

# **HELPING CITIES FOR HALF A CENTURY: A HISTORY OF THE MUNICIPAL TECHNICAL ADVISORY SERVICE, 1949-1999**

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When asked to comment on the quality of service the Municipal Technical Advisory Service provided for their town, responses given by Tennessee city officials sound like: “I would certainly hate to do without that service,” and “may I express ... my deep appreciation for the splendid work.” On one occasion in 1967, the Mayor of Hartsville was especially grateful. His two-page letter to then MTAS director Victor C. Hobday posed a familiar question: “How could we ever do without you? How could any town or city fail to avail themselves of the service rendered by the Municipal Technical Advisory Service? I shudder to think of the cost in dollars if we were forced to pay a private consultant for these services. It would be out of [the] reach of a small town.” Countless other city officials have heaped similar expressions of praise on the Municipal Technical Advisory Service in their its 50-year quest to provide comprehensive, quality assistance to Tennessee’s municipalities.<sup>1</sup>

At the end of its first half-century, the Municipal Technical Advisory Service has developed into a state-of-the-art consulting service. From its birth by a 1949 Public Act of the General Assembly, the Municipal Technical Advisory Service, or MTAS, has responded tirelessly to the changing needs of Tennessee’s 349 cities, providing to those municipalities several diverse categories of aid and support.

This history of the Municipal Technical Advisory Service looks to examine several aspects of the organization’s first 50 years; more specifically in several areas: the historical context out of which MTAS operated, the bureaucratic or structural changes that have come over 50 years, the people who shaped and breathed life into the organization, and the specific issues and problems MTAS consultants were called on to help Tennessee cities with. These topics fit together to give the reader a larger view of what the Municipal Technical Advisory Service has accomplished since 1949 and what the future holds for the next 50 years. Through the hard work and commitment of an ever-changing team of professional consultants and supporting staff, the people of MTAS have collectively created an effective organization that has successfully had a powerful impact on Tennessee cities, large and small.

## **Roots**

In the years before the Municipal Technical Advisory Service was conceived and founded, climatic events were drastically shaping the future of Tennessee’s cities. A more fully developed awareness of the important historical context that surrounded the origins of MTAS helps in understanding the first pathways the organization followed and the impending issues it would face further down that trail.

Twenty years before the founding of MTAS, the Great Depression wrought both a deep economic crisis and, ironically, the greatest prosperity the state and the South had heretofore witnessed. The

stock market crash of 1929 and subsequent changes in economic and political policy that were implemented to pull the nation out of the Great Depression undoubtedly had a significant impact on all Tennessee's cities from the established metropolitan areas of Knoxville, Nashville and Memphis, to the then tiny municipalities that dotted the Tennessee landscape. Through President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, federal relief and work programs succeeded in putting Tennesseans back to work and shoring up municipal facilities and public buildings. The impact was indeed monumental, according to New Deal historian Larry Minton. Minton argues that "as of June 30, 1938, the Works Progress Administration had constructed 129 new school buildings in Tennessee and had made improvements on 480 others." He further argues that by the middle of 1939 the WPA had also "extended \$5,502,038 on public buildings in the state," and had constructed five major airports and intermediate landing fields. The airports themselves, which were constructed at the five largest Tennessee cities, "represented another expenditure of \$4,849,949, and ... are significant monuments of the WPA program in Tennessee." Moreover, the National Industrial Recovery Act also had significant implications for Tennessee's cities, according to Minton. He asserts that, like the WPA, "the public works features of the National Industrial Recovery Act provided a stimulus to industry, and the construction of the highways, public buildings, public parks, municipal power plants, municipal water systems, and public housing projects stand as physical monuments to its achievement in Tennessee."<sup>2</sup>

A third major program of the New Deal, arguably the most visionary and enduring of Roosevelt's alphabet agencies, was the Tennessee Valley Authority. One historian echoed these sentiments: "None of Roosevelt's experiments was more riveting to Tennesseans than the emergence of the TVA." As the federal government's first foray into overall regional planning, TVA's effects on hundreds of towns and cities all across the South have been immense. Once completed, the Tennessee Valley Authority had built 14 dams to control the Tennessee River's flood patterns and harness its hydro power to generate cheap electric power, all at a cost of over \$450 million dollars in Tennessee alone.<sup>3</sup>

As revealed by such an astonishing price tag, "Tennessee was affected more than most other states by the virtue of the Tennessee Valley Authority being predominately located within its boundaries," one historian concluded. "Programs of flood control, regional planning, improved agricultural practices, recreational developments and the promotion of wider and cheaper use of electrical power were achieved in the state." Indeed, the programs of the New Deal, especially considering the abundant benefits of TVA, had a tremendous impact on the future needs of Tennessee cities, and in turn, the technical advisory service that was soon to respond to those needs.<sup>4</sup>

If, as historian Larry Minton has declared, "the New Deal wrought a revolution in Tennessee," then World War II dispelled any conviction that the economic revolution would be fleeting. The dual force of two such upheavals inaugurated a period of unprecedented growth in the economics, politics, and industry of Tennessee. In 1943 alone nearly 30 new industries were introduced to the Volunteer State. By the last year of the war, investors subsidized by the federal largesse spent \$1.5 billion dollars in constructing new plants in Tennessee. Industrial production took the economic initiative over agriculture in Tennessee during the war years. World War II affected the state, and the region as a whole, in other significant ways as well.<sup>5</sup>

In the words of prominent scholar George Tindall, "...the southern contribution was distinctive. For one thing, the region became the location of a disproportionate number of the nation's military bases and training centers ... More than 60 of the Army's 100 new camps were located in the South, and two-fifths of the wartime expenditures for new military and naval installations went to the southern states." According to Robert Norrell, Tennessee ranked fourth among other regional states in the wartime expansion of manufacturing facilities, contributing \$349,800,000 to the overall \$4 billion dollar influx experienced by the South.<sup>6</sup>

In Tennessee, the best example of this war boom was the explosive construction of Oak Ridge. In less than three years, the secret city grew from what one historian described as "rolling farmland and timbered hillsides," to Tennessee's fifth largest city, providing wartime employment to 110,000 people. Other military bases brought thousands of soldiers into the hinterlands of Paris and Fayetteville, severely stretching the outer limits of those cities' facilities. In addition to vigorous industrial and economic growth in Tennessee, metropolitan and municipal areas faced revolutionary changes in their size and makeup.<sup>7</sup>

In the 1930s and 40s the mass migration off the farm marked the greatest transformation in the history of Tennessee's cities. The changes were so substantial that, according to one historian, "the daily lives of many southerners were completely reoriented." All across the South more than three million farmers took advantage of the exploding industrial and economic conditions and migrated into the cities. The huge influx of former rural inhabitants into the municipalities forced city governments to adapt, and to make lasting reforms and react to the needs of their new constituents. Assisting these cities with issues born out of these long-term changes would be the refurbished Tennessee Municipal League and the Municipal Technical Advisory Service.<sup>8</sup> The end of war in August 1945 did not mean the end of Tennessee's economic and industrial growth. Wartime trends of expansion continued into the postwar years. For example, in Memphis, manufacturing and industrial production actually increased in 1947 to over \$2 billion, which was double that of immediate postwar figures. Returning veterans accelerated postwar suburbanization sparked by the GI Bill that bolstered their ability to afford new housing. This phenomenon had lasting effects on the development of outlying areas, as "housing authorities predicted that approximately 80% of the new housing projects ... would demand the utilization of undeveloped land." In the face of these unprecedented conditions, Tennessee municipalities would need quality assistance and advice to adapt and properly govern its citizens. That help came in 1949.<sup>9</sup>

This new influx of federal dollars — whether through huge projects like the TVA or through World War II military contracts — coupled with steady migration into the city limits, had a tremendous impact on the cities and towns of Tennessee in the postwar era. How cities would respond to the new needs and pressures they faced would loom large in the resurrection of the Tennessee Municipal League and, soon after, the move to establish the Municipal Technical Advisory Service. This brief investigation of the historical context that lay behind the changing obligations Tennessee cities would face explains some of the necessary causes behind the founding of MTAS. The immediate factors that led to its creation rested squarely on the shoulders of two men. These contrasted men, one at the zenith of his distinguished career in public administration and the other just beginning his storied crusade to improve Tennessee's municipalities, would meet with a grand idea in the spring of 1949.

Luther Halsey Gulick's career in public administration was unparalleled far before 1949. Born in Osaka, Japan, to Christian missionary parents in 1892, Gulick is considered the father of modern municipal government analysis. A year after earning his doctorate from Columbia University in 1920, Gulick began to serve as the president of the Institute of Public Administration, an organization in which he would serve more than 60 years. The Institute of Public Administration, or IPA, pioneered the discipline of using scientific management in city government. One commentator described the impact Gulick had on the study of city government: "He was among the first scholars to study the role of the executive in modern government and helped to devise and put into effect the concepts of budgeting and management training for public officials."<sup>10</sup>

During the Great Depression, Gulick served on President Roosevelt's Commission on Administrative Management and in other New Deal advisory positions on city government. When the United States entered World War II, Gulick further served the Roosevelt administration for two years as a consultant to Chief of Staff George Marshall, and on the staff of the venerable War Production Board. Due to Gulick's unique background — an American citizen of German ancestry born in Japan — he became an important participant in the nation's postwar diplomatic efforts. Serving on the United States Reparations Mission, Gulick toured Moscow, Tokyo, Manila, Paris, Brussels, Nuremberg, and Vienna in 1945-46. Two years after returning from Europe and Asia, Gulick was invited to speak about his experiences as a pioneer in city government and, more importantly, what the future of municipal management needed at the annual convention of the Tennessee Municipal League.

Gulick's keynote address "Technical Advice and Municipal Progress" laid out a foundation for a technical advisory service. It was the ideological birth of MTAS. According to Gulick, "What each city requires in meeting ... technical administrative problems is the advice and assistance of a well qualified and experienced man who can see with his own eyes what the problem is in its local setting and then help in finding and installing the solution, and showing the responsible officials of the town or city how to proceed." Gulick's answer to the city's administrative problems was MTAS.

There is a solution for this problem which I want to outline for your consideration today. It is the establishment by the state government of a local government technical advisory service for Tennessee. I would envision such a service as set up either in the department of finance and taxation, or in the office of the comptroller, or at the state university.... In addition to a director, the local government technical advisory service would have an advisory council made up of two kinds of experts, one kind nominated from among local government officials and experts by each of the major local government membership associates, such as your League; and the other group made up of technical representatives from each of the major state departments which have programs bearing directly on the work of cities, towns, special districts, and counties.

Gulick concluded with a plea that would not go unheeded: "If even half of what I have said makes sense, might it not be time for you, and the legislature, and the leaders of this state to put high on the agenda for 1949 the establishment in Tennessee of a local government technical advisory service?" Thus, the discipline of modern municipal government's founder had publicly

called for the establishment of the Municipal Technical Advisory Service. It would be in the hands of a capable young director of the newly revitalized Tennessee Municipal League to bring life to Gulick's request.<sup>11</sup>

On the day before the United States entered World War I, March 31, 1917, Herbert Jonas Bingham was born in Columbia, Tennessee. Only 29 years later, the Tennessee Municipal League would hire Bingham as its new executive director. Herb Bingham graduated from the Webb School in Bell Buckle, Tennessee, and went on to attend Southwestern (now Rhodes) College in Memphis. Earning a political science degree from Southwestern in 1938, Bingham continued his education at Vanderbilt University in 1939 and 1940, receiving a master of science degree in economics. Upon completing his coursework at Vanderbilt, the rising Tennessee scholar won a prestigious Rosenwald Fellowship to study public finance and public administration at the University of Chicago for the next school year. The year was 1941, however, and, like so many other young American men, World War II interfered with Bingham's progression toward the doctorate degree.<sup>12</sup>

Bingham enlisted in the Navy and was stationed across the nation and the globe: in Dayton, Ohio (where he met his wife); Cambridge, Massachusetts; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and in Ethiopia, China and New Guinea. In 1944 he fought as a gunboat officer at the Battle of Leyte Gulf in the Philippines and was awarded the Bronze Star for heroism in support of troops on Okinawa. Upon returning home the Tennessee Municipal League called upon this young Navy hero to lead its organization and Tennessee's municipalities through the unprecedented prosperity that followed America's victory over totalitarianism. In the words of Bingham's protégé and eventual replacement Joseph Sweat, Bingham "hung up his blue coat and trousers, put on a business suit and joined that battle to save urban America. He didn't know it then, but he had stepped out of the lesser battle and into the greater one."<sup>13</sup>

While still stationed at Millington Naval Air Base, Bingham began his long career at the Tennessee Municipal League on May 1, 1946. In a 1989 interview, the executive director described his first days on the job: "I and others worked very hard to create a statewide organization. By 1947 I traveled over 25,000 miles meeting with city councils, legislators and appearing on radio. But the real key to the '46-47 success was my belief that elected officials were essential to success in state legislatures." *Tennessee Town and City* editor Gael Stahl further asked why Bingham pushed to create a technical advisory service, the only one of its kind in the nation, in his first year at TML. He responded that

In the early years TML was often broke because of unpaid dues by member cities. So the real objective of organizing a municipal technical service was not to help cities but to help the poor municipal league get a skilled editor for a magazine so we could communicate better with our members. And we needed a public relations person to help us devise campaigns. We got an excellent municipal attorney, a director, and an engineer. This has paid off handsomely, to the tune of probably \$1.5 billion to \$2 billion a year at current [1989] levels and has been by far the greatest contribution [MTAS has] made.

Ever the consummate politician, Bingham knew that he needed a respected authority figure to sign on to his request for an independent technical advisory service. If the state legislature was

going to earmark a portion of the University of Tennessee budget for an experimental, unique organization, they needed the nation's leading expert in municipal management to convince them. Therefore, Bingham invited Luther Gulick to be the keynote speaker at the TML annual conference in April 1948. Sufficiently moved by Gulick's plea and Bingham's strategy, a group of legislators in the 1949 session of the General Assembly passed a public act and the Municipal Technical Advisory Service was born.<sup>14</sup>

"A Bill to be entitled: An act to establish a Municipal Technical Advisory Service in the University of Tennessee; to provide an appropriation therefore and for expenditure thereof; to prescribe the objectives and duties of such service." Thus read the introduction to Senate Bill number 607 which formally created MTAS. The bill, sponsored by six senators from across the state, also enumerated the specific duties and goals of this unique organization:

It shall be used for studies and research in municipal government, publications, educational conferences and attendance thereat and in furnishing technical, consultative and field services to municipalities in problems relating to fiscal administration, accounting, tax assessment and collection, law enforcement, improvements and public works, and in any and all matters relating to municipal government.

The assembly also addressed the issue of how to fund the technical advisory service. From its very inception in the spring of 1949, MTAS has depended on two sources for revenue. As originally part of the University of Tennessee's Division of University Extension, MTAS was awarded a share of its general budget. In order to supplement this appropriation, the legislature provided that a small percentage of the municipalities' share of the state sales tax would go to the Municipal Technical Advisory Service. Therefore, no matter whether they chose to call on MTAS for help or not, each town and city in Tennessee paid equally to have the privilege of a group of technical experts to be solely at their service.<sup>15</sup>

On April 15, 1949, Governor Gordon Browning signed Senate Bill 607 and legally established an organization named the Municipal Technical Advisory Service. It was the culmination of several shifts in Tennessee's politics and society. The rapid economic, industrial and cultural changes that came from President Roosevelt's New Deal, buttressed by the explosion that amplified these trends during World War II, created new challenges for the state's municipalities. The huge influx of people, migrating from the farm to the city due to the lure of new jobs, drastically altered the goals, needs and makeup of towns across Tennessee.

Although these sweeping changes created a need for new government leadership and assistance, it was the personage of Herb Bingham that made MTAS a reality in 1949. Bingham, whose own position at the head of a reestablished TML reflected the needs of surging Tennessee cities, made the immediate connections come together and brought bill number 607 to the floor of the General Assembly. The culmination of changes in Tennessee, and the vision of Herb Bingham, created the Municipal Technical Advisory Service. Now it would be up to a small group of technical experts to give life to the bureaucratic structure that the legislature had merely sketched out.

## Beginnings

A month and a day after the General Assembly had approved of the creation of MTAS, the gears of actually fashioning the organization began to turn. In the South College Hall office of University Extension Division Dean F.C. Lowry and a group of University of Tennessee professors and administrators came together to discuss the beginnings of the Municipal Technical Advisory Service. This group elected a permanent sitting advisory council consisting of business administration professor Charles White, sociologist John Knox, law professor Charles Miller, engineering professor George Hickox, Dean Lowry, Herb Bingham and political science professor Lee Greene. The council elected Greene, who would exert powerful influence on the future staff of MTAS, to serve as the first chairman.

The first order of business that faced the MTAS Advisory Council was to fill the position of executive director. Dr. Greene, however, already had given the matter some consideration. He recommended Gerald Shaw of the Tennessee Valley Authority. According to the minutes taken at the May 16 meeting, “It was the consensus of opinion that Mr. Shaw would be an excellent choice, chiefly for three reasons: his demonstrated ability to get along with people, his familiarity with conditions in this state, the fact that he is known personally by several members of the committee and therefore would not have to be hired on the basis of a ‘paper’ record.”<sup>16</sup>

Gerald Shaw began his career in municipal government in Ashland, Kentucky, in 1934, and he served as city manager in the cities of Hazard, Kentucky, and Big Stone Gap, Virginia. Shaw’s relationship with the state of Tennessee began in 1940 when he accepted the city manager’s position in Columbia. After two years, he joined the Tennessee Valley Authority as a governmental research consultant on problems of municipal government. A native of Massachusetts, Shaw received both his bachelor’s and master’s degrees from the University of Tennessee. Through his experiences with Tennessee government, the TVA, and the university, Shaw more than qualified as an excellent candidate for executive director. The council indeed appointed Shaw as executive director of the new Municipal Technical Advisory Service beginning the first week of July 1949.<sup>17</sup>

The first few months of a brand new endeavor are normally fraught with disorganization and chaos. The infancy of MTAS was no different, as Shaw “started on the tedious process of creating a completely new working organization.” His first priorities were simplistic, yet important. In his first monthly report to the Advisory Council, Shaw reported, in staccato fashion, his inaugural duties:

Arrangements for office space in the Aviation Barracks were completed, and office furniture and supplies obtained on loan from the Airport Laboratory. A telephone was installed ... worked out an estimate of requirements for stationery and office supplies and placed an order in line with this estimate... Engaged secretary, Mrs. Bettye Daniel, to report August 1, 1949... Took delivery of new car, Tuesday, July 26.<sup>18</sup>

Shaw also looked to begin his quest for qualified consultants. At the end of his first monthly report, the new director explained what he saw as MTAS’s most immediate future needs. In Shaw’s words, “During the first month, attention has been devoted primarily to getting the

Municipal Technical Advisory Service established and integrated within the university's organizational structure. This preparatory work sets the slate for proceeding to the next phase of the development of MTAS: the employment of certain key personnel as specialists." As he saw fit, Shaw recommended that five consultants be hired in the order of greatest need. He saw three — legal, accounting, and engineering and public works — as the most significant positions that needed to be filled "if the Advisory Service is to be able to furnish technical assistance on a level of professional competence." The fourth, a consultant in public administration, would be needed "as soon as the first three are well integrated into the organization and their responsibilities and work defined." Shaw deemed the fifth, public safety, really as a luxury. He deemed that consultant "may not be required," and should be "deferred until a definite need is demonstrated."

MTAS, according to Shaw's vision, would be a very direct bureaucracy. In the organizational chart drawn up in his third week on the job, the executive director allocated a purely simple flow of responsibility. The five consultants, potentially with some future assistants, would report directly to the executive director, while the professional responsibility of their work would correspond with each member of the diverse Advisory Council. For example, while the accountability of completing requests would eventually fall to Shaw, the legal consultant would have to be sure that College of Law professor and council member Charles Miller agreed with his decisions. This chain of command, which proved effective in the late 1940s and early 50s, would soon grow in complexity as the cities and towns of Tennessee began to realize fully the potential benefits of their Municipal Technical Advisory Service.<sup>19</sup>

The first city to call in need of help came at the very start. Although he was in the midst of the organizational duties that accompanied starting an agency from scratch, Director Shaw did find time to respond to the first request for MTAS services. The city of Norris, a town literally established by the Tennessee Valley Authority, needed assistance doing exactly what Shaw was doing with the Municipal Technical Advisory Service: getting organized. In fact, Norris had incorporated on the very same day that Shaw began his tenure at MTAS. Shaw met a few times with the Norris city council, discussing with them the details of preparing an annual budget, and conferred with officials in August about accounting and billing system problems. This request from Norris was the first of tens of thousands that would drive the Municipal Technical Advisory Service for 50 years.

Throughout the late summer and fall of 1949, Shaw would enlarge the size of his staff and hire MTAS's first consultants. Interviews for consultant positions began in August and continued through November. The first addition to the Municipal Technical Advisory Service began work on December 1, 1949. Mrs. Pan Dodd Wheeler, a 28-year-old artist who had been working at Knoxville radio stations WBIR and WKGN, became the first advisor on municipal information. The first consultant on municipal law, Porter C. Greenwood, joined Wheeler on the second day of 1950. Murphy U. Snoderly came on board as the engineering-public works consultant on January 16, 1950. Victor C. Hobday, a former Paducah, Kentucky, city manager accepted the position of municipal management consultant on February 1, completing the original group of MTAS consultants. These first four, especially Hobday, Wheeler and Snoderly, would have a drastic impact on the course and development of the Municipal Technical Advisory Service over several decades.<sup>20</sup>

By the middle of February, most of the staff and structural implements were in place. Mary Elizabeth Bush also joined the staff as a clerk-typist on February 15, beginning what would prove to be a long and positive relationship with MTAS. Before the end of the winter of 1950, MTAS had published its first issue of *Tennessee Town and City* and was beginning to respond to cities' requests that had been slowly trickling in.

## Structures and Frameworks

MTAS has changed dramatically since those harried months during which Director Shaw constructed the first framework for his organization. Without compromising its commitment to cities, the Municipal Technical Advisory Service has shifted physically, structurally, and in its relationship with the University of Tennessee and the Tennessee Municipal League during the past half century. Further, the location of MTAS on the University of Tennessee campus and across Tennessee has changed, while the types of consultants and their job descriptions have adapted as well.

Geographically, MTAS's first location at the Aviation Barracks would prove to be only temporary. In May 1950 the Municipal Technical Advisory Service moved into the newly built College of Law building on Cumberland Avenue. MTAS's Knoxville office was headquartered in the law building for many years, starting out in Room 14, then later commandeering a large space in the basement. From there MTAS moved four blocks east to 1000 White Avenue, which once was the Tyson Machine Shop. MTAS shared the White Avenue building with the state testing and evaluation center and the UT Bakery, which, according to longtime employee Ann Lowe, "drove you crazy ... we got fat."

The temptations of the bakery ended in 1979 when the White Avenue building was slated as one of the first structures to go to make room for the 1982 World's Fair. From White Avenue, MTAS moved back into the heart of the UT campus, into a wing of the Andy Holt Apartments which also housed hundreds of upperclass UT students. MTAS's office was located in the east wing of the second floor where the university had renovated a recreation part of the dormitory for office space. Ann Lowe, who had witnessed each of the moves firsthand while serving over four decades with MTAS, recalled that she "liked being associated with the students, even though we'd fight with them for parking spaces." She added that, "being in the same environment with the students was interesting.... We might be getting older, but I always said as long as you were around students you just didn't get old." In the early 1990s MTAS came to settle where it resides today, in the University of Tennessee's large Conference Center on Henley Street. Given ample room in the former Hess's Department Store building, MTAS built a permanent municipal library and has afforded each of its Knoxville consultants and support staff a comfortable work space.<sup>21</sup>

Although Knoxville would remain the main headquarters of MTAS since its inception in 1949, it was quickly decided that additional regional field offices would be necessary to serve fully Tennessee cities that lay far from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville campus. In the years before the construction of the interstate highways, it took two days for MTAS consultants to travel to Memphis and points in west Tennessee, having to take a route that dipped down into northern Alabama. With the hiring of Edward Meisenhelder in July 1952, MTAS opened its first "branch office" in Nashville. In space adjacent to the office of the Tennessee Municipal League,

the Nashville office began to serve its clients in middle and western Tennessee. This placement next door to TML also solidified MTAS's relationship with its parent organization. According to its first occupant, Ed Meisenhelder:

I opened the office and worked closely with Herb Bingham.... [In the first building MTAS had in Nashville] we had inner offices, so you didn't know whether it was snowing or raining or what was happening outdoors. The next move from there was on the eighteenth floor of the Life and Casualty Tower, where you could see everything, except when you're that high you're looking down on rooftops, not the prettiest things to look at. But we always had an office close to the League, one way or another.

Several years later, MTAS assigned an "intergovernmental services" consultant, the incomparable Bob Lovelace, to serve as a liaison between the two organizations in Nashville.<sup>22</sup>

MTAS pushed further west on September 1, 1965, establishing an office in downtown Memphis. Occupying an entire floor of the Downtown Center Building, a facility owned by the University of Tennessee, newly hired consultant A.C. Lock and a secretary operated the Memphis branch on their own. Management consultant Gary Head joined Lock in November 1966 to assist with west Tennessee cities. An office in Memphis would not prove permanent, however; in 1976 MTAS decided in favor of a more centralized location in west Tennessee: Jackson.

By its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Municipal Technical Advisory Service had established branch offices across the entire state, giving the organization the ability to be within a few hours drive of nearly all clientele. Also, like its mobile consultants, the locations of MTAS have been in flux throughout its 50 years. The various areas of interest and specializations of its staff would also be constantly shifting and adapting to the needs of Tennessee's municipalities.

The key to understanding the organizational framework of MTAS is the consultant. Beginning with four broadly defined categories, the scope and concentration of individual MTAS consultants has gradually expanded while the overall range of the organization has grown significantly, covering ground in the 1990s that was unknown in the 1950s. The original four consultants covered categories of law, accounting, management, and public relations. In the late 1990s, multiple consultants take care of these general issues, while several others specialize in municipal concerns in wastewater, computer technology, codifying ordinances, police and fire department affairs, and human resources.

Ed Meisenhelder, in a 1985 *Tennessee Town and City* article rhetorically asked cities, "Could you use a Superman in your city hall with a professional public administration degree and 102 years of municipal experience, including 65 years as a city manager?" MTAS generalist consultants, Meisenhelder argued, could provide this impressive feat. The generalists, including consultants on municipal management, law, finance, public works, and public relations, cover the broadest categories of requests. Most of their job descriptions still resemble those that Gerald Shaw sketched in his first annual report in *Tennessee Town and City*. According to Shaw:

Technical assistance in the field of management, including budgeting, organization, reporting, personnel, and other administrative matters, are handled by the consultant on municipal management; requests pertaining essentially to

municipal law, including charter and ordinance drafting, analysis of model ordinances, and their application to specific local situations, interpretation of recent decisions and rulings in municipal corporation law ... are assigned to the municipal law consultant; requests for technical assistance in the field of municipal public works and engineering, including maintenance of streets, sidewalks, and drainage systems, street cleaning methods and administration of the public works function ... are referred to the consultant on municipal engineering and public works.

Although many of these tasks are now the sole jurisdiction of other consultants, such as ordinance codification and personnel issues, much of these 50-year-old descriptions hold true for today's consultants. According to a 1985 *Tennessee Town and City* article the many duties of MTAS generalist consultants in the mid-1980s included "annexation studies, budget preparation, cash flow projections, risk management, charter amendments, ... personnel management, ... police and fire information, organization and management analysis, ... [and] incorporation guidance."<sup>23</sup>

The lineages of each of the generalist positions are as old as the Municipal Technical Advisory Service. While only a few people have held some positions, other jobs have seen constant turnover and complexity. Some have settled into trends. For example, a woman has always held the position of consultant on municipal information: from Pan Dodd Wheeler to Jackie Kersh to, currently, Carole Graves. Aptly reflecting the gender values of the workplace in the 1950s, the Advisory Council did not originally consider the position a "full consultant" because of its association with women, even though they did equal work. The first consultant hired at MTAS, Pan Dodd Wheeler, took on the position merely as an "advisor" for municipal information. It would be more than a decade before women at MTAS received their equal due. In the mid-1960s, current University of Tennessee Vice-President Sammie Lynn Puett (then Sammie Lynn Scandlyn) was the advisor for municipal information, and she described her fight to get "promoted" to full consultant with her male colleagues:

I had been taking a course in the College of Education and we were talking about discrimination and women in the workplace and it suddenly dawned on me that, hey, this is ridiculous.... [I was] really worked up and I thought I'm just going to go in and tell [Executive Director] Hobday just exactly what I think. I happened to meet him on the sidewalk ... and I lit into him about how I thought that this [unfair treatment] was just absolutely horrible. He agreed with me, I mean he couldn't agree with me more, which kind of took the fire out of my sails. He said, "We'll get that taken care of." And sure enough he got the ... MTAS Council to approve changing the title of the public relations staff member from advisor to consultant.<sup>24</sup>

Other consultants' career movements have shadowed each other. Ed Meisenhelder, the first consultant to serve in the Nashville office accepted an assignment to go to Panama in 1955. Sponsored by the University of Tennessee and the State Department's Point Four program, the assignment called for a three-year appointment to assist the Panamanian government with municipal concerns. Executive Director Vic Hobday hired Robert Lovelace to replace Meisenhelder in Nashville. When Meisenhelder returned from Panama in 1958, Lovelace came to Knoxville as an annexation specialist.

In 1960, representatives from the state municipal association in Maryland came to visit MTAS. They were very impressed with Lovelace, and subsequently offered him the job as executive director of the infant Maryland Municipal Technical Advisory Service. The next year, the city of Cookeville offered its middle Tennessee MTAS consultant the position of city manager, and Ed Meisenhelder again left the organization. His replacement, also for a second time, was Bob Lovelace, who returned from his short-lived stint in Maryland. This time Lovelace would stay until his retirement in 1982, while Meisenhelder, after serving ten years overseas with the prestigious Public Administration Service (PAS), returned for a third tour of duty in 1971.

The Lovelace-Meisenhelder relationship also reveals another trend in MTAS history. Lovelace's position in 1960 as a consultant on fringe areas marked the first foray into consultant specialization. Reflecting the distinct needs of Tennessee's cities throughout the decades, consultants in special areas have developed since the early 1960s. Like their generalist counterparts, some specialist positions have enjoyed a long tenure, while others have begun and then been discontinued, reopened and closed again. After hiring A.C. Lock to look strictly at urban growth, the development of specialist consultants got another boost through an unusual outside source: the federal government.

The Higher Education Act of 1965 was one plank of Lyndon Johnson's Great Society. Title One of that act allowed federal grant money to organizations that assisted the needs of municipalities. MTAS applied for and received a large grant from the Education Act with which it hired three specialist consultants. According to then Director Hobday, although there was some dissension as to how to spend the grant subsidy, hiring specialist consultants seemed the best way to augment the range of MTAS's effectiveness:

I had no problem with [the grant] for two or three years; it [was] renewed, of course, from year to year. But some of the others around here said, "Well, we're supposed to use this as seed money to start something and now its taking over." I said, "The way our budget is if you take this [grant] money away from it we'll have to let these people go," and I would challenge them to find any better use of this money. Nobody could tell me any other use of the money they thought would be better than this ... That was our first entry into police and our first personnel consultant, too.

The state matched an additional percentage of funds to the \$18,750 Title One money, which brought the total to \$48,750. Thanks to this additional money, MTAS hired two police consultants, Harold Guerin and Christopher Flammang, and then implemented a complete organizational restructuring. In 1966, MTAS formally moved toward dividing its coverage of the state along its "grand divisions" of east, middle, and west Tennessee. Constituting the biggest growth spurt in its 18-year history, MTAS hired consultants Jerome Hartman, Gary Head, Ken Holbert, Philip Deaton and Frank West by the end of 1967. According to TML director Herb Bingham, the reorganization

... proved extraordinarily successful. Experienced managers were assigned to each ... district.... They were well known and their expertise was demonstrated, appreciated, and thoroughly utilized.... This administrative structure let consultants spend a great deal of fruitful time in the field giving assistance in face-to-face discussions in city halls.<sup>25</sup>

Although their job titles connoted them as “specialists,” the actual work consultants A.C. Lock and Bob Lovelace performed hardly approached the word as defined in the late 1990s. Since the 1960s, specialists have reflected the changing needs of the cities, especially in areas concerning technology, water treatment, and utilities. Instead of calling one general consultant on public works to help with a wastewater request, as a city official would do in MTAS’s early years, that official could call four advisors for specific, state-of-the-art assistance in the late 1990s. Other highly technical fields, such as computer technology, have grown to offer similarly impressive coverage.

Supervising all the various consultants is one person, the executive director. The executive director’s position has traditionally been a difficult one. Hampered by a constant awareness of the many internal and external pressures, the director’s best assets have been strong diplomatic skills. Navigating successfully between large bureaucracies that have a stake in MTAS, including the Tennessee Municipal League and municipal governments, takes careful planning and a clear vision of the future. The five executive directors who have held steady the rudder of MTAS — Gerald Shaw, Victor Hobday, Odell Miner, C.L. Overman, and Bob Schwartz — have proven to be skillful in shaping the course of the Municipal Technical Advisory Service and in dealing with its parent bureaucracies. Inside the organization, the executive directors also have had to call upon exceptional management skills for independence and individual efforts on the part of the director’s employees are inherent in the nature of MTAS’s mission. The primary tasks of the five executive directors have been organizing, creating an exciting and tangible vision, establishing a positive atmosphere in the office, and keeping the needs of the cities first. Victor Hobday, who served as executive director for over half of MTAS’s 50 years, recalled that his management style evolved out of an assignment he had during graduate school at Syracuse:

The dean was a man who had gone to a German university. He was a hard task master and we studied like the devil ... He had us read *Creative Experiences* by Mary Parker Follett, and the essence of her book was that in settling controversies you shouldn’t consider it as two sides going against each other, ... there is a relationship that the two of them form ... a mystical third entity ... [that] evolves out. ...you don’t have one side or the other win, you have an entirely new [creation] ... The other thing she stressed was that you don’t have superior/inferior relationships. One person is not the boss; everybody here is someone you’re working with, you’re not working for them; you work with them. And that always stuck in my mind. Then I thought to myself that most of these people here spend most of their time working at MTAS, and I’m going to do all I can to make their lives here as pleasurable as possible.

Because of the quality of MTAS’s consultants, the executive director has been traditionally faced with the fortunate problem of having to manage professionals who themselves are capable managers. Nearly all consultants, through their previous experiences in municipal government and subsequent roles as qualified experts, have possessed on some level the ability to run the organization themselves. Channeling that independence and vast knowledge toward the common goal of aiding cities has been the primary challenge of the executive director.<sup>26</sup>

Another group integral to the organization is the diverse and talented support staff. The large staff includes everything from what in the 1950s were called clerk-typists (referred to as

word-processing specialists in the late 1990s), to highly specialized and demanding positions such as office managers and administrative services assistants. Beginning in July 1950 when Wendell Russell came on board as the first administrative assistant, MTAS consultants have worked alongside an ever-growing group of indispensable professional aides and office managers. The anchor of this group unquestionably has been Ann Lowe. Hired in 1956 as a clerk-typist, Ann dedicated more than four decades to MTAS, retiring in June 1998. With only one six-month break in 1960, Ann was a central figure in all but seven of MTAS's 50 years. Office work underwent nearly revolutionary change during those forty years. Ann described the differences in office productivity before the computer age:

I took my typing test on Gene Puett's old Royal manual typewriter. I still have that original test.... Then in the later years, especially on your ordinances and codification we went to the CPT computer, our first introduction to the computer.... One of the big machines was the address-o-graph machine. It was how you did envelopes. We kept a list of city officials and it was like a newsroom. We had drawers with type styles: little metal plates that were three by two and you physically inserted them into the machine and pulled a handle down for each letter. So for every address that changed you used a new steel plate. And you had to ink and hand-feed your envelopes. That is how we did our mailing list back then.

Other integral people who made various organizational and administrative operations run smoothly over the years were Mary Bush, Sally Thierbach, Flora Williams, Armintha Loveday, and many more. Without their management of the offices across Tennessee, handling constant travel reimbursements and processing incoming requests, MTAS would not be able to compete its mission and serve Tennessee's municipalities.<sup>27</sup>

Like the support staff, the library has grown to become an equally vital component of Municipal Technical Advisory Service. For the first few years, the MTAS library was mostly a collection of reference materials that consultants used for research under the supervision of Elizabeth McNutt. In the view of early MTAS leaders, the ability to have access to a wealth of knowledge on operational trends in municipal government would deepen the effectiveness and authority of the consultants' advice.

In April 1956, Miriam Bass oversaw the formal organization of the materials of the library. Bass was a Florida State University graduate who had previously gained exceptional experience tending to the TVA technical library. Along with McNutt, she shaped the library into a productive resource providing up-to-the-minute information for MTAS consultants. Bass expanded the library's scope for nearly a decade until she resigned to return to her home in Florida in 1965. Her replacement was Elizabeth Sodemann, a 1943 graduate of the University of Wisconsin, who had worked previously at the University of Tennessee library and at the Madison (Wisconsin) Free Library. In 1980, the task of taking the library into the 21<sup>st</sup> century fell into capable hands when Carol Hewlett came on board to replace Sodemann.

In her nearly 20 years of service since, Hewlett has effectively developed the library into an invaluable asset to MTAS. Under Hewlett's supervision, the staff, the collection, and the scope of the library has grown significantly. In addition to Hewlett, who earned her master's degree in

library science from the University of Tennessee, there are in the late 1990s a total of four permanent professionals working in the library. Thus, the library has been able to broaden its scope and ability to market itself to a wider constituency. While the traditional activity of collecting resource material still continues, the library staff now conducts telephone and Internet surveys, and they have taken advantage of technology to further organize their information. Hewlett, whose position has expanded by the late 1990s to that of a senior information resource specialist, has tied the MTAS library to other depositories across the state and has assisted Tennessee cities with managing their materials and information resources. Although it began simply as a central location to help consultants stay abreast of current municipal trends, the MTAS library has evolved into a more significant institution in the last several years.

The relationship MTAS has had with two outside bureaucracies is equally crucial in completing the structural portrait of the organization. Over the past half century, MTAS's two parent agencies, the Tennessee Municipal League and the University of Tennessee, have considerably influenced its direction and identity.

As we have seen, MTAS was essentially the creation of TML director Herb Bingham. Needing the help, Bingham pushed for the establishment of an organization that could both provide quality assistance to the cities and facilitate a monthly magazine that highlighted Tennessee's municipalities. In its first decades, MTAS did exactly that, subsequently tying itself tightly to the vision of TML and Herb Bingham. Although under the strong leadership of director Vic Hobday, throughout the 1950s and 60s, the ubiquitous shadow of Herb Bingham loomed large in MTAS activities. TML and MTAS obviously had strong links to each other, even though their purposes differed. While MTAS had nothing to do with the political lobbying that defined TML, the two still shared the same clientele.

One of the first responsibilities given to Director Gerald Shaw in the summer of 1949 was to work out a formal agreement between the Tennessee Municipal League and the University of Tennessee concerning the operation of MTAS. The result, entitled the "Memorandum of Understanding," identified and restrained TML's influence on MTAS. According to Bingham in his 1986 book *Municipal Politics and Power*, the memorandum provided that "MTAS service to TML in its main legislative role was carefully limited to legislative research without advocacy, and other specific MTAS/TML joint enterprises were clearly identified and agreed upon, such as the publication of a municipal magazine." While establishing guidelines to prevent abuse, the activities allowed by the Memorandum of Understanding tied MTAS closely to the Tennessee Municipal League.<sup>28</sup>

In the late 1960s, Bob Lovelace, whose official title was consultant for intergovernmental affairs, was Bingham's right-hand man in Nashville, helping him research and write legislation on the municipalities' behalf. Editing *Tennessee Town and City*, technically a TML publication, was predominately the responsibility of the MTAS consultant on municipal information through the 1970s. This activity linked Pan Dodd Wheeler, Sammie Lynn Scandlyn, and Jackie Kersh tightly to Herb Bingham and the Tennessee Municipal League. Further, Bingham served as the only non-University of Tennessee member on MTAS's Advisory Council. The Council, which met biennially, approved budget changes, monitored the hiring of consultants, and authorized structural changes for the organization. Therefore, it was pivotal in determining the direction

MTAS would take. Bingham played a significant role in advisory council meetings and the other UT members depended on the outspoken TML director for inside information on MTAS activities.

The charisma and prominence of Herb Bingham tied MTAS closely to TML throughout its first few decades. Like many other facets of Tennessee politics in the years after World War II, the widely renowned TML director greatly influenced MTAS. Another factor that pushed MTAS closer to the Tennessee Municipal League was that the University of Tennessee did not get too involved in the Municipal Technical Advisory Service. Although the university was extremely vital, MTAS was under the direct supervision of the Dean of University Extension and partially funded by a portion of the university's budget, but in the early years UT did not take an active role in developing MTAS and determining its mission. The biennial Advisory Council meetings represented the extent of UT's involvement in MTAS's affairs.

In the early 1970s, this arrangement of influence shifted. With the creation of the Institute of Public Service in 1971, MTAS grew closer to its affiliation with the University of Tennessee. However, with the other agencies in IPS — the Center for Government Training (CGT), Center for Industrial Services (CIS), and MTAS's sister agency, the County Technical Advisory Service (CTAS) — MTAS came under an umbrella that specialized in serving Tennessee governments. IPS added another advantage to MTAS's visibility and prestige: it was an integral part of a department that reported directly to the president of the University of Tennessee.

First headed by Robert Hutchinson, IPS's ties to MTAS were strengthened in January 1989 when former municipal information consultant Sammie Lynn Scandlyn Puett took the helm of IPS and became a vice president of the university. Although the leadership of vice president Puett and the burgeoning strength of the Institute of Public Service pulled MTAS closer to the university, MTAS had always enjoyed benefits from its association with UT.

In his symbolic address at the 1949 Tennessee Municipal League convention, Luther Gulick offered suggestions as to where to locate a municipal advisory service. The most sensible of these ideas was to attach the service to the University of Tennessee, thus keeping the service independent of political agenda and influence in Nashville. Because of this affiliation with the university, consultants visiting in the field also had additional weight behind their messages: they represented the University of Tennessee. Seen as quasi-faculty members, MTAS consultants earned prestige and authority in the eyes of city officials, and they carried a nonpartisan air of greater respectability. City officials across the state knew that because MTAS was not a tool of the Tennessee Municipal League or a political party, the organization could be counted on for impartial advice that was in *their* best interests, not in the best interests of politicians.

MTAS's complex framework has developed greatly since 1949. The addition of several new fields of interest has expanded the staff of consultants nearly tenfold. Its administrative staff has grown equally with the organization's maturation. In the late 1990s, the Municipal Technical Advisory Service is fully equipped to assist Tennessee municipalities in areas and topics unheard of in the 1950s. Furthermore, the Municipal Technical Advisory Service has responded to the changing needs of Tennessee's other state bureaucracies. MTAS's parent organizations, the Tennessee Municipal League and the University of Tennessee, have provided leadership and

helping hands to MTAS in return for quality service and able assistance. The ways in which the Municipal Technical Advisory Service has built its framework over the past half century have proven successful.

## The Requests

Since Gerald Shaw's response to the city of Norris in August 1949, the mission of the Municipal Technical Advisory Service has been to help Tennessee's municipalities improve their ability to govern effectively. The ways in which MTAS has gone about receiving calls for help have been entitled "requests." Although regular visits to cities have always been common, MTAS has largely placed the burden of calling for help upon municipal governments. For the past 50 years, if a city is unsure of a procedure, it is up to that city's manager, mayor, or commissioner to call, fax or write a letter to the Municipal Technical Advisory Service for assistance.

In many respects, only the medium in which cities have filed their requests has changed since 1949. Cities that in the past wrote a letter or a postcard formally asking for help now rely on e-mail and fax machines instead of their post offices. Although technology has speeded the process of filing a request, many of the requests that come in resemble those that consultants placed on three by five note cards in the 1950s. As MTAS consultants respond to requests that, if the numbering system survived in the 1990s, would surely be in the 40,000s, their contents resemble the first requests sent in during the summer of 1949.

Beginning with that first visit to Norris, MTAS consultants have crisscrossed the state in UT automobiles to assist cities. By January 1951, 67 cities, from Rossville to Mountain City, had called MTAS to assist with a specific problem. At the same time, the first four MTAS consultants began to spread the word about their organization to hundreds of city officials. During 1950, consultants Snoderly, Greenwood, Hobday, Wheeler, and Shaw personally visited each of the state's then 230 municipalities in order to acquaint officials with the new service. These extensive tours, which were policy during the first years, quickly began to spread MTAS's excellent reputation across the state.

Throughout the early 1950s MTAS handled an ever-growing number of requests. In the first several years, Tennessee city officials filed approximately 30 requests per month. From the beginning, patterns began to emerge in the types of requests and in which cities were asking for help. For example, because MTAS's only office location in the early 1950s was in Knoxville, east Tennessee municipalities filed the majority of requests. Recently founded cities, such as Norris and Oak Ridge, called most often needing assistance with basic issues, such as compiling budgets, writing annual reports, and collecting tax rate information. Larger cities, such as Nashville and Memphis, did not call often, simply because they had the revenue to hire their own consultants for a particular problem. This pattern, however, was not a steadfast rule. The metropolitan areas of Knoxville, Chattanooga, and Nashville did call on MTAS for help with many large and small projects throughout the past 50 years. Cities with populations of 25,000 or less, however, called most frequently. From growing cities, such as Alcoa, Murfreesboro, Jackson, and Franklin, to tiny towns like Finger, Medon, and Parrottsville, each used the prepaid services of the Municipal Technical Advisory Service.

The number of requests coming in by the end of MTAS's first decade reveals the plateau of approximately 30 calls per month. Executive Director Hobday, in his 10<sup>th</sup> annual report in *Tennessee Town and City* reported that

MTAS consultants traveled 46,209 miles in the state ... [and] a total of 322 requests were received and processed during [1958-1959]: 113 from 45 cities in East Tennessee, 123 from 51 cities in Middle Tennessee, 52 from 28 cities in West Tennessee, and 34 from the Tennessee Municipal League.

By the end of the 1960s, however, this pattern had expanded at a steady rate. As the organization made itself more accessible to west Tennessee and hired a significant number of additional consultants, the capacity of requests MTAS was able to process also jumped.<sup>29</sup>

The opening of the Memphis office, coupled with the mid-1960s redistricting and the hiring of several new consultants, took the Municipal Technical Advisory Service to a new level in its capacity to help Tennessee cities. By MTAS's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the number of requests consultants had responded to doubled. According to Director Hobday's annual report in *Tennessee Town and City*, over the 1974 fiscal year MTAS consultants had completed work on 741 requests, had made 1,872 field visits to cities, and had traveled 253,351 miles in Tennessee. Further expansions in the 1980s and 90s would make that number seem minute yet again.<sup>30</sup>

Like the various sizes of Tennessee cities MTAS aided, the categories in which these numerous requests ranged from helping the city administer huge projects to simple requests for research. Consultants could spend as little as three or four hours on one request while dedicating upwards of 600 or 700 hours on a major project. Furthermore, city officials who saw their neighboring municipalities implement a successful program with MTAS's help often called to request a similar project for their own city. Much of Sammie Lynn Scandlyn Puett's tenure as MTAS's municipal information consultant in the 1960s reflected this phenomenon. During her eight years at MTAS, she spent much of her time helping cities garner public support for a local sales tax. In her words:

In 1963, the [Assembly] passed legislation making it possible for cities to levy a local sales tax if it was approved in a referendum because they thought nobody would dare vote a tax on themselves ... Saying that cities would not approve it was kind of like waving a red flag in front of me, because I wanted to prove it could be done. I remember the first referendum — it was in Henderson County where Lexington is — and I knew that we had to win that first referendum because it was highly publicized, that was the first county that was going to vote on local sales tax ... So I worked hard with Lexington and Henderson County, spent a lot of time down there planning their campaign, organizing it, and doing the publicity for it and everything. We won by a margin of seven to one ... I was just elated.... I spent the next probably three years after that working on [sales tax referendums], that was by far the bulk of what I did [as a consultant] because one city and/or county after another were involved with it. I worked all over this state with cities and counties and within two years, 98 percent of the *population* had approved the sales tax.

For Scandlyn Puett, the overwhelming success of the local sales tax campaign had both a profound effect on Tennessee's cities and it created an enormous feeling of accomplishment for the MTAS consultant.<sup>31</sup>

Scandlyn Puett's description of her exhaustive efforts to pass the tax in her hometown of Knoxville illustrates this satisfaction:

The referendums were just wonderful. You could really measure your success.... My calendar was marked with the date that the referendums were coming up all over the state, and I was just as eager, or maybe I should say anxious, about every one of them as if it were my hometown or my home county. I remember the Knox County referendum in particular, [because] it got kind of nasty with all sorts of charges going back and forth. The big anti-sales tax person was Cas Walker. He was a member of the city council, had been a mayor briefly, had [a TV] show at night, and he owned Cas Walker Supermarkets. He was as country as anybody could be.... He was always opposed to anything, whether it was fluoridation or whatever. So Cas was obviously against the local sales tax.... That was the first public issue that Cas Walker lost.... Everybody was so sure because Cas was fighting it that it would fail. Fluoridation had failed, anybody's campaign that he endorsed — if he endorsed [the candidate] he won, if [Walker] was against him, they lost. And the same thing on public policy issues.<sup>32</sup>

Other prominent MTAS consultants also had special projects that stuck out in their memories. Throughout five decades, each MTAS consultant completed hundreds of requests from different cities across the state. One analogy compares the consultant's memory to that of a busy doctor who has seen so many patients that all the ailments and injuries have blurred together. For many consultants, the requests have simply run together. Still, some projects prominently stick out, like the prolonged sales tax referendum campaign. For Edward Meisenhelder, his help with Nashville's largest annexation and consolidation into a metropolitan government was a milestone in his career. In his words,

I guess one of the toughest assignments I had was to try to figure out a way that the city could annex the entire tenth district — the Green Hills vicinity and [large] areas south of town.... Of course, at that time, you had a lot of people who lived out there who were happy with the benefits of Nashville but didn't pay Nashville city taxes.... I remember I was invited to go to a public meeting to discuss this and I had some real tough opposition from a couple of lawyers.... Later on, of course, it was done but as part of the metropolitan government.

Long-time executive director Victor Hobday recalled an instance in which work he had done found its way into a Tennessee State Supreme Court decision. According to Hobday,

The old constitution of Tennessee specified the composition of the county governing body: [they would have] two justices of the peace from each district, except the district that included the county courthouse, which would have three. Well, these federal district judges all around the state ... simply ignored that provision. They simply came up with new plans which they thought were good plans and ignored the constitution. Well, I'm not a lawyer but it was obvious that there was something wrong with that. So I wrote this article outlining why that was not right, and the Tennessee Supreme Court acted on it.

This article, co-written with University of Tennessee political science professor Lee S. Greene, remained vivid in Dr. Hobday's memory. Thousands of more mainstream requests or activities were simply forgotten.<sup>33</sup>

One activity that cities frequently called upon MTAS to assist them with was ordinance codification. Dr. Hobday described MTAS's practice of codifying municipalities' ordinances as "the single most important valuable service that we provide." Furthermore, Hobday suggested that a major obstacle facing many of Tennessee's smaller cities was that the cities' active laws and ordinances were in extreme disarray. According to the executive director, sometimes they were in "handwritten form in old ledger books. I doubt there were many of them that really knew everything that was in those books or [were willing] to sit down and try to go through all those books." For more than three decades, MTAS gave the task of solving this significant impediment for cities to legal consultant Don Ownby.<sup>34</sup>

Requests had completely covered up legal consultant Eugene Puett by 1957. The number of cities that needed help with legal issues had grown to the point that one consultant could not handle the load. In April 1957, MTAS brought on board a second lawyer, Don Ownby, to concentrate solely on the painstaking yet vital task of codifying ordinances. According to Ownby, codifying ordinances for Tennessee's cities was a challenge because "codes were whatever someone would remember. Some cities did not even number their ordinances ... sometimes ordinances would run 50 or 100 pages [or] sometimes [they] may be one page. Some cities were *surprised* what ordinances they had on their books, or didn't have." For example, Ownby related one instance when, while visiting one city to look through its books, he asked about the charges against a person in the city's jail. When told public drunkenness, the MTAS consultant replied, "I didn't see any ordinance that you've got against public drunkenness!"<sup>35</sup>

Codifying ordinances has been the most popular service MTAS has offered. Each month several cities called asking to have their codes updated. For the first few decades this service was completely free, saving cities from retaining an attorney in the private sector to do it at the expense of thousands of tax dollars. Only in the late 1990s has MTAS instituted a fee for the service in order to streamline the process and proactively produce the best volume for cities to adopt. The massive amounts of ordinances Don Ownby codified over his 31-year tenure reflected MTAS's central mission: assisting even the tiniest cities in Tennessee modernize and stay that way.

## The People

The thousands of requests filed by cities were the building blocks that made MTAS function; they were the reason the Municipal Technical Advisory Service was created. What made MTAS a successful organization that was able to respond quickly and expertly to the most pressing issues facing Tennessee's cities, however, has remained its personnel. The bedrock of MTAS has always been its people. In the very second meeting of the MTAS Advisory Council, on May 16, 1949, Herb Bingham insisted that MTAS bring only the most qualified and energetic people into the organization. According to Bingham, in order to gain the confidence of Tennessee city officials, MTAS must hire only individuals with outstanding practical experience in solving the problems of city government. This requirement, that MTAS hire only the best, has been one of its

most enduring principles. It is the secret to the success of the Municipal Technical Advisory Service.

Victor C. Hobday is the man most responsible for making the Municipal Technical Advisory Service a successful venture. Other than Herb Bingham, who greatly influenced MTAS from without, Hobday shaped the paths that MTAS would follow for nearly 30 years. Any discussion of the people who gave life to the Municipal Technical Advisory Service must start with the talented manager from Kentucky. Beginning in 1950 as the first consultant in municipal management, Hobday would leave the organization to take a city manager position in Waxahachie, Texas. In 1952, Hobday returned to MTAS as executive director; a position he would make his very own over the next 28 years. For several decades, many city officials simply associated MTAS with Vic Hobday. They were synonymous.

Born in Covington, Kentucky, on September 2, 1914, Victor Hobday was part of a young generation that was unwittingly on a collision course with World War II. Upon moving from Covington, a town just over the border from Cincinnati, Ohio, Hobday graduated from high school in Falmouth, Kentucky, and proceeded further south to Lexington and the University of Kentucky. In the midst of the Great Depression, Hobday completed his bachelor's degree from Kentucky in the field of commerce. According to the future executive director, those desperate times and the search for any opportunities shaped his decisions:

In my undergraduate days, I had no good idea of what I wanted to do. I felt, at times, sorry that I didn't have a burning desire to be a lawyer or something like that. In fact my dad sent me off to college simply to study law, but this was in the depths of the Depression; from 1932-36 were my college years. So the second year I was there we read about this publication by the Department of Commerce, which they call instead of Business Administration at Kentucky. They put out a publication each year on "Bargains and Brains," [which included] resumes of their graduates each year. And every one of those graduates were getting jobs. So that impressed me and I transferred to the College of Commerce.

Despite the restricted job market Hobday did secure a job after graduation, working for \$115 a month in the Kentucky Department of Revenue from 1936 to 1938. In 1938, Hobday secured a graduate fellowship from the Maxwell School at Syracuse University, widely recognized as one of the best schools in the field of public administration. After he had dedicated two years at Syracuse toward his doctorate in public administration, "World War II came along, and I was a reserve officer and got ordered up right away." Along with thousands of other American young men and women, World War II forced Hobday to postpone temporarily any career aspirations.<sup>36</sup>

Hobday's sharp ability to recognize opportunity again marked his diverse experience in the military. According to Hobday,

Here again, [I was] the opportunist. It was a two-year arrangement at Syracuse and they brought in a new class every year.... The year I was in the second year class, this one man named Jim Vaughn was in the first year class.... He was a reserve officer in the Signal Corps and he went down [to Washington] to be in the personnel division of the Signal Corps. So he got in touch with me in the summer of 1941 and wanted to know if I could come down. He put me on orders

to be in the personnel division of the Signal Corps. I didn't know anything about the Signal Corps.

From the Signal Corps, he enrolled in three-month law program at the Adjutant General's school in Washington.<sup>37</sup>

Then, Hobday ended up in the budget office of the War Department through the use of another connection, this time one of his professors at Syracuse, John Russell. After another year, he was tapped to be the commanding officer in a unit that used his education at Kentucky and Syracuse: military government.

I went to school in military government at the University of Virginia for five weeks and then to the civil affairs training school at Northwestern for six months where I learned to speak Japanese. They had instructors there who had been in the families of those who had been forcibly removed from the West Coast. These were young people, dedicated Americans. I even got hold of Senator [Claude] Pepper — I had met [Florida] Senator Pepper when I was in Washington — [and told him] about what a raw deal I thought the [Japanese] got.... When I completed that six months, I was shipped off, well, we didn't know where we were going.... We ended up spending about a month on the ocean in [a] ship, and then we got word we were going to Korea.

Hobday landed with his military government unit — a group of troops and experts whose purpose was to continue the operations of occupied cities and maintain the peace in the midst of turmoil — at Inchon, South Korea, a few weeks after the Japanese surrendered. After one of his superior officers decided to take command of the military government unit, Hobday was soon relieved of duty. Again through connections, and impeccable timing, Hobday secured the overwhelming position as the national budget director for South Korea. Due to the constant state of flux and confusion in nations such as Korea after the Japanese occupiers were ousted, American service personnel filled in to run the government. After working for six different military agencies in five years, in June 1946 Victor Hobday left active duty and returned to Kentucky.<sup>38</sup>

In the summer of 1947, Hobday began a career in municipal government that would span three decades when he accepted the city manager position in Paducah, Kentucky. A job interview in Tennessee two years later would shape much of the remainder of Hobday's career. In November 1949, Hobday came to Knoxville to interview with Gerald Shaw. In February 1950 he became the fledgling Municipal Technical Advisory Service's first municipal management consultant. Hobday's first stint with MTAS was, in his words, an "unreasonably short period of time." While still city manager at Paducah, Kentucky, Hobday had applied for the city manager's position in Waxahachie, Texas, a small town a few miles south of Dallas-Fort Worth. According to Hobday, "After I came down here [to MTAS], the man they had hired in Waxahachie instead of me had gone on in a very short time, so they contacted me and wanted to know if I was still interested.... It was an opportunity to get [my wife] Elizabeth back to her home [so] I felt it was desirable."<sup>39</sup>

After just eight months at MTAS, Hobday left to become the city manager of Waxahachie. The impact of Vic Hobday on MTAS, however, was not complete. After executive director Shaw left

in 1951, he returned to Knoxville, this time for a little longer than his first eight-month stint. For the next 28 years, Hobday held steady the rudder of MTAS, guiding the organization through its years of major growth and expansion.

Hobday's tenure as MTAS executive director, along with leading the organization into several new ventures, saw some personal successes as well. In the mid-1950s, the Department of Political Science at UT earned a contract with the U.S. State Department to aid the governments of Panama and Bolivia as part of its "Point Four" program. One publication described the program's mission as "designed to improve the capacity in these countries to participate more effectively in their own governments and carried out by International Cooperation Administration (ICA) of the United States Operation Mission (USOM) as part of the Point Four Program for international development." Officially administered by MTAS Advisory Council member Lee Greene, the contract partnered UT with the University of Panama and the University of San Andres, in La Paz, Bolivia.<sup>40</sup>

The first team sent to Panama in 1955 was composed of three men, led by MTAS management consultant Ed Meisenhelder. Meisenhelder's responsibilities in Panama mirrored those he encountered each day in Tennessee as an MTAS consultant: He gave the Panamanians "advice on budgeting, operations and management, personnel, purchasing, and records management." Meisenhelder spent three years attached to the University of Panama, ultimately returning to MTAS's Nashville office in 1958. In 1963, UT would again call upon the expertise of MTAS to lead the contingency in Panama, this time it chose Victor Hobday.<sup>41</sup>

Although the assignment called for a two-year commitment in Panama, political instability cut his stay short. In his own words, Hobday described the exciting reasons behind his shortened stay:

I had understood all the way around that I was going down to [Panama] for a two-year leave of absence, and that was the duration of my appointment. At Christmas time, 1963, a small shooting war erupted down there, precipitated by some Panamanian students.... The United States had agreed to have the Panamanian flag [flown] alongside the American flag at all public places in the Canal Zone.... [At the University of Panama], there was only an American flag. Well, the Panamanian students didn't like that and, right before the Christmas holiday, they took an old Panamanian flag and were going to put it up that flagpole. The American students [disagreed] and there was a little bit of a riot on the campus. The Panamanian students, in handling their flag, had torn it. Well, they went back into Panama saying that the American students tore our flag. That just sent Panama afire. Now this happened late in the day, and [then] the Panamanian National Guard started firing on this hotel in the Canal Zone. I think there were three fatalities altogether.... The upshot of all that was, with the Panamanian students so heavily involved, they decided that it was an unhealthy place to be ... and they canceled the contract.<sup>42</sup>

Hobday and his family returned safely to Knoxville in February 1964, but because he was on an official two-year leave from MTAS, he went to work for Lee Greene as a researcher in UT's Bureau of Public Administration in order to complete his assignment. This opportunity allowed

Hobday to move closer to the goal he had abandoned in 1947. Upon his discharge from the Army in 1946, Hobday returned to Syracuse to spend a year working on the requirements for a doctorate in public administration. After using one year of his GI Bill benefits, he then accepted the city manager position in Paducah. Seventeen years later, the aborted mission to Panama allowed him to renew his efforts to earn a Ph.D. Hobday turned his research for the Bureau of Public Administration into his dissertation and eventually crafted it into a book, *Sparks at the Grassroots: Municipal Distribution of TVA Electricity in Tennessee*, which the University of Tennessee Press published in 1969. The short adventure to Panama in 1963 had brought his goal of a doctoral degree to fruition. After his short hiatus ended in the summer of 1965, Hobday returned to his executive directorship at MTAS where he would remain until his retirement in 1980.

Hobday's retirement in 1980 produced a quandary for University administrators and Tennessee city officials: For the first time since 1952 they had to find someone to take over the reins of MTAS. A select group of interested parties, including Dr. Hobday and Herb Bingham, decided to guide the Municipal Technical Advisory Service down a different course and selected Edwin Odell Miner to become the third executive director of MTAS. A native of Utah, Miner had previously served as executive vice-president of the Rocky Mountain Institute of Public Affairs and gained quality city experience on the staffs of the municipalities of Provo and Orem, Utah, and Scottsdale, Arizona. Miner attended Brigham Young University, where he received both a bachelor's and a master's degree in public administration. Miner earned his Ph.D. at the University of Utah in 1978.

Miner's management style differed greatly from that of his predecessor. Whereas Dr. Hobday led with a personal air of authority, Dr. Miner's method of management looked more to reaching a consensus throughout the organization. This drastic change led to some friction because, in the words of one consultant,

Those of us in the organization didn't recognize that what Odell Miner was talking about we'd still be talking about 20 years later. He put a lot of emphasis on teamwork, and that's a no-brainer today, and that's what MTAS had been doing for years. But he was a little ahead of his time and for MTAS at that time.

This friction, coupled with Dr. Miner's desire to be closer to his family back in Utah, led to his resignation in January 1983.<sup>43</sup>

In a move that mirrored the hiring of Victor Hobday in 1952, MTAS again invited a former consultant, Carl Lewis (C.L.) Overman, to fill the vacancy and become the organization's fourth executive director. Overman's interest in city government lay deep in his personal background. "My grandfather was the mayor in Johnson City, where I was raised in the 1950s. He was the city commissioner and mayor for about three terms from '53 to '59. I had a great deal of respect for him ... and so that's where my interest came from, following his political campaigns."<sup>44</sup>

Another interest he shared with his grandfather — aviation — further shaped his pre-MTAS career. Upon graduating with his bachelor's degree from East Tennessee State University in the late 1960s, Overman went to the Navy's Basic Aviation Training Command school where he became an accomplished expert in training fighter pilots for the Vietnam War. However, because

Overman was far too valuable to send in harm's way — he was the first student to earn an expert rating in both bombs and rocket training — he never saw combat. Instead, according to a 1989 *Tennessee Town and City* interview, “They sent me to Jacksonville, where I was an instructor and communications officer. So I spent my career bombing palm trees in Florida and the Okefenokee Swamp.” His prestigious position as a Navy instructor deeply ingrained in Overman several core values, including a strong work ethic and a reliance on teamwork. These value systems would serve him well as MTAS director.<sup>45</sup>

With the early 1970s removal of American troops from Vietnam, Overman returned to ETSU to seek a master's degree in its newly established city government graduate program. During his coursework, Overman completed an internship with the city of Maryville, where he gained quality experience working in city government. Through his Maryville and ETSU contacts, the city of Sevierville hired Overman as its first city administrator in 1972. According to Overman, in Sevierville “They had plunked me [down] into the middle of that whole 1930s way of doing business out of a cigar box.” His efforts at trying to update and modernize that archaic system reflected the crusade that MTAS had been leading since the 1950s. From Sevierville, Overman followed his former employer and Maryville city manager, Ken Devereux, who had gone to manage the city of Beaumont, Texas. Beaumont, a city of 125,000, provided many challenges and worthwhile experiences for Overman. After four and a half years, however, the east Tennessee native decided it was time to return home. According to Overman, he responded to MTAS's recruiting advertisement in the International City Managers Association (ICMA) magazine on a whim.

After I had sent my resume to Vic, I just happened to go to work real early one morning. I had to be there at seven o'clock, which was a little bit of an aberration. So Vic called [my] house, apparently about 7:15, because he'd get to the MTAS office over on White Avenue real early, so he called early to try to catch me before I left for work. My wife answered and he said, “This is Dr. Hobday, is C.L. there,” and she said, “No, he's already gone to work.” And [Hobday replied], “He's already gone to work!” So I think that's what got me the job, because he said, wow, this guy's going to work early.

In July 1977, C.L. Overman first came to work at MTAS as a management consultant, working with cities in the familiar northeastern region of Tennessee. For the next four years, Overman worked as a generalist consultant until leaving to become an assistant city manager of Maryville in the fall of 1981. A year and a half later, MTAS called upon Overman again to return as executive director.<sup>46</sup>

Overman served as executive director for just over six years. During his tenure, which lasted through much of the 1980s, Overman worked to solidify MTAS's organization and modernize some of its processes. Beginning a movement that would be extended by his successor, Overman made the first in-roads in using technology to modernize the Municipal Technical Advisory Service, therefore enabling the organization to lead Tennessee's cities into the next century. In June 1989, C.L. Overman left the directorship of MTAS to become the assistant to renowned Alcoa city manager Bill Ricker. Rising to the position of city manager with Ricker's retirement in 1990, the abilities C.L. displayed at MTAS — strong long-term vision and organization-building skills — again emerged in his leadership in one of the most thriving towns in east Tennessee.

This expertise manifested itself in Overman's winning the 1995 City Manager of the Year award given by the Tennessee City Management Association.

The campaigns to recruit new MTAS executive directors have followed somewhat of a pattern. When the Advisory Council brought in Dr. Hobday in 1952, they hired a director with whom they were familiar and who knew well the workings of the organization. In 1980, the organization's leaders, along with IPS and TML, decided to take a different tack in recruiting a replacement for the retiring Hobday. Because he was unacquainted with MTAS and Tennessee, Dr. Miner fulfilled MTAS's desire for a fresh director with a fresh outlook on city government. When this relationship did not work to everyone's expectations, however, a return to the previous method of recruitment — finding a familiar and comfortable director — resulted in the hiring of former consultant C.L. Overman.

In 1989, MTAS decided again to hire an "outsider," only this time the effort met with greater success. Bob Schwartz, the former city manager of Americus and Garden City, Georgia, became the fifth MTAS executive director in December 1989. Schwartz's city government career began when he served as an assistant county manager in Lexington County, South Carolina, from which he moved to Sumter, South Carolina, where he served as community development coordinator. Going next to Garden City, a suburb of Savannah, Georgia, he spent five years in that city as administrator. In 1987, he went to western Georgia as the city manager for the municipality of Americus. Schwartz, who is only a few months older than MTAS, came to Knoxville two years later, and, in his own ways, continued the work of his predecessor, C.L. Overman. In his nine years as director, Schwartz's primary objective has been to continue MTAS's successful relationships with Tennessee cities by streamlining and modernizing the organization's processes.

In the late 1990s, Schwartz engineered a plan to restructure the ways in which MTAS fulfills its mission to Tennessee's cities. Appropriately entitled "MTAS: The Next Fifty Years," Schwartz's plan, which he developed in conjunction with the entire Municipal Technical Advisory Service staff, calls for a redistribution of the internal organization to better improve MTAS's ability to assist cities. Reflecting a statement expressed decades earlier by Herb Bingham, the "50-year plan" calls for an improvement in consultant starting salary in order to successfully attract the most experienced candidates. Furthermore, it provides for the reduction in the number of cities assigned to each generalist consultant therefore allowing them to assume primary responsibility for their assigned cities. Thus, under Schwartz's direction, MTAS in the late 1990s is preparing itself for the challenges that will face Tennessee cities in the future.<sup>47</sup>

During MTAS's 50 years, Tennessee city officials have come to know a host of MTAS consultants. Names such as Snoderly, Meisenhelder, Lovelace, Overman, Lock, Puett, Ownby, Muscatello, Tallent, Hardy, and Pentecost stand out as familiar helping hands that Tennessee authorities have continually called upon. The intelligence, charisma, and work ethic that these people, along with dozens of their fellow MTAS colleagues, have used to inform their technical expertise has made the Municipal Technical Advisory Service a powerful force in Tennessee government.

Over the past five decades, MTAS has enjoyed its share of personalities who have shaped its image in the minds of Tennessee city officials. Some MTAS consultants, such as UT Vice

President Sammie Lynn Scandlyn Puett and longtime comptroller William Snodgrass, have gone on to prestigious positions in Tennessee government. Others, such as Murphy Snoderly, Bob Lovelace, and Don Ownby have made their indelible impressions on the state of Tennessee through their activities at MTAS. The consultants and support staff have also served as the center of the organization. An exploration into who they are and where they have come from is really the core of the history of the Municipal Technical Advisory Service itself.

In the words of Ann Lowe, who witnessed all but a few of MTAS's 50 years, "every kind of person and personality has been here and gone.... I've called it the 'Baskin-Robbins' variety' ... the different flavors of MTAS created by the different people." Like the differing personalities and backgrounds of its executive directors, consultants have brought to MTAS perspectives from all across the nation, and in some cases, the globe. Although by no means comprehensive, a survey of some of the most influential MTAS consultants reveals the real secrets as to why the organization has made such a lasting impression on Tennessee over the past 50 years.<sup>48</sup>

The Tennessee Chapter of the American Public Works Association (TCAPWA) each year gives an award to the state's most outstanding public works employee. The name that graces the annual award is that of Murphy Ulysses Snoderly. By the time he became MTAS's first public works consultant in January 1950, Snoderly had already made a significant name for himself in Tennessee. Born a year before the turn of the century in Maynardville, Tennessee, Snoderly earned a civil engineering degree from the University of Tennessee in 1920. From 1921 to 1926, he supervised construction on roads and bridges throughout the state as a resident engineer for the Tennessee State Highway Department.

In the late 1920s and early 30s, Snoderly worked as an engineer in western Kentucky and east Tennessee until the federal work programs of the early New Deal began to demand the services of qualified engineers throughout the region. He worked on local control surveys as a "party chief" for the Civil Works Administration (CWA) in 1933-34, and the following year, the Tennessee Emergency Relief Administration (TERA) placed Snoderly in charge of construction work in 10 counties. When President Roosevelt created the prodigious Works Progress Administration (WPA), district director Burgin Dossett called on Snoderly to oversee WPA projects in 21 east Tennessee counties, which amounted to his being responsible for 12,000 to 15,000 workers.

In 1939, Murphy Snoderly became the first city manager of the growing municipality of Johnson City. Johnson City, a town of 25,000 in the late 1930s, provided Snoderly with exceptional training for the position he would later assume with MTAS. In fact, he had two tours of duty as the city manager of Johnson City, working from 1939 to 1941 and again from 1943 to 1947. In January 1950, Snoderly became the first engineering and public works consultant for the Municipal Technical Advisory Service.

For the 30 years before his attachment to MTAS, Snoderly had a huge impact on public works projects across the state. In a laundry list compiled by *Tennessee Town and City*, the major undertakings were supervision of the design and instillation of the famous Iroquois Steeplechase track in Nashville; supervision of construction for all earthen dams constructed in Tennessee by [the] WPA from 1937 to 1939, including those at Marrowbone Lake in Davidson County, Laurel

Lake in Blount County, and at Pressman's Home in Hawkins County; serving as location engineer for portions of the skyline highway in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park; and as construction supervisor for many of the early highways and bridges in middle Tennessee.

In his nearly 20 years at MTAS, Snoderly crisscrossed the state promoting the organization's services to city officials while helping them accomplish their public works goals. In addition to his consulting work, he actively participated and served as secretary of the Tennessee Chapter of Public Works Association, the organization that rewarded his dedication by naming its prestigious award in his honor. Snoderly married Alice Peters, a Knoxville city schoolteacher, on November 21, 1964; tragically, however, the marriage was cut short when a car accident on Interstate 40 near Parsons, Tennessee, in 1968 fatally injured Mrs. Snoderly. At the age of 70, the first MTAS public works consultant retired in September 1969, and he died the following year after suffering a lengthy illness.<sup>49</sup>

Another consultant who enjoyed a prestigious career in addition to his work in Tennessee was middle Tennessee management consultant Ed Meisenhelder. Edward Webster Meisenhelder III, who worked for MTAS on three separate occasions, was born in 1915 in York, Pennsylvania. Meisenhelder received his bachelor's degree in sociology from Harvard University in 1938, and proceeded to enroll in the prestigious public administration program at Syracuse University's Maxwell Graduate School. At Syracuse, one of Meisenhelder's classmates was a man he would eventually come to work for three times, Victor Hobday.

Also like Hobday, World War II interrupted Meisenhelder's career in city government. Finishing his master's degree in 1940, Meisenhelder joined the Army in January 1942 where he soon became a second lieutenant specializing in personnel evaluations and the classification of soldiers. In 1944, Meisenhelder began to use his graduate education when he began training for military government and civic affairs duty. According to Meisenhelder,

I had gone through military government training and was sent out to California, [where] we continued our Japanese training because it looked as though we were going to Japan when the forces got there. Then MacArthur said he needed more people in the Philippines, so they dropped our Japanese study and gave us some information about the Philippines and flew us to New Guinea, which is a long trip from California. Hawaii was a refueling station, and then we flew to Canton Island, which only had one tree on it. It was a sandbar really, an atoll. The only tree was in a flowerpot that the [commanding] officer had. Then we flew in a thunderstorm overnight to Guadalcanal and waited out until it was almost dawn [then continued] to New Guinea.... By the time we got to the Philippines, they didn't need us any more ... so I was assigned to work in civilian personnel.

From June 1945 to March 1946, the newly promoted Captain Meisenhelder worked as a labor recruiting officer and a deputy director of civilian personnel at Base "K" on the island of Leyte. His tasks included hiring and supervising the hundreds of Filipinos needed to manage local operations and assist the Army.

I traveled in Leyte with an interpreter and a colleague and we'd go out and hire people, everybody from a doctor to a truck driver or a mechanic ... to come and work for the military.... One of the jobs I had in the Philippines was to drive out

on weekends and pay the [workers] in Philippine pesos. My colleague and I would go into the schoolhouse and sit at the teacher's desk. I had a stack of maybe 1,000 pesos on one side and my loaded .45 revolver on the other side, and we had no difficulty at all.

While in the Philippines, Meisenhelder met his future wife Trining, one of the Filipino civilians who worked at the Army's headquarters for civil affairs.<sup>50</sup>

Upon his discharge from the Army in March 1946, Meisenhelder returned home and took the summer off to recuperate from the stresses of war. In September, he accepted a job as the city manager of Fernandina, Florida, then a city of 5,000 on the northeastern coast of Florida. Meisenhelder stayed four years in Fernandina, until moving to the midwest to become the city manager of Park Forest, Illinois, on January 1, 1951. Built by the booming economy in the years immediately following World War II, Park Forest is located 25 miles south of Chicago, and in the early 1950s it was a thriving municipality, which provided Meisenhelder with some unique city government experiences. According to Meisenhelder, "my experience at Park Forest [consisted of] the problems both of initiating the city manager form of government and in the development of that government for an entirely new city." The postwar expansion that Meisenhelder experienced first hand at Park Forest would prove valuable in his future positions at the Municipal Technical Advisory Service.<sup>51</sup>

Meisenhelder stayed only 18 months at Park Forest before joining an organization directed by his former Syracuse classmate Victor Hobday. In July 1952, Meisenhelder opened MTAS's first "branch" office in Nashville, where, in three separate stints with the organization, he would spend a total of 20 years. After his first three years, Meisenhelder accepted in 1955 the University of Tennessee assignment to go to Panama. After his three-year contract expired in 1958, Meisenhelder returned to MTAS and Nashville.

The attraction of municipal government proved too great for Meisenhelder to ignore, and he became the first city manager at Cookeville, Tennessee, in the fall of 1961. Soon after his tenure began at Cookeville, a falling out with the city's leaders led to his resignation and subsequent attachment to the prestigious Public Administration Service (PAS) based in Chicago. For several years, Meisenhelder worked in the Foreign Service branch of PAS in Bangkok, Thailand, and Managua, Nicaragua. In 1969, he returned to the United States and worked in 10 different cities from Long Island, New York, to Topeka, Kansas. After nine years of constant travel with PAS, Meisenhelder again returned for his third and final tour of duty with MTAS, this time staying 14 years. In 1982, after 20 years with MTAS and nearly 40 years helping cities across the globe, Edward Meisenhelder retired to his Nashville home where he and his wife take pride in maintaining their magnificent gardens.<sup>52</sup>

Bob Lovelace, the person who more than once traded positions with Ed Meisenhelder, was another consultant who had a significant impact on MTAS. Born in 1916 in New Haven, Connecticut, Lovelace received his bachelor of arts degree from the University of Connecticut in 1949. After completing his undergraduate degree, he spent two years at the University of Kansas earning a master's degree in public administration. During Lovelace's coursework at KU, he gained his first municipal experience while serving as an assistant city manager in Emporia,

Kansas. With his master's degree in hand, Lovelace then accepted a city manager position with Delray Beach, a town in southeastern Florida a few miles north of Fort Lauderdale. In 1954, after three years at Delray Beach, Lovelace moved to a city on the outskirts of Palm Springs, California. After serving two years as city manager in Indio, Bob then came to Tennessee and the Municipal Technical Advisory Service.

Lovelace made quite a first impression on MTAS according to longtime TML secretary Sue Dixon.

I recall the first time I ever saw Bob Lovelace.... He had just come in from California. He was very casually dressed, wearing one of those typical California outfits — tennis shoes [and a] short sleeve shirt which was open at the neck. Some of the other ladies and I wondered how he was going to fit in sitting at an office desk. Well, it wasn't long before we learned that there wasn't anything Bob Lovelace didn't know. He was a walking, talking fountain of information and it sort of made us all lazy because we would go to him instead of looking up things. I used to tell him we didn't need to know anything because he knew everything.

Lovelace's first position with MTAS was managing the Nashville office in place of Ed Meisenhelder who had recently left to lead the public administration project in Panama. Upon Meisenhelder's return in 1958, Lovelace came to Knoxville to begin work as a consultant on fringe areas, where his main assignment was to assist Tennessee cities with annexation studies.<sup>53</sup> In September 1959, officials from the University of Maryland visited MTAS to gain ideas for the establishment of a county and city version of MTAS in Maryland. (This was before the formation of CTAS, Tennessee's County Technical Advisory Service.) They must have been impressed with the ability of Bob Lovelace because just nine months later they invited him to College Park as the head of that new organization. Lovelace's tenure with the University of Maryland would prove to be brief. In November 1961, he returned to MTAS in Nashville where he would complete the remainder of his career as the consultant on intergovernmental affairs. From 1961 to 1982, Lovelace still assisted middle Tennessee cities, but his main charge was to serve as Herb Bingham's right-hand man in Nashville. According to one commentator, "Together, Herb and Bob, through the legislature, made the cities in Tennessee what they are today."<sup>54</sup>

Lovelace's work with Bingham in Nashville was exceptional and influential, but it is his personality that made Lovelace a fixture in the minds of many Tennessee city and state officials. Lovelace was a curious mixture of the profane and the sacred. A deeply religious man, he placed his faith in both the Unitarian church and in his pure avocation of helping people through public service. For example, former TML executive director Joseph Sweat recalled that "he would not stand for having the U.S. Postal Service maligned. The post office seemed to be everyone's favorite whipping boy, everyone except Bob Lovelace. He defended the post office with a vehemence worthy of Billy Graham standing up for baptism." On the other hand, Lovelace had an equal streak of profanity in him that showed itself at every opportunity. For longtime *Tennessee Town and City* editor Beverly Bruninga, "Bob was a funny man. He had a photographic recall of any story, joke, anecdote, poem, he'd ever heard in his entire life. Of course, none of it could be told without a very generous sprinkling of profanity." Lovelace's complexity did not end there. His greatest passions were for two diametrically opposed forms of writing, English literature and annexation legislation.<sup>55</sup>

Eugene Puett and Don Ownby were two legal consultants who each spent 34 years serving Tennessee cities. Puett, who later married municipal information consultant Sammie Lynn Scandlyn, replaced original legal consultant Porter Greenwood who had gone to become the city manager of Red Bank, Tennessee, in 1955. Born in Athens, Tennessee, in 1918, Puett received his bachelor's degree from the University of Tennessee in 1941. While working on his graduate education, Puett taught classes at UT from 1947 to 1951. In his own words, "I had taught economics on the Hill for about five years, and I didn't think I wanted to go through the rigors of the Ph.D. and continue teaching, so I walked across the street to the law school and turned in my grades and went to law school."<sup>56</sup>

After earning his law degree in 1953, Puett went to work in the state's department of finance and taxation. Like his decision to go to law school, his subsequent attachment to the Municipal Technical Advisory Service was also spontaneous:

One day everybody had gone to lunch, and I was there with no one to go to lunch [with] so I went across the street to ... a little diner. I walked in and Vic Hobday was there. He said that [MTAS] needed a [legal] consultant — [Porter Greenwood] had decided that he was going to go down for a year to Red Bank as city manager. [Hobday] said, "I need somebody for a year, actually five months." He'd promised the Knoxville city attorney the job in seven months. So I went there, and at the end of five months the city attorney said he didn't want it anymore, and at the end of the year the manager said he didn't want to come back, so I just drifted into it. [My career at MTAS] just so happened because I didn't have anyone to go to lunch with and I found Vic Hobday.

After that lunch with director Hobday, Puett comprised the core of the MTAS legal arm for more than three decades.<sup>57</sup>

A second important legal consultant arrived two years later. Don Ownby received his bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of Tennessee in 1951, and three years later he graduated from the UT law school. After discovering the financial difficulties of establishing a new legal practice, an engaged-to-be-married Ownby, weary from working two jobs, decided to take a secure job with a steady paycheck. In April 1957, at the age of twenty-six, Don Ownby began his three decades of service with MTAS. As explained above, by the late 1950s the number of Tennessee cities requesting their ordinances codified was growing at an alarming rate. While classified as a legal consultant, Ownby's primary responsibility for 34 years was the codification and organization of city's ordinances.

The engineering and public works consultant position, first occupied by Murphy Snoderly, has also witnessed several influential and unique personalities. Together, A.C. Lock and Frank Kirk dedicated 43 years of service to the Municipal Technical Advisory Service and to Tennessee's cities. In 1964, MTAS hired LeRoy Henry as engineering-public works consultant to fill the vacancy left by Murphy Snoderly who assumed the duties of executive director during Dr. Hobday's assignment in Panama. Tragically, after only 13 months with MTAS, Henry, a former city engineer in Jefferson City, Missouri, died suddenly of a heart attack in February 1965.

Frank Kirk began his 20-year tenure with MTAS upon Snoderly's retirement in 1969. Kirk, who came to MTAS from North Kansas City, Missouri, where he was city engineer, had earned a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from Southern Methodist University in 1951. He spent five years in Liberty, Missouri, as city engineer before going to North Kansas City in 1966. At the age of 47, Kirk came to MTAS where he would remain until his retirement in the summer of 1989. An active member of the Tennessee Chapter of the American Public Works Association (TCAPWA), in 1971 that organization awarded Kirk the Harry Swearingen Award for outstanding service. In 1987, Kirk also received the Meritorious Service Award, a national award given by the American Public Works Association to reward dedicated individuals who devote their time and energy furthering the public works profession.

A second public works consultant, A.C. Lock, was actually a part of MTAS before Kirk's arrival. When he opened the Memphis office in September 1965, Lock's original charge was to assist cities with urban growth. In 1972, Lock assumed the duties of west Tennessee engineering and public works consultant, a position he held for 18 years until his 1990 retirement. A native of Oklahoma, Lock's interest in city government grew out of family experiences early in his life. According to Lock, "My father was a small town politician serving four years as county treasurer and eight years as county commissioner in Jackson County, Oklahoma. Because of this I have been interested in government since I was a small boy." Like many other early MTAS leaders, Lock's career collided with World War II. In September 1943, just one year after graduating from Sequoyah High School in Claremore, Oklahoma, the Army drafted Lock to fight in Europe. In September 1944, after serving as an airfield construction supervisor in Iceland, Lock qualified to become a paratrooper and a member of the prestigious 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division. That winter Lock fought in Belgium and Southern France in the Battle of the Bulge, the dangerous German counteroffensive that tested both the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne and the Allied advance on Berlin.<sup>58</sup>

After the war, Lock entered Oklahoma A & M (now Oklahoma State University), where he earned a bachelor of science degree in civil engineering in 1952. From 1952 to 1956, Lock worked for the Corps of Engineers in Tulsa, Oklahoma, as a construction estimator. In 1956, Lock moved into city government, holding positions as city engineer in Claremore, Cushing and Stillwater, Oklahoma. For Lock, it was a fulfilling move.

When I first sat down at my desk in Claremore, I knew I had found my calling. Not one time since then [did] I look at my watch and it wasn't later than I thought. There has never been a dull day, even in retirement, since then. I saw my first city manager several years after we had both left Claremore. He apologized for hiring me into a field that probably lost its glamour and excitement for me rather rapidly. I told him to forget it. His hiring me into the municipal engineering field helped me to find my niche in life.

Like his MTAS public works colleague Frank Kirk, Lock actively participated in the TCAPWA, sitting on awards and bylaws committees throughout the 1970s and 80s. In 1983, the organization awarded him for such outstanding service with the Harry Swearingen Award.<sup>59</sup>

The consultant on municipal information was another position that witnessed several interesting and forceful personalities. Three in particular, Pan Dodd Wheeler, Sammie Lynn Scandlyn, and Jackie Kersh, made a lasting impression on both the Municipal Technical Advisory Service and

Tennessee city officials. The first consultant hired by Gerald Shaw was Pan Dodd Wheeler. Born in 1921, Mary Frances (Pan) Dodd lived a busy and diverse life before coming to work for MTAS in 1949. Before graduating from high school, Dodd attended seven schools in Nashville, Cincinnati, Chicago, and Decatur, Indiana. Upon finishing at West End High School in Nashville, Dodd attended Vanderbilt University for two years. Consistent with her migratory childhood, Dodd studied Spanish and music history for three quarters at the Instituto Nacional de Panama in Panama City and spent one quarter in Knoxville at the University of Tennessee. Furthermore, Dodd expanded her education through seminars at the Cincinnati Art Museum, the Chicago Art Institute, and Nashville's Watkins Art Institute. Through these courses, Dodd learned commercial artistic skills that would be necessary as an advisor for municipal information.

Dodd, who became Pan Dodd Wheeler after her marriage in 1949, became the first MTAS publications officer. As we have seen, in the beginning the MTAS Advisory Council did not view this position in the same light as other consultants. Wheeler's primary duties of editing *Tennessee Town and City* and assisting cities with annual reports and publications needs reflected her extensive experiences prior to MTAS. While serving as publications officer, which the council voted to change to "advisor on municipal public relations" in February 1952, she also edited a column of *American City*, a national magazine focusing on achievements and trends in city government. In 1957, she was a member of the U.S. Mission to Europe to attend the eighth International Congress of Local Authorities at The Hague.<sup>60</sup>

Wheeler's impressive tenure ended in April 1958, after a decision to travel with her second husband, geologist Paul Eimon, whom she had married the previous November. Wheeler's replacement, Ann Pearson, worked for two years until leaving for West Pakistan, where her husband accepted a job as an engineer on development projects.<sup>61</sup>

Sammie Lynn Scandlyn Puett filled the vacant municipal information position in September 1960. The attractive young woman, who had graduated from the University of Tennessee in 1958, took over for Pearson at the recommendation of her mentor in the UT journalism department. According to her, she had no inclination to assist Tennessee cities before interviewing with Vic Hobday.

I really didn't know anything about it; I didn't set [MTAS] as a goal. I actually was asked to interview for the job by Professor Tucker, who was head of the school of journalism. He had been asked by Vic Hobday to help identify some candidates for the PR position.... So Professor Tucker called me up and said for me to apply for the job, even though I really didn't have a journalism background.... I remember when I went for the interview with Mr. Hobday, every question he asked me I answered in a way that would disqualify me from the job. I remember walking out of his office saying, "I hope you find the right person for this job."

Scandlyn Puett had shown exceptional leadership skills as a student at the University of Tennessee. She served as president of the Delta Delta Delta sorority and was a member of the Phi Kappa Phi academic honor society. In her senior year, the University awarded Scandlyn for her outstanding service with the honor of Torchbearer, a designation given to only the very best and brightest graduating seniors.<sup>62</sup>

Scandlyn Puett spent eight years with the Municipal Technical Advisory Service as the advisor on municipal information. In September 1966, the position was brought into line with the other male consultants in title and in salary. Like her predecessors, Scandlyn Puett edited *Tennessee Town and City* and helped cities with their annual reports, along with her added duties of the local sales tax campaigns. She also edited a monthly column for *Nation's Cities*, which she maintained even after her tenure at MTAS ended. In September 1968, Scandlyn Puett left MTAS to return to the University of Tennessee College of Communications as an assistant professor in journalism.

A few weeks later she married consultant Eugene Puett after a long office romance. Now Sammie Lynn Puett, her involvement with MTAS was not finished in 1968. In 1973, she became an executive assistant to the Chancellor of the University of Tennessee, and five years later Tennessee Governor Lamar Alexander called her to join his cabinet, where she served as the state's Commissioner of General Services and Human Services Commissioner. In January 1989, MTAS and Puett came together again when she became the University of Tennessee's Vice President for Public Service.

Her replacement at MTAS in 1968 was Jackie Kersh. Kersh, a native of Jacksonville, Florida, came to east Tennessee to attend UT. She graduated from the School of Journalism in 1953, just a year before Scandlyn Puett began her program. Upon graduating, she went home to Florida where she worked for the *Daytona Beach News Journal*. From 1955 to 1958 she served in the media and publications department for the Methodist Church in Nashville and Washington D.C. In 1958, Kersh became managing editor of the *Herald-Advocate* in Wauchula, a small city in the interior of Florida. Kersh held one final position in Florida as public relations director for the Hillsborough County Public School system before returning to east Tennessee and MTAS in 1968.

When Kersh came to MTAS the organization was 18 years old, and when she left in 1986 it was double that. During her long tenure, Kersh greatly shaped the position of public information consultant, which she expanded into special projects. She also extended her expertise by earning a master's degree in communication from the University of Tennessee while at MTAS. In 1986, Kersh resigned to accept the position of public relations director at Stetson University in DeLand, Florida.

These three women, Pan Dodd Wheeler, Sammie Lynn Scandlyn Puett, and Jackie Kersh assisted cities with public relations information for 35 of MTAS's 50 years. Puett's nine additional years of leadership at IPS further adds to their influence on Tennessee's municipalities.

In the field of finance and accounting, two men, Inslee Burnett and Ken Joines, also served MTAS and Tennessee cities for over three decades. The first MTAS consultant on finance and accounting was William Snodgrass. Hired in December 1951, Snodgrass worked until newly elected Governor Frank Clement appointed him budget director in January 1953. Due to the temporary nature of the budget director's position, Snodgrass asked only for a leave of absence from MTAS. In 1955, he became comptroller of the treasury, a position he has since held for more than 40 years. In a 1984 interview in *Tennessee Town and City*, the former consultant laughed about going to work for the Governor in 1953: "I never got back to my MTAS work at the University ... I guess I'm still on leave of absence with MTAS."<sup>63</sup>

Born in 1919, Inslee Burnett, like so many of his MTAS colleagues, first had to serve his country in World War II before beginning his career aiding municipal governments. The Knoxville native served three tours of duty with the Army in World War II, returning to Tennessee in 1946. Before enrolling at the University of Tennessee at the age of 34, his experience came from several different positions. After his military discharge, Burnett worked for five years as an assistant buyer for a large grocery chain, he spent three years as an office manager for an equipment company, and for two years he was chief accountant for a motor accessories firm. Upon his graduation from UT's business administration program in 1957, Burnett joined the Knoxville accounting firm of Homer K. Jones and Company as an auditor. Three years later, in the spring of 1960, he replaced William Chaffin as the consultant on finance and accounting, thus beginning a decade-long tenure with MTAS.<sup>64</sup>

After Burnett returned to private practice in 1970, MTAS hired Ken Joines to succeed him. For the next 27 years, Joines provided Tennessee's cities with finance and accounting assistance from the Knoxville office. Born in Madisonville in 1935, Joines received his bachelor's degree in accounting from Tennessee Technological University in 1957. After completing his education, Joines spent eight years working for the comptroller's office as a county auditor. In 1966, he became the supervisor of field services for the Tennessee Department of Education. Working as MTAS's finance and accounting specialist from 1970 until his retirement in October 1997, Joines also served as assistant executive director beginning in November 1982. Between the departure of Odell Miner in January 1983 and the arrival of C.L. Overman in June, Joines acted as the interim director.

Since 1950 there have been several municipal management consultants who have helped Tennessee cities with general problems. Some, like Vic Hobday and C.L. Overman, have gone on to lead MTAS; others have gone on to take management positions in city government. The list of municipal management consultants is extensive. Tennessee city officials may recall the names of experts such as West, Deaton, Gorham, Sprowl, Mauer, Hartman, Head, Freson, and Mabrey who came to their municipality's aid. A few of these many consultants, due either to their longevity or outstanding reputations (or both), stand out as exceptional management consultants.

One of these is John Brand. Brand, a native of Ypsilanti, Michigan, born in April 1933. Upon graduating from the University of Michigan in 1955 with a degree in political science, Brand spent two years in the Navy as a supply corps officer on a repair ship. In 1957, he returned to Ann Arbor to earn a master's degree in public administration. He worked for one year as a staff assistant with the Michigan Municipal League, and he served as assistant city manager in Sturgis, a town of 8,900 a few miles from the Indiana border in southern Michigan. In August 1963, Brand came to MTAS as a management consultant. His reputation was first rate. According to Ann Lowe,

He was very bright, [a] very intelligent young man, and he came and just fit right in. You could tell he was just made [for MTAS], we couldn't have chosen one any better. I remember he went out this one time and he was dressed up in a suit and tie. [He had to go to the town of] Philadelphia to meet with the mayor.... When he came back to the office that afternoon, he had his necktie off, he shirt unbuttoned, and his coat was off. He had been out riding a tractor [and] talking to the mayor.... Our people had to be very adaptable, and this man was.... He was a perfect consultant.

Despite his acclaimed marriage with the organization, Brand's tenure was not long. A week after his fourth anniversary with MTAS, Brand returned to Sturgis, Michigan, to become the town's city manager. His work ethic and reputation, however, would endure. It was dedicated people, such as John Brand, who shaped MTAS into the viable and effective organization it is in the 1990s.<sup>65</sup>

Other municipal management consultants could boast of having a commensurate effect on the Municipal Technical Advisory Service. In 1976, after graduating from West Virginia University with a bachelor's degree in park management and a master's in public administration, Joe Muscatello went to work as a city manager in Welch, West Virginia. Six years later, after a stint as president of the West Virginia City Manager Association and working for the Mid-Ohio Valley Development Corporation, Muscatello came to MTAS. Hired to work as a management consultant out of Cookeville, Muscatello's energy and expertise were noticeable immediately. In 1985, after just three years with MTAS, he won the IPS Outstanding Public Service Award and became the assistant director of the Institute of Public Service. Three years later Muscatello returned to his former position as an MTAS management consultant in Knoxville, where he would spend the next decade helping cities in Tennessee and across the world. Muscatello, along with fellow MTAS consultant Mike Tallent, worked on a program in 1996 with the University of Tennessee School of Management and the United States Information Agency (USIA) to provide training to city officials in Romania. In 1996, MTAS honored Muscatello's body of work with the Victor Hobday Award. Established in 1988, the annual Hobday Award celebrates individuals who best display outstanding dedication and service to the Municipal Technical Advisory Service.

Jim Finane came to MTAS in 1983 as a management consultant for east Tennessee. A Texas native, Finane attended Texas A&M and received his master's degree in public administration from the Maxwell School at Syracuse University. In the early to mid 1970s, Finane worked as a budget analyst for the state of Wisconsin and for Marin County, California. From 1976 to 1980, he worked as the budget director and the director of technical services for the Association of Bay Area Governments in California. In 1980, he came to east Tennessee as the budget officer for the city of Oak Ridge.

From 1983 to 1986, Finane worked as a municipal management consultant, where his territory was from Hartsville to Cleveland and eastward. In 1986, Finane moved into the position of special projects consultant, a position he continues to hold in the late 1990s. His tasks as special projects consultant reflect the title. He has been a part of a major 1986-1987 study of the Knoxville Fire Department, he developed a policy development process for TML, and he helped staff a committee to revise Oak Ridge's charter. One of Finane's continued projects, however, has been in the embrace of computers and technology. As the first consultant to use a computer to respond to a city's request, Finane has aided MTAS in its efforts to integrate itself with the latest in computer technology.

The individuals listed in this brief overview are merely a sampling of the hundreds of people who have influenced the paths down which the Municipal Technical Advisory Service has traveled over the past half-century. Without a doubt, it has been the people who have made MTAS a successful endeavor. If not for the exceptional quality of those individuals who filled in the outline lightly sketched by state legislators in 1949, MTAS would certainly not be celebrating its 50 year anniversary of assisting Tennessee's cities.

These outlines of prominent consultants and executive directors should not, however, preclude the importance of the support staff who have been equally vital in directing the organization's path. Without the dedication of such individuals as Ann Lowe, Armitha Loveday, Flora Williams, Claudia Walsh, Sally Thierbach, and Mary Bush, the organization would not be the success it is in the late 1990s. All the people who have come to work for MTAS together have made the organization a viable and effective aid to Tennessee's municipalities; it is their achievement alone.

## Conclusions

There are a multitude of reasons why the Municipal Technical Advisory Service has been a successful enterprise over the past 50 years. First and foremost, the very idea of MTAS fills an incredible need in municipal government. To have a group of experts at your fingertips whose sole purpose is to answer any questions and help you deal with any pressing issues makes that group an indispensable tool for any city official. Furthermore, the Municipal Technical Advisory Service serves as a continual and consistent bridge between the rapidly changing numbers of individuals who serve their municipalities in some capacity. Despite the huge turnover in city government personnel, for 50 years one constant resource available to all new officials in Tennessee has been MTAS.

Another important reason that the Municipal Technical Advisory Service has been successful is the people who have dedicated themselves to furthering the organization and making it an excellent tool for cities. From the very beginning, MTAS has prided itself on hiring the very best personnel. The organization invites only those who have earned strong government experience and actually been on the firing line in a city to join the staff. Through this integrity and insistence on the best, MTAS has endeared itself to its clientele. Because Tennessee's city officials know that they will get only the most thoroughly researched and current advice, they have come to depend on the Municipal Technical Advisory Service. MTAS consultants have responded to this reliance by taking pride in their mission to lead cities into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In the words of one consultant,

Why did I come to MTAS? If you work in municipal government, I don't think you could find a more interesting place to work.... Being a consultant at MTAS is interesting and stimulating every day of the year, and [it's] different every time you start a new project. Plus, the experience of making a difference in people's lives and work in so many cities is just immensely satisfying. You're always the guy in the white hat, come to solve their problems. The amazing and fun part of it is, you're actually able to do that most of the time.

A third reason the organization has enjoyed success over the past half century is its unique position in the bureaucratic hierarchy of government in Tennessee. MTAS consultants are often viewed as brokers between municipalities and state government. MTAS's funding, which comes from both state and municipal sources, adds to this divergent view. Seen as apolitical, city officials know that MTAS consultants work for them, while MTAS's attachment to the public service arm of the University of Tennessee adds to the perception that they are representatives of the state. These views, however, complement one another. Due to their affiliation with the University of Tennessee, MTAS consultants have enjoyed an added air of

respectability when calling on city officials. The advice MTAS consultants have given to cities has benefited from added weight simply because their organization is linked to the state university instead of to a political lobbying group or private consulting firm. City officials know that MTAS is in business strictly to help them, and therefore believe they have a friend outside the political arena. The spatial distance that MTAS occupies, between the University, the state government, and the cities, further augments the organization's ability to complete its mission.

The sum of these factors has made the Municipal Technical Advisory Service a necessity for Tennessee's city governments. Over the past half-century, Tennessee has experienced sweeping changes. In turn, those changes have created innumerable challenges in the state's municipalities. MTAS has proven to be a large factor in helping mitigate those challenges. For example, of the 349 cities in Tennessee, six — Athens, Columbia, Cookeville, Jackson, Maryville, and Union City — have most frequently called on MTAS to help solve problems.

All of these cities experienced major periods of growth over the past 50 years. Athens, a town of fewer than 7,000 when MTAS was established, has doubled in size since that time. To help with the problems that arose in that expansion, Athens officials called on MTAS consultants 358 times. Columbia, which had filed over 230 formal requests for MTAS assistance, tripled in size. In 1949, the population of Cookeville and Maryville together numbered fewer than 10,000. Fifty years and nearly 500 MTAS requests later, both cities had grown five times over, each boasting in 1998 of populations over 21,000. From the economic boom that followed World War II through the Sunbelt phenomenon that gripped the South in the 1970s, Tennessee's municipalities needed impartial expert assistants to help them facilitate growth. Instead of having to blindly feel about in the dark for proper methods of policy and procedure, city officials over the past 50 years have enjoyed the luxury of having a body of experts dedicated solely to helping them navigate the dangerous seas of municipal expansion and growth.

This, however, leads to one final question: If the Municipal Technical Advisory Service has been indispensable in helping Tennessee's municipal governments over the past 50 years, why are there no similar organizations in the United States? Why is MTAS unique to Tennessee?

Any answers to this question are purely speculative. While some states have tried to create an advisory service to help their municipalities, no state has copied the Municipal Technical Advisory Service. A few states have approached Tennessee's system. Georgia and Maryland, for example, have attached their organizations to the state universities. Still no state has successfully established an independent, multidisciplinary technical advisory service on par with the Municipal Technical Advisory Service.

Perhaps the answer lies in economics: No city wants to give away a share of its revenue for an organization from which it does not fully benefit. In Tennessee, however, that assumption has been belied by the fact that cities have received a great deal of service in return from the amount of tax revenue spent. Through strong personnel and backed by an effective organizational framework, the Municipal Technical Advisory Service has proven to be a worthy investment for Tennessee's municipalities.

Perhaps the hesitation lies in bureaucratic jealousy: The creation of a technical advisory service in other states may infringe on the territory of already entrenched municipal leagues. Again, in Tennessee, this experience has proven positive. In fact, the Tennessee Municipal League led the drive to create MTAS in order to alleviate some of the heavy workloads that city officials placed on the League. Instead of creating interoffice jealousies, the Municipal Technical Advisory Service and the Tennessee Municipal League have proven to be effective partners in helping Tennessee's cities.

Perhaps no other state experienced the coalescence of forward-thinking, right-minded men as did Tennessee in the late 1940s. The vision of Herb Bingham, the early direction of executive directors Gerald Shaw and Victor Hobday, and the dedicated work by consultants and office staff, together forged an organization that possibly cannot be replicated in any other state. The unique space in Tennessee government, which the Municipal Technical Advisory Service has carved out for itself over the past five decades, is special indeed.

It is exactly because of that dedication and hard work that for 50 years the Municipal Technical Advisory Service has fulfilled its mission to help Tennessee cities with whatever problems arise. It is also because of this dedication, now a firmly established tradition at MTAS, that the organization is poised to welcome the next half-century of helping Tennessee's cities.

1. Tom Hall 'Don't know how we'd have done without MTAS': Hall," *Tennessee Town and City* 10 January 1985, p. 5; Letter from Chester L. Parham, Jackson Commissioner to Pan Dodd Wheeler, 9 December 1953; Letter from Cecil D. Harper, Hartsville Mayor to VCH, 26 October 1967.
2. Larry Minton *The New Deal in Tennessee, 1932-1938* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1979), 74, 115.
3. John H. Kyle *The Building of TVA: An Illustrated History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1958); Dewey W. Grantham "Tennessee and Twentieth-Century American Politics," *Tennessee History: Its Land, its People and its Culture* ed. by Carroll Van West (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1998), 353.
4. Minton, 210; *Ibid.*, iv.
5. Patricia Brake Howard "Tennessee in War and Peace: The Impact of World War II on State Economic Trends," in Van West, p. 414.
6. Dewey W. Grantham *The South in Modern America: A Region at Odds* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), 172; Robert J. Norrell with Guy C. Vanderpool *Dixie's War: The South and World War II* (Tuscaloosa: Center for Southern History and Culture, University of Alabama, 1992), 16.
7. Howard, p. 417; George B. Tindall *The Emergence of the New South, 1913-1945* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967), 698.
8. Norrell, 3.
9. Howard, 420; *Ibid.*, 430.
10. *New York Times*, 11 January 1993, B-8; for a general biography of Luther Gulick see Lyle Fitch, *Making Democracy Work: The Life and Letters of Luther Halsey Gulick, 1892-1993* (Berkeley, CA: Institute of Governmental Studies Press, University of California, Berkeley, 1996).
11. Gulick's speech reprinted in *Public Management* 30 (June 1948): 158-161, *Ibid.*, 159; *Ibid.*; *Ibid.*, 161.
12. Much of this biographical material comes from Gael Stahl's obituary on Bingham. *Tennessee Town and City*, 17 October 1994, 1.
13. *Ibid.*, 3; Joseph Sweat, "He's Fought the Good Fight," *Tennessee Town and City* 33 (May 1982): 4.
14. Interview in *Tennessee Town and City* 5 June 1989, 8; *Ibid.*;
15. Tennessee General Assembly, Public Acts 1949, Chapter 261, 862; *Ibid.*, 863.
16. Minutes of MTAS Advisory Council, 16 May 1949.
17. *Tennessee Town and City* 17 (September 1966): 23; *Tennessee Town and City* 2 (October 1951): 9.
18. *Tennessee Town and City* 1 (January/February 1950) 15; MTAS Monthly Report to Advisory Council, July 1949, 1.
19. *Ibid.*, 3-4;
20. MTAS Monthly Report to Advisory Council, December, 1949, 1; MTAS Monthly Report to Advisory Council, January, 1950, 1; MTAS Monthly Report to Advisory Council, February, 1950, 1.
21. Ann Lowe interview, 26 June 1998; *Ibid.*
22. Edward Meisenhelder interview, 28 May 1998.
23. *Tennessee Town and City*, 10 January 1985, 6; *Tennessee Town and City* 1 (January/February 1950): 16; *Tennessee Town and City*, 10 January 1985, 6.
24. Sammie Lynn Scandlyn Puett interview, 2 July 1998.
25. Victor Hobday interview, 7 May 1998.
26. Hobday interview; Herbert J. Bingham, *Municipal Politics and Power: Tennessee Municipal League in Action*. (Nashville: Municipal Press, 1986), 274.
27. Lowe interview.
28. Bingham, 269.
29. *Tennessee Town and City*, 10 (September 1959).
30. *Tennessee Town and City*, 25 (August 1974): 18.
31. Sammie Lynn Scandlyn Puett interview.
32. *Ibid.*
33. Meisenhelder interview; Hobday interview.
34. *Ibid.*
35. Don Ownby interview, 4 June 1998.
36. Hobday interview; *Ibid.*
37. *Ibid.*
38. *Ibid.*
39. *Ibid.*
40. Panama-Bolivia Project, University of Tennessee Archives, AR-19.
41. UT Archives, AR-19, Box 18, Folder 77.
42. Hobday interview.
43. Overman interview.
44. *Ibid.*
45. *Tennessee Town and City*, 27 November 1989, 8.
46. Overman interview.
47. *Tennessee Town and City*, 11 December 1989, 1; *Tennessee Town and City*, 12 November 1990, 8.
48. Lowe interview.
49. *Tennessee Town and City*, 20 (December 1970): 15, 21; *Tennessee Town and City*, 18 (May 1968): 17.
50. Meisenhelder interview.