

Marquis G. Goode Jr.

Chief Highway Engineer, Texas Highway Department

July 1, 1980 - August 31, 1986

When Mark G. Goode Jr. began his career in the 1940s, a good engineer always carried a pencil and a pocketknife. By the time he ended his six-year stint as engineer-director in 1986, a good engineer could also depend on orbiting space satellites and computers that could crunch calculations quicker than it would take to sharpen a pencil.

He fondly told younger employees that his career paralleled the building of the Interstate system. He joined the highway department just as the post-war construction boom was beginning, and retired as the last few pieces to complete the system were put into place. As engineer-director in the 1980s, Goode over-saw the biggest and fastest period of growth in construction in the department's history. In 1982, the last detour on Interstate 35 in Texas disappeared with the opening of 16 miles of freeway north of Laredo. Less than a dozen gaps were left in the Interstate system.

More significantly, Goode oversaw a quantum leap in changes in technology, management philosophy and long-range planning. Along with these changes came a different attitude. Thanks to his leadership, Texas became a national and international leader in automation that paved the way for the computerized culture TxDOT has today. New advances allowed engineers to use satellite signals with advanced surveying techniques to determine on-the-ground measurements to within millimeters.

In his monthly September 1984 Transportation News column, he praised the advent of automation - an astounding but sometimes mystifying computerized technology which radically changed the way engineers did their jobs. "I believe we're not only on the right track, but are setting the pace when it comes to putting ultramodern technology to work," he wrote. "We can all take pride in the department's accomplishments and in the caliber of creative people with whom we work We are recognized as pioneers and authorities in numbers of other technological developments as well, from the creation of the breakaway sign to the application of computerized interactive graphics with photogrammetry. Such achievements place our engineers and technicians in the forefront of modern engineering." This technology transformed time-consuming, hit-or-miss mathematical calculations into an automated process that could be figured and refigured in a matter of minutes.

During Goode's tenure, the department also experienced its largest work force growth. Setting long-term goals for the department, he was able to develop employee training programs, especially for first-line and mid-level managers, and initiate a positive recruiting program that opened the doors wide for minorities and women. The new management program, introduced in the fall 1980, was designed to move people into positions faster. It was a matter of survival. The average ages of classified workers were 56.1 years for men and 48.9 years for women. One generation was retiring, and a new generation had to be trained and ready to assume these roles. The department's major investment had to be in its people, or it would cease to function.

"In a changing world we cannot be static. Nor can we rely solely on what we learned years ago to get the job done today," he said in 1986. "To our managers and supervisors we have entrusted our most valuable assets - the people with and through whom they work to achieve the department's objectives. The goal of our management training emphasis is to better equip them to handle their responsibilities."

Born in Quinlan on August 12, 1921, and reared in Dallas, Goode was attracted to engineering when he was a Texas A&M University student. "I heard they had a good engineering school, and I was interested in engineering and building things. I liked the idea of being able to construct something and being able to see it when you were through."

Midway through his college career, the Army drafted him to serve in World War II. He spent the next four years as an officer with an engineering unit in the European theater.

Finally finishing his A&M degree in 1947 on the GI Bill, he had several offers for jobs from the aircraft industry and oil companies, but he was looking for more than a high salary. "I felt like the highway department was the most stable situation we could have," he said.

His first assignment was in Dallas, his hometown, transforming the South Dallas U.S. 75 into a modern concrete, four-lane highway. He rose up the chain of command, first as resident engineer and senior resident engineer before being named assistant district engineer in 1964. During part of that period, he served under Luther DeBerry, Dallas district engineer, whom he would succeed as executive director. That was the beginning of a lifelong working partnership and friendship.

In 1970, Goode was named district engineer in Lufkin, coordinating activities in nine counties. Three years later, he was appointed assistant engineer-director for engineering operations in the Austin headquarters, working closely with his good friend DeBerry, then executive director. "When I walked in the door, Luther said, 'Well, there's not any manual on this job. The only thing I can tell you is to sit down and start doing whatever comes up,'" Goode said.

As he rose up the ladder in the department, he garnered a reputation as a good administrator. "If I needed to know anything about the regulations or the laws that governed us, all I had to do was ask Mark," DeBerry recalled. "We didn't have a lawyer in the administration until just before I retired." When DeBerry announced his retirement in 1980, Goode had no inkling that he would be in the running for the top spot. In June, he was called into a meeting with commissioners, one of whom included Dewitt Greer.

"They didn't have a lot of conversation. They just asked me if I was interested in doing the executive-director job, and I said, 'Yes, I am.'" He began work July 1.

Goode's management style, which he developed early as a resident engineer, served him well later as executive director. "I like to give people a job or a project to do. Then I like to step back and let them do it. I try not to tell them how to do it and then, of course, I do give them the authority to do it. But I still hold them responsible for it."

That management style paid off handsomely when the "Don't Mess with Texas" anti-litter campaign kicked off. Don Clark, then head of the Travel and Information Division, was convinced that hiring advertising firms to design and launch the program would more than pay for itself in cleaner highways and reduced maintenance costs. The first TV commercial aired in January 1986, featuring young blues guitarist Stevie Ray Vaughan.

Goode laughed as he recalled his first viewing with Vaughan's wailing guitar and over-the-edge performance: "I said, 'Don, did you pay good money for this?' He said our research shows that most trash is thrown by 34-year-old people in pickups. I said, 'Go ahead. I never would have come up with that idea.' Of course, it was successful, and, of course, Don reminded me of this a time or two. That's all right. He's entitled to it."

Goode became the biggest supporter of the "Don't Mess with Texas" campaign - no matter if it featured scruffy bikers, Little Joe Hernandez or Willie Nelson. "Whether you like the slogan or not," he told employees through his monthly Transportation News column in 1986, "it has captured the attention of a lot of people including members of the group we want most to reach. It is causing public interest and comment like no other effort the department has made before. 'Don't Mess with Texas' definitely is raising public consciousness to the litter problem."

The Adopt-a-Highway Program, begun by the Tyler District in 1985, was another partnership with the private sector that worked beautifully and became a nationwide model for other similar programs. "At the time, we were dumping millions of dollars at a time for trash pickup," Goode said.

On the national level, Goode made sure that Texas was well represented on the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), serving on the executive and policy committees as well as serving on the executive committee of the Transportation Research Board. In 1984, he received the MacDonald Award, AASHTO's highest award. He also served as president of the Western Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials.

The American Society of Civil Engineers also recognized him with the "Service to the People Award" in 1985, citing his community activities.

After his retirement, he and his wife moved to Dallas to be near their children and grand-children, but he kept close ties with his "highway buddies" by maintaining active interests in the Texas Good Roads Association and the work of the Transportation Commission.

Adapted from:

An Informal History of the Texas Department of Transportation

By Hilton Hagan

1991

Published by:

Texas Department of Transportation

Public Information Office

2000