LOOKING BACK
by Carlos Higgins

Luckenbach was established in 1849, and Hondo Crouch bought the whole ten-acre Texas town (population: 3) in 1970. Then his buddies, Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson, put the place on the map big-time with their 1978 hit song, "Luckenbach, Texas."


Well. Hmmmm. Looking Back, eh. As in "Those who are ignorant of history are doomed to repeat it." Well, I can buy that. But I’m not sure we in the TSHL need to do a whole lot of looking back at that last Legislative session. Maybe it’s helpful, just to remind ourselves that we tried, and we actually did have some success. A notable success, for instance, in the matter of property tax relief (but we still have unfinished business there).

If we dwell too much on that session, though, we may generate some of those bad old negative thoughts. Just for example, HR 2292 with its questionable reorganization of our Texas health and human services delivery agencies. We lost our battle to keep the Texas Department on Aging a clearly separate entity, focused on serving the senior population. But the call for reorganization is a done deal. Now, our job is to try to make the most of it, to assist in any way we can to help preserve the best of TDoA services for senior Texans.

This was another setback: The “Needs Allowance” took a beating during that session. It was cut instead of being increased for the very needy elderly in nursing homes. Too many other “helping-hands” programs and services suffered severe cuts. We can look back and dwell on those setbacks, or we can refresh ourselves and keep on working to make things better.

What we need is what our TSHL icon, John Holtermann, lived by in words and deeds. His positive attitude and outlook. Around the Capitol, John frequently reminded Bill Cummings and me that “We don’t have time for negatives.”

In the Holtermann spirit, we should work on our local city and county officials, encouraging them to adopt the Proposition 13 property tax relief. They really can put the relief in effect without the necessity of an expensive petition and election process.) We’ve got to stay tuned to the ongoing HHSC reorganization. As set out in the Frank Knotts Resolution at Camp Allen, our goal continued on Page 4

Transition Legislative Oversight Committee Update
by Speaker Chris Kyker

From September 12 to October 21, 2003, the Transition Legislative Oversight Committee (TLOC) conducted public hearings throughout Texas regarding the Transition Plan to merge eleven health and human service agencies into four departments and HHSC. Beginning January 9, 2004, and continuing into February, TLOC has participated in the public hearings relating to the organizational structure of the four departments - the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS), Department of State Health Services (DSHS) and the Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS).

Human service advocates, state employees, consumers, the general public, and the TSHL have participated in all public hearings. Public meetings on Design of Department Councils are scheduled for Spring 2004.

Governor Perry appointed Albert Hawkins to serve as Executive Commissioner of Health and Human Services Commission. Other key appointments made by Executive Commissioner Hawkins were DFPS Commissioner Thomas Chapmond, DARS Commissioner Terry Murphy; DSHS Commissioner Dr. Eduardo J. Sanchez and DADS Commissioner, Jim Hine.

H.B. 2292 Transition Plan was transmitted to the Governor and the Legislative Budget Board (LBB) November 3, 2003. The Transition Plan set target dates to create operational departments beginning in January 2004 with DFPS and DARS and continuing into Spring/Summer 2004 with DSHS and DADS.

The Transition Legislative Oversight Committee (TLOC) was authorized by the 78th Texas Legislature under HB 2292 to facilitate the transfer of powers, duties, functions, programs, and activities between health and human services (HHS) agencies with minimal disruption of deliv- continued on Page 4
At the December meeting of the TSHL Executive Committee, a fitting tribute to the Honorable William J. Sagstetter for his work as editor of the Silver Bulletin was read. For benefit of those not privileged to be present, it was pointed out that Honorable Bill was encouraged by his favorite high school teacher to pursue a career in journalism and that he started that career as editor of the first newspaper of Silsbee High School.

Of course, we are all familiar with Bill's development of the Silver Bulletin into a first class professional document. It should also be mentioned that he developed a beautiful brochure in text and pictures detailing the aspects of TSHL. This brochure was probably read by more people than the biennial TSHL Directory.

Akin to Paul Harvey's "Other Side of the Story (no comparison intended), having been Honorable Bill's roomie on several occasions and traveled with him many, many miles to and from TSHL meetings, I can attest to his love and dedication for his work on the Silver Bulletin and the brochure. Following TSHL meetings Bill would be close to pushing the panic button if he couldn’t get to a typewriter immediately to prepare a press release for the members to have by the close of the meeting.

The Honorable William J. Sagstetter was elected to the TSHL in 1994 and, if memory serves correctly, he was one of only two freshmen members whose resolution was among the top ten and then passed by the Texas Legislature.

Space does not permit mention of other feats to Bill’s credit. But one thing is a must. It’s KUDOS AND A TIP OF THE OL’ HAT TO HONORABLE BILL. YOUR SERVICE IS MERITORIOUS. WE ARE PROUD OF YOUR WORK AND PROUD TO CALL YOU OUR FRIEND. – W. G. West
The Texas Silver-Haired Legislature gratefully acknowledges the commitment to older Texans by

The Honorable William J. Sagstetter, Editor
TSHL Silver Bulletin

WHEREAS, As a high school student, Bill Sagstetter was encouraged by Mrs. May, his favorite teacher, to pursue journalism as a career, starting as the first editor of Silsbee High School first school paper, receiving his degree in Journalism at the University of Texas at Austin and continuing his interest in writing and journalism to this day; and

WHEREAS, Since 1994, Bill Sagstetter has been elected to five terms as a Texas Silver-Haired Legislator from the Coastal Bend district and served as Chairman of the TSHL Communications Committee; and

WHEREAS, Since 1996, Bill Sagstetter has been the Editor of the Silver Bulletin, the official publication of the Texas Silver-Haired Legislature and during that time he has published twenty-nine editions of the Silver Bulletin; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, That all members of the Texas Silver-Haired Legislature express our deepest appreciation and gratitude to The Honorable William J. Sagstetter for your service for eight years as Editor of the Silver Bulletin and for your professionalism and good humor in meeting all deadlines, writing news releases of TSHL elections and helping to reach older Texans with accurate and fair reporting. Mrs. May would be proud.

Adopted by the Texas Silver-Haired Legislature meeting in executive session at the City of Austin, December 12, 2003.

Chris Kyker, Speaker, 9th Texas Silver-Haired Legislature

Ivan's Insights – Did you notice? A review of last year and a preview of this year, through the eyes of the TSHL, is what this issue of the Silver Bulletin is all about. OK. Proposition 13 allows counties, cities and junior colleges to freeze homestead taxes for senior citizens and disabled homeowners. Note “allows.” To make that happen, someone has to make it happen. As all this began with TSHL Resolution No. 20, that somebody to make something happen are the members of the TSHL. Oscar Garcia (Tarrant County) took the lead. Glen Peterson (Kendall County), Richard Landry (Montgomery County) Steve Coyaclt (Harris County), Brigitte Rogers (Concho Valley’s all six counties and municipalities), and Naomi Norton (Midland) have also successfully advocated for the freeze. And the list grows day by day. Our thanks and congratulations to these TSHL leaders and to those who have not yet shared their efforts with us for publication. Will all of us continue this domino effect across Texas? I will cover Galveston County when this Silver Bulletin is finally put to bed.

I’m enthused about "Texas Roundup," Governor Perry’s new initiative to promote a more active lifestyle for all Texans which TSHL endorses and supports. With Nancy Foster (Frisco) and Robert Zepeda (San Antonio) as co-chairs, the TSHL will partner in encouraging all older Texans to incorporate more physical activity into their daily lives. I presented the program today to the site council at a senior housing facility with 200 residents. We begin a walk-around-the-block program next week! Treat yourself to a visit at www.texasroundup.org for full details, including the program for the first statewide roundup on the Capitol Grounds in Austin on Saturday, April 17. I’ll meet you there.

– Ivan Arceneaux, Galveston Island

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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<th>Event</th>
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<td>February 27 - Candidates filing deadline</td>
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<td>March 8-12 - Election notices posted</td>
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<td>April 20 - Mailing early voting ballots</td>
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<td>May 3 - Early voting begins</td>
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<td>May 20 - Early voting ends midnight</td>
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<td>May 25 - Election Day</td>
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<td>July 12-16 - Orientation</td>
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<td>September 13-17 - Legislative Session</td>
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TSHL WANTABEES
New Candidates, New Members

If what you want is:
(1) the satisfaction of doing good work for some of Texas’ finest – our seniors – and especially to speak on behalf of those unable to speak up for themselves;
(2) gaining hands-on experience in the legislative process; and
(3) working with like-minded citizens from all over Texas,

Then go for it! Get yourself elected to serve in the Texas Silver-Haired Legislature.

Just be aware, it’s not just a title or decorative name tag you’ll get. It’s an unpaid working job, but an important one. It’ll take time and effort, and even your money. TSHL members are expected to take part in fund-raising efforts, which help, but for the most part, they still pay their own expenses.

To learn more about the organization and its objectives, ask questions at your nearest AAA office. Ask current members of the TSHL. Go to the TSHL WEB site at http://www.TxSHL.org Then, get yourself elected and jump in.

We in the TSHL will welcome you, and help you make Texas “A Better Texas Through The Ages.”

Carlos Higgins, Speaker Pro Tem
LOOKING BACK  
continued from Page 1

at this point should be to (1) ensure a higher quality of life for Texas older citizens at an affordable price, and (2) continue the 28 AAAs essentially as they are currently organized and staffed.

Texas seniors are apparently getting a low priority in the HHSC reorganization. The next step may be a similar dilution of the AAAs’ services to seniors. Preserving the AAAs’ traditional and admirable focus on seniors may turn out to be an uphill battle. But we gotta try.

Then, we need to continue gearing up for our next TSHL session. Several of our notable and hard-working members have been doing just that: planning for our next session. But we all need to be thinking in those terms, and keep our eyes on what’s important. What’s important is making things better for our constituents – especially those least able to speak up for themselves.

So keep that positive attitude. Keep your eye on the ball. Don’t let the gnats – little organizational squabbles and parliamentary quarrels – get you down. And you can do some good work here and still have plenty of time for pleasure – maybe even a trip to Luckenbach, Texas.

– Carlos Higgins

TLOC Update, continued from Page 1

...ery of services. TLOC was authorized to provide input to the Executive provide input to the Executive Commissioner of Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) regarding the transfer of HHS agencies' powers, duties, functions, programs and activities.

In addition, TLOC was created to research, take testimony and issue reports on issues as requested by the Governor, Lieutenant Governor or Speaker, review recommendations for legislation proposed by HHS agencies and monitor effectiveness and efficiency of HHS system.

TSHL Speaker Chris Kyker of Abilene serves as one of the three public members appointed by Governor Perry to TLOC. Although as a member of TLOC, Speaker Kyker considers all health and human service issues, she has set preserving the integrity of the Older Americans Act within DADS as her key interest. Other public members include Ken George, former Texas Legislator from Dallas, and Noe Fernandez, business owner, of McAllen.

The TLOC organizational meeting was held in Austin, September 12, 2003 to take testimony on the Transition Plan. TLOC invites continuous feedback through on-line feedback mechanism located at http://www.hhsc.state.tx.us/Consolidation.asp.

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Texas ages well with TSHL

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