

TXD P 3500.6 D 779 1998 Winter

DPS


WINTER 1998

paisano


PUBLISHED QUARTERLY BY THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE

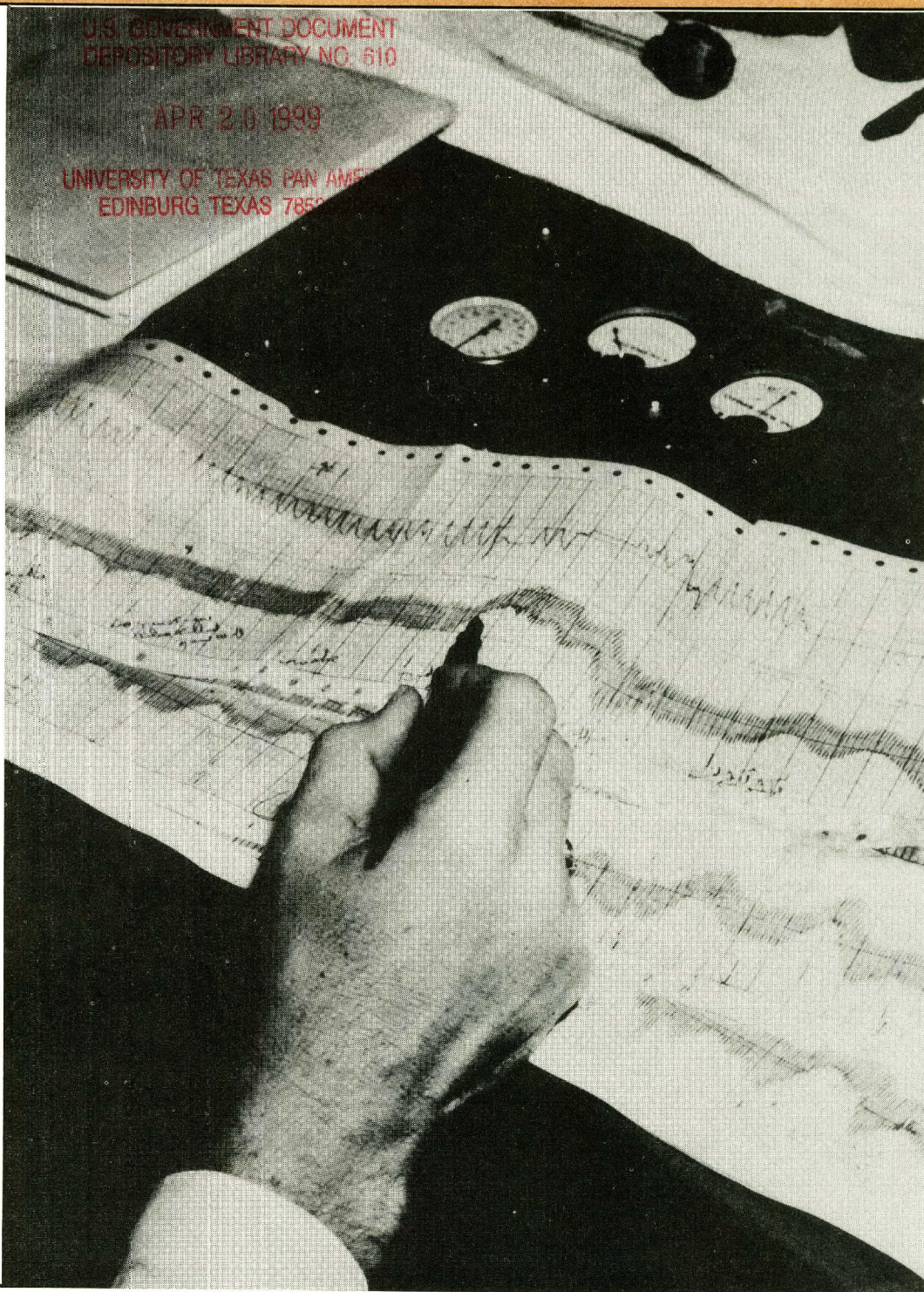
 Motorcycle Safety,
p.3

 Elderly Drivers, p.4

 Profile of DPS Pilot,
Kim Woodall, p.6

 To Tell the Truth,
p.8

 The Sobering Side of
DWI, p.10



THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS-PAN AMERICAN



0 1161 0817 5377

Paisano is a quarterly employee magazine published by the Texas Department of Public Safety's Public Information Office. If you have a suggestion for a future issue or would like to request additional copies, please call 512-424-2080 or write P.O. Box 4087, Austin, TX 78773-0170.

PAISANO STAFF

Chief of Media Relations
Mike Cox

Asst. Chief of Media Relations
Tela Goodwin Mange

Public Information Officer
Tom Vinger

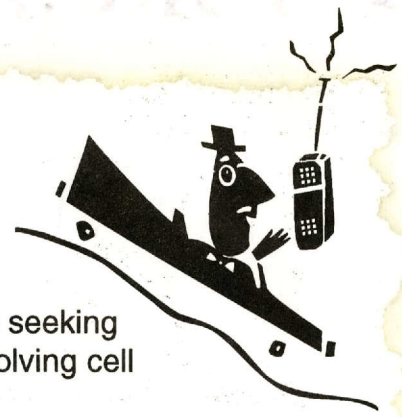
Interns
Sara Yocham and Allison Wollam

Administrative Assistants
Laura Luckie
Beth Warren

Graphics/Layout
DPS Graphic Arts Section

Reproduction
DPS Print Shop and Bindery

10-99!



The Public Information Office is seeking anecdotes about traffic stops involving cell phones and other technology.

- 📞 Stopped someone who wouldn't get off the phone?
- 📞 Investigated a crash attributable to cell phones?
- 📞 Stopped someone who was talking on a cell phone AND operating a laptop computer?
- 📞 Stopped someone who was reading while driving?

If you've encountered any of these, or anything similar, please contact PIO in Austin.

On the Cover: Detail of a photo of an old-style polygraph test. See page 8 for more on polygraphs.

Frequently asked helmet law questions

When could motorcyclists start riding without a helmet?

Senate Bill 99 went into effect on September 1, 1997. If a person is from out of state, can they ride in Texas without a helmet? Yes, as long as he or she is at least 21 years old and has proof of course completion or adequate medical insurance.

Do passengers have to meet the same age/insurance/training requirements as the operator?

It is presumed that operators and passengers on a motorcycle displaying a helmet exempt sticker on the license plate or plate holder meet the age/insurance/training requirements. If there is no helmet exempt sticker on the motorcycle, but the motorcycle owner has the state-required minimum insurance, passengers, providing they are at least 21 years of age, can ride on a motorcycle without a helmet.

Which course must motorcyclists take to qualify for the helmet exemption sticker?

Persons without a motorcycle, Class M, driver license or their own motorcycle must take the basic course. For those owning

their own motorcycle and protective equipment, the advanced course is recommended, although the basic course is acceptable.

Is the helmet exemption sticker required before a motorcyclist can ride without a helmet?

No. The sticker indicates that the motorcyclist meets the requirement for riding without a helmet, and law enforcement officers will presume that they do. Without the sticker motorcyclists may be requested to show police officers their proof of course completion or adequate insurance coverage.

Where are helmet exemption sticker applications available?

Helmet exemption sticker applications are available at most Driver License Offices, from the Motorcycle Safety Bureau at (1-800-292-5787) or by downloading it from the Motorcycle Safety Bureau's web page .

Do training sites provide motorcycles and helmets for persons attending training courses?

Training sites provide helmets and training motorcycles for students attending the



basic course. Sponsors may provide helmets for students attending the advanced course.

What constitutes proof of course completion?

A Department of Public Safety Motorcycle Operator Training Course Completion Card, MSB-8 or a completion card from a motorcycle safety course meeting or exceeding Motorcycle Safety Foundation standards. If the course was taken outside of Texas, the completion card must indicate that the motorcycle safety course meets or exceeds Motorcycle Safety Foundation standards.

For further information about the Motorcycle Operator Training Program or the revised helmet law, call the Motorcycle Safety Unit at (512) 424-2021 or toll free 1-800-292-5787.

Training Academy's Motorcycle Safety Unit provides quality safety training

By Lt. Erwin Ballarta
DPS Training Academy

Motorcycle safety is alive and well in Texas. The Department's Motorcycle Safety Unit (formerly the Motorcycle Safety Bureau) offers courses for new and experienced motorcyclists in 45 locations statewide. Its training program is nationally recognized. Four of the past five years, the Texas program was selected by the Motorcycle Safety Foundation as the outstanding statewide program in its category.

Since its inception in 1983, the program has instituted a number of changes to improve the quality and quantity of motorcycle training offered. Among the innovations are allowing students to attend a course for ticket dismissal (1995), riding test waiver for qualifying students (1996) and exemption from wearing a helmet for otherwise qualifying students (1997). With demand for motorcycle operator training continuing to climb, the Motorcycle Safety Unit faces a constant challenge to meet the rapidly increasing demand for high-quality training while keeping expenditures within a budget. The unit's staff continually stretches their imagination to come up with ways to make everything work.

During Fiscal 1997, 7,207 students enrolled in either the basic or advanced motorcycle operator training course, a 20 percent increase overall. Enrollment in the basic course was up 14 percent to 5,873 students. The number of advanced course students increased 57 percent to 1,334 students.

Administering the statewide motorcycle operator training program keeps the Motorcycle Safety Unit's staff busy. The 75th Legislature added to the unit's workload: it revised the motorcycle helmet law, adding a helmet exempt sticker program to the unit's responsibilities. The helmet law was revised to say that:

Persons at least 21 years old are exempt from wearing a motorcycle helmet if they:

- have successfully completed a motorcycle safety course, or
- are covered by a health insurance plan providing the person with at least \$10,000 in medical benefits for injuries incurred as a result of an accident while operating or riding upon a motorcycle.

The revised helmet law caused a lot of confusion among motorcyclists and law enforcement officials alike. During September and October of 1997, it was not unusual for the staff of six employees to answer more than 500 requests a day for

information or law clarification.

The Basic and Advanced Motorcycle Operator Training Courses offered by the Motorcycle Safety Unit's contracted sponsors meet the helmet exemption requirement. The unit recommends the Advanced Motorcycle Operator Training Course to experienced and licensed motorcyclists.

Both motorcyclists and law enforcement officials typically misunderstand the revised law's health insurance plan requirement. The law defines the health insurance as "... an individual, group, blanket, or franchise insurance policy, insurance agreement, group hospital services contract, health maintenance organization membership, or employee benefit plan that provides benefits for health care services or for medical or surgical expenses incurred as a result of an accident."

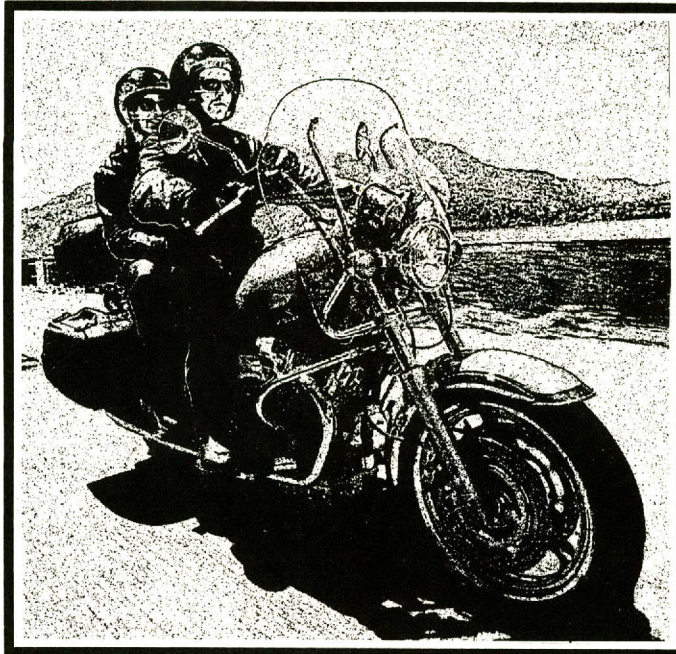
The most commonly used proof of adequate health insurance is a health maintenance organization identification card. Though the HMO identification card does not show \$10,000 in coverage, research shows that every HMO provides at least the minimum \$10,000 coverage.

According to the law, persons operating, or riding upon, a motorcycle with a helmet exemption sticker displayed on the license plate or license plate mounting bracket are presumed to meet the training or insurance requirements for riding without a helmet.

The Department's Motorcycle Safety Unit issues a helmet exemption sticker to persons meeting the requirements listed below. To date, the unit has processed nearly 7,000 applications with some 6,000 applications approved and stickers sent. Persons qualify for the helmet exemption if they:

- apply on a department provided form; and
- own the motorcycle listed on the application;
- provide adequate proof of successful completion of the basic or advanced motorcycle operator training course, or health insurance coverage, and,
- submit a \$5.00 non-refundable cashier's check or money order for each sticker they apply for.

NOTE: Helmet exemption stickers are serialized and may not be transferred from one motorcycle to another. The sticker expires on the third anniversary of the date of issuance.



A look at Texas drivers and aging

By Steve McQuagge
DPS Intern**

An 84-year-old woman turned left from a rural road onto a Texas highway, failing to yield right-of-way to an oncoming van with seven women on board. The van struck the rear of the woman's car, causing it to spin out of control. The van came to rest upside down in a pond with only the tires visible. Five of the passengers in the van drowned, and only the heroics of some men working across the street prevented all seven from dying.

This April 21, 1998 collision renewed debate about whether elderly people should be allowed to drive or have their driving privilege more closely governed because of their age. In November, a state representative introduced legislation that would have drivers tested after the age of 70. The legislator withdrew the bill two weeks after he introduced it.

Currently, the state of Texas requires only that drivers pass a vision test. Several other states have the same requirement.

"We have the vision test as well," said Sgt. Albert Boyce, Michigan State Police, Traffic Services. "We are not about to discriminate against anyone because of age."

The cause for concern may be a fear instigated by a tragic situation. Of all Texas drivers, nearly one-fourth are 55 or over. However, this age group is involved in only 16 percent of fatalities and fewer than one-eighth of all crashes.

DPS handles claims of someone being unfit to drive through an extensive background check.

"We get telephone calls and letters every day from concerned citizens who tell of a family member, friend or close acquaintance who has become a safety hazard on our roadways," said Kathy Prochnow, manager of the Driver Improvement and Control Bureau (DIC). "When someone calls us, we tell them to go ahead and send us a letter. That way we have written proof we did not take this action without reason."

"We give the letter to the Medical Advisory Board (MAB), based at the Department of Health, and they determine if that person is unable to drive," she said.

The MAB can obtain accident records for elderly drivers and review other factors to determine if health has become a driving factor.

"We not only handle the letters from DIC, but we also review reports on people who uniformed officers submit to us," said Judy Sibert, MAB Counselor. "Usually in a uniformed officer's report, we find more details that help us, such as the person weaving similar to a drunk driver."

While for various reasons some drivers may need to stop driving, other drivers may simply need a driving refresher course.

The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) has a driving program called 55-Alive, which teaches older persons how to cope with changes in driving habits.

"Sometimes people's eyesight gets a little worse as they get older. We just teach them how to drive, if they should be driving," said Bob Connell, state coordinator for the AARP 55-Alive program.

Many drivers, Connell said, have been driving for years and have not received tickets or been involved accidents. Because of that, they have not taken a driver's education class.

"Some of these drivers have not been in a situation where they have needed to be in an educational environment," he said. "There is a good chance that a law was changed that they were not aware of."

The AARP course focuses on driving trends, such as driving speeds and road rage. "If they are on a highway driving 40 miles per hour and everyone else is doing 70, then they pose just as much of a threat as someone doing over 100. If older drivers start to notice that they are getting the 'one finger salute' more and more, or, if they notice more people yelling at them as they are being passed, then we tell them that maybe it is time to stop questioning all of the other drivers and do a little self-examining."

Part of that process is getting regular vision checkups, he said.

The role played by diminished vision in traffic incidents is receiving greater attention by traffic safety experts. Certainly, some vision changes do occur with age. Some changes noted by the Organization of Optometrists in Society (OOS) include:

- ◆ more light needed to see well
- ◆ headlight glare and sunlight can be more bothersome
- ◆ reaction time slows
- ◆ peripheral awareness may be reduced
- ◆ color distinction may diminish
- ◆ various lighting conditions may affect sharpness of vision
- ◆ quickly changing focus to different distances will be harder

The main two elements that Austin optometrist Edward Bellingrath looks for regarding driving are visual acuity and peripheral vision.

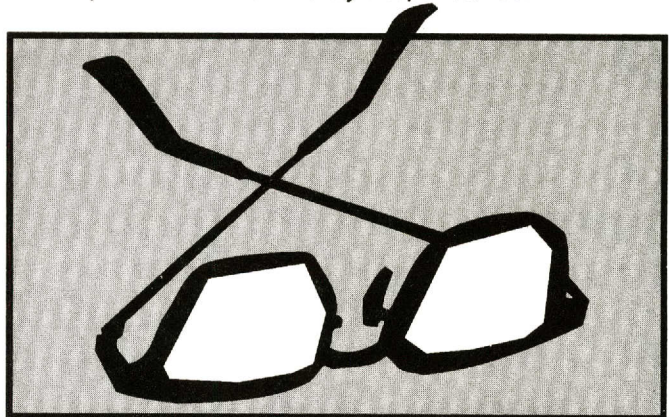
"Visual acuity is the ability to see shapes and focus. That and peripheral vision, or seeing items come into view from the sides, are good measures of the physical limitations of what your eyes can do," Bellingrath said.

Other elements that he searches for are changes in color perception and contrast sensitivity.

"Contrast sensitivity may be having good visual acuity, but without contrast sensitivity, a person cannot see things such as facial detail," he said.

Dr. Bellingrath recommends eye exams at least once a year until age 25. Then a person could probably get away with an exam every other year until age 40. After that, he recommends every year. However, medical conditions, such as diabetes, could be a reason for some to get their eyes examined more frequently.

**McQuagge, who was an intern in PIO for nine months, is now a Texas Department of Public Safety trooper-trainee.



Children and the Internet . . . a pedophile's playground

By Marilyn Moeller
 Capitol Police

Child lures vary, whether as simple as "Can you help me find my lost puppy?," or "Your mommy has been hurt in an accident and she sent me to pick you up," to offers of fame, money and drugs. Pedophiles are always looking for new ways to lure children. These predators are usually serial offenders who victimize large numbers of children. They are cunning, highly manipulative, and they're in your home.

The Internet is entertaining and informative. But the 'Net' does have a dark side. Teenagers are particularly at risk because they often have unsupervised access to a computer and because they are more likely than younger children to participate in online discussions regarding companionship, relationships or sexual activity.

There are two different safety issues on the Internet. The first is what your children are exposed to, either through their own actions or through accidental contact. The other area of concern is direct communication with your child that may be inappropriate and personal and that could, if mishandled, lead to information being revealed that puts your child or the family at personal risk.



Some **DO's** and **DON'Ts** to minimize your child's risk while traveling the Information Highway

DO

- Keep the computer in a central location rather than the child's bedroom.
- If available, use the internal log in your system. This will allow you to see what areas your children are using.
- Contact your online service or your Internet service to find out what type of safety blocks they offer.
- Spend time with your child, stay in touch with what they are doing. Get to know your child's "online friends" just as you would get to know their other friends. It's not a matter of trusting your child online, it's becoming "street smart" on the Information Highway.
- If you have cause for concern, talk with your children. Report to your local authorities anything you feel is inappropriate and poses a safety issue for your child or your family.

DON'T

- Give out your online password to anyone.
- Never reveal personal information, your real name, where you live, your parents' names, telephone number, or where you go to school. Never send pictures of yourself or your family through the Internet.
- Never continue a conversation that makes you feel uncomfortable, that seems inappropriate, or becomes personal. Tell your parents about what happened.
- Never agree to meet someone you've "met" on the Internet.
- Do not accept product offers or any other opportunities to send you information through the Internet without your parents' specific approval.

Narcotics Seizures

Largest Seizures:

Marijuana	3,718 lbs.	4-10-98	Hidalgo County
Cocaine	1,887 lbs.	4-21-98	Hidalgo County
Currency	\$1,200,000.00	7-22-98	Harris County
Heroin	2.56 lbs.	2-20-98	Hidalgo County
Methamphetamine	4,547.40 lbs.	4-28-98	Dallas County

DPS Profile: Kim Woodall

Kim Woodall is a DPS pilot/investigator stationed in McAllen. The 31-year-old Louisiana native got to Texas "as soon as I could."

How long have you been with DPS? What positions have you held?

I've been with DPS about 5 1/2 years. I spent six years in the military stationed in Michigan, New Jersey and Germany. Communications is what I did in the military. I was a command and control specialist. When I got out of the service, I was a police communications operator in Houston for about a year. Then I went through the Academy. I went into the commissioned area because I thought it offered better opportunities for advancement. I was in the Highway Patrol, stationed in Borger and Conroe. I've been in the Aircraft Section since April 1, 1997.

Did you learn to fly in the Air Force?

No, I didn't pick that up until I got out. When I was in the service, I was an enlisted E4 Sergeant, and the officers were the pilots. But because of the job, because of what we dealt with, that's where I picked up the interest.

When I went up to the Panhandle, during the first six months of probation, and I decided that, yes, I would finally make it that's when I decided to start flying. I had been interested in flying, and I thought it would be a great career opportunity. I had been talking to the pilot/investigators, and I did intend to apply for the Aircraft Section.

Why did you want to become a pilot/investigator?

I thought it would be something that continuously would be challenging, and it has been. If I do something that's boring, it kind of loses my interest. When I entered the section, I spent three months in Austin for commercial training, and I've been flying solo since September 1997.

What are the minimum qualifications for a pilot investigator?

You have to have one year of commissioned time with the Department and at least a private pilot's license and a medical certificate. You have to spend your own money to get it. Most people who come before the interview board have more than that. I had the private, instrument and written commercial certifications.

What has been your most interesting flight mission?

We just finished last week a search and rescue on the Valley Air Care helicopter. It was pretty intense and frustrating. I learned



about the challenges of flying in inclement weather. [Three people were killed when a medical helicopter crashed en route to a traffic collision. Visibility was low due to clouds.]

What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

Anything that's related to the outdoors - hiking, biking, camping, traveling, sightseeing. I pretty much got all of the adrenaline stuff out of my system when I was in the service. I think I've tried just a little bit of everything. But I don't have any desire to jump out of planes any more. I wanted to do that at one point, but a friend of mine did it first. She had a video camera that recorded everything. I really didn't like watching that point of impact.

Do pilot/investigators have to learn about jumping out of planes with parachutes?

No, we don't have to learn how to use those. Our passengers ask us if we have them - maybe it's for the sake of security - but they are not available.

What are your goals?

I have accomplished it. This is what I wanted to do, and I'm doing it. I worked hard to get here, and I'm enjoying the ride. Professionally, I'm pretty happy where I am. Now, I just want to get somewhere and settle down. I was in the Air Force for six years and it was always wait and see what happens next. Now I want to settle down and buy a home.

Woodall was interviewed by Sherri Deatherage Green, former Assistant Chief of Media Relations for DPS.



GEORGE W. BUSH
GOVERNOR

October 21, 1998

Mr. Tom Milwee
State Coordinator
Emergency Management Council
Post Office Box 4087
Austin, Texas 78773-0001

Dear Tom:

We have had a tough few months in Texas. First, no rain, then too much. I really appreciate all that your office is doing to help us cope with these disasters. Many Texans, myself included, are grateful for your tireless work.

You are doing an excellent job. Please pass along my thanks to everyone involved.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "George W. Bush".

George W. Bush

As usual, great job

Truth and Consequences

By Tela Goodwin Mange
Assistant Chief of Media Relations

I stabbed the teddy bear. And, try as I might, I could not lie about it.

In late July, I participated in testing for the 11-week Polygraph Examiner's School held at Headquarters.

"We need volunteers," the memo said, and I thought it sounded interesting. I had never taken a polygraph test, and wasn't quite sure what to expect.

In the movies and on television crime dramas, there's generally a "Perry Mason Moment," where the examinee jumps up, admits having committed the crime and is led away in chains.

In real life, it's a lot less dramatic.

Polygraph examinations are used to investigate specific misconduct or to screen for accuracy in job applications. They don't, in truth, detect lies, but they do measure physiological changes that occur while a subject is answering questions.

All the volunteers gathered in the Polygraph Service's office, waiting to go into other offices for a briefing. When I was called in with four other women, we were told that we were part of the "perpetrators" group.

Lt. Gordon Moore of the Polygraph Service told us that several of us would need to stab – for real, no joke – a small brown teddy bear that had seen better days. (How would you look if you'd been stabbed repeatedly through the years?) We needed to stab the teddy bear so we could deny stabbing the teddy bear – and get caught lying about it.

Several of us stabbed the teddy bear. I left the knife in the bear and left the room.

Leaving the room, I was approached by an officer from New Hampshire. He introduced himself and asked me to go with him to the testing room.

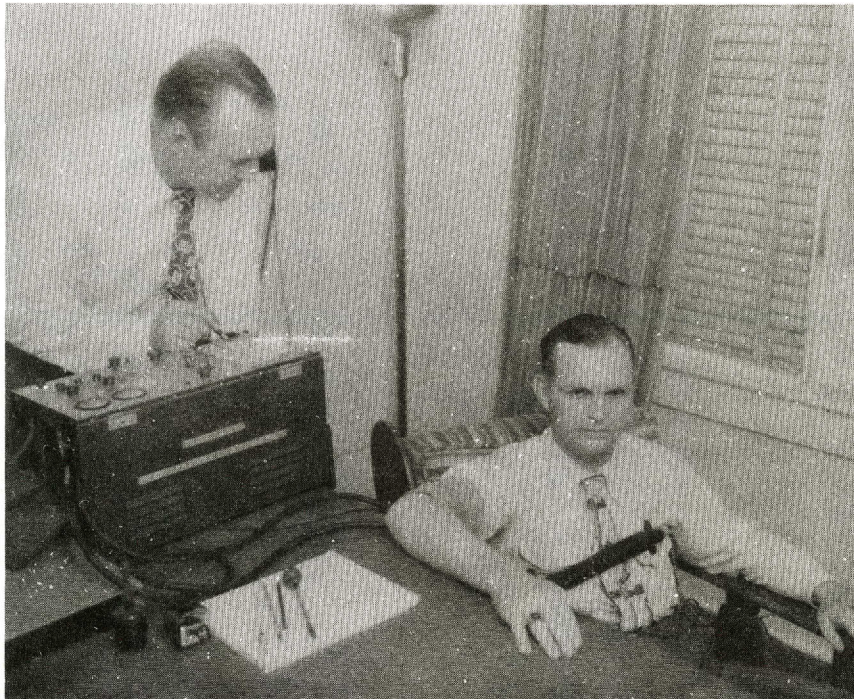
A few minutes later, we sat in an office talking about the testing. He explained the equipment and how it worked and asked me whether I had eaten lately, gotten any sleep recently and whether I had any health problems that could contribute to problems in the testing (heart problems, etc.).

We were ready to begin.

The examiner attached several sensors to me to measure respiration and heart beat and placed one of my fingers in a clip to measure sweat.

No problem, I thought. The blood pressure cuff was mildly annoying, but nothing I couldn't live with. Piece of cake.

The questions began.



Among other things, polygraph examinations measure heartbeats and respiration, both at rest and when answering questions. Although it seems like it would be an easy thing to lie and fool an instrument that's taking innumerable measurements, moment by moment, I am here to testify that it's not easy.

He asked three sets of 10 questions.

The science of polygraphy has come far enough now that computers do the heavy lifting (figuring the algorithms) for polygraph examiners, but the attendees of the DPS school also learn how to score the tests by hand.

On the outside, I thought I was acting cool as a cucumber. Inside, I went between utter panic and utter calm, and sometimes both at once. "Geez," I thought, "I'm glad this isn't for real, I'd be cooked already."

Still, it was an interesting experience, to say the least.

The DPS Polygraph Examiners School was created in 1995. So far, six DPS sergeants have graduated from the school, which trains examiners from law enforcement agencies across the nation. DPS has 12 CLE sergeants across the state who are polygraph examiners. Only U.S. citizens can attend the DPS school because the school is closely connected with the U.S.

Department of Defense's polygraph school.

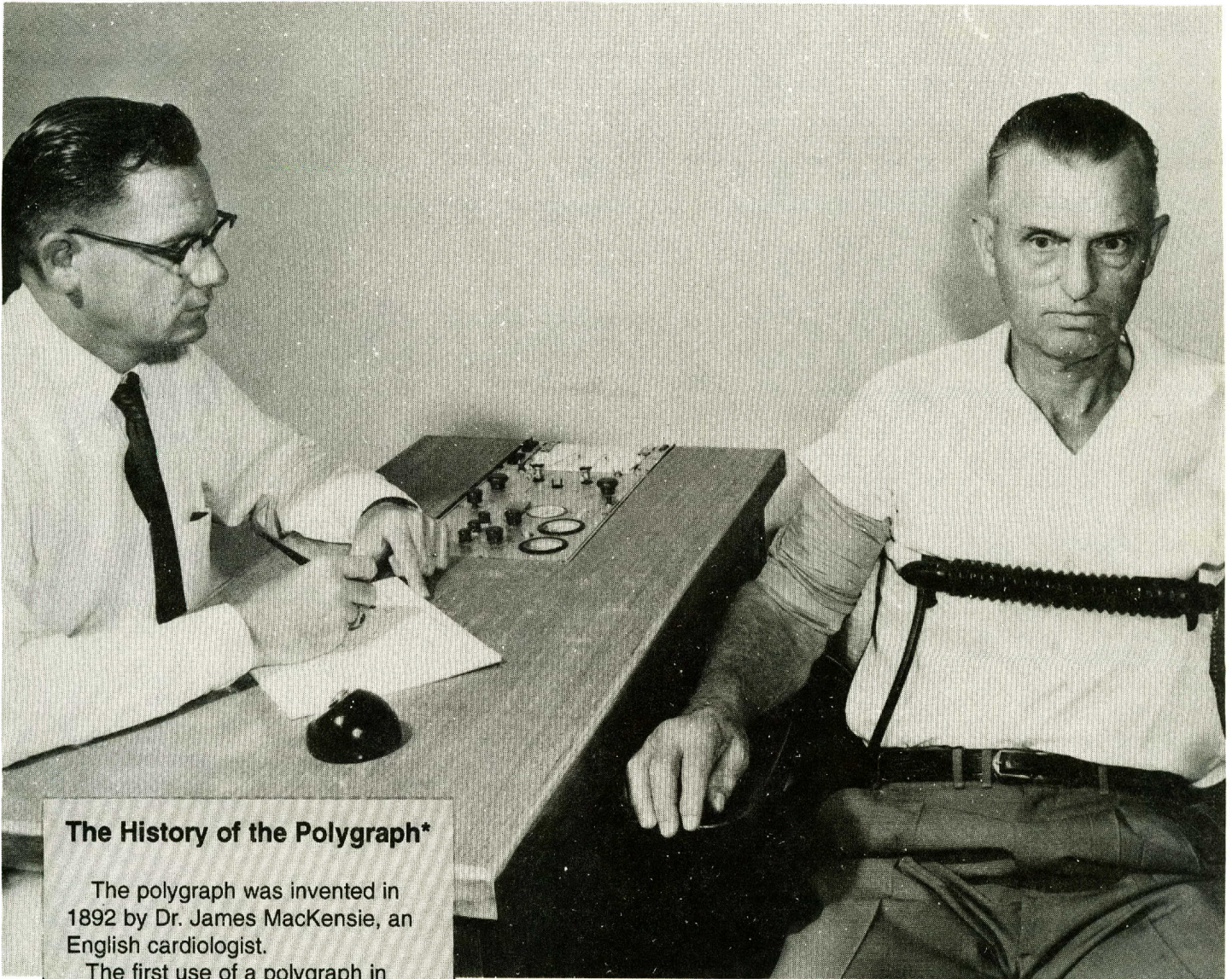
Graduates of the DPS Polygraph Examiners School get a certificate stating that they've completed the academic portion of the school. Then they have six months to turn in 30 cases that they've worked on. Instructors examine the cases for quality control; if the cases all

check out, they receive a diploma from the school. Many of the DPS graduates have gone on to become involved in investigating big cases soon after leaving school.

DPS polygraph examiners cleared 284 criminal cases through confessions in 1997-1998. Examiners work on cases ranging from murders to sexual assaults of children to burglaries and arson. The examiners assist other DPS investigators, other state agencies and district attorneys.

"Ms. Mange," the examiner said. "Looking at the results of your examination, I feel very comfortable with the conclusion that you were lying. You stabbed that teddy bear. I knew it within the first 30 seconds."

He was right. Lucky for me, I don't expect to find myself in a real-life polygraph situation. I think I'll stay away from teddy bears.



The History of the Polygraph*

The polygraph was invented in 1892 by Dr. James MacKensie, an English cardiologist.

The first use of a polygraph in investigating an espionage case was in 1917 and 1918 in the United States.

The first DPS case involving the use of a polygraph examination was a burglary case in 1944 in Nixon, Texas.

Polygraph examiners were first licensed in Texas in 1965.

The DPS Law Enforcement Polygraph School was established in 1995.

*Selected information from "The History of the Polygraph 1997-1998 Calendar," published by the Lafayette Instrument Company, Lafayette, Indiana.

San Marcos high school students

By Tom Vinger
DPS PIO

"Your daughter has been involved in a bad accident. She didn't survive."

The mother stared in stunned silence at Trooper IV A.J. Wolpman as her eyes brimmed with tears.

"It's the hardest part of my job," Wolpman said later.

"Are you sure?" is a common response."

Luckily for Wolpman and the mother, it wasn't the real thing this time.

It's all part of an elaborate DWI-awareness program called "Shattered Dreams," which was recently played out in sobering detail at San Marcos High School. The goal of the program is to give teenagers a bitter taste of DWI reality by staging a fatal drunk driving crash scenario using student actors.

The crash simulation involved about 50 police, fire and medical personnel, along with San Marcos-based DPS Troopers, as a two-way radio blared out an all too familiar script. An air ambulance descended from the sky and the student "suspect" was hauled away in handcuffs.

Highway Patrol Troopers Wolpman, Brian Freeman and Randy King and License & Weight Trooper Mike Heitkamp performed the mock parental notifications.

"Ninety-nine percent of the parents I notified had tears in their eyes," said Wolpman. "We played the part, we didn't deviate. It was very emotional. You have to remember the parents had written their children's fake obituaries the night before."

A school assembly the next day featured real-life testimonials. A San Marcos mother whose five-year old son was killed by a drunk driver that same day five years earlier recounted her heart-wrenching story. A former student talked about recovering from a crash that left him comatose for several days after a day of drinking with his buddies. Dry eyes were hard to find.

Wolpman's wife, Beth, is a teacher at San Marcos High School and she expressed hope that the anti-DWI message hit its target.

"It was very in your face, very personal," said Mrs. Wolpman. "We'll never know if the program saved lives, only if it didn't. If it saved one life, it was worth it. It helped show kids that they are not invulnerable."

Students were heavily involved in staging the event, which took six months to plan.

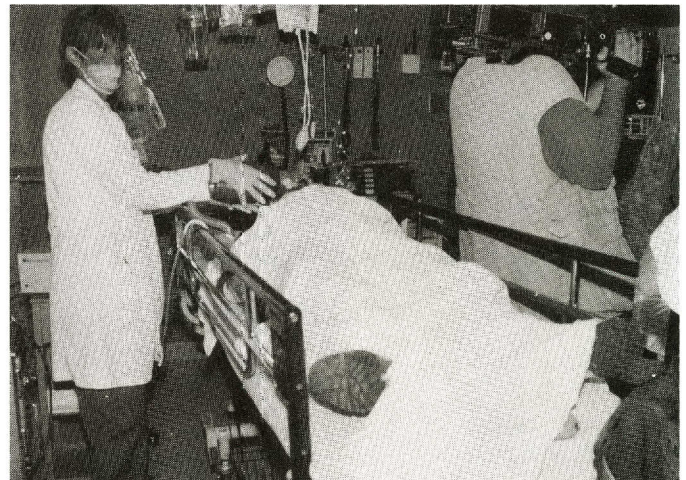
For information on bringing this relatively new program to your area call Rolando Garza, Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission, at 512-206-3218.



Horrifyingly realistic makeup is placed on a high school student who volunteered to be a victim in the "Shattered Dreams" program.



Two of the volunteer students pose inside the cab of one of the vehicles involved in the DWI-related "crash."



One of the victims of the crash is transported to the emergency room of the local hospital to add even more realism to the reenactment.

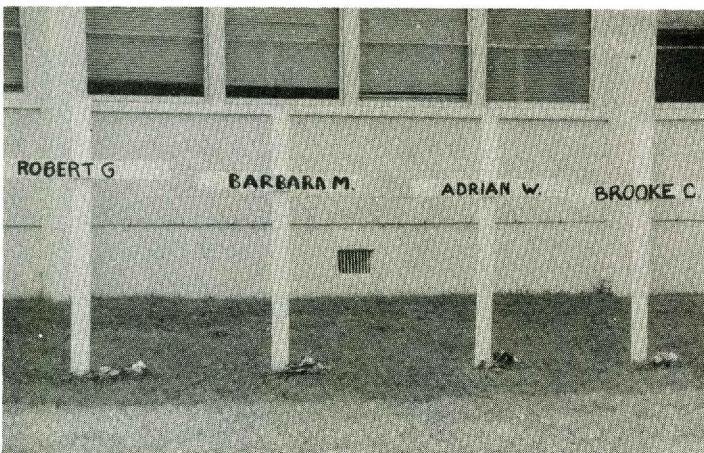
see the sobering side of DWI



The Grim Reaper (left) waits by one of the crash victims as the medical examiners (right) look on. The students sitting down directly in front of the truck are additional victims of DWI crashes.

*Photos by Missy Michilletti,
DPS Crime Lab*

As part of the "Shattered Dreams" program, Tr. IV A.J. Wolpman tells the mother of a teenager that her child was killed in a DWI-related crash.



Crosses representing the crash victims were set up at the high school.

Auto Safety Hotline

The Department of Transportation sponsors the Auto Safety Hotline to increase awareness of problems with motor vehicles. The hotline is a service provided by

the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration of DOT. Callers can report safety defects in vehicles that could lead to the recall of those vehicles, as well as

obtain information about child safety seats, air bags, and recalls. The toll free number for the hotline is 1-888-DASH-2-DOT or 1-888-327-4236.

How's our customer service?

Survey Says: Good job!

By Allison Wollam
DPS PIO Intern

Customers are very happy with the service they have received from various departments at the Texas Department of Public Safety, according to a recent customer satisfaction assessment survey.

"I think that the surveys that were returned to us reflected very positively on two of the big three in our motto: courtesy and service," Col. Dudley M. Thomas, director of the DPS, said.

Customer service surveys are a requirement of the Texas legislature or the state auditor.

"Customer satisfaction surveys let us know how we are meeting the needs of our customers, and I think they are great idea," Col. Thomas said.

The survey was developed to measure five areas of customer satisfaction with the agency. Customers answered questions about their overall satisfaction with the agency, how the customer's experience with the DPS compared with other state agencies, their specific opinion of the service and courtesy they received and their perception of adequate agency staffing in their local area.

The survey respondents were driver license customers, concealed handgun license customers, record information customers and Training Academy customers.

Although most of the responses were positive, one customer suggested that the agency have evening and Saturday hours. Another respondent added that it takes too long to get driving records and there should be a way to receive them via fax.

"Generally people who want to gripe return surveys; however, in our survey, we found that the majority of the people had very pos-

itive comments about our agency," Col. Thomas said.

According to the survey — using a rating system of five being very satisfactory and one being unsatisfactory in the areas of overall satisfaction, comparison with other agencies and adequate department staffing in local areas — customer satisfaction with the overall agency rated 4.3.

Using a rating system with the score of four being excellent and one being poor in the areas of courtesy and service, overall customer satisfaction with the agency rated a three.

"It is impressive to know that a large number of our employees who daily represent our department do so in such a positive manner," Col. Thomas said.

Of the 26,000 surveys mailed, 2,036 were completed and returned within a three-week period.

"The image of the agency is really created by individual contacts with the public, and if a citizen has a positive and friendly contact, then they will view the agency as positive and friendly," Col. Thomas said.

Many of the respondents took time to add extra comments, such as, "DPS took care of an 11-year problem with Florida over a ticket for me. They are the best."

One respondent added, "I received the most customer friendly service I have ever received from any government agency."

The data collected in the survey will be used to improve areas of concern noted in the survey. Department employees and offices that received positive comments from customers will be notified of their good work.

Takin' a tour of the DPS!

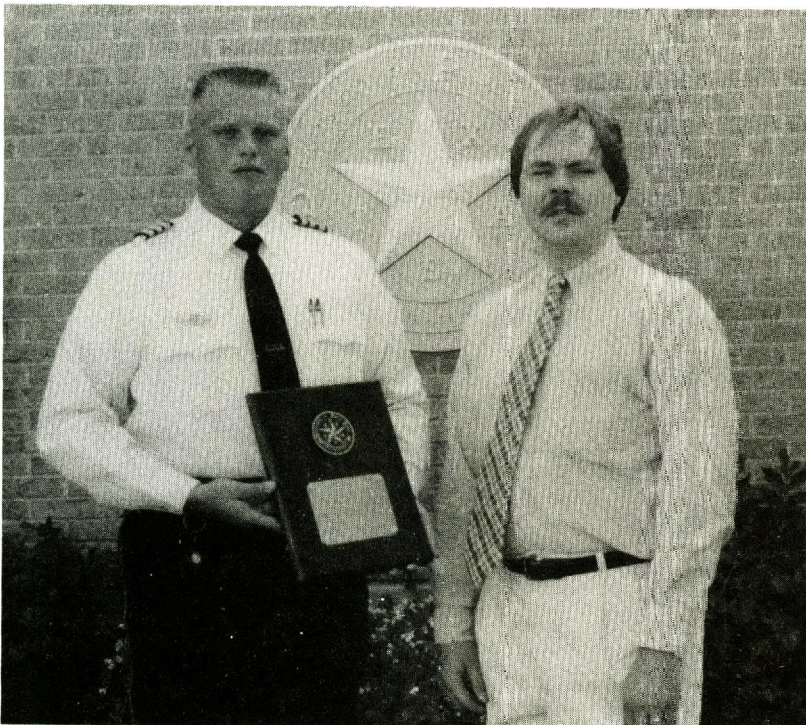
A note to all retirees...Do you live in the Austin area? Do you have several hours free during the week? The Public Information Office is looking for some extra people to help give tours of the agency. What better way to stay in touch with things at headquarters than to come volunteer your time and expertise?

Good Job!

Sgt. Sam Culpepper and Sgt. Hilan Priddy (both of the Training Academy in Austin) are now Internationally Certified Emergency Vehicle Operations Course Instructors. They are the only internationally certified instructors at DPS. They were certified by the Association of Professional Law Enforcement Emergency Vehicle Response Trainers.



Tr. IV Robert White, SES Garland, tests the fit of a bicycle helmet on a young Terrell girl during a "Bicycle Rodeo" this summer. (Photo by Michael Gresham, Terrell Tribune)



Michael Harper, left, stands with Mark Vangee. Harper received a Director's Citation on this summer after pulling Vangee out of his burning vehicle - just moments before the vehicle was totally engulfed in flames. Vangee was semi-conscious from a head-on collision when Harper and another man pulled him from the vehicle on the Dallas North Tollway. The two men had never met - until the award ceremony.

Safety Belts...Do It Everyday

By Beth Warren
Occupant Safety Coordinator

Do you wear your safety belt every time you ride in a vehicle? Are your children placed in age/size appropriate child restraints? If you cannot answer yes to both of these questions, you are not only breaking the law, but also putting you and your children in a no-win situation.

In 1997, 1432 people who were not restrained were killed in crashes across Texas. Thirty-seven of these were children under the age of four. By law, all children under the age of two are to be secured in an approved child safety seat according to the manufacturer's instruction. Children ages two to four must be in an approved safety seat or secured by a safety belt.

Until all drivers begin to use safety belts and child restraints every time they are in a vehicle, family members and friends will continue to be killed. Are we ready to take the responsibility for our child's death or permanent disability just because we are in a hurry or only going a short distance? What about the burdens placed on our families if we are killed or kill another person? Have we thought about how our own actions affect not only ourselves, but also everyone else riding in our vehicles?

Studies have shown that when the adults are wearing their safety belts, most of the time the children in the vehicle also are properly restrained. When the adults are not buckled up, rarely are the children.

The unbuckled person in a vehicle is an unsecured object, ready to be ejected out of the window or door in the event of a crash. Last year, 692 adults and children were ejected from their vehicles

during crashes.

Children are great imitators. If we wear our safety belts, chances are they will wear theirs. We must teach them that we value their lives, and that they will be buckled up anytime they are in a vehicle.

Last year, a national initiative was launched to raise the safety belt usage rate to 85 percent nationwide by the year 2000 and to 90 percent by 2005. Currently, the safety belt usage rate in Texas is 77 percent. If the compliance rate can be raised by 15 percent, 398 Texans would be saved each year.

What can the public do to reach this goal?

- Build strong habits. Wear your safety belt every time you are in a vehicle.
- Buckle your children into an age/size appropriate car seat or safety belt.
- Instruct anyone whom your children ride with to always use the correct restraints.
- Ensure that everyone who rides with you wears their safety belt.
- Talk to schools and day care centers about emphasizing correct usage of restraints.

Remember, "Wearing your seat belt won't keep you out of a crash, but it'll probably keep you out of your windshield."

Mystery photo:



Who are these men? What are they doing? What year is this happening? Are the men at Camp Mabry in an accident reconstruction class? (Their attire seems a bit, well, casual for an actual accident investigation. Love the hats!) If you have any answers to our questions, please contact the Public Information Office.



Previous mystery photo solved

Last issue's mystery photo showed a man standing next to a car, explaining something—what, we didn't know. Tom Ball, who said that his father was a Motor Vehicle Inspection Trooper from 1950 to 1976, said the photo was taken on an April 15, which used to be the annual State Inspection deadline. "Each year, the cars would line up for blocks." The photo looks like it was from 1955 or 1956, Ball said. Another respondent said the photo may have been taken near Auditorium Shores in Austin.

Looking in the Rearview Mirror

Snippets from Vol. 1, No. 2 (March 1932), of Highway Patrol, a newsletter edited by Mrs. L.G. Phares. The newsletter's motto was "Published Monthly in the Interest of the Highway Motor Patrol."

Forced Landings

...Lt. W.D. Roberts had his first forced landing recently while he and Patrolman Canady were going to Waco. The visibility was poor, and it was raining, the flying conditions were good, especially as they were on one of those curved tarvated roads with a high crown. It was reported that he went this way and that way several times before his machine turned clear around and started backing up with him. Then he decided to use his parachute but as it failed him, he made a one point landing, flat on his back. And was he upset? No, there were no injuries, except to his pride and his nice new breeches. Ask him to give you a demonstration as to how a graceful landing should be made.

...Sam Estes and R.L. Badgett were severely bruised and scratched recently on the San Antonio Highway at Williamson Creek when their motorcycle and sidecar were overturned while chasing a speeding car without lights. It is fortunate that neither was more seriously hurt because Badgett is recovering from a badly broken arm, and a new break would have been rather serious for him. The accident occurred after midnight, at two o'clock when most people are securing a good night's sleep, but our boys work at all such hours.

...Highway Patrol Arrests Win Nickel Cigar for a Reporter.

When a Highway Patrolman at Fentress, Caldwell County, recently filed eleven charges against motorists for failure to have proper lights on trucks and cars, he unwittingly helped cause a newspaper correspondent to lose a five-cent cigar to a proxy for a state official. The official said he couldn't wager, but named another correspondent to call the challenge that there hadn't been five arrests by patrolmen in a month in enforcing the headlight law.

...A Leak in the Radiator

A tourist was enjoying the wonders of the lower Rio Grande Valley as pointed out by Patrolman Hill Foreman.

"What a beautiful grapefruit!" the tourist said as they passed through a grove of citrus trees.

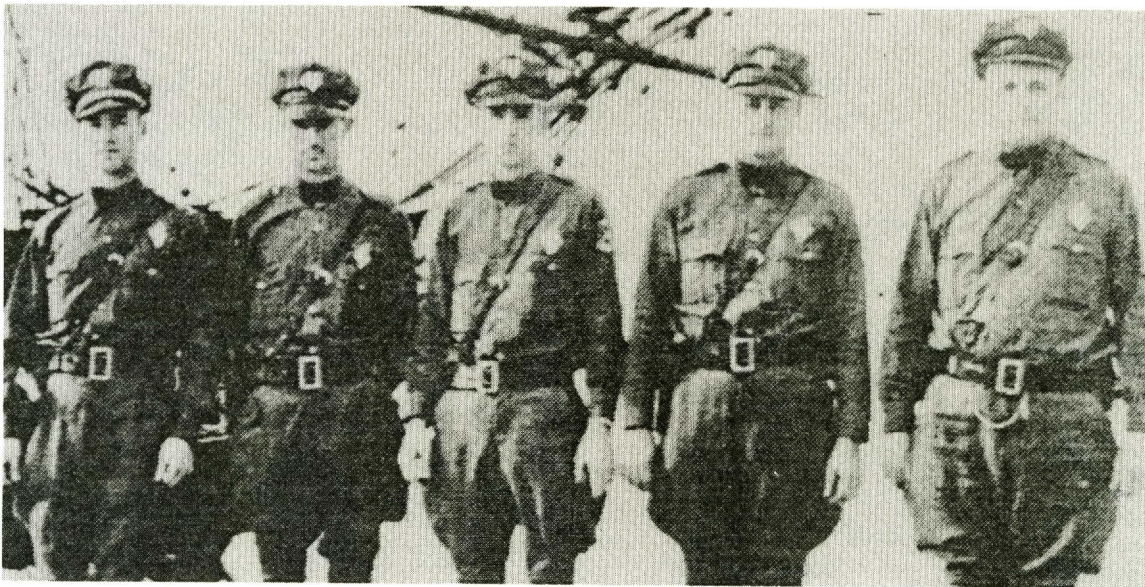
"Oh, those lemons are a bit small, owing to a comparatively bad season," said Patrolman Foreman.

"And what are those enormous blossoms?" asked the tourist.

"Just a patch of dandelions," said Patrolman Foreman.

Presently they reached the Rio Grande.

"Ah," said the tourist, grasping the idea, "somebody's radiator has evidently been leaking."



Mike Creech, DPS Aircraft Corpus Christi, sent in this photo of five Texas Highway Patrol troopers who were called in to assist with large crowds who had gone to Corpus Christi when the famous ship "Old Ironsides" visited the town in 1932. (Left to right: Lee Miller, W.T. Conwell, J.C. Anthony, R.B. Miller and Pat Nulty.)

Texas Department of Public Safety
Public Information Office
P.O. Box 4087
Austin, TX 78773-0001

BULK RATE
U.S. APOSTAGE
PAID
AUSTIN, TX.
PERMIT NO.
1265