

Big Thicket

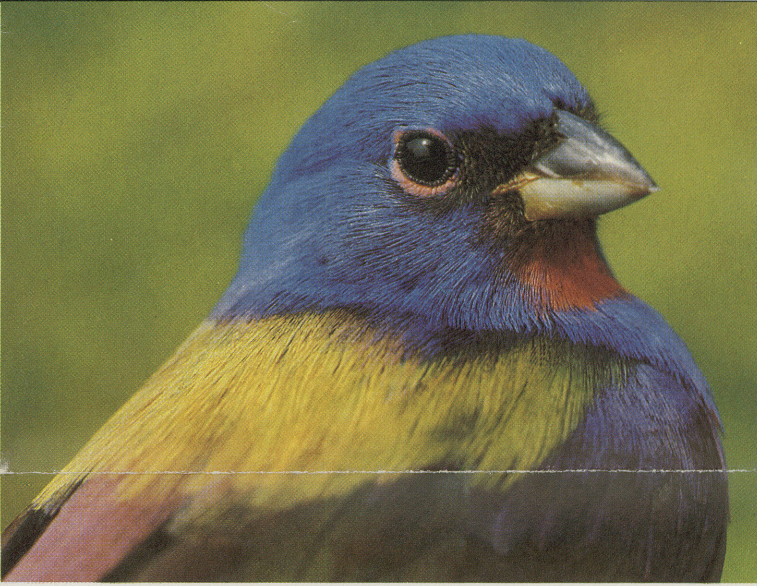
Official Map and Guide



Green tree frog



Roadrunner



Painted bunting



Flowering dogwood

Unusual Combinations of the Ordinary

People have called the Big Thicket an American ark and the biological crossroads of North America. The preserve was established to protect the remnant of its complex biological diversity. What is extraordinary is not the rarity or abundance of its life forms, but how many species coexist here. Once vast, this combination of virgin pine and cypress forest, hardwood forest, meadow, and blackwater swamp is but a remnant. With such varied habitats, "Big Thicket" is a misnomer, but it seems appropriate. An exhausted settler wrote in 1835: "This day passed through the thickest woods I ever saw. It . . . surpasses any country for brush."

Major North American biological influences bump up against each other here: southeastern swamps, Appalachians, eastern forests, central plains, and southwest deserts. Bogs sit near arid sandhills. Eastern bluebirds nest near road-runners. There are 85 tree species, more than 60 shrubs, and nearly 1,000 other flowering plants, including 26 ferns and allies, 20 orchids, and four of North America's five types of insect-eating plants. Nearly 300 kinds of birds live here or migrate through. Fifty reptile species include a small, rarely seen population of alligators. Amphibious frogs and toads abound.

Although Alabama-Coushatta Indians hunted the Big Thicket, they did not generally penetrate its deepest reaches, and the area was

settled by whites relatively late. In the 1850s economic exploitation began with the cutting of pine and cypress. Sawmills followed, using railroads to move out large volumes of wood. Ancient forests were felled and replanted with non-native slash pine. Oil strikes around 1900 brought further forest encroachment. Nearby rice farmers flooded some forests; others were cleared for housing developments.

Designation of Big Thicket as a national preserve created a new management concept for the National Park Service. Preserve status prevents further timber harvesting but allows oil and gas exploration, hunting, and trapping to continue. Only low-impact visitor facilities will be built. The preserve is composed of 12 units comprising 86,000 acres. It was designated an international Biosphere Reserve by the United Nations in 1981. The protected area will provide a standard for measuring human impact on the environment. Four major Big Thicket plant associations are illustrated at right.

- 1. Floodplain forest, baygall, and cypress slough
- 2. Flatlands palmetto hardwood
- 3. Savannah
- 4. Mixed hardwood/pine forest



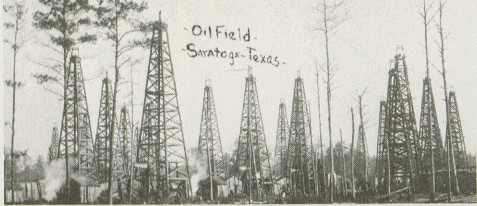
Big Thicket Legacies

As rich as its natural history is the Thicket's cultural history. Caddo Indians from the north and Atakapas to the south knew it as the Big Woods. Much later, Alabama and Coushatta Indians, pushed westward, found shelter here before they finally relocated to a reservation (see map). Early Spanish settlers avoided this "impenetrable woods," as did early Anglo-Americans who named it the Big Thicket before the 1820s, when farms appeared around its perimeter. Pioneers from Appalachia began to settle here in search of new land, and theirs is the Big Thicket legacy.

During the Civil War many Big Thicket citizens went deeper into the woods to avoid conscription. Lumbering, begun on a small scale in the 1850s, geared up when a narrow-gauge railroad was built in 1876. The original forest was doomed. The Big Thicket, which once spread over 3.5 million acres, is now less than 300,000 acres, with some 84,550 acres authorized for protection in the Preserve. The Big Thicket lifestyle is passing, but its flavor persists in legends and lore.



A pre-Civil War log house



Early oil field days



Martha Sultana Jacobsen



Lance Rosier

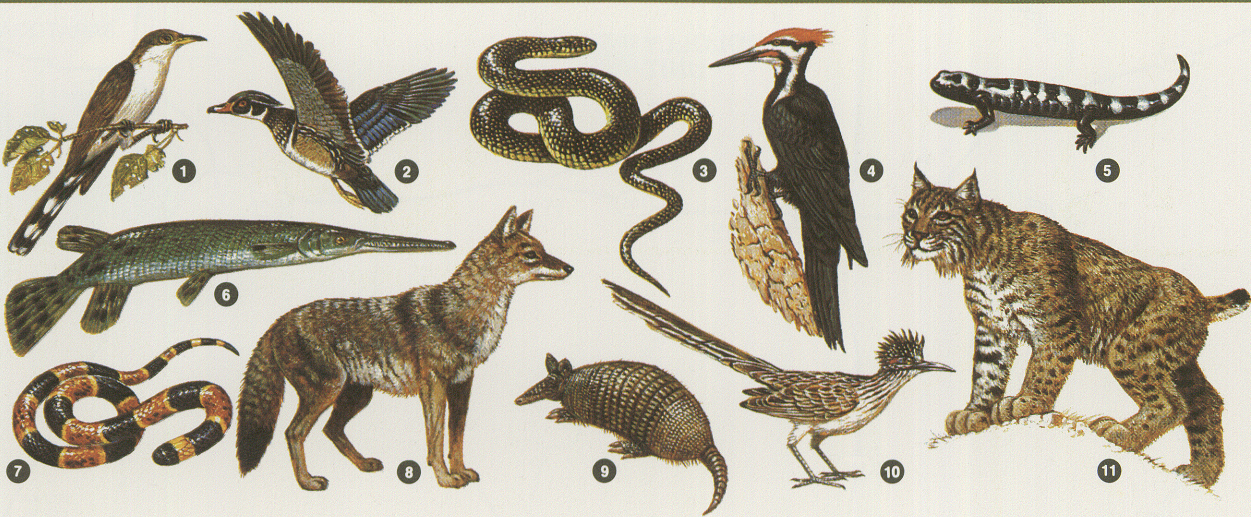


Brunce Jordan logging

An American Ark

The Big Thicket is not teeming with wildlife, but it boasts an incredible diversity of species. Many are most active at night. Ask at an Information Station (see map) for plant and animal species lists.

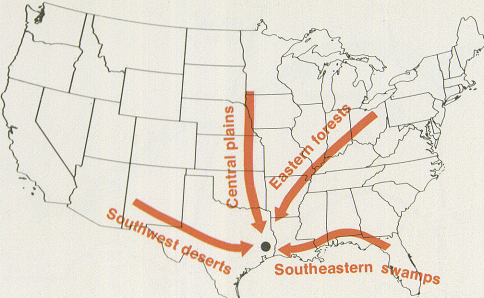
Illustrated at right are: 1, yellow-billed cuckoo, 2, wood duck, 3, speckled king snake, 4, pileated woodpecker, 5, marbled salamander, 6, gar fish, 7, coral snake, 8, coyote, 9, armadillo, 10, roadrunner, and 11, bobcat.



Ecotone, The Edge Effect

You can find plants and/or animals characteristic of many regions living together in the Big Thicket. Much of this "biological crossroads" phenomenon can be attributed to the Ice Age. Continental glaciers far to the north pushed many species southward. Conditions were sufficiently varied that when the

glaciers retreated, many species converged living here. A change in elevation of just a meter (a few feet) can produce a dramatic change in vegetation. Where habitats meet—called ecotones—life forms are most varied. The Big Thicket has such ecotones in abundance.



Plants that Eat Insects



Four of the five kinds of carnivorous plants found in the United States grow here: 1, pitcher plant, 2, bladderwort, 3, butter-



wort, and 4, sundew. (The Venus fly trap does not.) Most commonly seen are the pitcher plant and the sundew. The sun-



dew's sticky globules, looking like dew drops, attract and hold insects the plant then digests.

Visiting the Preserve

Big Thicket National Preserve was established by Congress in 1974. It is managed by the National Park Service. For information write or call the Superintendent, Big Thicket National Preserve, 3705 Millam, Beaumont, TX 77701, (409) 839-2689. For program information and reservations, call (409) 246-2337.

There are no accommodations in the Preserve. Food and lodging are available in nearby communities—Woodville, Kountze, and Silsbee—and in Beaumont. Grocery stores dot roadways and smaller towns.

Weather. Rain, heat, and humidity are parts of the Big Thicket experience. It usually rains every month of the year,

with 55 inches the yearly average. Summer daytime temperatures from the mid-80s to the mid-90s°F produce, with the rain, a humid climate. Winter daytime temperatures average in the mid-50s, with many overcast days to be expected.

Protect Yourself. Follow these tips to help make your trip safe: Register at the trailhead and stay on the trail. Detour around snakes because some are poisonous. Do not kill any snake; they are protected as part of the natural scene. Use insect repellent and avoid disturbing bee, wasp, or fire ant nests. Carry drinking water and do not drink from any creeks or ponds.

Protect the Preserve. Rules are designed to protect the natural re-

sources. Please obey them. All plants and animals are protected. Do not collect any specimens. Pack out whatever you pack in and do not litter. Fires, vehicles, and pets are not allowed in the backcountry. Horses and all-terrain bicycles are allowed only on the Big Sandy Horse Trail.

What is There to See and Do?

The Preserve information station is located in the southernmost portion of the Turkey Creek Unit (see map). It is open daily, except Christmas Day, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Here maps, literature, and program information can be obtained.

Turkey Creek Unit. This area displays great plant diversity. A trail leads 15 miles north-south. On the northeast a disabled-access boardwalk explores the carnivorous pitcher plant area. Kirby Nature Trail introduces many plants and explores Village Creek's floodplain.

Beech Creek Unit. A mid-1970s epidemic of southern pine beetles decimated loblolly pines here. How natural populations change because of this will be interesting

to watch. Take the one-mile loop trail here.

Hickory Creek Savannah Unit. Dry sandy uplands and wetter lowlands result in diverse flowers and grasses. Longleaf pine forest and wetlands mix here. Exposed to natural wildfires, this community will be largely a glade-like park. Without fire, dense shrubs will invade these grasslands. Take the one-mile loop trail through the unit's eastern part. The disabled-access boardwalk is 0.5 miles long.

Big Sandy Creek Unit. A sloping forest of beech, magnolia, and loblolly pine descends into dense stands of hardwoods in the Big Sandy Creek floodplain. Take the 5.4-mile loop trail and follow the sloping forest to the

creek. A second loop trail 1.5 miles long winds around a series of ponds formed by old beaver dams. This unit offers the only horse riding trail, 18 miles round trip, in the Preserve.

Nature Study. Look, listen, and enjoy. With its great diversity of plant and animal life the Preserve is the ideal outdoor laboratory for nature study. All you need do is observe. Birding is a favorite activity, especially during spring and fall. From late March to early May hundreds of bird species pass through on their way to northern nesting grounds. Fall migrations occur in October and November.

Naturalist Activities. All programs are by reservation only. Individuals

and groups can call (409) 246-2337 for information and reservations. Programs include guided hikes, talks, and guided boat tours and canoe trips.

Photography. Many Big Thicket photo subjects will be found in deep shade, such as the hundreds of colorful flowers, fungi, and insects. You will want a tripod and films rated to give your camera maximum depth of field.

Trail Hiking. There are hiking and nature trails in four Preserve units. There are no trails in the river corridors. Permits are not required for hiking but please register at the trailheads. Stay on the trails; it is easy to become lost. Be prepared for rain and wet trails. If you find a submerged

trail while streams are flooded, do not try to follow it; you could step into a deep waterhole. Pets and vehicles are not permitted on any trails. Horses and all-terrain bicycles are permitted only on the Big Sandy Horse Trail. No motorized vehicles are permitted on Preserve trails.

Boating and Canoeing. Small watercraft may be launched at locations along the Neches River, Pine Island Bayou, and along Village and Turkey creeks. Choose your waters: broad alluvial river, sluggish bayou, or free-flowing creeks. Water access points have not been developed on the creeks, but you can launch at most road crossings. Some boat ramps located on private property charge a launch fee.

Fishing. Fishing is allowed in all waters. A Texas fishing license is required and state laws apply. Ask at the information station about types of fish and fishing conditions to expect.

Camping. Backcountry camping is allowed by permit in certain parts of the Preserve. There are no developed campgrounds. Several private and public campgrounds nearby offer tent and recreational vehicle sites. Call the Preserve for permit information.

Picnicking. There are picnic sites in many of the units. Refer to the map for locations. Some sites have barbecue grills; contained charcoal grills (hibachi-type) are also allowed. Open fires

and the collecting of wood are prohibited.

Swimming. In the Neches River swim in quiet areas, away from strong currents. The Lakeview Sandbar area in the Beaumont Unit is a popular swimming spot. In summer it is designated a no-wake zone for boaters. Never dive unless you are certain of the depth of the water, and that there are no underwater obstacles.

Hunting and Trapping. Hunting and trapping are allowed only in specific areas at certain dates and times. A permit from the superintendent is required. Please write or call Preserve Headquarters for details.

Using the Map

The map on the back shows the eight land units and four water corridors that comprise the Preserve. It also shows nearby attractions and the vicinity and connecting roads, so that you may coordinate it with state or regional highway maps.

The nonprofit Big Thicket Association operates a private museum at Saratoga. There you can learn about the Big Thicket's natural and cultural history, legends, and lore. For hours and tours write: P.O. Box 198, Saratoga, TX 77585, or call (409) 274-5000.

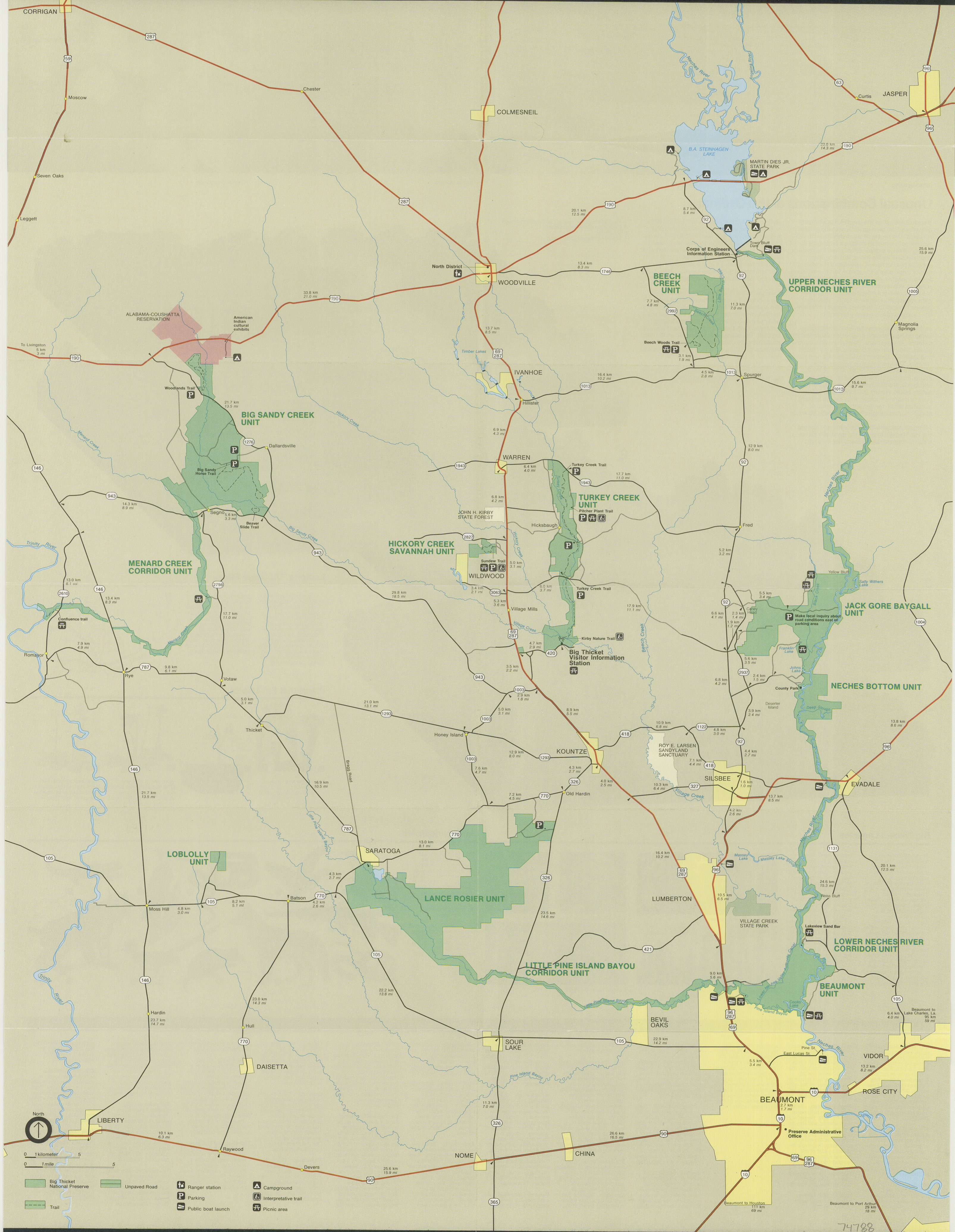
The Nature Conservancy, Inc., operates the Roy E. Larsen Sandland Sanctuary, which exemplifies the patches of arid sandland found in the thicket. Guided hikes can be

scheduled. Write: P.O. Box 909, Silsbee, TX 77656, or call (409) 385-0445.

Alabama-Coushatta Indian Reservation is open daily except in January and February. Craft demonstrations, cultural exhibitions, and tour rides are available seasonally. Campgrounds are open year-round. Call 1-800-444-3507 for information.

Tyler County Heritage Society operates the Heritage Village Museum in Woodville. The museum is a collection of buildings and artifacts depicting pioneer life in the Big Thicket. For hours and tours write: Heritage Village Museum, P.O. Box 888, Woodville, TX 75979, or call (409) 283-2272.

Big Thicket



The Permanent School Fund

The Permanent School Fund—one of Texas's most important and enduring legacies to future generations of Texans—is at risk of falling victim to the state's budget crisis.

Over the years, several attempts have been made to divert Permanent School Fund investment earnings earmarked for the state's Available School Fund. This would result in local taxpayers having to make up the difference in the form of higher property taxes to support their local public school districts. Placing our public school system in jeopardy would not embrace the initial intent of the Permanent School Fund.

This brochure explains the history and purpose of the Permanent School Fund, and why it is so important that the fund be preserved.

Permanent School Fund History

Perhaps the most important and far-reaching decision about education that the forefathers of Texas made occurred in 1854. That year, a new school law set aside as a Permanent School Fund \$2 million of the \$10 million in five-percent U.S. Indemnity Bonds received in the settlement of Texas' boundary claims against the United States. The purpose of this fund was to ensure adequate financing for Texas schools.

One hundred and thirty-eight years after its inception, the Permanent School Fund has become one of Texas' most enduring and important constitutional legacies to future generations of Texans. By providing a steady flow of dollars for public schools, the Fund has saved Texas taxpayers billions of dollars in local property taxes that otherwise would have been needed to support the state's public schools. Today, that \$2 million which our state's forefathers dedicated to education has grown to more than \$10 billion and is one of the best-managed funds in the United States.

Savings to Local Taxpayers

During the 1990-91 fiscal year alone, the income deposited into the Available School Fund saved Texas taxpayers over \$1 billion. Income generated from Permanent School Fund investments provided \$700.3 million, or \$227.69 per child, in state aid to public schools last year. That is more than double the \$102.72 per child the Fund provided during the 1981-82 school year, when the Fund provided \$270.6 million to local public school districts. During 1990-91, the Available School Fund paid for more than \$122 million worth of textbooks for the state's public schools, in addition to \$2.5 million in textbook and Agency administrative costs. This additional amount was made possible in part because more than \$400 million from motorboat and motor vehicle fuels taxes and more than \$1 million in outer continental shelf bonuses and royalty payments was deposited through the General Land Office (GLO) into the Available School Fund in 1990-91. After payment for textbooks, an additional \$292.9 million was distributed to school districts for a total of \$993.2 million or \$332.93 per child. That is why it is critical that these funds continue to be deposited into the Available School Fund instead of being diverted and used for other purposes. The longer the funds continue to flow into the Available School Fund, the greater the savings to local taxpayers.

From 1981 to 1991, the Permanent School Fund contributed a total of \$5.1 billion toward the education of millions of Texas school children. The next table shows how five Texas school districts benefited from distribution of the Available School Fund in 1990-91. (Based on \$332.93 per child.)

DISTRICT	ASF DISTRIBUTION	PROPERTY TAX SAVINGS PER \$100 VALUATION
Corpus Christi	\$12,466,462	23.58¢
El Paso	\$18,181,403	27.57¢
Lubbock	\$ 9,162,566	21.12¢
San Antonio	\$18,195,638	27.97¢
Wichita Falls	\$ 4,428,460	19.33¢

Bond Guarantee Program

Spending any part of the Permanent School Fund would have negative effects on local school districts and local property owners. A constitutional amendment approved in 1983 allows the principal and income of the Fund

to be used to guarantee locally-issued school bonds. This guarantee program is especially helpful to poor school districts which are unable to obtain favorable bond ratings to issue bonds at the lowest possible interest rates. Without this guarantee, backed by the Fund's assets, any school district which does not have an AAA rating on its own would have to pay additional financing charges when it borrows to build new facilities. These additional charges would be at a substantial extra cost to local taxpayers.

Between September 1, 1990 and February 19, 1991, the Fund guaranteed 30 issues totaling \$194 million. Another 50 issues totaling \$602 million also have been approved and are awaiting final guarantee. From 1983 to 1991, the Permanent School Fund guaranteed \$3 billion of Texas school bonds. A raid on the Fund would seriously jeopardize the bond guarantee program as it was envisioned and also would threaten the excellent credit rating of the Fund itself.

Raid Nearly Bankrupted Fund

The founding fathers of Texas made it clear that the principal of the Permanent School Fund was never to be touched. But in 1861, some of the Fund was used to purchase Confederate railroad bonds. Defaults on those bonds and the devaluation of Confederate currency nearly bankrupted the Fund.

In recent years, several proposals have been made to spend part of the Fund's principal. But to do so would result in the ultimate **destruction** of one of the most valuable state legacies. The Permanent School Fund's name implies the reason for its existence, it was designed to be a **permanent** trust fund whose principal must never be tapped. The preservation of the Fund is essential to the state's efforts to diversify and regain financial stability for the future. This can only be accomplished through a high quality education system, which in turn must be adequately financed.

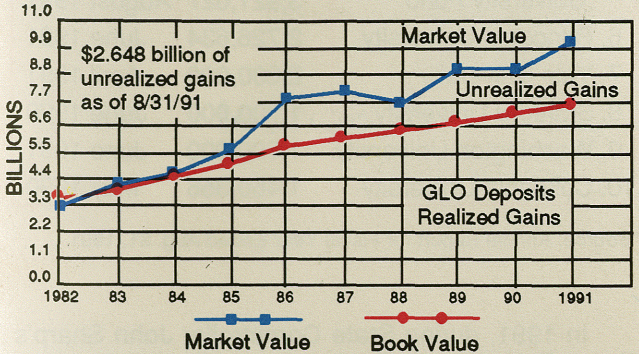
Top Performance

The Permanent School Fund has earned a reputation as one of the highest-performing trust funds in the nation. An analysis by Holbein Associates, Inc. places the Fund's performance in the top 5 percent of the 542 funds, in the Wilshire Cooperative Universe, posting a 15.8 percent annualized total rate of return for the last nine calendar

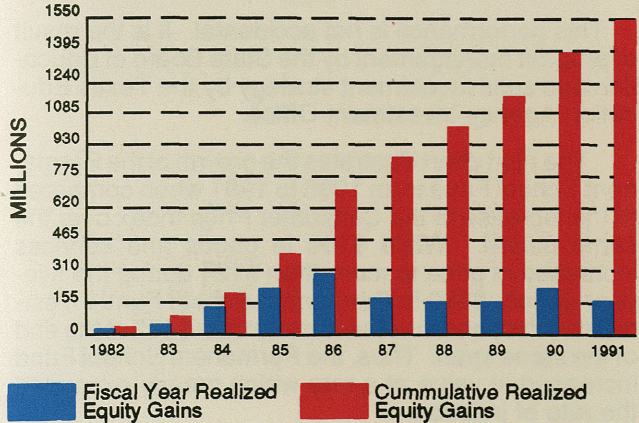
years. Yet another comparison by Evaluation Associates, Inc. reports that the Permanent School Fund's compounded annual return of 12.7 percent for the period of 1985 to 1990 was the highest return earned by 26 trust funds in their universe which have \$3 billion or more under management.

Under the current leadership of the Committee on the Permanent School Fund, the market value of the Fund has increased from \$7.995 billion to \$10.867 billion over the last three calendar years ending December 31, 1991. When income generated for the Available School Fund is included, the Fund's rate of return amounts to a 16.8 percent annualized total rate of return. The equity portion of the portfolio has recorded even better performance, registering a 21.6 percent annualized total rate of return for the same three-year period.

TEN YEAR GROWTH OF BOOK & MARKET VALUE



TEN YEAR HISTORY OF EQUITY GAINS



According to information compiled by Money Market Directories, Inc., a division of McGraw-Hill Company, the following are the ten largest endowment funds in the country as published in the 1992 directory.

	VALUATION (000)	DATE OF VALUATION
1. Texas Permanent School Fund	\$10,227,778	August 1991*
2. Howard Hughes Medical Institute	5,900,000	June 1991
3. New Mexico State Permanent Fund	4,931,436	June 1991
4. Harvard University	4,875,959	May 1991
5. Texas Permanent University Fund	3,921,627	August 1991*
6. Princeton University	2,726,634	June 1991
7. Yale University	2,600,000	April 1991
8. Stanford University	1,700,000	June 1990
9. Washington University	1,500,000	June 1991
10. Columbia University	1,460,356	May 1990

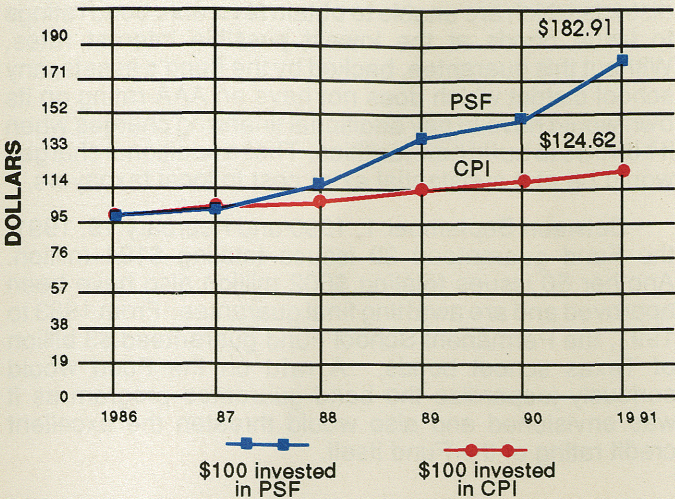
*Source: Annual Report for Fiscal Year Ended Aug. 31, 1991

In 1991, during State Comptroller John Sharp's Texas Performance Review (an audit of state agencies), the return earned by the Permanent School Fund was the highest of the state's major trust funds.

This performance is not accidental. It is the result of prudent management by the State Board of Education and solid investment strategy by the Texas Education Agency Investment Office.

The next chart illustrates the growth of the Permanent School Fund from 1986 to 1991 when compared to the increase in the Consumer Price Index over the same period. While \$100 in goods and services increased in price to more than \$124 during the five-year period, \$100 in Permanent School Fund investments increased in value to more than \$182 at the end of the same span. Thus, the Permanent School Fund increased in value at a rate which greatly exceeded the rate of inflation.

PERMANENT SCHOOL FUND VS. CONSUMER PRICE INDEX



Fund Must Be Preserved

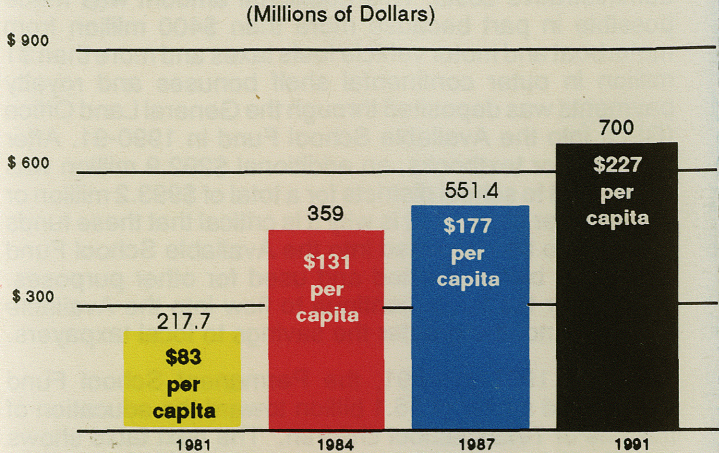
The key to enabling the Permanent School Fund to continue providing local schools with increasing levels of state dollars for education lies in keeping the Fund intact and not allowing any of the principal of the Fund to be expended.

There are only two ways the Fund can grow. One is through oil and gas revenues from public lands. The other is from the capital gains that are realized through investments. The fact that oil and gas revenues are derived from a finite and depletable resource underscores the importance of the income from capital gains from investments. This income can increase only if the principal of the Fund is maintained. If the principal were spent, income from the Available School Fund would decline significantly. And the less revenue provided by the Available School Fund, the more tax dollars are needed to finance public education.

Any expenditure of the principal of the Permanent School Fund would amount to a tax bill on future generations of Texans. Lost principal from the Fund would significantly hamper its potential for growth, and the lost income eventually would have to be replaced by tax dollars. Any part of the Permanent School Fund's principal which is spent would be lost forever. When the principal is preserved, it is able to grow indefinitely and offset larger and larger portions of the overall state costs of public education.

The State Board of Education remains firmly committed to protecting and preserving the Permanent School Fund so that it may continue to provide funding for the education of the state's school children. Under the guidance of the Board and the Texas Education Agency's Investment Office, the Permanent School Fund has grown into one of the state's most valued assets. With a record as one of the best managed funds in the nation, the Fund will continue to be an important source of public education funding.

INCOME PAID TO AVAILABLE SCHOOL FUND



Committee on the Permanent School Fund

Esteban Sosa, Chairman
Bob Aikin
Mary Helen Berlanga
Monte Hasie
W.L. Hudson
Geraldine Miller
Rene Nuñez

For more information on the Permanent School Fund or to order additional copies of this pamphlet, contact: The Division of Communications, Texas Education Agency, 1701 North Congress Avenue, Austin, Texas 78701-1494, 512/463-9000.

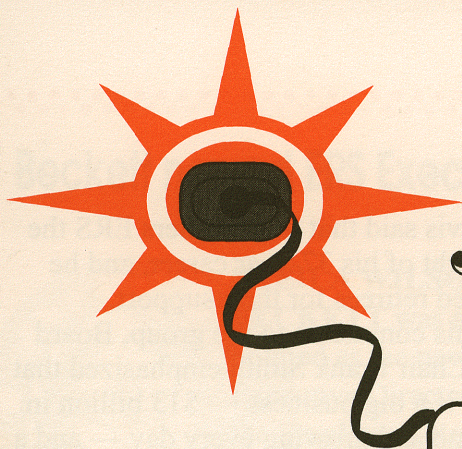
TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY
AUSTIN, TEXAS
GE2 55 04

SEPTEMBER 1992

Texas Permanent School Fund



Funding Our Children's Future



Your ERS Connection

A publication of the Employees Retirement System of Texas
discussing retiree benefits and other news.

VOLUME 3, NO. 1

FALL 1996

Travis, board members address RSEA

FORMER ERS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR Charles "Dicky" Travis told attendees at the annual meeting of the Retired State Employees Association (RSEA) that they should continue to monitor legislation and have an impact on employee benefit issues.

The annual meeting in Austin on August 23 also featured ERS Board Chair Janice Zitelman and Vice-Chair Frank Smith.

Speaking to the group only days before he was to retire, Travis reviewed recent accomplishments in retiree benefits and talked about the upcoming legislative session.

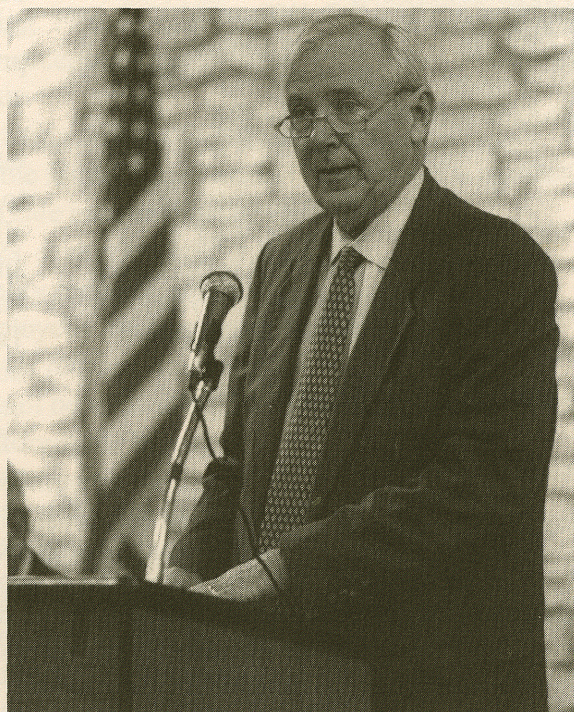
During his six years of ERS leadership, Travis oversaw the passage of three major bills concerning ERS. One of the highlights is the legislation which gave the authority for the bonus '13th' check which retirees have received twice during Travis' tenure. The most recent legislation provided for a 13th check to be given in 1997, but more importantly, it gave future autho-

rization to the ERS Board, allowing the Board to continue giving the 13th check whenever funds are available.

While last session's goal to increase the retirement formula multiplier to 2.25% on a permanent basis was not achieved, Travis said, the 12.5% ad hoc increase did equalize retiree annuities.

Travis also talked about the impact of rising medical costs on group insurance benefits. ERS was able to reduce premium rates for the 1996 plan year, but similar savings are not expected in the future. In fact, the continued increase in medical costs are forcing ERS to seek additional funds from the legislature this session for the insurance program.

"I believe that Texas has done a good job in combining cost



Former ERS Executive Director Charles "Dicky" Travis addresses retired state employees.

saving features with a quality insurance program," Travis said. "Texas compares favorably with every other state in terms of the coverage provided to retirees."

continued on Page 2

Travis, Board address RSEA

continued from Page 1

Travis said that he understood that having to pay Part B Medicare premiums is a concern for some retirees, while others object to the fact that Medicare becomes their primary carrier at age 65. Travis said that ERS would continue to look at this situation, but noted that ERS receives between \$175 to \$200 million in Medicare reimbursement each year.

1996/97 RSEA OFFICERS

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Robert McMullan

Secretary Barbara Kotrla

"These funds are crucial to the program. Without this subsidy, premiums would be higher for everybody in the program — especially retirees."

The 13th check which is provided to retirees generally covers the annual cost of the Part B premiums, Travis added. This bonus check from the retirement fund offsets the additional premium

costs for all but a few retirees.

Travis said he was pleased to report that the ERS fund is healthy and that ERS investments have done well. Most of the annuity payments are financed by investment income (*see investments story*) he explained, with only 20% of the monthly annuities coming from the 6% contributed from paychecks during active state employment.

He cautioned, however, that ERS will have to guard against trying to maximize investment income to meet the pressure of funding increases by making riskier investments. The current long-term investment strategy needs to be maintained in order to provide money for future retirees, as well as current retirees.

Travis said that he considers ERS the highlight of his 37-year career, and he thanked retirees for their support.

In his comments to the group, Board Vice-Chair Frank Smith emphasized that "ERS is a big business — \$13 billion in the fund and growing every day — and a huge responsibility" with 258,000 employees and 250,000 dependents in the insurance program.

"You are an important group, and your voice needs to be heard," Smith told the retirees, reminding them that they are the people who "elect members to the ERS Board or help influence those who appoint board members (ERS has three elected and three appointed board members)."

Board Chair Janice Zitelman said that the board must work to safeguard current benefits. Zitelman said she initially ran for the board because of her concerns about health insurance and that remains her interest today. She said that it was important for retirees to remain part of the group insurance plan instead of participating in a separate retiree insurance group.

"I think it would be a mistake to separate retirees from the rest of the group," Zitelman said. The group concept allows costs to be shared among a wide variety of participants. While retirees don't have a need for maternity coverage, they often do require costly prescription medicines — one of the fastest rising program costs. Spreading these expenses across a large group reduces the costs to participants.

Zitelman said that she would like ERS to focus on health insurance instead of diverting staff efforts towards additional optional coverages. Providing optional coverages consumes staff time and adds administrative expense, Zitelman said. She said that the board will look again at the issue of continuing the subsidy for surviving spouses, but noted that the legislature declined to fund this the last time it was presented because of its expense. ☀

Beckett named ERS Executive Director



SHEILA WILSON BECKETT was appointed as the new Executive Director of the Employees Retirement System of Texas (ERS) by a unanimous vote of the Board of Trustees Wednesday,

August 28, 1996. Beckett began her duties on September 16.

Beckett's selection follows an intensive search by the Board of Trustees to replace Charles 'Dicky' Travis who retired on August 30.

"We strongly believe that Sheila Beckett brings immense capabilities and experience to ERS," former board chair Milton Hixson said. "We are excited to have the opportunity to work with her in guiding ERS into the next century."

Beckett is experienced with state government and state budgets, having served Gov. Clements as the Director of the Office of Budget and Planning, and Lt. Gov. Bob Bullock as Budget Director. She also served as the senior advisor to the lieutenant governor on employee benefit issues.

Beckett began her career in state government in the 1970s as a research assistant to a special state committee formed by Gov. Dolph Briscoe to study public employee benefits. From that start, her state career has included work at the:

- Texas House of Representatives;
- Senior Budget Examiner at the Legislative Budget Board;
- Manager of the Spending Analysis Section at the Office of State Comptroller of Public Accounts; and

- Special Assistant to the Director of the Texas Legislative Council.

Beckett holds a Masters of Public Affairs degree from the University of Texas, Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from Texas A&M University.

Travis retired after 37 years of state service, six with the ERS. He said that he had enjoyed his state government career and was proud of his association with ERS. He plans to do governmental relations consulting. Hixson said that the board reluctantly accepted Travis' retirement resignation.

Since his association with ERS, Travis has been responsible for the implementation of a managed care insurance program for state employees, saving the state money and offering a quality program with stable premiums for employees. He supported annuity increases for retirees, including the 1991 recalculation of benefits using the current 2% benefit formula. In August 1995, he was recognized by the Texas Public Employees Association as the Outstanding State Administrator for 1995. TPEA renamed the award in his honor.

Travis began his state career in Gov. Price Daniel's Budget Office and remained a part of the Budget Office under Governors John Connally, Preston Smith, and Dolph Briscoe. He served as budget director under Governors Smith and Briscoe and also served as Gov. Briscoe's Chief of Staff.

Prior to coming to ERS, Travis served as executive director of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. He served in that capacity from 1979 to 1990, longer than any other individual.

New Board Member

Texas Gov. George Bush appointed Carolyn Gallagher to replace J. Michael Weiss on the ERS Board. Her term, which requires Senate confirmation, will run through August 31, 2000.

Gallagher is president of Texwood Furniture Corporation, a manufacturer of wood casework and furniture for schools in the U.S. located in Austin. She is a graduate of Duke University and earned a master's in business administration at the Harvard Business School. Prior to buying Texwood, Gallagher worked in mergers and acquisitions at The Coca-Cola Company in Atlanta and served as President of Houston Trailer. She is a trustee for St. Edward's University in

Benefits Briefs

13th Check

- Retirees and surviving beneficiaries whose ERS retirements started before September 1, 1996 will receive a *13th check* in January 1997. The Texas Legislature directed the ERS to make the popular supplemental payment during the current fiscal year which runs from September 1, 1996 through August 31, 1997. The ERS Board of Trustees will meet in December to accept actuarial certification.

If your ERS retirement benefit was effective on August 31, 1996, or earlier, you are eligible for the *13th check*. Your payment will equal 10% of one month's annuity for each fiscal year, beginning with the fiscal year in which your benefit became effective and ending with Fiscal Year 1996, which ended on August 31, 1996. Supplemental payments can not exceed 350% of a monthly annuity. Persons whose retirement benefit became effective after August 31, 1996 are not eligible for this payment.

Example: If your retirement benefit became effective on August 31, 1996, you will receive a check equal to 10% of your current monthly annuity payment. If your current annuity is \$1,600, your supplemental check will equal 10% of \$1,600, which is \$160.

Use the table below to find the fiscal year in which your retirement benefit first became effective. The percentage you will receive is indicated to the right.

Two previous supplemental payments were sent in fiscal years 1994 and 1995. If you are eligible, you should receive your supplemental payment no later than January 25, 1997.

Board Election

- Retirees will have an opportunity to vote in a 1997 election to fill a seat on the Employees Retirement System of Texas (ERS) Board of Trustees.

A ballot and newsletter listing candidates with their personal qualification statements will be mailed to each retiree on January 6, 1997, by NCS (National Computer Systems, Inc.) of Edina, Minnesota, which serves as administrator for the trustee election.

The board term of Pamela A. Carley will expire on August 31, 1997. That position is one of three elected seats filled by votes from ERS members and retired state employees. The other three board seats are filled by appointment from state officials, one each by the Governor, the Speaker of the House, and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

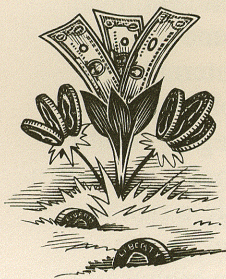
Surviving spouses of deceased employees or retirees and other beneficiaries who are receiving an annuity are not eligible to vote in this election.

Call for Volunteer Tales

- In a future issue of *Your ERS Connection*, we will have a Special Report on Retiree Volunteering. If you have any personal experiences which you would like to share, either as a volunteer or as a recipient of a volunteer project, please call us at 512-867-3317 or 800-252-3645, extension 317. You can also e-mail us at m504@ers.texas.gov, or write the Benefits Communication Division of the ERS.

FY of Retirement	% Amt.	FY	% Amt.	FY	% Amt.
9/95-8/96	10%	9/83-8/84	130%	9/71-8/72	250%
9/94-8/95	20%	9/82-8/83	140%	9/70-8/71	260%
9/93-8/94	30%	9/81-8/82	150%	9/69-8/70	270%
9/92-8/93	40%	9/80-8/81	160%	9/68-8/69	280%
9/91-8/92	50%	9/79-8/80	170%	9/67-8/68	290%
9/90-8/91	60%	9/78-8/79	180%	9/66-8/67	300%
9/89-8/90	70%	9/77-8/78	190%	9/65-8/66	310%
9/88-8/89	80%	9/76-9/77	200%	9/64-8/65	320%
9/87-8/88	90%	8/75-8/76	210%	9/63-8/64	330%
9/86-8/87	100%	9/74-8/75	220%	9/62-8/63	340%
9/85-8/86	110%	9/73-8/74	230%	9/61-8/62	350%
9/84-8/85	120%	9/72-8/73	240%	Before 9/61	350%

Investment growth key to ERS benefits



It would be appropriate to call the Investments Division the growth gardener for the Employees Retirement System of Texas (ERS).

Tending the ERS financial garden is an essential function because money earned from investments pays for 60% of a retiree's monthly annuity check, with the remaining 40% coming equally from the monthly contributions made by an employee and by the State of Texas.

Each month state employees contribute 6% of their salary to the retirement fund and their employer, the State of Texas, currently matches with 6%. Under state constitutional law, the state can contribute no less than 6% or no more than 10%. This money is held in trust and invested by the ERS. Investment income is used to administer benefit programs operated by the ERS and to supplement funding of retirement benefits.

Nancy Goerdel, ERS Deputy Director for Investments since 1987, explained that ERS investment strategy and policy have changed dramatically since she joined ERS in 1978 when the investment fund was worth about \$1 billion. Some 18 years later, she noted, the fund is worth about \$12.5 billion and its management is more complicated and sophisticated.

Prior to joining ERS, she earned a degree in math from Stephen F. Austin University, began a career in banking and then became corporate treasurer for a 60-store national clothing chain.

FUND MANAGEMENT

Because the level of oversight in managing the fund's several portfolios is more in depth now, the expanded staff (from 4 in 1978 to 20 in 1996) is utilized fully to provide specialized and sophisticated investment expertise. Also, ERS started investing in the international market in 1992. Managing this multi-billion dollar fund are 14 investment professionals, most with advanced degrees, led by Chief Investment Officer Russ Niemie. They are supported by six administrative and operational employees.

Niemie joined ERS in 1992 to develop and prepare the professional staff for the increasing complexity of the investment program. He earned an M.B.A. degree from the University of Texas at Austin and a B.B.A. degree from Arizona State University. Before ERS, he was vice president of investment banking for Alex Sheshunoff & Co., responsible for merger and acquisition services nationwide.

The ultimate responsibility for the ERS investment strategy lies with the Board of Trustees, which has the fiduciary responsibility for administering the fund.

INVESTMENT STRATEGY

The ultimate responsibility for the ERS investment strategy lies with the Board of Trustees, which has the fiduciary responsibility for administering the fund. To assist in its policy decisions, the board retains an investment consultant, and, to supplement ERS investment staff expertise, investment advisory firms are employed and assigned to specific portfolios.

Goerdel and her staff follow the broad directives of the board, reporting to the

continued on Page 6

Investment growth key to ERS benefits

continued from Page 5

board and the ERS Investment Advisory Committee on a monthly basis with a summary of portfolio holdings and transactions. On a quarterly basis, the ERS staff informs the board of the fund's performance results. Once a year, representatives from the investment consulting firm come before the board to present performance reviews.

'PRUDENT PERSON' RULE

The board operates under the "Prudent Person" rule set forth in the Texas Constitution and strives to obtain the optimum return on ERS investments. The primary goal is to earn an absolute return on the

total investments that will ensure the payments due to all retirees and their beneficiaries at a reasonable cost to ERS members and taxpayers.

One of the most important changes in the ERS investment strategy since Goerdel assumed her duties concerns the investment mix, which is determined on an annual basis by the board. This mix has changed substantially since 1978, Goerdel noted, explaining that when she started it was an

80-20 mix — 80% in fixed income investments, which are relatively safe, and 20% in equities (stocks), which carry more of a risk for loss.

Last year, the board's investment mix for ERS was 36% domestic equities, 54% domestic fixed income (each category $\pm 4\%$) and 10% international equities ($\pm 2\%$). Rates of return vary within each different category. Historically, the fixed income long-term return has been lower but with less risk involved, while equity investment is usually greater but with a higher risk.

Goerdel emphasized that the ERS investment philosophy is long-term by nature, with the goal to guarantee that funds are here to pay benefits "down the road." The board's asset allocation is done scientifically, she noted, explaining that the board uses information from its investment consultant to determine what each market is expected to generate over five years while factoring in the volatility of each market. "And, then the board decides on a mix that is expected to give them a certain level of return at a reasonable level of risk — it's not an easy job and it is done with much care," she said.

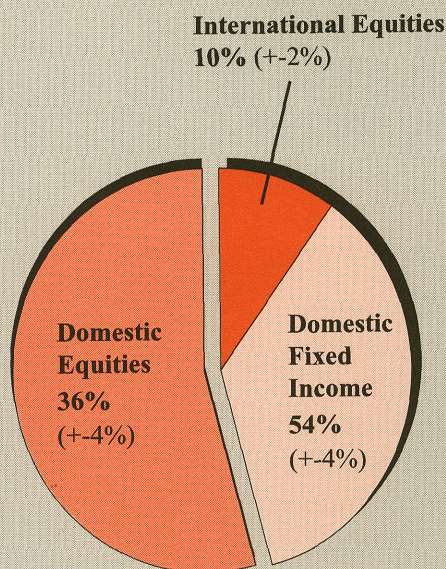
INVESTMENT RETURNS

ERS has achieved solid investment returns with its strategy. For example, during the fiscal year ended August 31, 1995, ERS investments earned a combined 13.40%. For the fiscal year that ended August 31, 1996, the overall return was 9.69%. (ERS returns and other financial information is provided to each member in a financial statement distributed at the end of each fiscal year.)

In accordance with its goal, the board has diversified its investment mix even more within the three primary categories.

In domestic equities, there are three management styles — value, growth, and core. Sixty percent of the domestic equity allocation is within the core management style, which is reflective of the market with basic characteristics similar to the Standard and Poor's 500.

ERS Investment Mix Policy



Source:
Employees Retirement System of Texas/9-96

There are two different portfolios within this investment category. The ERS staff implements the core management style.

INVESTMENT MIX

The remaining 40% of the domestic equity allocation is divided between the value management style (24%), which buys stocks that are currently depressed in price but of good quality and likely to increase in price, and the growth management style (16%), which buys stock in companies that consultants believe have above-average growth potential. Separate advisors — INVESCO for the value portfolio and Montag & Caldwell for the growth portfolio — recommend to the ERS what to buy and sell.

Duff & Phelps is the advisor for the fixed income bond portfolio and offers "big picture" portfolio advice to the ERS staff.

The international portfolio is confined to stocks from Europe/Australia/Far East (EAFE) and is handled by the ERS staff, with the assistance of the Morgan Stanley Asset Management Co. on one-half of the portfolio regarding the decision as to how much to invest in each country.

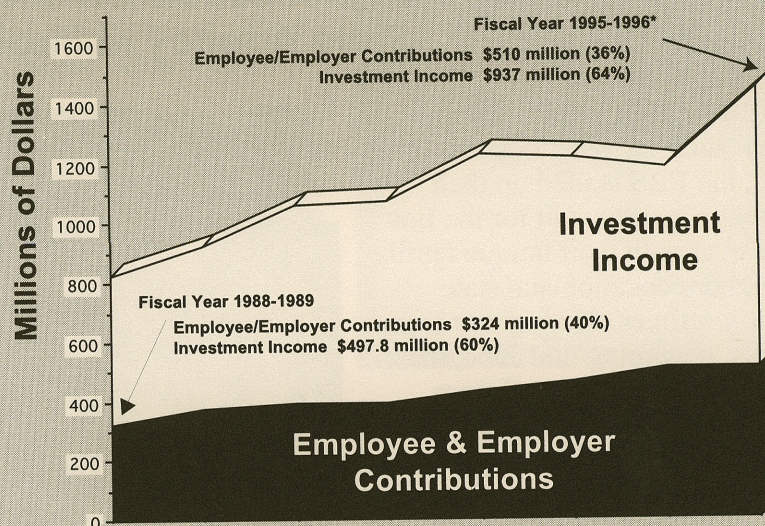
The ERS staff of professionals handle the buying and selling of stocks and bonds, which is done on a daily basis and requires some staff members to be on duty when foreign markets are open — not necessarily the traditional 8 to 5 workday.

Goerdel said the primary job for her division is to administer the investment program on behalf of the retirement system while adhering to the guidelines of board policy. "I see our division as an advisor to the board and its vehicle to efficiently run the fund while maintaining high standards and integrity in protecting the fund and enhancing the return on the ERS investment."

Continued, careful, and responsible tilling of the ERS investment garden will guarantee that retirees and their benefi-

ciaries will receive their earned benefits throughout the 21st Century. ☀

Investment Income is Major Revenue Source



Source: Employees Retirement System of Texas

*Fiscal Year 1995-1996 figures are preliminary.

Comparison of Combined Investments Returns

During Fiscal Year 1996, ERS netted a return of 9.69%, slightly higher than our averaged 5-year return of 9.51%.

Fiscal Year Ended Aug. 31, 1996

9.69%
(unaudited)

5-year Market Index

Domestic Fixed Income	-1.12%
Domestic Equities	18.71%
Internat'l Equities	1.74%

Fiscal Years 1992 - 1996

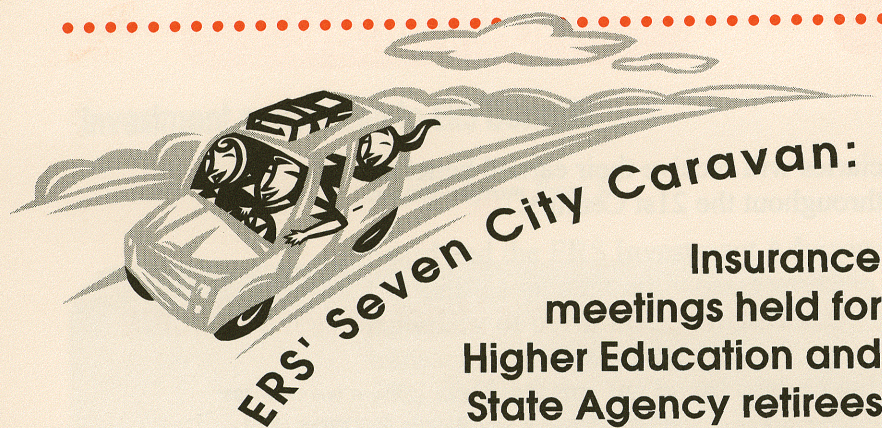
9.51%

Percent Investment Return

5-year Market Index

Domestic Fixed Income	7.52%
Domestic Equities	13.58%
Internat'l Equities	8.86%

Percent Investment Return



ERS' Seven City Caravan: Insurance meetings held for Higher Education and State Agency retirees

DURING THE TIME of traditional summer vacations and road trips, the ERS loaded up their traveling gear to visit for the first time ever with their unique family of higher education and state agency retirees. Throughout two weeks, beginning mid June, the ERS was joined by staff from Blue Cross/Blue Shield, several HMOs, and dental carriers during their seven city caravan of the Lone Star State. Despite the varied boxes of handouts, newsletters, booklets, and booth exhibit parts being unloaded from car trunks and hatchbacks, all groups had one main mission during these special insurance retiree meetings – to educate retirees about their health and dental insurance benefits.

“When employees retire, they often miss out on their agency’s health and benefit fairs,” ERS Benefits Communications Director Cathy Flautt explained. “Retirees were telling us that they’d like more information prior to their enrollment opportunity, so these meetings were in response to that need.”

During these special insurance meetings, retirees were acquainted with contacts from the Member Benefits, Group Insurance, and Benefits Communications Divisions of ERS and Medicare experts. Retirees also



had an opportunity to meet with vendors about their products for Summer Enrollment. During a formal presentation, Benefits Communication staff described several new options available to retirees including:

- HealthSelect Plus, a self-funded healthcare option
- Mail order prescription drug program for HealthSelect and HealthSelect Plus members
- Prudential DMO replacing American Dental

After their seven-city road trip which debuted in the Capitol City and then journeyed to Houston, San Antonio, Dallas, Ft. Worth, Lubbock, and El Paso, the ERS team confirmed that retirees from all over the state were interested



In addition to learning about their benefits this summer, retirees also received a sneak preview of the redesigned ERS booth.

in a number of issues. (See “ERS Delivers the Answer” column on page “9” for answers to frequently asked questions during these meetings.) Coincidentally, two of these issues – paid Medicare Part B coverage for retirees and keeping the premium subsidy for surviving spouses – will sizzle long after summer enrollment since both are 1997 legislative priorities for the Retired State Employees Association (RSEA). (See Travis, Board members address RSEA article on the front page.)

Actually the summer of 1996 was not the first time that the ERS tires were kicking up dust in West Texas or avoiding downtown metropolitan congestion. In 1991-92, a smaller group from ERS held informal meetings with state agency retirees, dependents, and annuitants. These general gatherings offered retirees an opportunity to voice their concerns and ask questions about their annuity payments, deferred compensation, and health care coverage, which are all administered by the ERS. Stops included: San Antonio, Houston, Arlington,

Corpus Christi, Lubbock, El Paso, and Amarillo in 1991 and Abilene, Tyler, Waco, and Midland in 1992.

State agency retirees who attended both the 1991/92 and 1996 meetings, noticed several differences between the two:

- 1996 meetings invited both state agency and higher education retirees for the first time versus only state agency retirees being invited during the 1991/92 gatherings.
- 1996 meetings saw a tremendous turnout of approximately 6% (2,145) of all retirees compared to 450 which attended in 1991.
- 1996 meetings had both formal presentations and a vendor booth fair of insurance and dental providers compared to 1991/92 gathering which held informal presentations only.

Based on the positive feedback from retirees attending the 1996 meetings and the high turnout, the

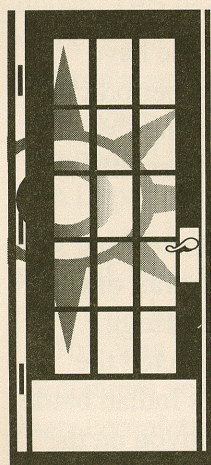
ERS is eager to be on the road again in 1997 for a reunion with their unique family of higher education and state agency retirees. Expect a similar lineup as in 1996, but with more locations. Watch future issues of *Your ERS Connection* for details. If you have comments or suggestions for the next series of retiree meetings, please contact Cathy



Flautt, Director of Benefits Communication, (512) 867-3238.



Blue Cross/Blue Shield's booth saw high traffic as Sandi Hapke further explained a new option, HealthSelect Plus. The meetings included retirees from state agencies and higher education.



ERS Delivers the Answer to You

Just ask ERS, and we'll deliver the answer to you. Mail, phone, or fax it to "ERS Delivers", Benefits Communication, P.O. Box 13207, Austin, Texas 78711-3201; fax, (512) 867-3441; toll-free, 1-800-252-3645, ext. 240. Or e-mail us at bencom@ers.texas.gov. Questions below were the most commonly asked questions at the retiree meetings held during Summer 1996.

Q: Why don't my premiums go down when I turn 65 and Medicare becomes my primary insurer?

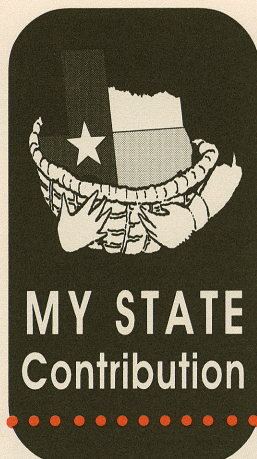
A: One of the reasons the state is able to continue to provide state-paid health insurance for retirees is Medicare pays a large portion of the health care bills for retirees. You continue to benefit by having close to 100% coverage for any out-of-pocket costs you may encounter. Your state-provided insurance, for instance, covers prescription drug expenses which make up half of expenses for people age 65 and older.

Q: Am I required to take out Part B coverage?

A: For all retirees and their dependents who become eligible for Medicare on or after September 1, 1992, ERS permits all participating health care plans to coordinate benefits with Medicare. Your expenses will be much higher if you don't take Part B. You also incur penalties if you delay in getting Part B coverage. We can't, however, require you to take Part B coverage. By the way, the \$42.50 that you pay monthly is only 1/4 of the actual cost of the benefit. The rest is subsidized by the federal government.

Q: Why don't you continue subsidizing premiums for surviving spouses?

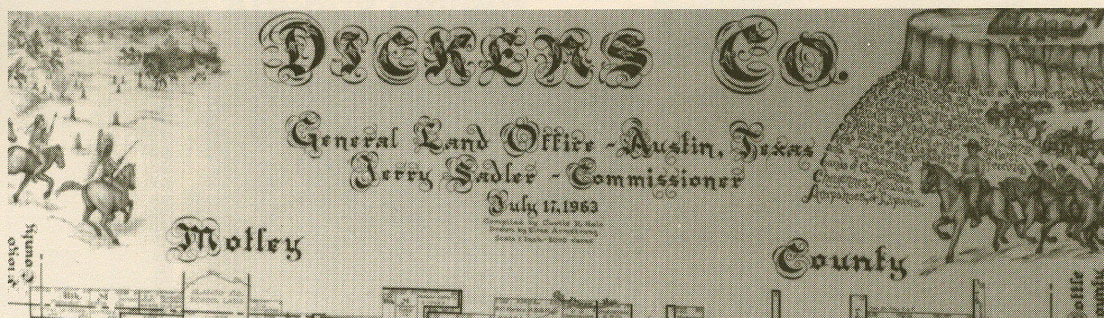
A: That's an issue for the Legislature to review. ERS can't provide that benefit without legislative authorization and funding.



Drafter's maps remain her legacy

Editor's Note:

As state employees, you contributed much more to the state than a portion of your paycheck. In this continuing series, we'll take a look back at some of the jobs our readers performed while serving the State of Texas. We'll also let you know if the job is still being done today. Please write us and tell us about your state job responsibilities and experiences.



SHE WAS AN ARTIST AT HEART, although she probably will not be remembered as such. Her legacy may well be having an extraordinary talent for livening up her 37 years as a drafter for the State of Texas.

Eltea Eppright Armstrong, who died in September — two months shy of her 89th birthday, was once quoted as saying, “Drafting can be a real drag; you have to work at it to keep things moving and exciting.” The work she left behind as a state employee certainly reinforces the fact that she was able to keep her chosen profession from being a “drag.”

Continuing her observations of her chosen work: “Drafting requires more patience than talent. Many very artistic people do not have the patience to do the detail work necessary for drafting. The scroll parchment is very hard to work on and certainly doesn’t lend itself to correcting mistakes. The inking of the map

lettering also requires a great amount of patience and almost as much accuracy as the scrolls.”

She began her state career in 1935 as a topography drafter in the Reclamation Department, which was later combined with the General Land Office under Gov. W. Lee O’Daniel. Her primary job was to make county maps — not the average road map type but tedious, detailed maps of each of Texas’ 254 counties.

She delved into the history of each county that she was assigned to map and on most added one or more of its historical highlights with her unique artistic and decorative touch.

She copied all this with pen and ink from the pencil draft that had been made using field notes from county surveyors. Her illustrations and decorative lettering were elaborate and usually done in striking red and blue colors, which contrasted nicely with the black and white lettering of the detailed

county map. Many of the 71 county maps that she drew could be considered works of art.

The maps are on permanent file at the General Land Office and are still used. Some older maps have been redrawn because of deterioration and some have minor updates made periodically, but all of the Armstrong-drawn maps remain in use virtually as she left them.

As examples of Armstrong’s work, she drew a portrait of Gov. Jim Hogg on the Jim Hogg County map and depicted the beginning of the last Indian battle in the Palo Duro Canyon on the Randall County map. An intriguing technique used by Armstrong in more than one of her maps is illustrated in her Limestone County map that features a picture of Fort Parker. The area in front of the fort appears to be a meadow, but on closer inspection, the “meadow” is actually the intricate lettering that contains a

.....

short history of the Fort, including a mention of Cynthia Ann Parker and her son, Quanah Parker, "last great chief of the Comanches."

Two drawings flank the bold lettering in the center of the Dickens County map. On the right is Soldiers Mound, which was home to a fort used by the military and those hardy pioneers traveling the McKenzie Trail. The base of the mound appears to be a sloping hill, but a closer look reveals Armstrong's skillful lettering technique that tells a short story of the area. On the left, she shows a band of Indians attacking what appears to be an unfinished settler's log cabin, with a covered wagon nearby.

During her tenure of state service, she also became the "unofficial" scroll and certificate maker. This phase of her state work began after she hand-lettered a certificate of appointment when her boss, R. J. Mahon, was named head of the Reclamation Department. Gov. James V. Allred saw it and was so impressed, he asked that she do others for him.

This was 1936, the Texas Centennial year, and she stayed busy completing certificates for that year-long celebration. She used Old English-style lettering but developed her own more readable version with elaborate curlicues and flourishes.

She began making scrolls when Gov. O'Daniel sent his daughter to Mexico for the inauguration of Manuel Avila Camacho and asked Armstrong to make a personal

scroll for President Camacho. After this, her scroll-making became a part of her work. Through the years, she made scrolls for the Shah of Iran, the King and Queen of Greece, movie stars, and other visiting dignitaries.

Another stunning scroll was made for former Land Commissioner Jerry Sadler that featured several Land Office seals, including the first seal used by the General Land Office, a Spanish and Mexican land seal, and two early Texas State seals — all of which were found on old Land Office records.

In her scroll that was presented to Gov. Price Daniel when he retired from office, what looked like decorative scroll work at first glance was actually the names of the Daniel children.

Joan Kilpatrick joined the General Land Office in 1975, three years after Armstrong retired, and has the responsibility of redrawing some of the older maps and making updates to others. Kilpatrick has the utmost respect for Armstrong's work, noting that her work was "special." Even in this age of the computer, maps like these are still done by hand by a General Land Officer drafter. Kilpatrick also took over some of Armstrong's certificate and scroll lettering duties and consulted with her to get advice. "She was very helpful and shared some of her 'secrets' with me," Kilpatrick noted with a smile.

Armstrong's entry into the world of drafting began with a high school course that she was "pushed into" after hearing a

male classmate remark that none of the girls in his drafting class were able to complete their own work. Her teacher was so impressed with her skill that he recommended her for a position at Miller Blueprint Company in Austin, a job she held when she joined the state.

A native Texan, she spent most of her 88+ years in Austin, moving there in 1915 from Dale, a small town in Central Texas, near Lockhart. Her father was a commercial beekeeper, and the family, which consisted of four girls and three boys, lived in South Austin.

After her retirement in 1972, she continued making scrolls for the state and for friends to commemorate special events. She also enjoyed the hobbies that she had developed over the years, including gardening, sewing, and traveling.

Dimmed eyesight and unsteady hands forced Armstrong to give up scroll making, but she continued her artistic ideas through an annual costumed Halloween Party that she hosted for friends and family through 1992. She also used her artistic talents in the areas of gardening and landscaping.

More than anything her story reinforces the axiom that one can make of life what he or she wishes. Armstrong's chosen field of drafting was not one that was thought to lend itself to artistic and creative talent, but she devised a way to produce not only an excellent technical work but also one that graced the senses with a historical sense, artistic beauty, and lasting value. She was truly an artist at heart. ☀

From the Executive Director: An Introduction



I am pleased to have this opportunity to introduce myself and assure you of my complete commitment to the continuing mission of the Employees Retirement System of

Texas. I trust that as we work together in the coming years we will forge a strong partnership for the benefit of all retirees.

It is a privilege to have been selected to lead this agency. I pledge to you that the high standard of service set by my predecessor, Charles "Dicky" Travis, will be maintained by me and your Board of Trustees. Your years of dedicated service to Texas deserve no less.

Combining the needs of retirees with the budget demands of Texas is crucial as we head into the 75th legislative session which begins in January. I have many years of experience in dealing with the legislature through my service to two governors and the lieutenant governor. This experience will be invaluable as I represent ERS, and you, this session.

I'll report to you on legislation in the next issue of *Your ERS Connection* and again this summer with a final report. I look forward to working for you.

Sincerely,

Sheila W. Beckett
Executive Director



Benefits Communication

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Cathy Flautt, Jackie
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Design Jackie McFadden
Photography Bob Ward,
Jackie McFadden

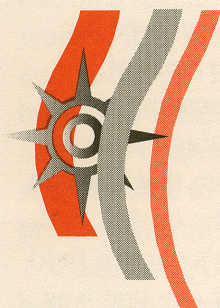
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Eltea Armstrong
Interview #6 - 7/5/89
Interviewer-Brian Hopper

[As the interview begins, Eltea and interviewer are examining copies of several of the maps that Eltea drew in her time at the Land office. She has especially selected her Randall County map for notice]

I: I don't think that I saw this one, no.

N: Yeah, I try to put something on 'em -- that is, along towards the last, when I was allowed to breathe a little better -- something that had to do with the county itself.

I: Oh, I did see this one, because I remember...

N: The canyon, uh huh.

I: And this is Randall County...[here follows a short pause, with maps rustling]

So how long did you work for the Land Office? Do you know when you first came?

N: Well, let's see. I had that...[a pause with more rustling, as she goes to the back of the house.]

I: This is Eltea Armstrong, it is July fifth, 1989.

N: [returning] Well, I thought I had it down somewhere. [pause] It seems to me like it was about '60, but I'm not sure.

I: Well, this map says 1958, so...Was this map real early in your career...at the Land Office. [Randall County map]

N: No, that was along about the middle. I retired in '70...No, wait a minute. Ben retired in '70 (that's my husband), I retired in '72.

I started with the state, it was the reclamation department.

I: The reclamation department?

N: Uh huh, I don't know whether they even have that any more.

I: Where was that?

N: It was in the highway building. And when they dissolved that -- the legislature did away with it -- why we were taken in, most of us were taken in, to the Land Office.

I: And how long ago was that, that you started?

N: I guess that I was at the other place about ten years, and...I guess I don't remember how long.

I: Oh, that's fine...

So what were the steps in making a map like this? I mean did you start with the field notes, or did someone give you a sketch that looked kind of like this?

N: Somebody else did the sketch, and I traced it.

I: So they did it -- you were just doing it -- you weren't even doing it to their scale or anything, just tracing it?

N: They did it to scale on the -- what you call a worksheet, and then [there follow two unintelligible words]...I traced that, and then I put...[another word] under it, and went over that with a pen to get my lines on it. And it was kind of a tedious deal, I don't

know whether they still do it that way or not.

I: I'll bet that they do it pretty similarly. I went down to surveying and saw some of what they did. I didn't understand it, but...

N: And then you have the master, when you get through with that. And then they make copies with that, and run blueprints -- or run prints off it, from that.

I: So you were making the masters?

N: And that's the ones that you need to not get wrinkled up in the drawer. Some of them did, and it would break 'em, you know, it was so heavy. The paper was really heavy. And we handled them really carefully.

I: Naturally. How long did it take you to make a master like that?

N: Well, it depended on the map. Some of 'em you could make in three or four months, some of them less than that. But not many of them, because the big ones...kind of down there, the one in -- Rio Grande Valley, that big county down there. This was put into three maps, because they wanted the same scale as the others, and we didn't have a drawer that it would go in -- did well to get all three of them in the same drawer, because it was such a big one.

That got real monotonous. So, I had got to where I put little decorations on 'em. That sort of broke the monotony a little bit, from one map to another.

I: Were you the only person who did that, or did everyone?

N: Well no, not everybody did. Most of them were doing the originals, which took a long time, because you had to go by the files. And they hadn't been making many maps for a long time, when I started. But Giles kind of got that going, of having a good many made.

So, you know, he had worked up there in the drafting department...

I: So, you worked for Bascom Giles?

N: Yeah, and then there was several that followed them. I don't remember their names.

I: Did you have to look up all of those little plots, or were those on the sketches too?

N: They were on the sketches. That's what they were doing, was checking those sketches, and getting them arranged right. And there was enough of them working on those, (I was the only one who was inking -- doing the original copy) but they had enough of them going that it kept me busy.

I: So you just inked in those sketches.

N: Uh huh.

I: And who did you work for down there?

N: Well, it was the...you mean the Commissioner?

I: Well, the commissioners, or who were you working for -- who were your bosses -- how many levels.

N: Well, Giles was there more -- longer than anybody else, while I was there, and then...the old man in the corner. Morris...Mr. Morris.

I: And he was the director of surveying?

N: He was supposed to have been...head of the drafting department.

I: What was he like? Can you remember anything about him?

N: Well, =====[unintelligible word]===== It really upset him if

somebody woke him up.

I: Oh, he slept a lot.

N: Well, he was real old. And he really didn't do much, and he needed a job. And he had worked there previously,. And his wife was a real nice person, and so she carried weight. And they kept him on a long time.

But he did pretty good, if you didn't wake him up, you know, in his afternoon naps...

But they hadn't had any lady draftsmen that I know of, and then after I got in, and did well with it, then they hired several others. And one little lady from West Texas was just super.

And I really enjoyed it. But, there's a time to retire. Have you talked to...let me think of his name...

I: Well, I just talked to Herman Forbes the other day, who was in surveying for a long time. He started out as a draftsman, of course.

N: Yeah...

I: So, you were just over in the old building, you didn't move over to the Stephen F Austin Building.

N: Well, now wait a minute. I was in the old, old Land Office; and then the one that's east of the Capitol -- was there. Now they are now north of that, aren't they?

I: Yeah.

N: No, I've never been up there. I forget about that they'd moved from east of the capitol.

I: Do you remember about what that building was like, could you describe it at all? What the room was like...

N: Well, in the old Land Office...we were on the fourth floor, that was -- and then there's a mezzanine floor above. We did have an elevator, but I needed the exercise after sitting at a desk. So I always used the stairs, you know, leave by the stairs. And the lady that worked with me, she always used the stairs too.

And it was, of course, no air conditioning. I never really got used to it, is one reason that I don't have it on now. I've got to go out in the yard and work as soon as you leave. So I just don't put it on unless I'm going to have a whole houseful of company. The heat doesn't bother me so bad if I don't ever have it on.

Anyway that building was -- of course, it was pretty dusty, because the windows all had to be open. But it wasn't a bad place. We were on the fourth floor, and there was mezzanine up above, so it was...

I: Well, what was the room like? Was it a big, open room?

N: Yes, the whole floor was open, and had cases -- filing cases to separate the different departments. And if somebody yelled, over anywhere in there, everybody's head'd come up to see who it was.

I: Do you remember any big changes or shake-ups; was there something really -- I mean there must've been a couple of really earth-shattering things that happened at some point, you know, even if they didn't affect you directly? Do you remember what it was like when the Land Board Scandal happened, that kind of thing?

N: Well, not anything, really, that would affect my job. I tell you, really, nobody wanted my job. They were pretty hard put to make anybody stay back there and do that kind of work.

I don't remember that we ever...Everybody got all shook up, of course, after every election. Giles was in there most of the time, and he didn't ever have any problem, and he didn't want any of the personnel politicking for him. You know, he made this statement, he'll do the politicking. Which was really good, and everybody doesn't take that attitude.

I: So, no one on his staff campaigned for him?

N: As far as I know they didn't. I'm not sure about it, I wasn't in a position to know too much about what the front office in general, but the word was -- he passed the word around that he didn't want to have politicking. We should just stay at our desks and work.

I: Were you there when Mr. Sadler finally came along? Did that change things a lot? I understand he had a lot of very strict policies, and very firm ideas about the way things should be done.

N: Yeah, he did, but it didn't really affect what I was doing. And he was always very, very nice to me. I never had any problem whatsoever. He was really most gracious...

I think they kind of -- it didn't take them too long to learn who the work horses were. And so, I never did have even any talk over...any of it...nice, yeah it was real nice.

I: Do you have a favorite story from your time at the Land Office?

N: That would do to tell?

I: Yeah...

N: Well, I don't know, really...I can't think of any right off.

I: That's all right...Let me go back to my notes here a little bit...

N: ...There were sort of contests with the deer hunters, you know, and we had some that were -- a fellow from Lockhart who...he wasn't happy when anyone else killed a deer. And I had taken up hunting with my husband. And it usually made him real unhappy when I come in.

One time, when I had -- we had been out, and had brought in about three that I had to do something with all of 'em, to keep 'em from spoiling. And I had to work nearly all night on it, and then got up the next morning to go to work. And actually, it was all I could do at work to walk down the hall, and get to my desk and sit down.

And he was always curious about what luck I'd had. So he had been in the hall, and saw me coming, and he came back and told all the fellows, 'Aw, she didn't have any luck; I can tell by the way she looks.' And then somebody there at the office called a person that was on our lease, and found out that I had killed two, and then had killed one. But they just didn't say anything for the longest time; they let him enjoy it while he could.

I: Did he not like hunting, or was he just jealous?

N: Oh, he loved it, and he wasn't happy when anyone else killed one.

I: So were all the people there real friendly; and I understand that the office was a lot

smaller then?

N: Yeah...it was smaller...I didn't ever try to pow-wow with the big bosses. And -- out of sight, out of mind, you know. And my office, where my desk was...out of sight of the commissioner's place, so I kind of stayed out of trouble.

I: Well, where did you get the ideas for these little pictures on the maps? You said that you tried to use things from the county?

N: Well, we had -- I had -- we'd made a trip up there, and on this one...

I: I guess it says what this is...

N: Palo Duro canyon. And there was a big article in the paper last week about this play they have up there, and we saw that.

I: Could you tell me about the play?

N: Well, it was of the early days. And it's beautiful. It was in front of a mountain, and we were on this side of the mountain, where we could see real good. And it really was a beautiful play.

And we went on a tour, and there was this one place where there was this canyon. And the ranchers were having such a trouble with the Indians -- they'd get their horses, and then one would sneak in, and cut them loose, and here they'd have 'em again. And so, the only way that they could solve that was to stampede the horses over the canyon walls. And they did, and that killed all the horses. And that, then -- they got control of the Indians.

I: Because they had no more horses?

N: Uh huh, 'cause they got to have horses.

I: Well, when you drew pictures like that, was it always things that you happened to know, or would you go look up things so you'd have something...?

N: Well, and I'd hear things that people were saying about 'em, and too, go to the library, and get the book on the county, and see if there was anything interesting. And I made a lot before I got into doing that. But, to keep me from just going, stir crazy, why that helps a lot.

I: How much of the time that you were working on a map would you say you did only for the pictures?

N: Very little, very little amount of time. And I usually would do enough of it sketching at home that I wouldn't, you know...

I: Use up almost any time at the office?

N: Uh huh.

I: Were most of these pictures from real pictures, or from things that you saw, or did you just...?

N: Yeah, yeah...To get them back as authentic as I could. Because that is just the way that looks. [she then pointed to the right hand, upper corner picture: of a pillar of rock. Randall County map illustration.] Now this over here, I just improvised on this. [Pointing to the left-hand illustration, of the Indians' horses being run off the hill.]

I: How many of these would you say you did with pictures? Just, you know, a rough estimate.

N: Oh, I don't know. I did -- I think it was 65 maps in all, and -- probably a third, because I didn't start that on them until I just got so bogged down in them. And that

helped me to...well, somebody had made a -- had criticized them for not having anything like that on 'em. So I said, 'Well great!'

I: 'That's just what I've been wanting to do.'?

N: Yes...[laughter]

I: Yes, well it really does make it look a lot prettier, I just like the calligraphy too.

N: Well, it does add some interest. Some of the counties, I just couldn't find anything in any of the records that would be of any interest.

I: Did you usually leave those blank, or...?

N: Yeah, I just didn't try to -- most of them I didn't try to put anything on 'em. And I'd made a lot -- so many of them before I ever started that.

Have you talked to Mr. Vandygriff?

I: No, I haven't.

N: Well, he's in a position to know more about the Land Office than just about anybody. Alvis Vandygriff.

I: I have the name -- I have a long list of names...

N: And he's a nice person; he's a fine person.

I: Did you work for him, or did you just know him?

N: Oh, he was Chief Clerk, a long time while I was working there. That's the reason I was able to -- he knows so much about the Land Office.

I: Well this is, actually, a lot of what I wanted to know about.

So, about how many people were there in the department while you were there?

N: In the drafting department?

I: Mmm...

N: Around ten...eight or ten, twelve. It varied from time to time.

I: What would you say was about the most women that ever worked for the department?...you had said that they hired some more after you got there?

N: Well, they had another lady...one of my best friends, for ten years. And they hired several more...that didn't work at it that long. But I don't think that we ever had more than two, another one and me, in the drafting department.

I: What was the name of this lady, the lady that you said was your friend?

N: Tommi Bowie, but she passed away.

I: And she was the one from West Texas?

N: Uh huh...she had taught school out there, and her husband got transferred here -- he's with an oil company, so she came to work up here.

I: Where are you from originally?

N: I've lived in Austin since I was in the sixth grade. And prior to that I was from Caldwell County.

I: And you went to school here?

N: Uh huh.

I: How, um..

N: Fulmore, then junior high and senior high.

I: Fulmore was a senior high then...?

N: No, it was a ward school, up through sixth grade.

I: And where did you go to high school?

N: And seventh and eighth was in junior high. And at that -- at one time, junior high was in the west part of town, then later on it moved to the east part. And they switched the high schools around like that, I went to high school in East Austin, and then I finished up in West Austin.

And I took drafting. And I needed one credit, and so I started in the last year -- in the first semester of the last year. And I didn't know whether I could do drafting or not, but I heard some boys talking, and they said that girls couldn't do it...so I signed up.

And then, when Mr. Miller -- that used to run the Miller Blueprint Company -- went over and asked Mr. Williams (the head of the drafting...school) to recommend a student. (he wanted to hire a draftsman) And he recommended me. And Mr. Miller said, 'No, I don't want a girl, I want a boy.'

And he said, 'I'm not going to give you a boy's name until you give her a chance. If she doesn't work out, then I will.'

So, okay. And of course, I didn't realize all that.

I: Right, you just knew...

N: I just -- he just -- Mr. Miller just called me...No, the drawing teacher called me, and said to go up to the Miller Blueprint Company...and gave me the address. And so I -- that's how I got into it.

I: And how long did you work there?

N: Not too long. He went into aerial mapping there for a while, and so I wasn't into that. And then, the depression hit, and all the flying, and everything for the mapping by air, collapsed. And there was some years there where I didn't have a job anywhere. And then, when the reclamation director called out to the house, and told me who he was, and he said, 'Have you ever done any topography?'

And I said, 'No, but I sure would like to get a try.'

And so he kind of laughed, and he said, 'Well, come on over here then.'

And I found out later on he had a bet with Mr. Miller. He had asked Mr. Miller if I'd had any experience with topography, and he'd said, 'I can't remember that she did. I'm not sure, she might have helped. Just ask her, she'll tell you.'

And he had said, 'Oh yeah?!'

And Mr. Johnny said, 'I'll bet five dollars that she tells you the truth.'

And so -- I didn't know about that until years later. And so, when I said that, 'I sure would like to give it a try,' he kind of laughed. It sounded to me like kind of a funny laugh, even though I didn't know him.

I: You knew something strange was going on?

N: Yeah, it sounded like it. A long time later...why, it was after I started working -- the legislature did away with the Reclamation Office, but they put us into the drafting department at the Land Office.

And Mr. Miller came up there one day, and he said, 'You know, you were responsible for me making five dollars on a bet,' and he told me what happened...

...Yeah, I liked that too. It was interesting work.

I: So you went straight from the Reclamation Department to the Land Office?

N: Uh huh. The legislature combined us, and that was...we were in the...we had a

section in the new highway building at that time. And then when we were shifted off there, into that old building; it wasn't that pleasant.

I: You liked it a lot better over at the highway building?

N: Well...I'm not sure. I don't know about that. We were -- the ones from the reclamation were -- there wasn't more than five or six of us. And since we were in the drafting business over there, why we went right into the drafting at the Land Office.

I: You must have really increased the size of the drafting department at the Land Office.

N: Through the years, they did. They really -- the maps were handled pretty rough, what we called the hard copies. And, you know, they would wear out. And whenever I saw someone handling them pretty carefully -- I mean uncarefully -- I didn't hesitate to call their attention. And so -- you know, when you put a lot of months working...and then see somebody reckless with them...

I: Something that takes you three months to do...?

N: Some of them took longer, some didn't take that long...

But it was interesting. To me, so much more interesting than say, a secretarial job would be.

I: So you never really considered doing anything else?

N: Uh uh, not after I got started. And to start with, we used to work all day on Saturdays. And then, it got to where they said, 'Just Saturday morning.' Oh boy, we just felt like we were wading in high cotton, have Saturday afternoon off.

I: And it was the same kind of eight hour days?

N: Well yeah. Before, it had started at nine hours a day, and then eight and a half, and it finally got to eight.

I: Was there lots of work for that kind of change, or did the legislature just kind of give it to you?

N: Well...they just appropriated for the Land Office, and they could use their money, as I understand it, like they wanted to. Like, one time now, they had about six hundred dollars that they could use in the drafting department. Oh, now wait a minute, I'm mixed up. They -- I -- had complained because they were tearing the maps up trying to get them in the drawers -- the little thin drawers. So then they had plans of getting better equipment to store them in. And then the chief clerk came along and said well, they's going to have to have another car, for the field man, so the maps would have to wait.

Well, they had already cracked a bunch of my maps, and I kind of...cracked a little myself. And I said -- and he's talking about that six hundred dollars is too much to spend for that, but we have to buy this car. And I said that the car would have to be replaced in a couple of years, but the maps would never have to be replaced, in our lifetime, if we had the proper cabinets, which we could get for six hundred dollars.

And that's the only time that I blew my stack out there, so I immediately went to my desk, and kept my head down. But, they started with the plans for the map cases. At that time the chief clerk wasn't -- had never done any map-making, and he really wasn't interested in the maps, of how they were made or why, and...

I: Had no idea how much time they took...?

N: Yeah, that's right. Mr. Vandygriff was the chief clerk most of the time, which -- he

was such a nice person. But, this other fellow was -- all he could think about was the field fellows.

I: You don't remember what his name was, do you?

N: No, I can't recall. You know, some of them I've forgotten on purpose.

But all and all, it was -- you know, it was a nice career...that I accidentally got into.

And then they started -- The Governor...let's see, that had been on TV, selling flour. What was his name...? Well, it was about in '40, because it was during that time when -- when somebody was elected Governor, I did their name on their certificate. And from then on, you know, they sent me things over for me to do.

So, one of the first rush jobs was to send one to Mexico when Camacho was inaugurated president. So I really had to burn the midnight oil on that one, because I didn't have a time allowance. So when I took it over there, I said, 'Well, I kept the radio going all weekend, just in case the fellow got shot, I wouldn't have to bother to finish it.'

And from then on, then I got a lot of work from the Governor's office, of putting names on things that he wanted to do. And through all the Governors, from then on until, until I left.

I: What was the thing that you made? Was it just a proclamation or a congratulation, or something?

N: Uh, it was already printed up, with just the blank name for -- it was a real fancy one, a fancy looking thing to start with, and I just put his name, and then the date, and what it was.

During the centennial, ohhh...they kept me busy. Now this was when I was filling in at the reclamation department. And uh -- but that, Camacho's was the very first that I did. And then after I got their attention on that, why, it was pretty steady. And like I said, during the war, we had so many lieutenant Colonels of this and that and the other...

I: Did that continue into the Land Office, or once you got there, did it pretty much stop?

N: Well, I did 'em in the Land Office, because they were sent from the Governor's office.

I: Oh, the Governor was still keeping track of where you were?

N: Yeah, one Governor, and then the next one, and then the next one. In a way, that was sort of job insurance.

I: Yeah -- well, it's a nice honor, too.

N: But, you know, I bet -- we didn't have TVs then. We did have radio, and I was a little afraid he would get shot, because things had been pretty rugged down in Mexico.

I: And when was that, it must have been about 1940?

N: Or, or earlier...I can't think when it was. The Governor, as I said, had been a flower salesman, on TV. I can't think of his name, now. Of course I didn't -- I very seldom saw the Governor.

I: How much time would you say that you spent on that say, a week, on the things that the Governor was sending to you?

N: Oh, a lot of time, there'd be six months without anything.

I: And then it'd just be a few days?

N: Yeah, and some of the Governors never did. But, uh, a lot of them kept me pretty busy.

Now when the present Governor came in, I had been doing -- the ones for -- the Governor had been appointing commissioners...and now I've forgotten which...it wasn't insurance, I don't believe, but it was some non-elected office, where the Governor appointed it. And so, I did one for some new commissioner, new appointee, and sent it over there. And so, he called about it, and I explained how it had been handled. And he said, 'Well, I'll let this -- I'll go ahead and sign this, but no more.' Said, 'We won't do this any more, because it's not fair to give that commission,' like Railroad Commission, that wasn't it, but, and not give them to Insurance Commission. And, you know, it could lead into a lot of problems if all the other commissioners had set up hell for it.

I: Uh huh. You mean just that some of them were getting these things, and some of them weren't?

N: Uh huh, uh huh. And you see, so many of them didn't know anything about how. And if they found out how to get it, they'd call the Land Office. And so, really, I was glad that they stopped it, because it interrupted with what I was working on, because they always wanted it, you know, yesterday. But it was interesting to do.

I: Break up the routine a little? [pause]

Was there anything else special that you did?

N: Well, not anything earth-shattering.

I: Well, what was the equipment like? I mean, did the pens ever change, did they make a new device, or did the table get some kind of new technological function, or was it pretty much the same?

N: Well, when we went over to the new building -- oh, when we went over to the new building, we took our tables and everything with us. So it was -- there were no really big changes. I think they had a bunch of the lettering pens that were...you know, had guides for 'em, but I didn't use them. It was pretty much -- more or less the same.

But it certainly was more interesting than [unintelligible phrase follows]

I: Well, I think I've about run out of things to ask you. Thank you a lot for your time.

++++ INTERVIEW ENDS +++++