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# 'Pothole professor'

## A&M instructor's life ruled by strange events

By CINDY GEE  
 Campus Reporter  
 The caption reads: "A Texas A&M civil engineering professor and asphalt specialist for 35 years, has concluded that traffic is a major cause of potholes."

The professor is Bob M. Galloway, 63, a friendly man who smiled when he said Texas Monthly's Bum Steer Award came about by a series of strange events and he didn't know anything about it until after it came out in the magazine.

The award is given jokingly to people who Texas Monthly feels have done or said something silly. The Austin-based magazine publishes about 20 such awards at the end of every year.

In an interview at his office, Galloway recalled several instances in his life that came about by a series of strange events.

He said Jim West of Texas A&M's University News Service came to interview him about potholes a year ago and the story was picked up by The Associated Press and United Press International because people were having a lot of potholes in their streets and highways.

"As a result, a number of radio and

television stations called to interview me over the telephone about potholes. That just kind of snowballed.

"One of these people who was interviewing me, after we had talked for about 15 or 20 minutes, said, 'By the way, professor Galloway, what causes potholes?'"

"So I said, 'Well, I'm really not sure but after studying in the field asphalt for 35 years, I've just about concluded that it's traffic. No traffic, no potholes.'"

Galloway said that statement went out over the wires. He said he had letters from friends he hadn't heard from in 30 years. One friend living in England clipped the story out of the London Times and sent it to him and another friend in Sidney, Australia clipped it out of his paper.

Not only did the professor hear from old friends, but also he heard from people living in other states.

"I had one letter that was addressed to 'The Pothole Professor,'" he said. "All that was on the envelope was 'The Pothole Professor, Texas A&M.' It came to me without any question."

"In this letter a lady said that the potholes in Texas couldn't hold a

light to the ones they had in Wyoming."

He said a paper in North Carolina picked up the story and did a whole page on potholes, taking it to a ridiculous extreme.

"They showed a picture of a pothole with a hand sticking out of it," he said laughing, "and another one with an ocean liner lodged in it. All because of this story where in the original article we said that in Texas we had the biggest and the most potholes."

Then the Texas Monthly picked it up and he said he didn't hear about it until one of his friends called and told him he got the Bum Steer Award. He said he and his family got a kick out of the joke.

Galloway, who holds three patents in the field of asphalt paving, likened his interest in highway materials and construction to the fun person might get out of solving a crossword puzzle.

There are problems, he said, and there's always a number of solutions to them. He said he looks for an answer that will solve the problem effectively, efficiently and economically and when he can do that and the customer is pleased it gives him a good, warm feeling.

For nearly 40 years Galloway has been a professor at Texas A&M and he said teaching is fun and challenging. "I bring my experience and background in research and problem solving into the classroom along with the lecture," he said.

Galloway plans to teach another year or two and then go into his consulting and research business full time. He also plans to do more golfing, fishing and gardening when he retires.

Galloway grew up in the lower Rio Grande Valley where his family farmed citrus fruit. He graduated valedictorian from Mercedes High School and he said one major objective in high school was to finish with a good rating so he could get a scholarship to go to college.

He got a \$25 scholarship and ended up at Texas A&M, again by a series of strange events.

"When I graduated from high school," he said, wrinkling his tan forehead, "I started to Texas University. I think I had \$63 in my pocket and I packed all the belongings I had, carried 'em out to the high, put 'em down and hitched a ride on a truck."

He said the truck driver was hauling a load of canned goods to East

Texas and the driver said he'd give him a ride to Carmine."

"When we got to Carmine I asked him if he'd wait while I made a phone call to see if they still had room for me in the project," Galloway said. "When I called, fellow said, 'Well I'm sorry about two weeks too late, we're full.'"

"So I went back and told the 'How about me riding on up there with you? There must be some school somewhere where they'll take me.' He said, 'Yeah, I go to A&M, I'll go through Navasota.'"

Galloway said he didn't know anything about Texas A&M but he said it was a state school and his ship would be good there.

Pointing out his office window to the main entrance of the campus, he said the driver dumped him over there and he set his "possessions" by the side of the road and walked to the Agriculture Building.

He said he was told he'd be staying in Navasota with 400 other students at the Hoyle Hotel, an old, dilapidated hotel renovated by the state because the campus was overcrowded.

One of the students in the room owned a cattle truck, he said, and he put a canvas over and some boards in and he would haul a load of dents in the morning and evening. Galloway said he paid \$13 a month for room and board and \$1 a week for a ride the truck.

He graduated with the Class of '50 and went to work for Standard Oil. He said he didn't think they were paying him enough so he came to Texas A&M and got a master's degree in chemical engineering.

Galloway then became interested in civil engineering and he is currently a civil engineering professor and head of the materials and construction division of the Transportation Institute.

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