US Army Corps of Engineers®
St. Paul District

Crosscurrents

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Special 10th anniversary section: Floods of 1997

District confronts blizzards, blackouts and floods

St. Paul District file photo

Cover photo: Dave Haumersen, chief of the old construction-operations division, and Tom Eidson, constructions operations, at Minnesota Avenue Levee in Granite Falls, Minn., in early April 1997.

US Army Corps of Engineers®
St. Paul District

Crosscurrents

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Teamwork transcends time

by Col. Jon Christensen
District Commander

Sir Isaac Newton said, "If I have been able to see further than others, it is because I have stood on the shoulders of giants."

At the retirees' reunion in September, I was fortunate to meet some of the giants who helped shape our district today. Our chief of engineers often stresses the value of teamwork and the importance of having good teammates of character working for the organization. It is important to remember that our retirees remain valued members of the Saint Paul team and celebrations like the retirees' reunion gives us a chance to thank them for being a part of the team.

Each day as we walk down the hallway of the fifth floor, we pass the photographs of the 61 district engineers who previously served the district. Each represents the many outstanding teammates who were (and are) part of the success of the St. Paul District – and their silent challenge is to continue making the district better.

Further down the hall the bar is raised, as we pass the members of the district Hall of Fame (photo below). Their challenge is to motivate us all to be the best we can possibly be and to strive each day to become the best at what we do.

It was my great pleasure during the retirees' reunion to present another great American for inclusion on that wall – John Bailen's photo now occupies a position of honor among the giants of the St. Paul District. Bailen had an illustrious career, as outlined in the last issue of *Crosscurrents*, and his Hall of Fame distinction is well deserved.

In closing, I would like to personally thank all of our retirees for all they have done, and all they continue to do. I would ask all district teammates to continue reaching out to the retiree community in order to thank them for their service. We could not accomplish what we do today if it wasn't for the strong foundation they built for us. They are truly the "giants" on whose shoulders we stand.

"Further down the hall the bar is raised, as we pass the members of the district Hall of Fame."

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Great hunting in a legendary place

by Dan Wilcox, biologist

This column first appeared in the River Falls, Wis., Journal, *Sept. 30, 2007. Copyright 2007, Forum Communications, Inc. Reprinted by permission.*

Photo by Dave Reese

Bob Anfang, St. Paul District retiree; Dennis Anderson and Keith LeClaire, project management; Badger, a golden retriever; Randy Devendorf, project management; Walt Herschey of Hastings, and Dan Wilcox, project management, at the Sports Afield Duck Club in Manitoba, Canada.

Delta Marsh is huge, several miles wide north to south and about 25 miles long at the south shore of Lake Manitoba, Canada. It's one of the world's greatest gathering places for migratory waterfowl. In 1982, Delta Marsh was designated as a wetland of international importance under the International Union for the Conservation of Nature Ramsar Convention.

About 2,500 years ago, the Assiniboine River formed a delta at the south end of Lake Manitoba. Wave and ice action on the big lake reworked the delta sediment and formed a lengthy beach ridge creating Delta Marsh. The marsh has lakes, ponds, connecting channels, extensive stands of cattail, Phragmites reeds and bulrush. The open water areas of Delta Marsh offer a smorgasbord of submersed aquatic plant food for many species of waterfowl as they stage there, fueling up before their fall flight south.

Earlier this year, Dave Reese of River Falls made me an offer I couldn't refuse – a chance for me and friends to hunt at Delta Marsh and stay at the legendary Sports Afield Duck Club. Founded by the late Jimmy Robinson, the lodge has hosted people from all walks of life. Ernest Hemingway, Robert Stack, Clark Gable, Barron Hilton and British royalty, as well as people from River Falls have hunted there for the legend as well as the beauty of the marsh and for the sport.

Jimmy Robinson was a legend himself. A short fireplug of a guy, a cigar-chomping, fast-talking storyteller, he was an avid hunter, shooter, fisherman and a bundle of energy. Born in Minnesota in 1897, his family moved to Winnipeg Manitoba. Jimmy grew up to love hunting at Delta Marsh and became an excellent shot. Jimmy served in World War I, played semi-professional baseball, managed the Grand National Trap Shooting tournaments in Vandalia, Ohio, and became an editor for Sports Afield Magazine. Jimmy wrote 14 books about shooting and hunting. He was named to five

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***Hunting**, continued from, Page 4*

halls of fame: Trapshooting, Fishing, Skeet, the Minnesota Hall of Fame and the Waterfowl Hall of Fame.

Jimmy Robinson founded his first lodge at Delta Marsh in 1935. The present lodge in the village of St. Ambroise, Manitoba, was built in 1958. Jimmy passed away in 1986. Dick and Judy Wallin of River Falls had hunted with Jimmy Robinson for many years and bought the lodge.

My friends Dennis Anderson of River Falls, Randy Devendorf of Hudson, Wis., Walt Herschey of Hastings, Minn., Bob Anfang of St. Paul, Minn., Keith LeClaire of Lino Lakes, Minn., and I met in Manitoba on Sept. 23, the day before the start of waterfowl hunting for nonresidents. We were greeted at the Sports Afield Duck Club by Dave Reese and Judy Wallin of River Falls who operate the camp.

The lodge is a very comfortable live-in museum of a place. Dick Wallin framed hundreds of Jimmy Robinson's photos of friends and celebrities and covered walls with them. Racks of old decoys, duck calls and taxidermy of many game bird species give the lodge a real-McCoy hunting ambience.

We were up the next morning at 4 a.m., ate breakfast and met the guides. Our guides were Dave Richardson, John Ducharme, Nick Lavallee and his father Bill. They are Metis: French-Cree people whose families have lived in the area since the 1600s. Nick Lavallee is a fourth-generation guide at the Sports Afield Duck Club. They really know the marsh and the ways of waterfowl. They transported us to the marsh by truck. Hunting partners and guides ventured into the marsh in handmade heavy wooden duck boats propelled by oars. No motors are allowed in the marsh. We set decoys in the dark and settled into blinds in the reeds to watch the sunrise.

Hunting partners and guides ventured into the marsh in handmade heavy wooden duck boats propelled by oars. No motors are allowed in the marsh.

Birds started flying just before 7 a.m. We watched as squadrons of redheads, teal, canvasbacks, bluebills, pintails and mallards came zooming through. Some of them would fly straight into the decoys. Others would circle and check it out as we called to them. We got lots of chances and bagged plenty of ducks and Canada geese. Big "V" formations of white pelicans flew right over us. Bitterns, gulls, yellowlegs and terns glided by knowing that they are protected species. We listened to coyotes howling in the marsh in the middle of the morning. My old golden retriever, Badger, did a great job retrieving ducks and geese that we shot. He was fascinated by coots swimming through the decoys.

After picking up the decoys about noon we went back to the lodge for lunch, a nap, trapshooting or walking around the local prairie. In a beautiful tall-grass prairie and aspen parkland east of the lodge, we saw sharp-tail grouse, woodcock, and I bagged a ruffed grouse.

The last day was the best for me. Three of us, LeClaire, Devendorf and I, hunted with guide Nick Lavallee and set up on a point in the dark with the wind at our backs. Dave Reese came along as a spotter and for moral support. In a series of flurries of action, we got a mixed bag of canvasbacks, redheads, mallards, pintail, a widgeon and cackling geese (a small subspecies of Canada geese).

That evening, Judy Wallin served us a feast of ducks, ruffed grouse, wild rice and fresh vegetables from the local Hutterite community. We toasted to a great hunt and good friends. Dave Reese entertained us with stories of hunts on Delta Marsh.

We drove the long flat way across the prairie back to River Falls. We declared the birds that we brought back at the border. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service agent remarked that the people at the Sports Afield Duck Camp had done an excellent job of plucking, cleaning and packing our ducks and geese.

For me, that was a memorable hunting experience, one of a lifetime. Delta Marsh is big, beautiful and full of life. Friends from River Falls hosted us and treated us like kings. We got to hunt with guides who really know what they are doing. Best of all, I took a week off of work and got to joke around and hunt in a legendary place with some of my best friends.

– Special Section: 10th Anniversary of the Floods of 1997 –

Special Anniversary Section: Floods of 1997

Rain, blizzards, ice and floods assault North Central Region in 1997

Dave Haumersen, former chief of the old construction-operations division, at the Minnesota Avenue Levee, Granite Falls, Minn., in early April, 1997. (Photo by Ken Gardner)

Floods of 1997 - Part 1 of 2

District fought floods in three river basins

by Shannon Bauer

Ten years ago this past spring, the St. Paul District faced one of its biggest challenges ever when, in the timeframe of around six weeks, it simultaneously fought floods in three river basins – the Red, the Minnesota and the Mississippi.

Most of the flooding occurred along the Red River of the North with the majority of locations along this river experiencing record flooding. During its peak flows, the width of the Red River reached an average of seven to 10 miles.

The district's response began with pre-planning in the early winter months of 1997 and continued throughout the April and May flooding and on through recovery, lasting well over a year. It involved the efforts of almost all district employees and included providing advance measures, and/or emergency response in 47 communities and administrating more than $18.4 million in both advance construction and disaster recovery contracts.[1]

By the time the waters receded, more than 2,200 square miles of Minnesota and North Dakota – an area roughly the size of the state of Delaware – experienced flooding and around 70,000 residents had had to evacuate their homes.[2] Ultimately, the event caused more than $4 billion in damages, $3.6 billion in the Grand Forks, N.D., area alone, and an immeasurable amount of heartache.[3]

More than 140 Corps' employees deployed to the field, around 40 of which came from outside the district. At the peak of the fight, 84 of these people were deployed at the same time.[4] To date, it has been the district's largest emergency response within its own boundaries.[5]

Although flooding inundated Grand Forks and the Minnesota communities of East Grand Forks, Ada, as well as portions of Breckenridge, the contributions of district employees and the protection provided by permanent Corps' flood projects prevented damage to more than 40 communities. District economists estimated that, overall, an additional $325 million in damage was prevented.[6]

Col. J.M. (Mike) Wonsik, then the St. Paul District's commander, wrote in the after-action report that this success was the result of the district staff's "concern for the people under threat and their willingness to extend themselves to their limits to win the fight."[7]

***Floods of 1997**, continued Page 8*

St. Paul District file photo

As flooding increased on the Red River of the North, the North Dakota National Guard provided helicopters to transport supplies, flood fighters and news media over the Red River.

– Special section: 10th anniversary of the Floods of 1997 –

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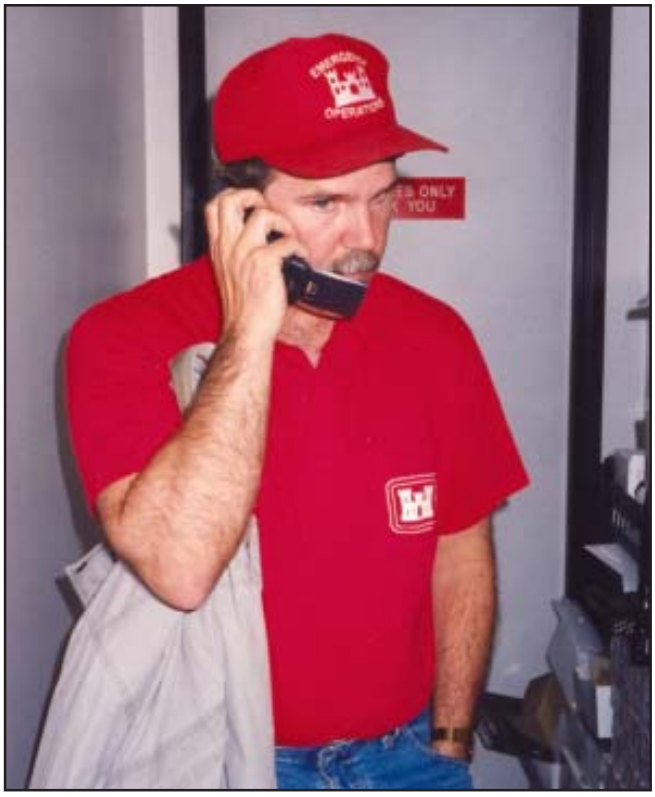

St. Paul District file photo by Ken Gardner

Tim Bertschi was area flood engineer for Red River of the North Basin during the floods of 1997. Bertschi, based at Fargo, N.D., participated in many conference calls on his cell phone. The photo was taken on April 23.

Geography and geology boost flooding

Scott Jutila, a hydraulic engineer, served as a flood reconnaissance engineer in 1997 and has since become the lead reconnaissance engineer for the Red River of the North. He said what makes the Red so prone to flooding is both its "geography" and its "geology."

The valley is the result of the last ice age, he explained. The slope of the glacial plain goes east to west about one to three feet per mile – and, going north from Grand Forks to Canada, the slope becomes even milder. Essentially, the land is flat, and there is no where for the water to go once the river bed is full.

Essentially, the land is flat, and there is no where for the water to go once the river bed is full.

As temperatures in the southern portions of the basin warm in the spring and the snow begins to melt, more and more water accumulates. Then, the water flows northward. When the snow melts in the north, more water is added to the peak as it continues to flow north. If the river is still frozen, the higher flows create ice jams, which, in turn, can act as temporary dams.

To describe what happens in the Red River Valley in the spring, Ed Eaton, a senior hydraulic engineer and former chief of water control in 1997, said, "There are section roads bounding nearly every square mile in the valley, and the boundaries of each section road are all connected with dikes and culverts. These section roads act as dikes to hold back the melt waters in each section. At each road intersection, culverts with flap-gates are provided to allow melt waters to run off. Typically, what happens is the ice melts in the sections, and the flap gates are usually stuck early in the flood, so the water doesn't move ... then when the flap gates open up, it just kind of all lets loose."

Jutila, Eaton and the rest of the district's hydraulic engineers and hydrologists knew early in 1997 that there would be serious flooding with the spring melt because of the wet fall and the severe winter. Additionally, early reconnaissance work completed by the district's water control section indicated that this flooding would be severe.

Eight blizzards bury Red River Valley

The Red River Valley experienced no less than eight blizzards that winter. These storms, named Andy, Betty, Christopher, Doris, Elmo, Franzi, Gust and Hannah, dumped 117 inches of snow in Fargo, N.D., and 98 inches in Grand Forks.[8]

***Floods of 1997**, continued Page 9*

The snow drifts reached rooftops and collapsed power lines and even roofs.

***Floods of 1997**, continued from Page 8*

Snow surveys in February showed exceptionally high water content in the snow pack with the highest amount being in the southern end of the Red River Basin – the headwaters to the Lake Traverse area. Specifically, in the Lake Traverse region, the water content of the snow pack averaged in the 10 to 13-inch range. From Fargo northward, it averaged around 5 to 6 inches.

Eaton, who now works mostly with the International Joint Commission boards supported by the district, explained that because of the flatness of the ground, only three inches of snowpack with water content can produce a good flood in the valley. "I've never seen such high snow water contents as were out there in 1997," said Eaton, "and I've worked for the St. Paul District since 1976."

The residents in the region remember the winter for its severity. Grand Forks resident Mark Krenelka, who became a Corps' construction representative in 2002, described it as "miserable." He said it got to the point where there was no place to shovel all the snow. To clean off his driveway, he had to have a friend from work clean it with a backhoe.

Tim Bertschi, Fargo area resident and western area office resident engineer, remembered, "Because of the blizzards, I had to ask for admin leave every other Wednesday for months. It got to be almost a joke."

That winter, due to low visibility and snow plowing, Interstate 29 closed for 18 days and U.S. Highway 2 for 17. In January, the North Dakota governor activated the National Guard to remove snow off the major roads.[9] The snow drifts reached rooftops and collapsed power lines and even roofs.

And then it was cold. Wind gusts averaged 30 miles per hour and wind chills averaged 50 below. At least five deaths resulted from the extreme temperatures.[10]

St. Paul District file photo

Blizzard Hannah froze heavy equipment in place and stopped highway traffic. A tow truck assists trucks at Grafton, N.D., after the blizzard.

Valentine's Day card: severe flooding

On Valentine's Day, the National Weather Service issued its first forecast for the Red River Valley, calling for severe flooding, and the district began making its official preparations. It held a number of early meetings in late February and early March to include hosting a flood exercise on March 13.[11]

Bertschi, who served as the valley's flood engineer then and now, said, "Normally only the flood engineer will make contact with the local communities and [he or she] will usually do so right before runoff begins."

In 1997, however, because of the expected severity of the floods, the sub-engineers visited with local officials and visited them early. "From about late February or early March, most of us became full-time flood responders," said Bertschi. "In comparison, last year [in 2006], we started responding two days before the flood."

At one point, he remembered, he had the opportunity to talk with the then district chief of engineers and flood executive officer, Bob Post, and they discussed

***Floods of 1997**, continued on Page 10*

***Floods of 1997**, continued from Page 9*

the possibility of something overwhelming happening. "We kind of agreed that this might be one of those situations where we needed to make sure that no loss of life came into play," he said. "We needed to make sure at the time that everybody knew this would be something we'd never seen before …

"But we went about our business kind of normal, because it had been drilled over and over into us that there'd never been a flood fight that we couldn't handle," he continued. "Then the water started running, we ran into storms, and then the National Weather Service changed its forecast dramatically. Then it became really difficult to do [response normally]. Late March, early April [of 1997], it became continued chaos."

St. Paul District file photo

Bonnie Greenleaf, project management; Dave Haumersen, former construction-operations division; and Joshua Cress, engineering division, in Montevideo, Minn., discussing advance measures for Minnesota River, April 4, 1997.

The district officially opened its emergency operations center March 7. It requested approval from Corps' headquarters to begin advance measures March 13 and received authorization the next day. To do this so far in advance of the event, said Eaton, is unusual and used only in extreme circumstances.

Jutila spent mid-March assisting in designing advance measure levees before departing for the valley at the end of the month. To do this, he and his co-workers first had to come up with an elevation for the levees, which included looking at the NWS forecasts and flood insurance studies to estimate what the flood profiles would be. The profiles were then used to determine the height of the levees. As an added safety factor, they added two to three feet of freeboard.

The sub-engineers took these designs with them to the field and began building levees. The problem, said Jutila, was that the forecasts kept rising. "We put those levees in place," he said, "but most … had to be raised above the initial design as the predictions went up."

Emergency operations jumps ahead of advance measures

By March 17, Roland Hamborg, project management, was on his way to Fargo, N.D., where the district set up its main field EOC. Smaller field offices were also opened in Grand Forks; Montevideo, Minn.; and Mankato, Minn.

Hamborg, then the operation's environmental review coordinator, was assigned to the Fargo EOC as the office manager. His role included managing all the contracts. "I was a liaison between the folks in the field setting up the contracts and the people in the district office who were writing the contracts and awarding them," he said.

When Hamborg arrived in Fargo, snow still covered the ground. "The first thing they had to do was clean a number of feet of snow off the areas that they wanted to construct levees on," he said. "Of course, the ground was still frozen."

***Floods of 1997**, continued on Page 11*

***Floods of 1997**, continued from Page 10*

From late March to April 9, the district initiated 22 advance measure contracts in communities along the Red and its tributaries – all the way from Wahpeton, N.D., to Pembina, N.D., and along the Minnesota River from Appleton, Minn., to Granite Falls, Minn. But before the advance measures were all in place, emergency operations were initiated in several communities, beginning with Grand Forks and East Grand Forks on March 26. Before most of these contracts could be finished, Blizzard Hannah, which occurred on April 4-6, stopped most everything.

St. Paul District file photo

Timm Rennecke, Leech Lake Recreation area, inspects levee construction on the Sheyenne River in North Dakota, April 10.

To those on the ground, there didn't appear to be a difference between advance measures and emergency operations, the contracts just kind of blended. "I mean pretty soon the snow began to melt and the water began to come up a bit," said Hamborg. "It was early April, and we had a major switch-over, but the real significance was funding, really, as far as I was concerned.

"We anticipated being able to follow the flood from the south end of the valley to the north and continuing to move our management office with the flood … but it didn't happen that way. It just kind of all crested in a couple of days, and the whole thing just shot up," he continued. "It was all happening across the valley at once."

Blizzard Hannah knocks out power

As the temperatures began to rise, Jutila left for Fargo, where he and Jim Murphy served as one of the three reconnaissance teams in place to monitor the changing conditions. Every day, they checked different gauges and set up temporary water marks or reference points to determine if there were any changes. They reported the data they collected to the water control folks in the EOC, the flood engineers throughout the valley and the NWS.

Jutila and Murphy spent most of their time south of Fargo, monitoring Lake Traverse and the areas upstream of Fargo. Lake Traverse had more water in it than ever before. It reached the top of the spillway design pool elevation, and there were concerns of White Rock Dam overtopping. The district fully opened the gates, which prior to 1997 had never been done before.

"We drove, I think, over ten thousand miles in those 30 days," he said. "The event developed slowly. At first, all you could see was snow, a lot of snow, and then … the ice was melting, and all you could see was water everywhere."

When Blizzard Hannah hit, they were on the road, coming back from Lake Traverse. The forecast that morning called for two to three inches of rain. "You couldn't see very far in front of you," he said. "There were roads we had to turn back on 'cause [they]…were starting to overtop."

***Floods of 1997**, continued Page 12*

***Floods of 1997**, continued from Page 11*

The rain turned into freezing rain and pelted everything with ice, but they made it back to Fargo and spent that next day stuck in their hotel.

For those working further north, it was worse. Dick Otto, natural resource manager, was serving as a subarea engineer in Pembina County in North Dakota. As the rain froze, he said, "the power lines got heavy with ice and then it snowed. The power lines just snapped and went down. The whole city [of Drayton, Minn.,] and surrounding area was without power.

"We couldn't do too much work on the levees then because of the blizzard, so we sat in a hotel with no power, no food, for two or three days," he continued. "We had snacks from the vending machine, and there was a gas station down the road with water, pop and gas station food – junk food, mostly junk food."

By the end of the blizzard, more than 300,000 residents were left without power. What's worse, seven more inches of snow fell in the northern half of the basin. Several days later, the NWS raised its crest prediction.[12]

What happened, said Eaton, is that the melt had started in the valley around the Lake Traverse area late March, and the water was moving north towards Fargo when Blizzard Hannah hit. "What that did was it got cold, real cold. It shut off the melt – stopped it in its tracks," he said. "However, it didn't stop the water that was already in the system south of Fargo that was moving northward.

"It didn't really start warming up in the valley until around the twelfth to fifteenth of April. When it did warm, it warmed up very quickly," he continued. "We had all the water that had been moving northward from the early melt and the additional melt water was added to that.

"It was more of a basin-wide warm up, so the water got going up in the Grand Forks area as well, before the Fargo area and Lake Traverse water had a chance to get there," he explained. "Probably the thing that was most difficult was the timing of the melt, because you had an initial melt, intervening cold snap, followed by a rapid warm up."

Floods crest back-to-back in three cities

Most of the district's responders remembered Hannah as being the beginning of a peak that didn't end for weeks. At the beginning of the storm, the Wild Rice River broke out of it banks east of Ada, Minn., and overland flow overtopped sandbag levees and flooded that community.[13]

A day later, the Minnesota River at Montevideo, Minn., crested at a record stage of around 24 feet – only inches away from the top of the emergency levees. The city had already partly flooded by the time it called on the Corps for help, only a few days before Hannah.[14]

Contracts had been put in place the day before the storm to build three emergency levees. Bonnie Greenleaf, project management, was there assisting the city. She said they worked right through the rain and snow, only stopping for an hour when visibility was too poor to drive.

At the same time, Wahpeton, N.D., and Breckenridge, Minn., experienced their first crest from

***Floods of 1997**, continued on Page 13*

St. Paul District file photo

Above is the staff gage at the Hwy. 75 Dam Service Spillway, Lac Qui Parle Reservoir, near Watson, Minn., April 3, 1997. The water level was 957.45. It peaked on April 7 at 958.05.

***Floods of 1997**, continued from Page 12*

the Ottertail River, just as Matt Bray and Tim Grundhoffer, both from engineering, were finishing up their emergency levees. The sewer began to plug up, and then a portion of the northern levee was breached. Flood water inundated the north end of Breckenridge. (See Wahpeton/Breckenridge, Page 17.)

The crests along the Minnesota River continued on through mid-April, about the same time the main stem of the Red began to reach its peak and the Mississippi began to rise.

"If it were a normal flood, it would have taken around five days after the Red crested in Wahpeton for it to crest in Fargo, and than another eight before it crested in Grand Forks," said Bertschi. "Instead, all three cities crested within days of each other.

Wahpeton and Breckenridge experienced their second crest April 15, and this time the south side of Breckenridge was inundated by overland flooding.

It only took three days for the crest to reach Fargo and Moorhead, Minn., and in those three days, every piece of heavy construction equipment in the area, including those pieces owned by the North Dakota National Guard and the Department of Transportation, was running 24 hours a day, causing a "virtual gridlock" on the streets.[15]

"Fargo was precariously close to being lost," said Bertschi. It crested April 18 at a record stage of 39.6 feet. It crested right about the same time that district staff working in Grand Forks found cracks in the Lincoln Park levee.[16]

By 8 a.m. that day, that neighborhood was flooding and the Riverside and Central Park neighborhoods were being evacuated. That afternoon, a dike in East Grand Forks broke and flooding occurred in The Point area.

By noon April 20, around 50 percent of Grand Forks and most of East Grand Forks were flooded. The river didn't crest until two days later, reaching a record stage of 54.35 feet.[17] (See Grand Forks-East Grand Forks, Page 22.)

St. Paul District file photo

Ed Eaton served as chief of water control during the floods of 1997.

'There are people out there ... giving it their all'

At this point in the battle, said Bertschi, "everybody was on 24 hours. There were shifts for everyone. The EOC was going 24 hours.

"We had many people coming out [to help], thinking they'd be doing 'X' and were assigned to do something else," he continued. "Lori Taylor, [engineering,] and some others were coming out to do

***Floods of 1997**, continued on Page 14*

"We were pulling out hydrographs of historic floods in the Grand Forks area and trying to make judgments using basic hydrology to be able to provide our field people with the best information we could."

Ed Eaton
Chief of water control, Flood of 1997

***Floods of 1997**, continued from Page 13*

some survey work; by the end of the day, they were out doing construction inspections and ended up staying a couple of weeks."

Hamborg said, "Everybody worked hard for long hours. I usually got to the office at about 5:30 [a.m.] … I was lucky if I ever beat Tim Bertschi there. It seemed like he lived there."

At the district office, things were just as busy. "We were looking at data collection platform river gage data that was being sent in via satellite. We were looking at the river elevation points from hour to hour, looking at trends in the river," said Eaton. "We were pulling out hydrographs of historic floods in the Grand Forks area and trying to make judgments using basic hydrology to be able to provide our field people with the best information we could."

Despite best efforts, Grand Forks and East Grand Forks flood

"The day Grand Forks and East Grand Forks flooded was a miserable day," said Hamborg. "When you work hard, you expect success."

Bertschi agreed. "It emotionally really hits you hard, and you really take it personally," he said. "I think it affects, actually, this whole district, because I think the whole district takes a lot of pride in what they do."

The flood fight continued, though, along the Red until it reached the Canadian border, culminating with the crest in Pembina April 26. The rest of the communities along the Red were successfully protected by the efforts of the district, the communities and thousands of volunteer sandbaggers.

Then, the battle moved on to the Mississippi Valley

***Floods of 1997**, continued on Page 15*

St. Paul District file photo

At the Red River of the North in Fargo, N.D., a contractor for the Army Corps of Engineers checks the height of the 2nd Street Levee in front of City Hall. An unidentified Corps of Engineers' emergency response team member is at right.

– Special section: 10th anniversary of the Floods of 1997 –

***Floods of 1997**, continued from Page 14*

with the district assisting its namesake city, St. Paul, Minn., and its operations staff sandbagging its own facilities along the river.

At the same time, the Federal Emergency Management Agency requested assistance in providing disaster relief to the affected communities, and district staff began helping the cities of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks by providing clean drinking water and power to its citizens and temporary housing for its displaced-residents, picking-up debris, demolishing homes and cleaning up the sanitary and storm sewers through the affected areas in Minnesota and North Dakota.[18]

These efforts continued on into November. It took another year or two to close out the books.

Overall, Hamborg said, the experience made him realize the "tremendous human resource," available in the district. "There are people out there just giving it their all, working ungodly hours, doing everything possible to save those communities, and the majority

***Floods of 1997**, continued Page 16*

'You have my permission..'

"Each day people would come to flooded Lincoln Park in Grand Forks, where we were working during the recovery phase to pump out [floodwater at] the park using Cristifolli pumps. They'd ask us when they would have permission to go into their homes to see what they might salvage, principally in the way of irreplaceable mementos. When we started, the water was up to the second-story windows. Incidentally, when we completed the pump out, the term 'fish out of water' had new meaning. The view of the trapped fish wriggling in the street gutter muck defined the term with great clarity.

"Initially, we needed access from a homeowner to go on his land to get equipment set up atop the levee. A man, about 85 to 90 years-old, happened to come by his house which was beyond the flooded limits and said to me, 'You have my permission to go wherever you need to go to get your equipment on that levee.' I walked away with his verbal okay to let the contractor know he could begin turning wheels.

"I thought throughout the flood fight, if a person was to choose who he or she was working for during the '97 floods, who would it be? Who stood out most prominently? The day I met that 90-year-old American at Grand Forks was the day I made up my mind I had come to the Red River Valley to be in the positive spirit of that American."

Lew Riggin, project engineer, Flood of 1997

File photo by Ken Gardner

Lew Riggin, project engineer during the Flood of 1997, prepares for a morning meeting as part of emergency operations on the Minnesota River at Granite Falls, Minn., in early April 1997.

***Floods of 1997**, continued from Page 15*

of them were saved," he said. "It just made you very proud of this district, the individuals in it and what the Corps could accomplish when nature was against it. I am just very proud to be a part of this group."

To this day, the flood has had an impact on district business. Since 1997, the district has continued to work with numerous communities in the basin to assist them in better defending themselves against a flood of similar scale. It has begun constructing six flood damage reduction projects in the Red River Valley to include the nearly completed $400 million project in Grand Forks and East Grand Forks and the halfway completed $33 million project in Wahpeton and Breckenridge. In addition, it is currently studying a potential six more.

– Footnotes –

[1] U.S. Army Corps of Engineers St. Paul District, *Spring Flood 1997: Red River of the North, Minnesota River, and Mississippi River After Action Report* (St. Paul, Minn.: April 1998), 2 and 17.

[2] Peter Verstegen, "District puts in her clean effort against the flood of '97," *Crosscurrents*, Summer 1997, 1 and 6.

[3] U.S. Department of Commerce National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration National Weather Service, *Service Assessment and Hydraulic Analysis: Red River of the North 1997 Floods* (Silver Spring, Md.: August 1998), preface.

[4] Peter Verstegen, "Red River recovery mission nearly complete," *Crosscurrents*, October 1997, 4.

[5] The district's largest emergency response outside of its own boundaries was Hurricane Katrina, which began in August 2005 and continues to this day.

[6] Corps of Engineers, *After Action Report*, 16-17.

[7] lbid, 17.

[8] Ibid, 1; Ryan Bakken, *Come Hell and High Water* (Grand Forks, N.D.: Grand Forks Herald, Inc., a division of Knight-Ridder, Inc.), 12.

[9] Ibid, 11 and 21.

[10] Ibid, 11.

[11] Ken Gardner, "District prepares for potential spring flooding," Crosscurrents, March 1997, 2.

[12] Ibid, 14 and 29.

[13] Corps of Engineers, *After Action Report*, 3.

[14] Ibid, 7.

[15] Ibid, 8.

[16] Ibid, 8 and 9.

[17] Bakken, *Come Hell and High Water*, 33 and 38.

[18] Peter Verstegen, "Red River recovery mission nearly completed," *Crosscurrents*, October 1997, 1.

St. Paul District file photo

Sand bags protect a residence near the Red River of the North in Breckenridge, Minn./Wahpeton, N.D. area.

St. Paul District file photo

Matt Bray and Tim Grundhoffer, engineering; Pete Corkin, Rock Island District; U.S. Rep. Earl Pomeroy; Col. Mike Wonsik, St. Paul District commander; and Maj. Gen. Russell Fuhrman, Mississippi Valley Division, at Breckenridge, Minn., during the floods of 1997.

Rain, Blizzard Hannah and higher crests

Flood of '97 overwhelms Wahpeton/Breckenridge

by Shannon Bauer

Engineering division's Matt Bray and Tim Grundhoffer fought two swiftly rising rivers, blizzard conditions and extreme temperatures only to be overcome by conditions beyond their control and to lose portions of a town not just once, but twice, in the same flood.

Bray, a geotech engineer, and Grundhoffer, a structural engineer, were assigned as flood subarea engineers in Wahpeton, N.D., and Breckenridge, Minn., during the 1997 floods that wreaked havoc across the Red River Valley. Although they worked together closely, Bray worked primarily in Wahpeton and Grundhoffer in Breckenridge. Pete Corkin, from Rock Island District, assisted them.

The two cities are situated across from each other at the confluence of the Ottertail and Bois de Sioux rivers. The two rivers converge in the cities' downtown

***Wahpeton/Breckenridge**, continued Page 18*

***Wahpeton/Breckenridge**, continued from Page 17*
areas and form the Red River of the North.

Flood fight efforts are generally simpler for Wahpeton than Breckenridge, as Wahpeton only requires protective measures to be taken along the east side of town due to flooding on the Bois de Sioux/Red River. Breckenridge requires protection along its west side due to flooding on the Boise de Sioux/Red River but also requires protective measures be taken through the central portion of town due to flooding on the Ottertail River.

Bray and Grundhoffer arrived in Wahpeton mid-March, about three weeks before the first predicted crest, and began working on advance measures. Initially the City of Wahpeton wanted to provide protection for its park, and Breckenridge wanted to have snow cleared out from one of its major drainage ditches. However, as river stages began to rise and predicted river crests were increased, it became apparent to both communities that more significant measures would be required. Ultimately, both communities built extensive emergency levee systems. Breckenridge also put in place several hundred feet of sandbag levees for areas where earth fill levees could not be built.

The levees were fairly well finished to the predicated crest the night before the Ottertail crested – the night Blizzard Hannah moved into the area – but then it began to rain.

"We were ahead of the crest and prepared for that, but we had two to three inches of rain and that was the last straw," said Grundhoffer. "I knew when the [weather] forecast came out, and it started raining. I didn't think we were going to make it."

Rain all night and all day saturates towns, blizzard dumps wet snow

It rained all night and all day. "We were trying to get levees built in the north part of Breckenridge along the Ottertail River, but we couldn't keep up with the rising river," said Grundhoffer. Water was also flowing into the area behind the levees through the city's storm system, which had not been entirely blocked off from the river. Ultimately the north end of town was inundated with flood water.

That night, the temperatures dropped around forty degrees to below zero, and it began to snow. "Both cities were essentially shut down due to the white out conditions from the blowing snow. The blizzard did help us in that it slowed down the rate of raise on the river," said Bray.

St. Paul District file photo

Vice President Al Gore filled a sandbag at Breckenridge, Minn.

"We had to do some repair work the next day to a portion of the Wahpeton levee that had been cut to allow drainage from behind the levee back to the river. Several truckloads of clay fill had to be brought to the site, a distance of two to three miles," he continued. "We put together a caravan of about 10 dump trucks loaded with fill. We were traveling bumper-to-bumper very slowly, but still managed to

***Wahpeton/Breckenridge**, continued Page 19*

***Wahpeton/Breckenridge**, from Page 18*

lose half the group due to the whiteout conditions."

As the water levels dropped on the Ottertail, it continued to climb on the main stem.

In the 10 days it took for the second crest, the cities began to let their guard down. Grundhoffer said they began to cut holes in some of the levees. "We had to have a meeting with the city to say, 'Hey, this isn't over. There will be a second crest,'" he said. "Finally, water was rising again in some of the levee openings, and they took it seriously at that point."

The National Weather Service published higher crest forecasts within days after Hannah had dumped more precipitation on the already soaked valley, and Bray and Grundhoffer continued to add height to the levees.

At the same time, the Corps continued to release water out of White Rock Dam downstream. White Rock Dam was in danger of overtopping. (See "District fought floods in three river basins," Page 7.)

"They [the water control section] would call us everyday and tell us, 'Sorry, but we have to let more water out of Lake Traverse for safety reasons,'" said Bray. "So even though we couldn't handle any more water, there was no choice. It just kept coming up, and we just kept building the levees higher.

St. Paul District file photo

Tim Grundhoffer (left), engineering, at Breckenridge, Minn.

St.Paul District file photo

The district's water control section opened the gates to release water from White Rock Dam for safety reasons. The release surged into Wahpeton and Breckenridge. The reservoir was formed for flood reduction along the Bois de Sioux River and lower Red River valley, as well as water conservation for frequent periods of drought.

Working without sleep

"Most days, we worked 18-hours or more," he continued. "There were a couple of times where we worked a day-and-a-half straight without any sleep."

He said the city had given him a cell phone, because they could not reach him on the Corps' issued phone. Often, they were both ringing at the same time.

Within days of the crest, they experienced a breach in the levee on the Wahpeton side. Grundhoffer said he received a call from Bray and went over to help him. "Water was blowing through the levee probably about the size of a manhole," he said. "It was just shooting out of the levee."

The breach took place where the levee had been tied into an abandoned railroad embankment. "It hadn't occurred to me at the time we constructed that reach of levee that I shouldn't be relying on that to hold back the water," said Bray. "You don't know what materials were used to construct it."

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The location of the breach was especially difficult to work in as water had ponded behind the levee to a depth of about three feet and there was a propane tank, still connected to a mobile home, floating in the water.

"We had a lot of town people on the levee, putting sandbags in the area of the breach trying to get the flow to stop," Bray continued. "Eventually, we got it to slow down by putting sandbags on the riverward levee slope. At that point, a large backhoe from the railroad was brought on site. It was used to place fill in the breach. The backhoe was able to stop the flow entirely. The next day we fortified the area with more clay fill using our crews.

"When I went back [there] in 2001," he added, "the first thing I did was have our crew remove that portion of the railroad embankment entirely and build a new levee section."

Second crest and overland flooding

The next day, April 15, Wahpeton and Breckenridge experienced their second crest and the Bois de Sioux began to cause overland flooding on the southern end of Breckenridge.

Grundhoffer said they recommended a plan that included building a levee that left a few businesses and around a dozen homes out of the protected area, but the city did not want to leave anyone out.

Later that night, as the south end of town began having more and more water, they came back and requested to follow the originally-suggested plan. "We went ahead and did that but knowing that it would be almost impossible, at that time, to try and build that other line up in that short time," he said. "It must have been four or five o'clock in the morning when the mayor finally came out and told us to call it quits.

"We actually were trying to fight the flood during the flooding and essentially ran out of time," he explained. "The levees that were completed were overtopped in some locations."

The water stayed high for several days, and Bray and Grundhoffer stayed in town to monitor the conditions of the levees. They had some that were getting soft, as well as some seepage problems. They ended up staying until the city felt comfortable again.

Although he knew it wasn't his fault, Grundhoffer said he felt like he had let the people down. "It was something that took a long time to process," he said.

"It being my first emergency duty, it was an extremely challenging situation," he said. "You are there helping the city as a team to provide guidance to them. You are not there by yourself. There are other experienced flood engineers, the district office, the city to help you out. All of that support was very welcome."

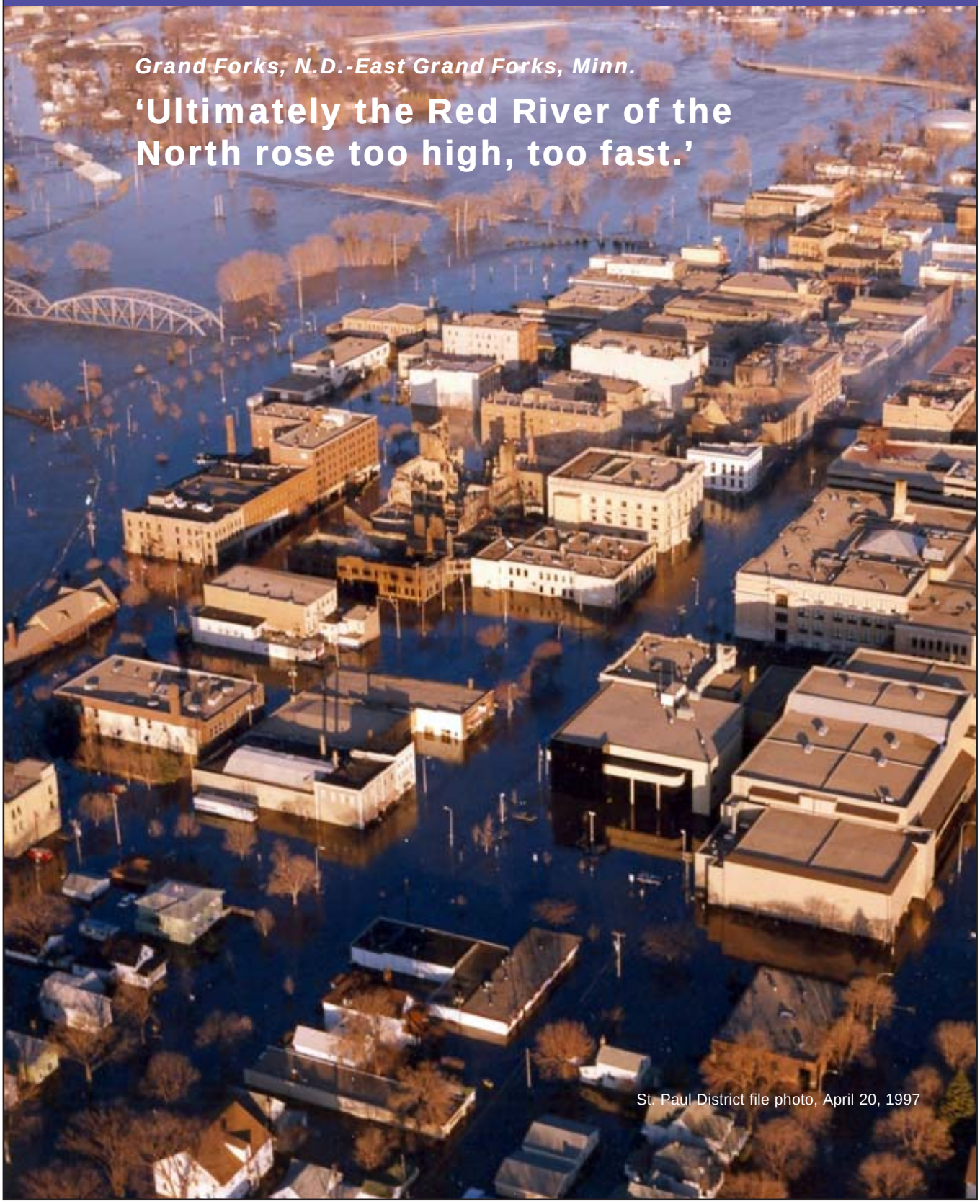
Although the topic of a permanent flood control project did not come up during the fight, within a year both cities contracted with a private engineering firm to begin building flood protection for both cities.

Bray said they built permanent levees on both sides of the river, as well as two flood walls in Breckenridge. The engineering firm approached the district to review its plans, he added, and the district recommended modifications. Shortly after that, the district initiated a feasibility study.

St.Paul District file photo

Breckenridge is on the Minnesota side of the Red River of the North across from Wahpeton. The photo was taken April 5, 1997.

– Special section: 10th anniversary of the Floods of 1997 –



Grand Forks, N.D.-East Grand Forks, Minn.

‘Ultimately the Red River of the North rose too high, too fast.’

St. Paul District file photo, April 20, 1997

St. Paul District file photo

The Corps of Engineers supplied millions of sandbags and built levees at Grand Forks, N.D. Above, the North Dakota National Guard and citizens assist in fighting the floods by filling sandbags.

Memories linger of disaster at East Grand Forks/Grand Forks

by Shannon Bauer

The district, the locals, the volunteers – they all put up a tremendous fight, but ultimately the Red River of the North rose too high, too fast.

And although it's been 10 years since the spring flooding in the Red River Valley destroyed much of Grand Forks, N.D., and East Grand Forks, Minn., the sights, the sounds, the emotions of this event linger for those who were there.

"I can still picture those breaches like it was yesterday," said Neil Schwanz, a geotech engineer. "I can picture myself standing [there], watching all this happen."

Preparations for the spring flooding began well in advance. The National Weather Service put out a forecast several weeks earlier than usually scheduled at the request of the district and local officials. In it, they indicated flooding to exceed historic levels could be expected.

"Right from the get go, the first flood forecast was for significant flooding," said

***High and fast**, continued Page 23*

The district, the locals, the volunteers – they all put up a tremendous fight, but ultimately the Red River of the North rose too high, too fast.

***High and fast**, continued from Page 22*

Jay Bushy, who worked for the Grand Forks engineering department in 1997. He now works for the district at the Western Area Office.

"The advance measures were actually deployed at least a month before the flood," he said. "The Corps was helping us get ready for the fight, getting us better prepared."

By late March, based on National Weather Service forecasts, the measures included protecting Grand Forks up to a 49-foot crest with three feet of freeboard as added insurance. The district opened an emergency operations center in the East Grand Forks City Hall. Darrell Morey, engineering, served as the subarea engineer there under Tim Bertschi, the area engineer. Bertschi worked out of a Corps' EOC opened in Fargo, N.D., about 81 miles south of Grand Forks, a city also facing severe flooding.

By April 4, the Corps had its advance measure contracts in place in both Grand Forks and East Grand Forks. The ground had just begun to thaw, and a contractor began opening up a borrow pit that morning to begin digging up the material needed to build levees, when a massive blizzard struck the region and work came to a standstill. The backhoes froze in the pit, said Lisa Hedin, formerly of project management. In 1997, she served as a subarea engineer for Grand Forks and reported to Morey.

This blizzard, named Hannah, brought freezing rain and nearly seven more inches of snow to an already inundated valley, as well as extreme temperatures and bitter winds. In and of itself, Hannah was a huge disaster. (See "District fought floods in three river basins," Page 7.) She shut everything down, including flood fighting, for around four days.

Corps' employees working in Grand Forks and East Grand Forks were stuck without power and without food in their hotel. "All you could do was sit in your room. Everything was frozen," said Hedin. "Some people went back to their rooms, and there was snow blowing in down there by their air conditioners.

"I ended up calling a restaurant … across the parking lot. And I have no idea why, but they had a couple of staff people who had managed to get there," she continued. "They agreed to feed us. And because we were Corps' people with nothing else to do, we organized all the people in the hotel, making lists of what everybody wanted to eat and coming back with a big sandwich order."

An estimated 300,000 residents across the valley also lost power,[1] including Mark Krenelka, a Grand Forks resident who now works at the district's Western Area Office as a construction representative. "We lost power for three days. We ended up burning wood in the fireplace, trying to stay warm," he said. "For the people in the rural area, they were without power for even longer."

The blizzard proved to be the last opportunity for Corps' employees to rest for a long time. As soon as Hannah let up, flood fighting began in earnest.

"It was just so fast after that," said Hedin. "It started moving from advance measures and transitioned into emergency operations as the predictions were continuing to go up based on more snow." In Grand Forks, because of Hannah, the plan changed to add three feet, building levees with three feet of freeboard for up to a 52-foot crest.

At that point, it became a 24-hour operation with most of the flood fighters working 12- to 15-hours-a-day, and sometimes more. And where levees couldn't be built any higher, volunteers placed sandbags.

"But then it began to get warm," said Hedin, "and the water was just coming like crazy, and there was still a lot to go."

All hell broke loose April 18

Schwanz served as the sub area engineer in East Grand Forks – across the river from Hedin. He said the first problem they encountered occurred Thursday, April 17, when they discovered cracks in the Lincoln Drive floodwall on the Grand Forks side of the river. He went there to assist Hedin, and they decided to

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***High and fast**, continued from Page 23*

plug the cracks with burlap sandbags, while volunteers added more height to the wall with sandbags. They finished this around one or two in the morning; but by daybreak the next day, water was running down the street and into the Lincoln Park neighborhood.

"That's kind of the day all hell broke loose," said Schwanz.

Ironically, most remember Friday, April 18, for also being a beautiful, warm spring day.

Hedin was back in her hotel room that morning, trying to obtain a few hours of sleep after spending most of the night fixing the Lincoln Drive cracks, when she heard the city sirens go off. She immediately reported back to the city's EOC, located in the basement of the Grand Forks Police Department. City Attorney Harold Swanson, who Hedin didn't know then, approached her with the Yellow Pages in hand, asking her what she needed.

"I didn't have the faintest idea then what was going on, really," she said. "The storm sewers were letting go, and little spots in the levee were letting go, and we just needed equipment in all these different places." Swanson began calling everyone in the Yellow Pages, she said, trying to locate people with Bobcats® to help her.

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St. Paul District file photo

Melting ice on the Red River of the North and its tributaries jammed against many bridges, exacerbating flooding. Above is an ice jam on the Sheyenne River near Ft. Ransom (downstream of Valley City, N.D., about 40 river miles). "There was ice dusting and other methods done to try to melt ice early, and this is a ice jam hotspot," said Tim Bertschi, area flood engineer.

***High and fast**, continued from Page 24*

The Lincoln Park floodwall tied into high ground on the south end, right about where Reeves and Lincoln drives meet. "It was just a road," said Hedin. "It wasn't a levee or anything.

"I mean they talk about the levees breaking and what really happened, in my mind, in my memory, is that the water got so high, it just came over the natural ground at this point," she said. "And then, once it got around that floodwall, it just ate away at that corner … [the water] just ran down the hill [behind the floodwall], and it was running into Lincoln."

The Corps and the city decided to build a secondary dike in the neighborhood, down the alley between Belmont and Reeves and to essentially abandon Lincoln Park, she said. Additionally, the city then began mandatory evacuations for that neighborhood.

The Point goes under

Across the river, Schwanz and Kurt Reppe, real estate, were still raising levees and overseeing sandbagging on The Point in East Grand Forks. Reppe had finished all his real estate work for advance measures and had volunteered to help Schwanz with construction oversight. It was around 1 p.m., April 18, when one of the levees broke on the backside and water started flooding The Point.

St. Paul District file photo

Lisa Hedin, subarea engineer for Grand Forks, and a member of the North Dakota National Guard at the University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, N.D., April 22, 1997.

"It was rising just as fast as we could get the people out," said Reppe. "Then, the city came in with fire trucks and the [Army National] Guard came in and hauled out the people."

Schwanz remembered trying to plug the hole with contractor R.J. Zavoral and Sons. "At one point, we had four dozers with their blades side-by-side, trying to hold back some of the water, while an excavator would be picking up sandbags," he said. "As soon as we would get one area closed, another would break."

By around 7 p.m., the neighborhood was lost. The Guard airlifted Schwanz and Reppe out via helicopter. Another Corps' employee, Mark Meyers, lost his government rental vehicle there to floodwaters. All three relocated to the downtown area, where sandbagging was still underway.

Bushy, as a Grand Forks city employee, had spent the day in Lincoln Park neighborhood, fighting the flood. Across the raging river, though, he had a wife, a four-month old daughter and a home on The Point. "I was spent – mentally spent, physically spent. I wanted to go and see my wife and my daughter. I hadn't seen them in a few days," he said. "On my way to The Point, I got as close to the bridge as I could until I had to stop. They were losing The Point at that time, and I couldn't go any further."

He said he remembered receiving a phone call from his wife when their home was about to go under, demanding that he come home. "I said I just couldn't," he said. "She got real mad at me and hung up."

His wife and daughter evacuated to his parents' home, located on one of the highest elevations of The Point, and stayed there until the sewer lines began to back up. His wife and daughter ended up evacuating that day via helicopter, followed shortly thereafter by his parents. It would be at least another week before Bushy could reunite with his family. In the meantime, he went back to work, assisting the Corps and its contractors with building a levee in the Elmwood area.

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***High and fast**, continued from Page 25*

Boils appear in Riverside

That same afternoon, boils developed in the Riverside neighborhood of Grand Forks. "They were starting to have places where the water pressure was high – it didn't have a lot of freeboard, but the levee was holding – but they had so much pressure because the differential was so high," said Hedin. "It was finding small seams in the ground, and it was pushing up behind them."

Kent Hokens, engineering, made the discovery. He came back to the EOC, said Hedin, and explained that there were far too many to fight. "We told those guys who were working in this area to get off the levee and get back to Gateway Drive," she said. It was about 7 p.m. when the city ordered a mandatory evacuation of this area.

Krenelka lived in the Riverside neighborhood then, near the Riverside Pool. His home featured a fully-finished walkout basement, so he and his family had moved all their belongings to the main level of their home in anticipation of flooding.

"I didn't have the faintest idea then what was going on, really," she said. "The storm sewers were letting go, and little spots in the levee were letting go, and we just needed equipment in all these different places."

Lisa Hedin, subarea engineer for Grand Forks, Flood of 1997

They evacuated in the wee hours of the morning when they first heard the city sirens go off. "We

***High and fast**, continued on Page 27*

St. Paul District file photo

Floodwaters inundate 4th Street N., downtown Grand Forks, N.D. The photo is looking towards Demers Avenue. The second, third and fourth buildings on the left hand side were torn down after the flood. Photo taken April 25, 1997.

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turned on the radio and got the word to evacuate," he said, "Then it was scrambling, trying to decide 'where are we going' and 'how do we get there' and 'what do we take with us.'"

"What we heard was that the river had risen fast and that it was coming over the dikes in Grand Forks, coming over the levees," he continued. "If you wanted to cross the river to Minnesota, you better get on the road and start heading north fast…"

They ended up packing as much as they could and caravanning up Interstate 29 with his brother-in-law and sister-in-law and all of their family members. They crossed over to Minnesota at Pembina and went to Thief River Falls where his mother-in-law lived, and all 12 of them greeted her at the front door. "We all packed into my mother-in-law's house and that's where we stayed," he said, "glued to the TV."

While Riverside was being abandoned, the Corps' flood fighters began to loose trucks bringing up borrow from the south end of town. "We were having problems where neighbors were high jacking trucks. I mean they weren't physically assaulting the drivers – but they knew the drivers. They lived there. This was their community," said Hedin. "And they were getting them [the truckers] to come into their neighborhoods, and they were building spot levees.

"So I was having our poor little intern engineers, who didn't know a soul in this community, trying to go down there and keep our trucks going to where they needed to go," she added.

Plus, the temporary dike being built near Lincoln Park had to be abandoned. "They couldn't stay ahead of it," she said. "I think it had to be four or five blocks long to tie in …, and they couldn't raise it a tenth of a foot in an hour. It was washing out.

"Lincoln Park was full. It was starting to come out the back side," she continued. "Again, it was just coming over the ground."

Emergency Operations Center evacuated

Around 8 p.m., water flowed through this hole towards downtown. Hedin, in the city EOC at the time, took a phone call from Scott Hennen, the local radio talk show host, wanting to know what was going on. "He was essentially asking, 'Are we going to lose this flood fight?,'" she said. "I sort of knew, but I hadn't even told myself that we had lost – yet.

> **"We're getting out. Everybody's getting out."**
>
> Ken Vein, city engineer

"I was just way too young, and I was way too scared to be that person being quoted as saying, 'It's over. Get out of town,'" she continued. "I was on hold, and Ken Vein [the city engineer] was on the telephone, on the other side of the room.

"We looked at each other, and the police chief had come in, the fire chief had come in, and water was in the streets around the EOC," she said. "Ken [Vein] was just sitting …, just sitting. 'We're getting out. Everybody's getting out,' [he said.] We all just knew what that meant.

"He talked to Scott Hennen and said, 'It's time to go,'" she continued. "People just started swooping stuff off their desks."

Grand Forks relocated its EOC to the western side of town, on the second floor of the University of North Dakota's public works building. While they evacuated, the Red flowed west, moving closer to the English Coulee Diversion Channel, located along the western edge of Grand Forks, filling in the city as it went.

At their new location, Hedin said North Dakota State Water Commission employee Todd Santos suggested building a levee up South Washington Street, which runs up the middle of Grand Forks to the railroad tracks. The intent, said Hedin, was to keep the Red on the east side of the city and prevent it from joining the English Coulee and flooding all of Grand Forks.

"The city of Grand Forks had this mountain – in any city of North Dakota, it would have looked like a mountain – of crushed, recycled concrete," said Hedin. "It was just sitting there out on Highway 2, just across from Airport Road."

Hedin put the contractors to work, dumping this

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recycled concrete into the flowing water. The idea worked. Bushy's in-laws lived on the west side of Grand Forks, he said, and the dike protected them.

Another place the flood fighters saved included the Grand Forks hospital. A team was sent there to build a ring levee around the building. "Since they didn't have access to any material," said Hedin, "they began digging up the parking lot."

Francis Schanilec, a Grand Forks resident, worked for the Omaha District at Grand Forks Air Force Base in 1997. He has since retired from the St. Paul District. He recalled evacuating his home with the water following him as he went. "It was coming up out of the drains onto the streets," he said, "and the streets were getting flooded as I was driving away."

All along, he said, he had not been anticipating a disastrous flood. "I didn't really do a lot [to prepare] 'till the day before we had to evacuate," he said. "My sister said, 'Did you get all the stuff out of the basement?' I said, 'Well no, 'cause, I don't think it's going to flood.'

"The next day, [Thursday], I ended up taking everything out of the basement, and I'm glad I did, 'cause I had eight feet of water in the basement," he continued.

Schanilec and his family went to Bismarck, N.D., where his sister lived. From there, they wound up in a small town near Grand Forks, where they were allowed to stay in a parish house, enabling him to get

***High and fast**, continued on Page 29*

St. Paul District file photo

The U.S. Air Force Base at Grand Forks, N.D., provided emergency shelter for many residents displaced from their homes by the flood.

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back and forth to work. They would not move back into their home for around 30 days.

East Grand Forks evacuated

Across the river, events were happening just as fast. After the breach on The Point, Schwanz spotted water seeping from under the Highway 2 Bridge. In this location, the levee ran under the bridge, but there wasn't enough room to get equipment in there to place earth fill on top of it. They had raised the levee with sandbags. With this breach, said Schwanz, it was inevitable that the low-laying areas of the city would flood.

"There were people still sandbagging at various points," he said. "They hadn't heard the sirens to get out, so we had to blow the sirens another time.

"At that point, it would have been too dangerous to try and go under the bridge," he explained. "Those sandbags, the way they were, it wouldn't have taken too much for another section to blowout. People would have been hurt."

Around 10 p.m., April 18, they initiated a backup plan that included building a ring around the downtown area in an attempt to save some of the businesses. "The water was rising so quickly that we had to stop," said Reppe. "I am guessing it was between midnight and two in the morning. Finally, we didn't have a choice. We didn't want to lose people."

The Corps' employees in East Grand Forks then evacuated to Crookston, Minn., almost leaving Schwanz behind. Having been awake for almost two days, he laid down in the police department for a few minutes of rest.

"There was a period of time where I couldn't stay awake anymore, and I laid down in one of the jail cells," he said. "I remember Marsha Gilliland, [formerly of operations], waking me up [to evacuate].

"Then it was quite calm," he said. "Of course, there was water all over, and the power was out."

By 4 a.m., Saturday morning, April 19, all of East Grand Forks, including its downtown, had flooded.

An hour later, downtown Grand Forks had four feet of water in it.[2] About twelve hours later, fire broke out on North Third Street. In four more hours, the fire

***High and fast**, continued on Page 30*

St. Paul District file photo

A North Dakota Army National Guard truck plows through the flooded streets in Grand Forks, N.D., April 19, 1997.

"There was a period of time where I couldn't stay awake anymore, and I laid down in one of the jail cells," he said. "I remember Marsha Gilliland, [formerly of operations], waking me up [to evacuate]."

Kurt Reppe, Real Estate

***High and fast**, continued from Page 29*

spread three blocks.

Marilyn Noss, Grand Forks resident who now works for the district at the Western Area Office, lived at the time on the south end of Grand Forks near Red River High School. She evacuated when the fires broke out.

She and her then husband had woken up that morning to the sound of sirens and spent most the day moving items to the second floor of their split-level home. They waited until the last minute, she said, because they had been dealing with another family emergency up until that time.

She described what she saw as they left. "You just saw all these choppers flying around and a lot of National Guard vehicles," she said. "It was kind of surreal. You kind of almost felt like you were in a little bit of a war zone."

Noss evacuated safely to her father's farm west of the city. The flood waters only made it partway up their driveway, but they still lost their lower level. What happened, she said, is the city shut off the power because of the fires, and without the pumps pumping, water backed up into their ground floor. And because it was fully finished, it needed to be gutted after the water receded.

Reppe, too, witnessed the fires – but from a distance, from the other side of the river. "We were sitting on the outskirts of East Grand Forks, watching it burn," he said. "There was nothing anybody could do."

He said fire trucks were put on top of National Guard flatbeds, and they used river water to try and put it out. When that didn't work, planes were used to drop a chemical retardant on the flames. The fire fighters weren't able to put the flames out until Sunday afternoon, and, in the meantime, 11 buildings, many historic, were lost.

Red River crests at record 54.35 feet, breaking old record by 5.4 feet

It took another two days, until Tuesday, April 22, for the Red to crest, which it did at a record stage of 54.35 feet, 5.4 feet over the previous flood of record. While the flood fighters waited for the water to recede, they caught up on paperwork and began to brainstorm about recovery.

Hedin said she went out with the National Guard at the time of the crest to see whether the levee was still standing and to see how long it was going to take to get back on-line. The Guard was searching for people left in the city, she said. They found about six people in apartments who hadn't left and didn't want to evacuate.

"We were driving around in this sand truck, and there was three or four feet of water on the street. It was washing directly up to people's homes, so you'd try and drive in such a way that you didn't create a

***High and fast**, continued on Page 31*

St. Paul District file photo

Tim Bertschi updates the media at daily press conference, Fargo, N.D., April 10, 1997.

St. Paul District file photo

Aerial photo of Grand Forks, N.D. and East Grand Forks, Minn., after the inundation.

***High and fast**, continued from Page 30*

wake," she said. "It was just so odd to be driving through the streets with all that water, with nobody else moving around and everything quiet."

On the other side of the river, Reppe took a similar tour but in a boat. "I can't even explain how emotional it was," he said, "you had some of those older homes, two story homes in some of those lower areas. We were in a boat on top of one of them, the house was totally submerged. Houses were moved off their foundations, half a block away."

The hotel where the Corps' employees were staying at flooded. Those on the Grand Forks side moved to a location closer to Highway 2. And although the new hotel didn't have power, the National Guard hooked up generators fairly quickly. "We didn't have water, so the hotel had this line of 15 port-o-potties out in the parking lot, and you had a water bottle to bring back from the EOC to brush your teeth," said Hedin.

Additionally, no one lost their belonging. The hotel staff was "fabulous," she said. "They hadn't even left themselves yet, but they had gone into a bunch of people's rooms with big, black garbage bags and dumped all their stuff into it or in their suitcase, and they'd written the room numbers on the bags."

The National Guard ferried over the luggage of those that were stranded on the East Grand Forks side of the river via helicopter. Schwanz hitched a ride back and forth to gather all the belongings.

Eventually, when it was possible to cross the river again, a block of rooms opened up in Crookston. "The thing was, you never knew who was staying there. You never had your stuff in the right place, and you

***High and fast**, continued on Page 32*

***High and fast**, continued from Page 31*
never knew if you'd get it back again," said Hedin. "That was kind of chaotic."

The tragedy, not surprisingly, drew the attention of the press. Bertschi said there was almost as many national reporters as there were local. "It was interesting to see," he said. They kept looking for the Red River Valley. They couldn't really understand how small the [river] bed is normally.

"You had to really educate them every time you talked to them," he continued. "They would come up with their helicopters and such and were just amazed.

"The cities in the area cosponsored a daily press conference, and the Corps participated. It really helped get the Corps' story out and minimized the time they [the reporters] took up," he said. "It was 35 phone calls you didn't have to deal with. But the national guys didn't like that. They all wanted their own little piece."

In fact, it was on TV that Krenelka first saw his neighborhood. "You could see that the water was very high," he said. "Our neighbor across the street to the east of us, the water in their house was up to the roofline. You could see that it was high in our house.

"When they showed that on TV, my wife just broke down and started crying," he continued. "Up until that point, you think, maybe we are going to be okay, things will be fine." It would still be a few weeks before Krenelka could be allowed to inspect his home.

When he did get the opportunity, he determined there had been 18 inches of water on the main floor and the lower level had been totally flooded. "Our furniture was saturated. The water had gone up in the furniture," he said. "Everything else, the carpet, was just covered with about an inch of mud – greasy, slimy river mud."

Looters and politicians arrive

As the waters receded, the looters and the politicians began to arrive. Although most agreed that the National Guard did a good job at preventing looting, they were unable to keep out the politicians. The president, the vice president, the Federal Emergency Management Agency director, the local Congressional delegation and more all arrived within days.

"With the president's visit and the vice president's visit, it took three or four people, three or four days to deal with it," said Bertschi. "The local Congressional delegation, because it's a small state, they just walk in your office and ask you how everything is going and then walk out. The big guys were fairly high maintenance."

The residents, on the other hand, were not allowed back in for days or weeks, depending on the amount of damage in their neighborhood. "You had to go through a checkpoint with the guard and show them your ID to prove where you lived, so they could tell you if you could go back in or not," said Noss.

And at first, since there wasn't any power or water, she explained, "they just wanted you to go in and look." Initially Noss took out a few things, she said, as well as started pumping water out of her home. Then, the basement needed to be gutted before she could move back in.

Krenelka also gutted his basement shortly after being allowed back in. "Everyone was cautioned not to try and clean and maintain a lot of the stuff, because there were a lot of bacteria in that river water," he said. "If you started to hang on to stuff, once the weather warmed up, you were going to end up with mold problems … The best thing to do to deal with it was to throw it away.

"You could just go down the street and see block after block of piles and piles of household goods," he said. "The piles were six or seven feet tall in front of every single house from people going in there and cleaning out their basements and taking out all the destroyed furniture, clothes and everything else that was ruined…"

"After we got all that stuff out, then we were told to start gutting the basement, rip out the sheet-rock right down to the studs, take up any carpeting, anything that was soaked with water," he continued. "The thing was to get a company in there to start pressure washing. If you had a forced air system and your duct work was filled with river mud, then you had to get somebody in there to clean out your duct work … Everybody's electrical panel was ruined. Everybody's furnace was destroyed, so were their water heaters –

***High and fast**, continued on Page 33*

***High and fast**, continued from Page 32*
anybody who had their utilities downstairs."

As it turned out, Krenelka's home was more than 50 percent damaged, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA, would not let him rebuild in a floodplain. His flood insurance paid off his mortgage, and the city paid him the balance between what was left on the mortgage and the resale value of the home, allowing him to make a down payment on a new home.

But even if he had rebuilt, he added, the new flood levee built by the Corps goes right through the lot where his house once stood.

Financially, the flood hurt. "We went from having between seven to 11 years left on our mortgage to taking out a 30-year mortgage," he said. "That put us way back to square one.

"Emotionally, it was tough, because we lost all of our contents," he added. "Fortunately, most of our pictures and things like that we had up on a shelf in a closet, so those were out of the water."

Bushy also lost his home.

About a week after the crest and having worked many, many hours for more than three weeks without a break, his employer, the city, ordered him to go find his family and get some rest. He said he spent a few days with his wife and daughter and then a few more days with his parents, but he spent most of the time sleeping.

"They couldn't believe how much weight I'd lost," said Bushy. "I looked like a scrawny runt."

When he arrived back in town, he didn't have a place to live. Although he didn't have a basement, flood waters damaged the first floor of his home. Since he was a city employee, FEMA put him up at the Holiday Inn for around six weeks.

He spent his days working on recovery, doing damage assessments and such, and the nights cleaning up his home. Although his home did not suffer more than 50 percent damage, he was still not allowed to obtain a building permit to rebuild. His property was to be located on the wet side of the Corps' future flood levee. He and his wife and daughter ended up moving in with his in-laws for about a year.

***High and fast**, continued on Page 34*

St. Paul District file photo

The Federal Emergency Management Agency requested that the St. Paul District manage the debris removal mission in Grand Forks, N.D.

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Bushy used his flood insurance to pay off his mortgage and sold his property to the city. This allowed him to purchase a new lot and build a new home. His brother- and sister-in-law eventually purchased his home and moved it to a new lot. "So, it's still in the family," he said.

"All my wife and I wanted was to break even, and we did," he said. "With our situation, in our house, the flood was probably a blessing in disguise. We had flood insurance. We were eventually going to outgrow that house … Trying to sell it would have been an issue with flood insurance."

Water recedes; Corps and FEMA advance with recovery missions

Once the water had receded and city officials felt safe, most of the Corps' flood fighters went home for a rest. The majority eventually returned, either to assist with recovery or begin work on a flood control project to protect both cities from future similar events.

The district ended up assisting FEMA with five recovery missions to include debris removal, demolition, temporary housing, storm sewer cleaning and structural evaluations, spending about $21 million of appropriated federal recovery dollars.[3]

When it was all said and done, the flooding caused more than $3.6 billion in damage to Grand Forks and East Grand Forks.[4] More than 50,000 residents of these two cities had to be evacuated, and more than 11,000 homes and businesses were destroyed in Grand Forks. Only around 27 homes and businesses in East Grand Forks escaped without damage.[5]

Plans had already been in the works for an East Grand Forks flood control project; but the city hadn't liked the levee's footprint, and the plans had been shelved. Since the project was still authorized, it was essentially immediately revived and Grand Forks was added to the scope of the project. Within weeks, people wanted to know where the levees would be, said Hedin.

Ironically, the levees today look very similar to the ones East Grand Forks initially rejected.

The official FEMA recovery missions ended later that fall, but it took much longer for those involved to recover.

"When I came back here [to the district office], there was almost nobody here, and I called down to Bob Post's [then chief of engineering] office, and he was in, and I asked him if I could talk to him," she said. "I went in there and just burst into tears … He was very kind and compassionate and told me it wasn't my fault.

"My single job was to keep the flood waters from this town," said Hedin, "and I felt like I'd failed.

"It did take awhile to get over," she continued. "It helped on a lot of levels to be involved in the project afterwards."

The following year, an ice storm occurred in April. Noss said she had "a strange and nervous feeling," and she wasn't the only one. "A couple of other people that I worked with … were feeling the same edginess," she explained. "Like: are we going to have to go through this again?"

"It's a comfort knowing that we are almost to that point [where the flood control project is complete]," she said. "Every year you get a little more comfort level – especially since last year, with the flood that we did have, and knowing how well things did work."

This past spring, 10 years from the flood that almost destroyed them, the cities commemorated the event, as well as celebrated the completion of a $400 million Corps' flood control project.

– Footnotes –

[1] Ryan Bakken, *Come Hell and High Water* (Grand Forks, N.D.: Grand Forks Herald, Inc., of Knight-Ridder, Inc.), 14.
[2] Ibid, 38.
[3] Peter Verstegen, "Red River recovery mission nearly completed," *Crosscurrents*, October 1997, 1.
[4] U.S. Department of Commerce National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration National Weather Service, *Service Assessment and Hydraulic Analysis: Red River of the North 1997 Floods* (Silver Springs, Maryland: August 1998), preface.
[5] Ryan Bakken, *Come Hell and High Water*, 28 and 70.

News and Notes

Holiday Awards Ceremony

Corps' family: People helping people

"Corps' Family: People helping people" is the theme for the annual Holiday Awards Ceremony at the Prom Center in Oakdale, Minn., Dec. 14, 2007.

One of the events planned is a baby picture "Who is it?" ice-breaker. "We are asking individuals who would like to participate to please submit a baby picture and a current picture to Marita Valencia, 5th floor, regulatory branch, no later than Dec. 4," said Jeff Olson, awards committee co-chair. "The more who participate the more fun it will be. We will accept hard copy photos or digital photos."

Also, a special Corps' game of Jeopardy® will be played and a category will be released each week going into the awards ceremony. There are 25 questions, five categories, five levels, three possible answers and four teams.

Retirees who plan to attend should contact Jan Pream in operations at 651-290-5312.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers photo

Terry Jessessky (left), central area lockmaster, Trempealeau, Wis., received the Commanders Award for Civilian Service on Sept. 24 for his mission support at the Louisiana Recovery Field Office in Baton Rouge. Mike Smith, director of LA-RFO, presented the honor at a weekly review meeting in New Orleans.

Announcements

Rosemarie Braatz, a retiree from operations division, was the grand marshal of the Wannigan Days Parade, July 21. The parade starts in St. Croix Falls, Wis., and ends in Taylors Falls, Minn. The two communities are across from each other on the St. Croix River. Wannigan Days is a community festival sponsored by the St. Croix Falls Chamber of Commerce.

Kevin Henricks, contracting, and his wife, Katie, and son, Nathan, welcomed Nicholas Edward into their family at 11:29 a.m., Oct. 3.

Donna Zappa, formerly an administrative assistant in operations division, retired from the Federal Highway Administration, March 30. She was an administrative operations assistant. "I still miss the folks from the Corps, especially now that I don't see them in the skyway at lunchtime," said Zappa.

Taps

Marvin C. Schroeder, Alma, Wis., passed away Oct. 1. He worked on the sandblasting and painting crew and worked on Lock and Dam 2, Hastings, Minn., in 1979, and at Lock and Dam 7, LaCrescent, Minn., in 1980.

Kelly Hayward, the wife of Maj. Preston Hayward, contracting division, passed away Oct. 4.

Sheldon E. Fox, member of the St. Paul District Hall of Fame, passed away Oct. 30. He was head electronics mechanic in the old construction-operations division.

Photo by Jon Sobiech

Clearing debris at Blackhawk Park in DeSoto, Wis., are, from left: Dan Cottrell, Chad Rethwisch, both at Blackhawk Park; Ray Marinan and Kristin Moe, La Crescent Office; and Eric Hammer, a co-op ranger at Blackhawk.

August wind storm rips trees, blocks access to Blackhawk Park

by Dan Cottrell, park ranger

On Aug. 22, I received a call at 1:30 a.m. from a shaken up Jerry Keele, a volunteer and fee collector who reported that "a lot of trees are down and nobody can get in or out [at Blackhawk Park]. It looks like a jungle down here!"

Keele and his wife, Sharon, as part of their contract, stay in the park overnight in case of emergencies. They both reported that severe winds only lasted about 10 minutes but at times they could not see 10 feet outside of their recreational vehicle.

Park Manager Tom Novak and I arrived about a half-hour later and started the two-hour process of clearing the roads in the upper-camp area so campers could leave for emergencies.

Other campers in the park reported large branches and flying debris hitting so hard they thought their windows would break.

Luckily, nobody was injured during the intense storm. One recreational trailer sustained major roof damage when a six-inch cottonwood limb fell through the roof from about 40 feet up.

A few days earlier, the lower-camp area was closed due to sustained rainfall, which made the ground too soft to drive on.

The challenge was to get most of Blackhawk Park back up and running for Labor Day weekend.

The restoration was made more difficult by a two-day power outage, which limited water and sanitary facilities.

On Aug. 23, 22 people worked through hot and humid weather to clean up the damage. Nine people were Corps' personnel from Blackhawk and La Crescent offices and nine were from Four Seasons Maintenance, the grounds and cleaning contractor for the park.

Robert Hoff Tree Service provided four workers. The tree service handled the most dangerous trees and hanging limbs with their boom truck and other equipment. They cut down hazardous trees safely. Through it all there were no work injuries or lost time accidents.

The upper area was operational by that Friday and the following week all but the southern most part of the primitive area was usable for Labor Day visitors.

Photo courtesy Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Corrine Hodapp (right), Eau Galle Recreation Area, Spring Valley, Wis., represented the St. Paul District at the Minnesota State Fair, Aug. 28. She worked at an exhibit sponsored by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. An estimated 750-800 people visited the booth that day.

Photo by Tim Meers

The Towboat Patrick Ganaway pushes a barge loaded with gravel into Lower St. Anthony Falls Lock and Dam in Minneapolis. The district's three upper locks opened to shipping Oct. 6, for the first time since the I-35W Bridge collapse Aug. 1. The helper boat Lois E stands by to lend a hand.

Minneapolis locks and dams open again to navigation

by Mark Davidson

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Paul District, opened its upper three locks and dams in Minneapolis, Oct. 6., to include Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock and Dam, Lower St. Anthony Falls Lock and Dam and Lock and Dam 1.

The Coast Guard removed the security zone from Mile 851.7 to Mile 854 on the Upper Mississippi River today, and all vessels, including recreational vessels, are now allowed to proceed through this entire area.

This is the first time the Minneapolis locks and dams have been open to all navigation traffic, including recreational vessels, since the collapse of the Interstate 35W bridge collapse Aug. 1.

The Corps of Engineers completed hydrographic surveys of the river's navigation channel this week to ensure all bridge debris had been removed prior to opening the locks and dams.

June Employee of the Month

Bemidji Regulatory field staff nominate Hartness

The Bemidji Regulatory Field Office, including Rachael Tjepkes, Bill Baer and Kelly Urbanek, nominated Lemoyne (Le) Hartness for Employee of the Month. Hartness is the resource assistant in the Brainerd Field Office.

Le Hartness was instrumental in assisting the regulatory division in setting up the initial satellite office in Bemidji, Minn., in 2005, and in the move to the permanent official field office. He acted as the unofficial administrative assistant for the Bemidji Satellite Office and the field office in 2006. Hartness traveled to Bemidji on several occasions to assist with mail, file systems, general administrative tasks, supply orders, etc.

St. Paul District photo

Le Hartness (left) and Col. Jon Christensen.

Many previous permit files for the Bemidji Office are housed in the Brainerd Office, and Hartness continues to support the Bemidji Office in information research requests.

Hartness developed and conducted the training of Rachael Tjepkes, a new resource assistant in Bemidji.

Hartness has always been available to help and answer questions, concerns and processes the RPA, or regulatory program assistant, has had. Hartness has driven to Bemidji on different occasions to assist the program assistant with processing of ORM files, the Ombil Regulatory Module (a regulatory database), and duties required for the position. Hartness also created "How To" instruction manuals for procedures that need to be completed daily and monthly. He also assisted with the resource assistant's Army civilian identification card at Camp Ripley.

Hartness merits recognition for ongoing aid and assistance, putting the team's obligations ahead of his and not expecting anything in return.

July Employee of the Month

Ulrick sets standard as mentor from start to finish

Capt. Adam Rasmussen, project management, nominated Jim Ulrick, engineering and construction division, for Employee of the Month. Here is what he wrote.

Upon my arrival, Jim Ulrick immediately began the process of training and preparing me for my job in project management. It started as a 'right-seat ride' by meticulously taking me through the processes involved in managing a project from conception through completion. Ulrick introduced me to all the personnel, offices and branches with whom I would soon be working. Ulrick coached me through my 'left-seat ride,' overseeing my meetings, lending professional advice and reviewing documents and plans with me.

St. Paul District photo

Jim Ulrick (left) and Col. Jon Christensen.

On his own time, Ulrick mentored me on the district's policies and procedures. He assisted my learning of the project management business process and tutored me in P2. As a mentee, I always felt I could seek his advice on project issues. He always gave a very thorough and professional opinion of both the management and technical engineering fields and ensured I understood their relationship in making management decisions.

Ulrick continually has the district's best interests in mind in all he does.

August Employee of the Month

Grant provides exceptional emergency response

Shannon Bauer, public affairs, and Aaron Snyder, project management, nominated Joetta Grant, operations division, for Employee of the Month. Grant works as a clerk at Lower St. Anthony Falls Lock and Dam, Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock and Dam and Lock and Dam 1, all on the Mississippi River in Minneapolis. Here is what they wrote.

Bauer wrote: "During the chaos created in the aftermath of the I-35W Bridge collapse, Joetta Grant was a Godsend to the many people who responded to the incident, as well as the people who work there normally.

St. Paul District photo

Joetta Grant (left) and Col. Jon Christensen.

"I deployed to Lower St. Anthony Falls Lock and Dam to deal with the many questions being asked by the news media. My phone did not stop ringing for days, and I didn't have time to take a breath. Grant helped me by faxing documents, responding to numerous e-mails and finding answers to unusual questions. Plus, she helped screen some comments from the citizens who were calling in just to comment on what the Corps should do with the river levels."

Wrote Snyder: "Following the collapse of the I-35 Bridge, Grant was willing to go above and beyond her normal duties by assisting the responders however possible.

"I was working for public affairs following the disaster and Grant was a huge help to us while operating out of Lower St. Anthony Falls. She assisted with everything we needed, from finding ways to protect our cameras in the rain to answering phone calls and directing the questions to the correct personnel.

"No matter what was happening Joetta was able to identify ways to help out, she was quick thinking and able to solve problems when they arose."

St. Paul District photo

Teri Alberico (right), operations division, greets U.S. Ambassador Richard B. Norland at the Civil-Military Emergency Preparedness geographic information systems workshop in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, on Sept. 21, 2007. She was in Tashkent from Sept. 14-22. The ambassador had just presented his credentials to the President of Uzbekistan on Sept. 20.

Photo by Lt. Col. John Kunkle

Col. Jon Christensen, district engineer, conducted a site visit to Eau Galle Recreation Area, Spring Valley, Wis., Oct. 9. With him are Dick Otto, Kevin Baumgard, Corrine Hodapp and Dave Reynolds, all from operations division. Hodapp and Reynolds work at Eau Galle.

Postcard from Iraq

Mike McGarvey (wearing shorts) was promoted to GS-13 recently by Col. Michael F. Pfenning, commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Gulf Region, North District, in Tikrit, Iraq. McGarvey and Pfenning served together in the St. Paul District before separately deploying to the Gulf Region a year apart. McGarvey is the chief of logistics at GRN. He is on temporary duty from a similar position in the St. Paul District.

– Submitted by Lora Greer, public affairs

Gulf Region North
2007
Tikrit, Iraq

Photo by Lora Greer

Postcard from Iraq

I've been working on the Al-Garma electrical substation, a key electrical project of the Corps in Basrah Province. It was successfully energized Oct. 3 and provides the Iraqi Ministry of Electricity with a more reliable and secure transmission network in the south of the country.

– Thomas Eidson, chief of engineering and construction, Gulf Region South District

Gulf Region South
2007
Tallil, Iraq