

# RAY BARNHART & Associates

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27 September 2001

Dr. Dennis Christiansen,  
Deputy Director  
Texas Transportation Institute  
The Texas A & M University System  
TAMU 3135  
College Station, Texas 77843-3135

Nominee: Marcus L. Yancey, Jr., P.E.  
Texas Department of Transportation (Ret.)  
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Austin, Texas 78723  
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Dear Dr. Christiansen:

The following pages constitute the nomination of Mr. Yancey as directed by the "Call for Nominations."

The first three pages are the formal nomination, followed by six pages containing an endorsement of the nomination by Governor Briscoe, as well as additional data culled from documents that summarize his educational background, publications, professional involvement at various levels of government, his other community service, and some of his awards.

My thanks for establishing TTI's Hall of Honor.

Sincerely,

  
Ray Barnhart

## **Marcus L. Yancey, Jr., P.E.**

The Texas Legislature established a state transportation department in April of 1917. Since that time literally hundreds of outstanding individuals, civic leaders as well as department professionals, have contributed to making it one of the finest such agencies in the nation. Of all of them, none is more deserving of being in the company of Frank Turner and Dewitt Greer in TTI's "Hall of Honor" than Marcus L. Yancey, Jr.

Yancey's brilliance and selfless service has extended far beyond Texas and the Department, significantly influencing not only the development of the nation's entire highway infrastructure, but earlier, serving his country during World War II in an extraordinary way.

After entering Georgia Tech on a scholarship at the young age of 17, when World War II was declared he, like other patriotic young men of the day, enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps in San Antonio. The Corps was so impressed with his intellect and leadership potential that it returned him to Georgia Tech where he was assigned to the Marine Intelligence/engineering School. Completing that training in 1944, he was sent to the South Pacific. Because his photographic memory enabled him to recall verbatim technical details and conversations, he was ordered to accompany U.S. officials on a highly secret mission into China to confer with the Chinese Communists. The purpose was to assess their military ability to assist the U.S. in winning the war against Japan. Mao Tse-tung's generals refused to allow those discussions to be transcribed, so each day upon the conclusion of the sessions Yancey would retire to his private quarters; there he would prepare a written record of the day's proceedings for his superiors. After peace was finally declared, Marc Yancey was one of the first Americans to enter the Forbidden City.

Upon returning to the U.S. after the war, Yancey enrolled in the University of Texas. Named Outstanding Freshman Engineering Student, he earned his mechanical engineering degree in 1950. After a brief stint in the private sector, Dewitt Greer recruited him as a design engineer in the bridge division in 1957. Two of his bridge designs won national recognition: The Devil's River High Level Span on US 90 received the National Outstanding Bridge Design Award in 1960, and the Kemah rolling lift bridge received the Bridge Design Award in 1962.

A man of remarkable intellect, his rapid mastery of the complex issues involved in developing a transportation system for a state the size of Texas so impressed Greer that in 1968 he transferred him to his personal staff; five years later he was named Assistant Engineer-Director. In 1980 he became Deputy Engineer-Director, then four years later Deputy Director, and in 1991, Associate Executive Director for Planning and Policy. In the latter position he was responsible for transportation planning, public transportation, legal affairs, legislative affairs, strategic and tactical planning, policy development, internal audit, and program evaluation. As departmental liaison with the many federal, state, and local government agencies, he earned the respect of all with whom he worked.

He was known as a man of the highest integrity, one whose word could be trusted under any circumstance. Precisely because of his vast technical knowledge as well as his flawless

patience and diplomacy, it was he who Mr. Greer assigned to work with legislatures and governors. He was so successful in representing the department in that politically-volatile environment that even Greer's successors continued to assign him that responsibility.

During his career he personally represented the department's interests during 16 Legislative Sessions, and under eight governors.

His management talents are unsurpassed. Governor Bill Clements created the Governor's Task Force on Management by Objectives in 1979. Comprised of representatives of the state's twelve largest agencies that employed ninety-five percent of the government's workforce, Yancey was elected to chair the committee. As a result of the ensuing recommendations, Governor Clements presented Yancey with a special award for his outstanding service to the state. Among other notable commendations, Yancey was also recognized as "Public Administrator of the Year" by the Austin Society of Public Administrators.

His expertise in financial matters as well as management strategies placed him in high demand not only in Texas government, but also throughout the nation. He was twice appointed Chairman of the State Agency Coordinating Council, and twice elected by state employees to the Board of the State Employees Retirement System. He served on the Board continuously for twelve years, two terms as Chairman.

The accomplishments of this unassuming man are truly remarkable. Not only was he on the University of Texas' Centennial Committee to organize its 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration, he was the only non-Aggie appointed to the 21-member Texas A&M 2000 Task Force. Imagine, a "Tea-sip" asked to aid in evolving a master plan where, by the year 2000, A&M would become a world-class institution! Marc Yancey served as Chairman of the Liberal Arts Task Force, and perhaps more pertinent to this nomination, was Chairman of the Engineering Subcommittee, as well. While it may come as a surprise to some A&M engineering graduates, through this committee Marcus Yancey, U.T. graduate, played a key role in making the Texas Transportation Institute a separate entity in the A&M University System and a world leader in transportation research!

Beyond his departmental responsibilities, he has been a guest lecturer on management techniques for students at the University of Texas, Texas A & M University, Southern Methodist University, Baylor University, and the University of Indiana. He was constantly recruited to serve on special committees for the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, often as chairman or vice chairman: the Task Force on a Consensus Transportation Program; the National Transportation Policy Study Commission; the Standing Committee on Administration; the Subcommittee on Highway Design; the Policy Review Committee; the Task Force on a Highway System of National Significance; and the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Executive Information Systems, as well as others. His contributions as Chairman of the Subcommittee on Highway Design were deemed to be so significant that a special award was created and awarded to him in 1988 – "The AASHTO National Award for Outstanding Service."

Because of the respect his colleagues accorded him for his role in shaping national transportation policy, over the years six states have requested his counsel in selecting the most qualified

individual to head their respective transportation agencies, in reality an honor few men experience during their professional careers.

Yancey's leadership was not restricted to engineering and transportation; he was active in a host of civic, sports, and educational activities. A Southwest Conference Swimming Champion, he was coach of the Austin Aquatic Club for seventeen years, and was named Coach of the Year twice by the American Swimming Coaches Association. In 1995 he was inducted into UT's Swimming Hall of Fame. He was active in the Boy Scouts of America, a member of the President's Council on Physical Fitness, a member of the Executive Board of Fellowship of Christian Athletes, on the Board of Directors of the U.T. Longhorn Hall of Honor, Chairman of the Deacon Board of the Hyde Park Baptist Church in Austin, and Chairman of its Building Committee.

Somehow, despite his Departmental responsibilities and the demands placed on him by professional and civic organizations, he found time to marry Alice Leigh and raise four children: Marcus Leigh Yancey, Mrs. Paul (Deborah) Hejl, Mrs. Larry (Janis) Forar, and Ms. Tenley Phinea Yancey.

Marc Yancey's Texas roots and commitment to public service go deep, dating from the early 1800's when his great great great grandfather founded Indianola down on Lavaca Bay, the shipping center of the state until it was destroyed in the hurricane of 1868. His great great grandfather was appointed Ambassador and sent to Brazil by Sam Houston to borrow money to pursue the War of Independence from Mexico, while another relative was editor of the largest newspaper West of the Mississippi and was instrumental in recruiting a militia to fight for the Confederacy. Of more recent times, the City of Austin dedicated the fire station on Speedway Street to his father, "Cap" Yancey, Sr., for his heroism in the line of duty. Also included among his ancestors was a Texas Ranger, known as an "ornery s.o.b.," and, as occasionally occurred in many families of that era and even in modern times, an uncle referred to only in hushed tones: the Right Reverend William Yancey of the Presbyterian Church who, as noted in a newspaper of the day, "was last seen in Albuquerque, the first sighting since the church's treasury and secretary disappeared at the same time."

Truly, Marc Yancey is not only a great Texan, but a great American. In the eyes of those with whom he's spent most of a lifetime, he stands as the epitome of what a man should be: exceptionally competent; selfless in pursuit of excellence; a professional in the finest sense of the term; a gracious mentor constantly encouraging others in the pursuit of their goals; a superb father and family man; and old-fashioned as it may sound, truly a gentleman respectful of every individual regardless of his or her station in life. He was, as one of his subordinates expressed it the other day, the "conscience of the Department, whose friendship is priceless."

Of all of the outstanding men and women I've been privileged to know, none is more fitting to be recognized in TTI's Hall of Honor than Marcus Yancey Jr. Hundreds, literally hundreds of people with whom he's worked throughout our nation, will concur in that assessment. Students of A & M University would do well to pattern their lives on his, for if they do, their futures will be assured not only as professionals, but as contributors to our society.