee
 Ruben G. Lopez
10 years
 Miguel A. Flores
5 years
 Matilde Dimas

Dallas District
35 years
 Jerry D. Shepherd
30 years
 Hershel W. Derryberry
 Gregory G. Richards
25 years
 Van M. McElroy
15 years
 Johnny F. Greer
10 years
 Rodney Douglas
 William D. Grooms
 Larry D. Shumate
5 years
 James S. Burton
 Angela M. Green
 Patricia A. Jandrew

El Paso District
10 years
 Ramon P. Gonzalez
 Hector J. Granados

Fort Worth District
20 years
 Ahe W. Crayton
 Jose P. Esquivel Jr.
15 years
 Sherman L. Edwards
 Migelo Galindo
 Harold G. Hall
5 years
 Cynthia G. Baldrige
 Johnny L. Lehmann
 Dean P. Tesmer

Houston District
30 years

Wilbert W. Riewe
20 years
 Angel M. Barela Jr.
 Allen Clark III
 Cynthia S. Sauer
 Frieda L. Smith
15 years
 Sharon L. Edwards
 Gerald G. Foster
 Michael R. Tello
10 years
 Joe P. Cornett
 James V. Hinkle
 Manuel S. Rodriguez Jr.
 Troy D. Shelly
 Richard Turner III
5 years
 James A. Carter
 Larry R. Whittington
Laredo District
20 years
 Rodolfo Amesquita Jr.
10 years
 Abelardo G. Galvan
 Augustin Martinez
 Ronald Rubio
 Eloy C. Zertuche
5 years
 Jose L. Franco III

Lubbock District
25 years
 Jacob E. Birdwell
20 years
 Tracy L. Cumby
15 years
 Kyle D. Hill
 Carol E. Jackson
 Jim H. Osby
5 years
 James K. Edwards

Lufkin District
25 years
 Robert L. Faver
10 years
 Mark E. Jeffrey
5 years
 Hoy J. Clark Jr.
 Douglas B. Huss
 Troy M. Vaughn
 Paul O. Cortinas

Odessa District
30 years
 Jose Lopez
15 years
 Hector Flores
5 years
 Bobby M. Contreras
 Gorgie L. Fabela
 Hector V. Salmon

Paris District
35 years
 Bobby R. Kennedy
30 years
 Jerry W. Baker
10 years
 James B. Hutchison III
5 years
 Steven R. Taylor

Pharr District
5 years
 Miguel Rodriguez

San Antonio District
20 years
 Gilbert Limon
 Raul S. Martinez
 Edward K. Schmidt
 Ruth M. Tschirhart
15 years
 Joe L. Espinoza
 Judith L. Friesenhahn
 Matias H. Galvan
10 years
 Manuel D. Tovar
5 years
 Roy M. Allbritton
 Frank C. Brown
 Michael W. Crow
 Eduardo Reyes
 James A. Samford
 Roland Sanchez
 Richard Torres
 Michael G. Wood

Tyler District
30 years
 George L. Humphrey
15 years
 Odis M. Cates
 Millard C. Martin
 Stanley L. Rushing
10 years
 William E. Fletcher
5 years
 Jaime S. Martinez

Waco District
25 years
 Paul R. Spear
20 years
 Curtis W. Hefelfinger
5 years
 Jeanine G. Henson
 Timothy E. Meeks
 Samuel T. Nowaski

Wichita Falls District
15 years
 Timothy S. Weber
5 years
 James Chapa
 Weldon D. Moore

Yoakum District
30 years
 Melvin B. Bayless
 Patrick J. Kram
15 years
 Ernest D. Aleman
 Milton J. Barta
 Guadalupe Gomez Jr.
 Rodney G. Strait
5 years
 Emery L. Mascheck
 Mark A. Melnar
 Adolph R. Novosad Jr.
 Kenneth E. Wicks

Construction Division
30 years
 Joseph R. Johnston
Design Division
5 years
 Juan Hinojosa Jr.

Environmental Affairs Division
5 years
 Dennis S. Nielsen

General Services Division
30 years
 Mckinley Clark Jr.
 Ernest L. Spradling
 John W. Wilder
5 years
 Byron L. Jones
 Randy L. West

Human Resources Division
5 years
 John R. Hofmann
 Christine L. White

Information Systems Division
20 years
 William E. Holt
15 years
 Elmo J. Roberts
10 years
 Mary E. McGrath
5 years
 Gary F. Grose

Internal Audit Office
5 years
 Carlos Contreras
 Roberto Elizondo

Motor Carrier Division
25 years
 Curtis M. Wagner

Motor Vehicle Division
25 years
 Eddie A. Thorp III
5 years
 Heidi C. Jackson
 Rachel S. Robbins

Public Information Office
5 years
 Lori J. Rowe

Right of Way Division
10 years
 Robert C. Bernhard

Traffic Division
10 years
 Patrick J. Worsham

Transportation Planning and Programming Division
10 years
 Michael G. Lloyd
5 years
 Jack S. Jones
 Ronny L. McClarron

Travel Division
10 years
 Jose Sermino Jr.

Vehicle Titles and Registration Division
25 years
 Patricia R. Batiste
20 years
 Mary H. Davenport
 Patricia C. Gunn
15 years

Cynthia J. Blagden
 Charles H. Nail Jr.
10 years
 Cherylann M. Frame
5 years
 Lydia G. Apodaca

June Traffic Division
25 years
 Melvin W. Partee, Jr.
10 years
 Connie L. Bohuslav

Transportation Planning Programming Division
10 years
 Robert C. Williams
5 years
 Joann C. Hummel

Vehicle Titles Registration
25 years
 Jennifer W. Wells
20 years
 Mary C. Chapman
15 years
 Sandra G. Bell
5 years
 Sofia V. Dovalina

June Service Awards were omitted inadvertently from a previous edition of *Transportation News*.

In Memoriam

Retirees

Abilene District
 Raymond E. Driver, Maintenance
 Construction Foreman III, died
 June 19, 1998

Amarillo District
 Elmer L. Ensey, Maintenance
 Technician III, died June 25, 1998
 Albert L. Hunt, Maintenance
 Technician III, died July 5, 1998

Austin District
 Patrick A. Bartsch, Engineering
 Specialist I, died June 10, 1998

Brownwood District
 Henry P. Turner, Maintenance
 Technician III, died July 31, 1998

Corpus Christi District
 Maximo Sanchez, Maintenance
 Technician III, died June 3, 1998

Dallas District
 Johnnie J. Berryman, Maintenance
 Technician II, died July 9, 1998
 Conard M. Kelley, Laboratory Engineer,
 died July 13, 1998
 Marvin M. White, Jr., Engineering
 Technician II, died July 23, 1998

El Paso District
 Andrew Dutchover, Maintenance
 Technician II, died July 14, 1998
 Tommie McVay, Maintenance
 Technician III, died July 19, 1998

Fort Worth District
 Joe H. Derrick, Sr., Maintenance
 Construction Foreman III, died
 June 4, 1998

Houston District

John H. Appelt, Jr., Maintenance
 Construction Supervisor III, died
 July 13, 1997
 Lonnie L. Heflin, Maintenance
 Technician I, died June 12, 1998.
 Eddie C. Musgrave, Maintenance
 Construction Supervisor III, died
 June 16, 1998
 Jack E. Null, Maintenance Technician
 III, died June 6, 1998

Lubbock District
 Elmer Y. Wright, Engineer IV, died
 June 29, 1998

Odessa District
 William H. Poitevint, Maintenance
 Construction Supervisor II, died July
 30, 1998

San Antonio District
 Lee W. Engelke, Engineering
 Technician IV, died June 26, 1998
 George M. Haley, Maintenance
 Technician III, died July 5, 1998

Tyler District
 William F. Hoppers, Engineering
 Technician IV, died July 6, 1998
 Gordon J. Mayer, Engineering
 Technician IV, died June 19, 1998

Waco District
 Woodrow W. Cotton, Maintenance
 Technician III, died July 28, 1998
 James T. McKee, Maintenance
 Technician III, died June 28, 1998

Yoakum District
 Fred W. Dehnel, Maintenance
 Technician III, died August 1, 1998
 Florian Mozisek, Maintenance
 Technician III, died August 28, 1998

Equipment and Procurement Division
 Charles G. Duncan, Core Drilling
 Supervisor, died July 9, 1998

Traffic Operations Division
 John H. Hoes, Engineer IV, died July 1,
 1998

Austin area employees make donations to help South Texas flood victims

TxDOT offices in Austin pitched in to do their part to help the victims of flooding from Tropical Storm Charley.

Lori Rowe of the Public Information Office's Community Relations Section served as volunteer coordinator in a drive to collect food, clothing and other essentials for those hardest hit by floods.

"I sent an e-mail to our contacts in all the Austin divisions and offices and asked for volunteers to coordinate collection of needed goods and funds at various locations around Austin," Rowe said. "The response I got was great."

Rowe said, "I think that, given the short time frame, the response was real positive, both in material and in monetary contributions."

Sandy Carmona, General Services Division, was one coordinator at Austin's Riverside Annex. Carmona said, "We got a real good response and got a little bit of everything - clothes, food and money, but the majority was clothes.

She said Riverside employees ponied up "four big boxes of clothes in just seven or eight days."

Joann Riester, Traffic Operations Division, helped coordinate donations at Building 118 at the Riverside Annex. "We got a lot of clothing, diapers, bleach, (over-the-counter) medicines like Neosporin. We also got blankets, some bottled water - about five large boxes of donations."

Sarah Hourigan, Construction Division, helped coordinate collections at Camp Hubbard. She said that in less than a week, employees there donated \$70 in cash and also donated clothing and bedding.

'The response I got was great.'

Lori Rowe
 PIO

See Victims, Page 15

Prevention key to avoiding maintenance headaches

What is preventive maintenance and why is it important to TxDOT?

Preventive maintenance is a process that ensures a piece of equipment works when it's needed and that it will last until the end of its expected service life.

Meeting these goals requires a preventive maintenance program that will correct potential problems. A good program also complements TxDOT's safety program, as both are designed to take care of department equipment and employees.

TxDOT has nearly 9,400 on-road vehicles and more than 7,600 off-road vehicles. To be successful, preventive maintenance must be done on a regular basis. Equipment operators are the first line of defense in TxDOT's preventive maintenance program. Operators conduct daily inspections, perform maintenance, and report discrepancies that cannot be repaired at the work site.

The second level of defense is scheduled main-

tenance: inspections and services such as fluid and filter replacement, lubrication, adjustment and certification at prescribed intervals.

Supervisors, equipment operators and equipment maintenance personnel are key elements in the success of the preventive maintenance program. Operators must thoroughly inspect equipment and document their findings. The preventive maintenance manual, now available on-line, includes several equipment inspection checklists for this purpose. The involvement of the supervisors in reviewing the completed checklists and in determining if a piece of equipment is road-worthy or not is of paramount importance. Inspecting, servicing and cleaning equipment requires planning to allow the operator time to ensure the equipment is available when needed.

A good preventive maintenance program can also be instrumental in the resale of surplus equipment for maximum value. ★

— General Services Division

Transportation conference focuses on future needs of Texas

"Texas Transportation for Future Texans" is the theme for the 1998 Transportation Conference, Oct. 12-14, at Texas A&M University.

There are several changes to this year's annual conference. Presentation of the D.C. Greer, Gibb Gilchrist, Luther DeBerry, Raymond Stotzer and Russell H. Perry awards will be made during Tuesday's opening session.

These awards had been presented at an awards banquet on Monday before the conference. Also absent from this year's schedule is the Monday business meetings. There is a District Engineer/Division Director/Office Director meeting on Monday.

During Tuesday's opening session, remarks will be made by the members of the Texas Transportation Commission. Special recognition will also be given to the 50th year of the Cooperative Research Program.

Eighteen technical sessions are planned for Tuesday afternoon and Wednesday. Like last year, these sessions will not be taped.

According to Executive Assistant Nancy Handrick, conference and registration information has been forwarded to each district, division and office.

This 72nd annual conference is sponsored by TxDOT and Texas Transportation Institute. ★

Victims

Continued from Page 14

Cyndi Crain of the Finance Division coordinated donations for Building 150 at Riverside. She said donations continued to come in even after the first batch had been taken to the General Land Office. "The Salvation Army just left with the stuff collected later, and we just donated two more boxes and two bags of clothes and miscellaneous supplies."

Tawana Haynes of the Motor Carrier Division at Bull Creek's Building 22, said, "We got tons of baby stuff - in fact, we got more kids' stuff than we did anything else."

Bill Moorehouse, at the Motor Carrier Division's Building 32 at Bull Creek, said, "Our office is very small, but we got some canned foods and other food stuffs, as well as a check for \$20."

All the donations collected went to the General Land Office, and from there to the relief organizations. "We collected a total of \$560, which went to the Red Cross. We also collected about nine truckloads of essentials like clothes, bottled water, baby food, diapers and bleach," Kirk said. Those went to the Salvation Army.

Kirk said he sent e-mails to all the state agencies in Austin's Capitol Complex asking for donations. "I didn't hear back from some of them," he said, "but I heard back from TxDOT." ★

It's time to renew!

State law says anyone receiving Transportation News by mail must make a request to remain on the mailing list.

Here's your chance. Fill out the form below and send it to Transportation News, 125 E. 11th St., Austin, Texas 78701, attention: Diana Ward. Include mail label on other side.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____

ZIP code: _____

Letters

I would like to commend **James W. Coey** for assisting my mother and me when our tire blew out on I-20 on July 27. He immediately pulled over and changed our tire in the 106-degree weather. We were very grateful to him and thank him for caring.

He is a great asset to the Texas Department of Transportation. And we thank you for the great work your department does keeping the roads safe, especially in this extreme heat.

Mary C. Burgess
Keithville, La.

James Coey is a maintenance supervisor on the Dallas District's Special Maintenance Office.

I would like for someone to know about a gentleman's good deed that happened in Drop. He and his co-workers on the day and night of July 29 were called to close FM 1384 because of a natural gas well that had a severe leak. These men closed the road and stayed from day until night making sure everyone was safe from this terrible accident. They had no relief to come give them a break and I thank you, I went home after meeting **George Douglas** to gather some snacks for them. I really wanted to thank these dedicated workers. I wish there was some

other way I could thank them. Drop is a small community and it makes me feel safer that people care as much as they do. Thank you, Mr. Douglas, as well as the men that stayed with you that night.

Kara B. McLamb
Drop

George Douglas is an assistant maintenance supervisor. His co-workers were John Kennedy, a maintenance technician and Ted Anderson, a crew chief. All work in the Dallas District's Denton Maintenance Section.

I'm writing to tell you how **Kendal Mosley** saved our vacation. He saw our tire was blown and he stopped to help, from start to finish. I have sung the praises of the Texas Department of Transportation across nine states.

Phyllis Dorsey
Omaha, Neb.

At the time Kendal Moseley was a Maintenance Tech V in the Midland Maintenance Section. He has transferred to the Washington County Maintenance Section in Brenham in the Bryan District, where he is an asst. supervisor.

Retirements

March
Lubbock District
 Ronald E. Watson, Engineering Technician III, 12 years

April
Dallas District
 Edwin G. Krajca, Transportation Maintenance Supervisor I, 32 years
 Addison E. Oliver, Transportation Maintenance Supervisor I, 28 years

Houston District
 Shirley C. Moore, Printing Technician III, 16 years

San Antonio District
 Jimmy R. Lange, Engineering Specialist II, 30 years
 Columbus Stutes, Jr., Telecommunications Specialist IV, 41 years

May
Lubbock District
 Carl E. Cates, Administrative Technician III, 10 years

June
Wichita Falls District
 Monty C. Overcash, Engineering Aide, 15 years

Design Division
 James E. Johnson, Engineer VI, 29 years

July
Austin District
 Isidro D. Contreras, Maintenance Mechanic II, 13 years

Lubbock District
 Troy R. Williams, Engineering Technician III, 27 years

San Angelo District
 Youvonne Harrod, Administrative Technician I, 17 years

Travel Division
 Thelma L. Herwig, Administrative Technician II, 13 years

August
Amarillo District
 Charles M. Rennie, Engineering Technician I, 12 years

Atlanta District
 Robert W. Cowley, Motor Vehicle Mechanic III, 30 years

Houston District
 John L. Pavlock, Transportation Maintenance Supervisor V, 40 years

Paris District
 Royce G. Brooks, Engineer IV, 27 years
 Stephen E. Phifer, Engineering Technician III, 27 years

San Angelo District
 Jesus M. Escobar, Transportation Maintenance Crew Chief I, 32 years

San Antonio District
 Pedro Hassette, Transportation Maintenance Technician II, 32 years
 Waldo V. Martinez, Transportation Maintenance Supervisor II, 33 years
 Domingo R. Rodriguez, Engineering Technician III, 32 years
 Ronald D. Sloan, Engineering Technician II, 14 years
 Dennis R. Tuch, Engineering Technician IV, 34 years

Yoakum District
 Edwin J. Molnoskey, Motor Vehicle Mechanic III, 29 years

September
Austin District
 Richard A. Wesson, Jr., Engineering Technician V, 30 years

Beaumont District
 Charles R. Davis, Engineering Technician V, 12 years
 Joseph E. Horn, Engineering Technician III, 25 years

Fort Worth District
 Ronald W. Womack, Training Specialist III, 38 years

Houston District
 Gene W. Slovak, Engineering Technician III, 25 years

Paris District
 James L. Lawrence, Transportation Maintenance Supervisor I, 31 years

San Antonio District
 Wayne R. Balzen, Maintenance Section Supervisor III, 40 years

Yoakum District
 Walter L. Hill, Engineering Technician III, 31 years

General Services Division
 James Justice, Maintenance Mechanic II, 32 years

Information Systems Division
 Richard B. VanHooser, Systems Analyst III, 8 years

Vehicle Titles and Registration Division
 Janice G. Kitz, System Support Specialist III, 31 years
 Janie B. Lowe, Administrative Technician II, 17 years

October
Amarillo District
 Joyce Little, Administrative Technician III, 25 years

Brownwood District
 Roy T. Speer, Engineering Technician III, 30 years

Fort Worth District
 Alvin Fron, Transportation Maintenance Supervisor I, 30 years

Waco District
 Billy F. Lucas, Administrative Technician II, 30 years

Construction Division
 Jose L. Hernandez, Director II, 28 years

Human Resources Division
 John G. Whittle, Information Specialist III, 20 years

Calendar

OCTOBER
5-6 Contract Administration, Austin, GSD
6-7 District Equipment Supervisor's Meeting, Austin, GSD
7-9 Competitive Sealed Proposals/Competitive Negotiations, Austin, GSD
12 DE/DD/OD meeting, College Station
12-14 Transportation Conference, College Station
26-28 Texas Vegetation Association Annual Meeting, Galveston, MNT
27-28 GEOPAK Drainage Training, San Antonio, DES
29 Commission Meeting, Austin
29-30 GEOPAK Drainage Training, San Antonio, DES

NOVEMBER
2-6 Research Management Committee Meeting, San Antonio, CST
3-4 State Rodeo Championship/Accident Prevention Meeting, Waco, OCC
10 Texas Turnpike Authority Board meeting, Austin
11 Veterans Day (holiday)
16 Negotiation Strategies, Austin, GSD
17 Specification Writing, Austin, GSD
17-20 NHTSA/TxDOT Project Management Course, Austin, TRF
18-20 Intermediate Public Purchasing, Austin, GSD
19 Commission Meeting, Austin
26 Thanksgiving Day (holiday)
27 Day After Thanksgiving (holiday)

DECEMBER
16 Certified Professional Public Buyer Review, Austin, GSD
16-17 Certified Public Purchasing Officer Review, Austin, GSD
17 Commission Meeting, Austin
18 Certified Professional Public Buyer/Certified Public Purchasing Officer Written Exam, Austin, GSD
24 Christmas Eve Day (holiday)
25 Christmas Day (holiday)

JANUARY
1 New Year's Day (holiday)
5 Specification Writing, Lewisville, GSD
7-8 Contracting for Services, Lewisville, GSD
18 Martin Luther King Jr. Day (holiday)
19 Confederate Heroes Day (holiday)

Fire

Continued from Page 11

'dozer, but it was so steep, I couldn't get up it," Thompson said.

Dallas employees were not the only out-of-towners recruited to fight the fire. The forestry service routinely imports experts from all over the country. During this fire, a group of Navajos helped clear brush by hand at the ground level.

While the special maintenance crew slept on their own equipment, toolboxes and whatever else was available the first couple of nights, the Navajos slept on the ground. When it became apparent the fire would go on, Thompson went into town for provisions including cots and clean clothes.

Even with all the precautions, there were still many close calls. Lawrence recalled one instance when he ran dangerously low on fuel as the fire changed direction and began to rapidly approach.

"I was in the 'dozer and our mechanic was pulled up beside me fueling me up. The fire was 50 or 60 feet away and the treetops were exploding into flames. Well, the mechanic got a little shaky. He was saying, 'It's coming, it's coming — this ain't cool, man!' Lawrence said. I replied, 'I know it ain't cool — just keep fueling.'"

The immediate threat of the fire and the heat of the summer weren't the only complications. Wildlife running from the blaze and maintaining firefighting equipment were also major concerns.

"Fire ran those rattlesnakes out and you had to watch where you were walking," Lawrence said.

Thompson added, "If Earl hadn't come up and blown dust out of our equipment,

we'd have been in trouble. The dust gets into the engine and then they start running hot," he said.

Another source of anxiety was the presence of high-pressure gas and oil lines. Since it was not a heavily trafficked area, the lines were laying unmarked on top of the ground. Forestry personnel on foot would walk in front of the heavy equipment helping operators spot the lines, which could explode under the weight of the equipment.

In the early morning hours, when the fire slept, so did the exhausted workers.

"About 4 a.m. it was nice," Lawrence said. "The stars were out and it was cool and you could hear the coyotes."

And then with the rising sun and soaring 100 degree heat; the fire started all over again.

The crews averaged 200 miles a day driving in their equipment back and forth across the ranch, cutting breaks.

At that time, several fires were raging in Texas. But the 101 Ranch fire was the biggest and demanded the most manpower.

According to the Division of Emergency Management and Department of Public Safety records, 563 wildfires burned more than 305,400 acres in Texas between May and August.

In the end, no structures were lost on the 101 Ranch, and thousands of acres were saved thanks to hundreds of firefighters and volunteers, including five maintenance workers who were more than happy to pick up where they left off clearing channels and moving earth in the Dallas District.★

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