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**President 1995-1997**  
*(February 9, 2022)*

I was President of the HAS in 1995 - 97 after serving as President Elect for two years. During my tenure I think the two major events and accomplishments were the development of The Gulf Coast Bird Observatory and the fund-raising, building and construction of a new Administration Building.

The Gulf Coast Bird Observatory came about through a partnership with environmentalists, federal and state government agencies and the oil industry. The partnership itself was announced in 1993 just as I started my tenure as President Elect of the HAS. At the time it was called the Gulf Coast and High Island Conservation Initiative (this was frequently shortened to High Island Initiative - seg) and was focused initially on the Upper Texas Coast and into Louisiana but was ultimately to serve as the framework for the development of the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory which would reach up and down the entire Gulf Coast. The money, land and expertise contributed by the partners helped in identifying, preserving and managing areas critical to migrating birds. There were three phases to this partnership. Phase one was land acquisition; phase two was habitat protection and enhancement and public access facilities; and phase three was the first ever - and perhaps long overdue - bird observatory which would continue with the planning, the research and the education. The Gulf Coast Bird Observatory continues this work to this day - growing and building on the vision of the Initiative. (Steve Gast was a critical part of this partnership/initiative and can provide lots more information than me).

It was through this work that members of the HAS had the opportunity of working with National Audubon Society and its new Director - John Flicker who had reached out to the local Audubon Societies in an effort to incorporate local chapters more closely with the national effort. While the HAS was not successful in securing a firm commitment from the NAS on potential funding for the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, we were successful in developing relationships with them that brought John Flicker and other NAS officials directly to the HAS to see the work that we were accomplishing.

My recollection is that Roger Tory Peterson came to a couple of our Egret dinners and was very committed to the Houston Audubon Society. His Birds of Texas is legendary and one of the few books he did of a solitary state and he birded a lot in Texas (Victor Emanuel was one of his good friends here with whom he birded).

This leads to the beginning of my own tenure as President - 1995. We celebrated the 26th anniversary of the HAS which had its beginning in 1969. We were housed in the Edith L Moore Cabin and the long-term plans at that time were to house our administrative offices within that cabin. Over the next few years, the HAS propelled itself into the national spotlight with the acquisitions of Boy Scout Woods and Smith Oaks in High Island Texas. A new era of the HAS had been born and has not stopped since then. But, the administrative part of the organization had outgrown the cabin and was in need of a new expanded building with space to grow. We began a rigorous campaign to raise the funds that would be required to complete this new mission. We hired an architect who worked with us in developing what we thought would be required for our future. The architect built a small model of the proposed building which we took pictures of and used in our fund-raising campaign. We asked that each Board member make a contribution which we thought was critical in our approach to foundations, corporations and the members of the HAS - showing them that the full Board was seriously behind this endeavor. We were

incredibly successful in this campaign and the building went forth and was completed. That building was formally dedicated in 1997 and remains today as the administrative center of the HAS.

After my tenure as President, I remained on the Board as past President and I think this was when we met with the new NAS President, John Flicker. Steve Gast and I, as representatives of the HAS Board, made a presentation to John Flicker, asking for NAS participation in starting a bird observatory here on the coast. Unfortunately, we were not successful.

Mr. Flicker wanted instead to “plant’ the NAS flag in Texas. He intended to expand NAS influence in Texas through Audubon Texas, their satellite organization here. It was his vision that through the establishment of Audubon Centers adjacent to urban areas, urbanites could experience nature. Audubon Texas would provide education programs in the Centers explaining the need and benefits of preserving and restoring natural habitat for the birds and animals.

John Flicker’s tenure changed the four-state regional office that had been established with Dede Armentrout (as Regional Director for National Audubon Society) into a Texas State office with a state director. At that time HAS, while supportive of the Audubon Texas concept, did NOT want this to be to the detriment of the chapters (and especially HAS) that composed NAS at that time. The prior NAS administration under Peter Berle were exploring de-emphasizing local chapters. I think we were successful in that endeavor and the HAS lives on.

