

# HISTORY & FOLKLORE

## PART FOUR OF FOUR

From *Illustrated Press of Liberty County*,  
Thursday, September 7, 1967 –

The Soil Conservation Service, together with allied governmental offices, has made extensive studies and achieved impressive ends in the lower Trinity Valley in the years since World War II. While there is much yet to be done, the countryside is greatly changed for the better through the cooperation of the agriculture people in the public and private sector. Crop yields have increased and improved almost beyond recognition.

All farm and ranch pictures of the *Illustrated Press* were made by Louis Neumeyer, Work Unit Conservationist with the Soil Conservation Service, Liberty. With the visit here last week of Secretary of Agriculture Orville Freeman, a very successful meeting of government folk and farm and civic leaders was held in the city hall of Liberty.



Former Governor Price Daniel assists Liberty County Girl Scout Troop plant red-bud seedlings along State Highway 1011 on the Daniel Land for beautification. Mr. Daniel is a co-operator of the Lower Trinity Soil and Water Conservation District.



Local board of the Lower Trinity Soil and Water District, which covers Liberty County. Members (l-r): Billie Kirkham, Delno Brown, J.E. Clark Jr., George W. Maxwell, Gertrude Gregory (secretary) and B.J. Jones.

From *The Liberty Gazette*, Thursday, January 13, 1972 –

## Ditch Cleaning Permission Denied by District Voters

Much to the dismay of the Liberty County Water Control Improvement Board, District V, the called election Tuesday to authorize the board to re-allocate some of its tax funds for maintenance tax on some 50 miles of flood control channels failed by a vote of 310-228. The second ballot at the polls was for the election of a new board of directors of the Water Control Improvement Board. Re-elected to fill two of the positions were Dr. A.L. Delaney Jr. and Buck Echols. Incumbent John Hill was also elected to serve on the board. The voting saw Hill receive 336 votes; Echols, 335; Delaney, 361, and write-in candidate W.E. Haynie received five votes.

The election, had it passed, would provide for the reallocation of some 13 cents of the 40 cents already allocated for the payment of the bonds on the \$380,000 investment. The passage of the election would not have increased the amount of money the taxpayer was paying.

As it stands now, the flood control channels throughout the water control district are weed infested and polluted, and are breeding grounds for mosquitoes and hiding places for snakes.

The \$380,000 investment has for the past ten

years done nothing but collect garbage and refuse and breed mosquitoes. The water control board called the election to try to protect the investment, for fear that if the channels were not soon cleared, the board would have to start all over again and risk another \$380,000 or more to have the same thing done again.

Echols commented after the election, "I'm sure the people just didn't understand the whole thing. The word TAX just scares some people." He continued, "I really don't know what we're going to do now. Our hands are tied. We had \$380,000 tied up in those ditches and now it's all grown up and it looks like we might lose our investment. It's really a sad situation. The people of Liberty don't know it now but they'll realize one day that they made a bad decision."

Preston Johnson, attorney for the board, also was disappointed in the outcome of the election. "I can't understand," stated Johnson, "how anybody can spend \$380,000 on anything and then refuse to spend money to keep it up so it will work."

Johnson went on to explain that the engineers had advised the board that in a few years the channels would be completely dammed up and clogged up and unworking, and

then the channels will have to be reworked at a cost probably exceeding the original \$380,000.

Johnson continued, "If a ballot spells out T-A-X on it, the people will vote against it, even though it was fully explained in the newspapers, on radio and at various civic meetings. We can't attract industry and public-minded citizens to the community," Johnson added, "if we live in a town without enough community pride to maintain it. That means the property values are going to go down, reflecting a lack of community pride. I'm just real disappointed in the whole outcome of things," Johnson concluded.

Incumbent John Hill was angered at the outcome. "I had hoped that the people would study the issues involved, look at all the facts and come to a better conclusion," he stated. "I feel the main reason the election did not pass was that the voters were ill-informed. They didn't understand where the money was coming from or what it was to be spent for."

Hill continued, "We made some 700 phone calls and bought advertising in the newspapers and on the radio. We lost because some poorly informed individuals took it on themselves to spread things that were not true."



U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Orville Freeman was in Liberty last Friday, September 1, 1967, for a meeting with local farm and civic leaders at the Liberty City Hall. He is seen here as he was greeted on arrival by a large group of well-wishers. Visible here, among others, are Liberty Mayor Dempsie Henley, former U.S. Senator and Texas Governor Price Daniel, J.E. Clark Jr., Harlan Friend, Nelson Waldrop, Don Strickland and B.J. Jones.



J.E. Clark Jr., chairman of the board of supervisors of the Lower Trinity Soil and Water Conservation District, awards Oliver "Sonny" Damek of Dayton the Lions Club Award as Outstanding Conservation Farmer in 1966.

So the election is history and the voters voted against the reallocation of tax funds for the maintenance of the over 50 miles of weed infested flood control channels. And the mosquitoes continue to breed and snakes still lurk in the high grasses surrounding the channels, and the people just sit and watch their \$380,000 investment, not go down the drain, but settle in a still stagnant pool of river water.

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