

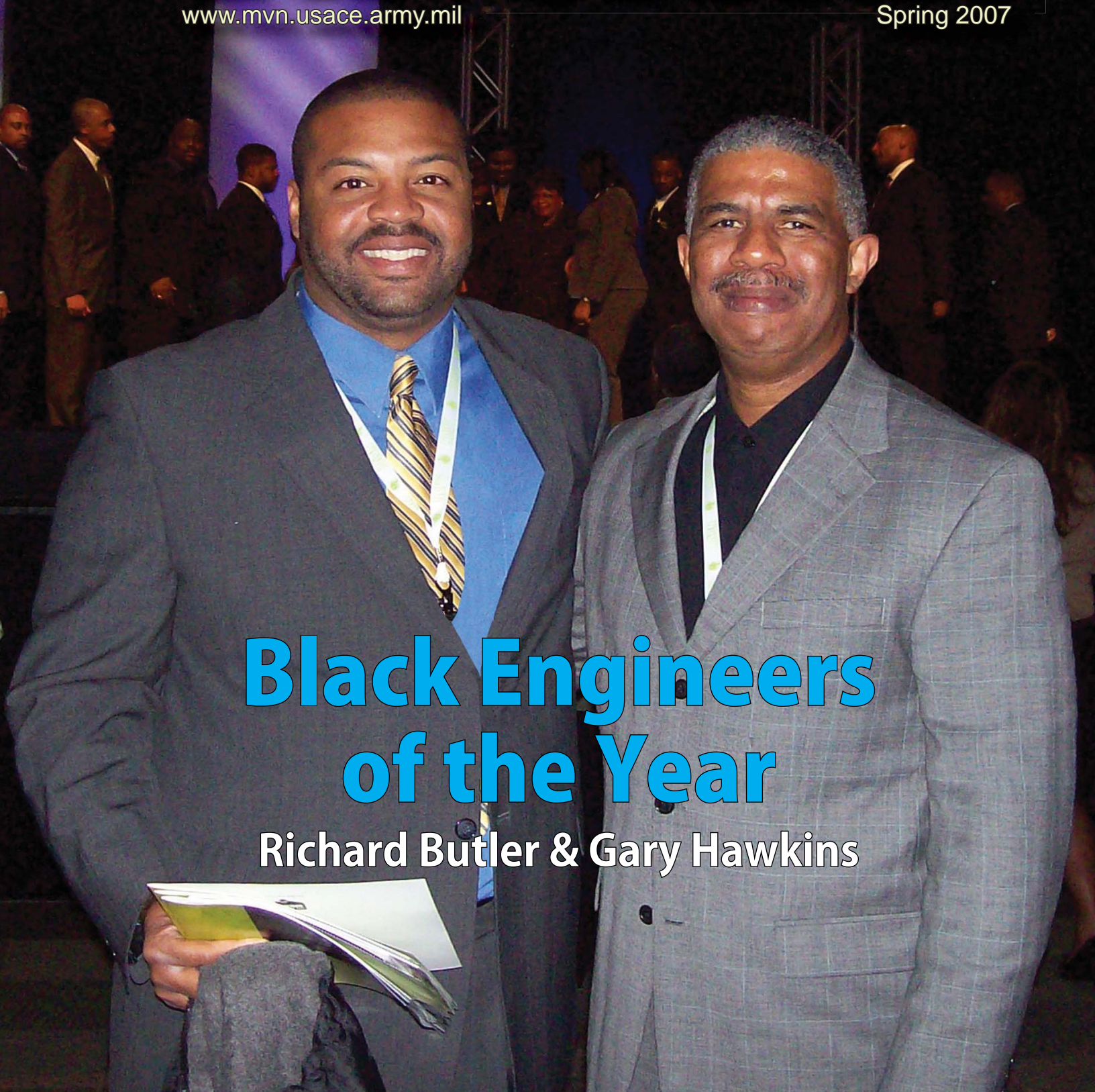


US Army Corps  
of Engineers®  
New Orleans District

# Riverside

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Spring 2007



## Black Engineers of the Year

Richard Butler & Gary Hawkins

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## Riverside

Spring 2007  
Vol. 18 No. 1

**Commander**  
Col. Richard P. Wagenaar

**Public Affairs Chief**  
Kathleen K. Gibbs

**Editor**  
Eric Hughes



**On the Cover:** Engineers Richard Butler and Gary Hawkins at the Black Engineers of the Year Awards Conference, February 2007. Courtesy photo.

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Left to right: Gary Hawkins, Janice Hawkins, Deputy Commanding General, USACE, MG Ronald L. Johnson, Juanea Butler, and Richard Butler  
(Courtesy Photo)

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# Carrollton Gauge

Everyone wants to be liked. In a working environment, to be popular among peers, coworkers, subordinates and supervisors is naturally desirable. Unfortunately, popularity and professionalism oftentimes can be competing interests. The senior leaders of this district are often faced with decisions of doing what is “right” versus doing what is “popular.”

Now more than ever, employee morale is important. Employees are working longer hours, under extreme execution deadlines and under fire from the media and elected officials. I can assure you that the district’s senior leadership is well aware of the demands on this staff. However, since Katrina, the Corps of Engineers and specifically the New Orleans District is under close scrutiny. Everything we do and the way in which we do it is being observed. We have to accept that our way of life that existed before Katrina is gone.

For some reason, we tend to remember only those decisions that were unpopular. After Katrina, while other companies and agencies were dismissing employees or asking them to relocate to other cities, we continued to pay salaries, discovered Safe Haven and extended time off to allow employees and their families to regroup. I know of no company or agency that treated their employees with such concern and generosity. But that’s yesterday’s news and easily forgotten.

The senior leaders of this district have had serious discussions on the adverse impact to morale. Recent decisions on the picnic and Christmas party are indicative of such decisions. We have weighed the consequences of such actions and made what we believe to be the right decision – although at times unpopular.

So next time a decision is made that adversely



*(Photo by Scott Riecke)*

affects morale, consider the pros and cons and ask yourself this question – “If this were your decision and you were accountable for any adverse outfalls, what would you do?” The answer may not be so obvious.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Accardo". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Chris Accardo, P. E.**  
**Chief, Operations Division**



# Keeping a public eye on the media

*Kathy Gibbs faces the challenge as the new PAO Chief*

by Kathy Mangan

**K**athy Gibbs entered an intense media environment when she took over the New Orleans District's Public Affairs Office at the start of the 2006 hurricane season, just two months before the one-year anniversary of Katrina.

"I was overwhelmed at the beginning," says Gibbs. On one day alone, she received 450 e-mails from reporters around the world, and her fingers didn't stop flying on her Blackberry even when she was soaking in the bathtub late at night.

"I enjoy challenges," Gibbs says, "and I couldn't imagine a bigger challenge anywhere in the Army than here." She adds that 20 years of public affairs experience, an almost-completed master's degree in journalism and mass communication and prior experience with USACE all helped her cope with the challenge.

"Media response during the Katrina anniversary was one of my career highs," admits Gibbs. She lists dealing with Olympic athletes at her Army post in South Korea during the 1988 Seoul Olympics and handling the Army's first-ever crisis reaction team during a sex scandal at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, as additional career highlights.

Gibbs grew up in a military family, enlisted in the Army on a dare while a junior in college and married Nick Gibbs, a career Army Soldier. She has lived in countries around the world but never in one house for more than six years. She retired as a Lt. Col. in the Army Reserve after 30 years and continued working for the Army as a civilian. As busy as she was, Gibbs raised three children during this time.

At her first job for USACE in Huntington, West Virginia, Gibbs got a trial by fire three months after her arrival when her boss deployed to Kuwait. In those three months, Gibbs went from deputy to chief PAO. Her last post was in Grafenwoehr, Germany, where she was a public affairs officer for the largest NATO training center in Europe.

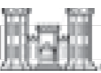
Prior to July, Gibbs only had fleeting memories of New Orleans from two short visits decades ago. But she and her husband, by now a retired Lt. Col. in Army aviation, wanted to return to the South.



**Kathy Gibbs wants to enhance the Corps message and image to district employees and the public.** (Photo by Scott Riecke)

She says some of the challenges before her include enhancing the USACE image in the community; coordinating between the public affairs offices in the district, Hurricane Protection Office, Task Force Hope, division and headquarters; and ensuring Corps employees are well informed on the facts and issues.

"The best public spokesperson is a well-informed employee," she says. "New Orleans residents need to know that people who work for the Corps are just as invested in flood, environmental and navigational control as they are."



# A new frontier at land's end

*Corps builds new sub-office in Venice, supporting Mississippi River navigation, commerce*

by John Hall

**F**or years, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers operated a sub-office in Venice—where the highway, levee and land end before the Mississippi River empties into the Gulf of Mexico.

Sad to say, on Aug. 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina forced the red brick, one-story office to live up to its name. The Gulf of Mexico invaded Venice and submerged it under 11.9 feet of sea water.

Nevertheless, navigation at the Big River's mouth is of global importance. So the Corps will open a rebuilt Venice Sub-Office late in 2007. The taller, white structure will look nothing like its predecessor.

"We're making a stand at Venice because we have no choice. We must keep open America's largest port complex, Baton Rouge to the Gulf," said Col. Richard Wagenaar, commander of the New Orleans District.

"The mouth of a great river presents the greatest problems of shoaling from sediment build-up. The sand, silt and clay drop out at land's end like passengers jumping off at the end of a streetcar line."

This megaport has four of the top 13 U.S. ports located shoulder to shoulder, Baton Rouge; South Louisiana, headquartered at LaPlace; New Orleans, and Plaquemines Parish. The majority of U.S. grain and billions of dollars of chemicals go abroad through the complex, along with great volumes of coal. And it receives the largest U.S. imports of steel, green coffee and natural rubber.

"Venice is the key base of operations for our work to keep the mouth of the Mississippi open to commerce. It's the biggest navigation job in the Corps of Engineers, to maintain the 45-foot channel," said Fred Schilling, a Corps branch chief in New Orleans.

"Here we supervise the surveys and the sonar boats that determine depths and safety of the river's mouth and adjacent channels. Here we

supervise all of the marine construction needed, such as dredging and maintaining structures such as pile dikes, rock jetties and foreshore protection," Schilling said.

The new Venice Sub-Office will be more muscular with pre-cast reinforced concrete walls, floors and roof with cast-in-place pile supported foundation. The office will be at an elevation of 22 feet.

"The sub-office is being built to have the survivability to function as an Emergency Operations Center if the need arises. We are building a structure with the strength to ride out a major hurricane," said Dean Arnold, the project engineer who put together the design-build technical specifications.

Arnold said the real "ground floor" will be for parking, storage and equipment. At 4,200 square feet, the new office will provide the space necessary for the team to perform its duties.

A design-and-build contract for \$6.05 million was awarded to RES Contractors, LLC of Pierre Part, La. Completion is expected before the end of the year.

see Venice, page 11



**A model of the the new Venice sub-office will reach an elevation of 22 feet. Model done by Steve Dalferes (OD).**



**Carl Robinson is the canal captain for the London Avenue Canal, one of three outfall canals along Lake Pontchartrain.**

*(Photo by Scott Riecke)*

# Outfall canal

**Part three of a three-part series**

*Carl Robinson: London Ave. canal captain*  
by Leo Skinner

Carl Robinson has worked for the Corps since 1982. He spent 18 years working on the Dredge Wheeler and now has a great job working at the New Orleans District. So why doesn't he just sit back and relax? Carl is not that kind of guy. He wants to be in the thick of things using his skills to the best of his ability. He found the challenge he was looking for as a canal captain at the London Avenue outfall canal.

Robinson is one of three canal captains assigned by the New Orleans District to manage operations at



the three outfall canals along Lake Pontchartrain during tropical storm activities. The other two captains are Ray Newman and Donald Constantine. Each captain has a four-person support staff to assist in the operation. If a tropical storm or hurricane has enough surge to force gate closures, teams will be located at the 17th St., London and Orleans Avenue sites and canal captains will be embedded at nearby pumping stations with representatives from the Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans.

According to Robinson, the London Ave. outfall structure has amazing electronics, which makes him more excited about the opportunity. “There are computers, sensors and other electronics that go along with the hydraulic pumps and floodgates and that is what I know best,” Robinson said. “Another part of the job I like is working with the staff at the structure, at the Corps emergency operations center and with city officials from the Sewerage and Water Board.”

As far as Robinson is concerned, being ready to kick into gear when the team gets the “go ahead” is essential. All three teams must be familiar with the equipment so they spend time learning the ropes through scheduled exercises. “You can plan for every little thing, but I’m sure there will be things that are going to surprise us when a hurricane actually comes ashore,” Robinson said. So the team follows the old adage, “practice, practice, practice,” to ensure they are ready when they get the call.

Another area that interests Robinson and his operations team are the safe houses located next to each of the closure structures.

The safe houses will shelter the crews during an impending hurricane. “Once it was decided we needed people to operate the structure, we’ve had input all along during the construction phase,” said Robinson. “The contractor has been responsive to our needs, and the staff should feel safe inside the new structure.”

As far as getting the job done, Robinson says he has everything he needs to get the job done. “I have the training, the experience, the staff and the drive to get the job done if a hurricane hits the area. I just hope I don’t have to use those skills anytime soon.”



**An aerial view of the London Ave. Canal with its platforms and new temporary pumps. (USACE Photo)**



# Black Engineers of the Year

*Class Acts - Gary Hawkins and Richard Butler honored at national awards ceremony*

by Eric Hughes

Every so often there's a chance to be honored in a big way. For two New Orleans District employees, it was a chance to be recognized on a national platform. Both Gary Hawkins and Richard Butler were honored at the Black Engineer of the Year (BEY) Awards Conference, held Feb. 15-17 in Baltimore, Maryland. Hawkins was awarded for Outstanding Professional Development and Butler for Outstanding Technical Contribution.

"It was really gratifying to be noted for that category," said Hawkins, who received special recognition in 2004 for Outstanding Technical Contribution in Government. "It caught me off guard. I liked it, and at the same time I am a little embarrassed to some extent to accept it."

Despite Hawkins' modesty, his background has been a model of professional development. Gary

joined the New Orleans District as a civil engineer after graduating from Boston's Northeastern University in 1976. Since then, Hawkins has taken steps to reach his career goals. He has held numerous senior project engineer positions for both engineering and construction management, including taking key roles as Deputy for Project Management in Baghdad in 2004, a member of the Crisis Management Team following Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and temporarily serving as Assistant Chief for Engineering Division, post-Katrina. He recently was temporarily promoted to Deputy Chief, Planning, Programs & Project Management Division.

"I have real passion for my work," Hawkins emphasized. "Civil engineering is a field that is a cornerstone and a foundation for civilization. It has become a part of me."

Since 2004, he has led a team of over 70 employees as the Chief of Design Services Branch, Engineering Division. Hawkins agrees that every new opportunity brings uncertainty and some fear. However, it's all part of the process.

"I've been very fortunate. It never occurred to me that I would not succeed. That was never an option. I was going to succeed," said Hawkins, who also stresses the importance of having a supportive work and home environment with role models and mentors to guide one's education and professional development. Having been guided himself, Gary now looks to help others succeed as well.

"Write down what you want to do. Don't just say it. It's going to change as you move through your stages in life. You make those adjustments as you need to, but you write it down and stay with those goals and objectives."

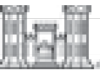
Hawkins, along with his wife, Janice, has used these same principles with their 24-year old daughter, Antonia, who graduated with a bachelor's in mechanical engineering. Her own personal development is one Hawkins finds most rewarding.

"We spent a lot of time and prayer in providing guidance. I am really proud of her as to what she's



**Gary Hawkins was honored for his outstanding professional development.**  
*(USACE Photo)*





**Richard Butler was honored for his outstanding technical contribution.**  
(USACE Photo)

done. That's my proudest achievement."

The selection of two employees from the same district is a rare occasion and a significant achievement for the New Orleans District and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. "This is huge," said Terry Chopin, Equal Employment Opportunity Officer for the district. "It's something to get *one* employee selected, but *two* awards in one year is just astonishing."

For Richard Butler, being selected was not something he expected. "I was very surprised," expressed Butler, a project civil engineer team leader for Relocations Section since 2000. "At work you focus on doing a good job everyday and performing the best you can. I was not even thinking about receiving a special recognition."

Butler was honored for his essential technical expertise during the Corps' Katrina recovery; thus, garnering his award for Outstanding Technical Contribution.

Being a 1991 civil engineer graduate from Southern University, Butler's skills were enhanced with on-the-job training, allowing him the technical skills needed to accomplish his work.

Like Hawkins, Butler would prefer to see others

see BEY, page 11

## About BEY

Since 1986, the Black Engineer of the Year Awards Conference has honored and awarded outstanding professional achievements by African Americans, Hispanics, Asians and women in the United States. The conference is part of the Career Communications Group employee recognition program. A key aspect is selecting innovators who demonstrate excellence in science, engineering or technology, leadership in their workplaces and communities, outstanding work as role models and mentors and commitment to recruiting and retaining minorities in the nation's science and technology enterprises.

## Selection Process

For an individual to be selected for the Black Engineer of the Year Awards, the following process takes place:

1. Must be nominated (usually by a manager/supervisor).
2. Nomination package is put together. The package should include a resume, letters of recommendation, endorsements from the district and division commanders and articles, newspaper clippings, and other significant items about the nominee. It is then forwarded to HQ USACE Equal Employment Office (EEO).
3. HQ EEO holds a panel review on the nomination packages for appearance, professionalism, presentation of information, write up, and how well the package is put together. After a review of all the nomination forms from USACE organizations worldwide, the panel chooses which package will be sent to represent the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.
4. The packages are forwarded to the Commanding General, who attaches a letter of endorsement, and to the sponsors.



# Joint Visitors Bureau aims to educate

*Corps office brings personal touch to Corps recovery efforts*

by Roger Cawley

So great was the devastation and so large is the recovery and rebuilding process that for many people outside New Orleans, the best way to comprehend the legacy of Hurricane Katrina is to see it firsthand.

To get that up-close look, visitors usually call the New Orleans District. Whether a congressman, mayor, governor, foreign dignitary, college professor, government agency, humanitarian group, military unit or other government representative, chances are they've been in contact with the district's Joint Visitors Bureau (JVB) that was established in June 2006.

While working closely with the respective public affairs offices for Task Force Hope, the district and Hurricane Protection Office, the JVB remains the spear point for the district's outreach efforts to high-profile guests seeking insight about Katrina's ravages and the Corps' response.

Fielding those inquiries is Carol Wittkamp, the executive assistant to the district commander. She coordinates with the bureau's staff, protocol officer Michael Maples, and two district park rangers who share responsibilities during temporary 45-90

day rotational assignments. Together they provide visitor tours and presentations that convey the latest and most accurate information on the scope of the disaster, pace of recovery and Corps plans to dramatically enhance the region's hurricane and flood damage reduction system.

Typically, visitor delegations range from five to 20 persons. And they usually arrive with a must-see list of sites that include the 17th Street, Orleans and London Avenue outfall canals, the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal, Lake Pontchartrain, Lower Ninth Ward and other locations specifically requested by the guests. To get there, the rangers call upon an array of transportation and travel options, escorting their guests throughout the region via bus, boat or helicopter.

The rangers are an instrumental part of the challenge in shaping the JVB. With rotational assignments, each new ranger provides a new source of ideas. Besides assisting with outreach efforts to high-profile guests, they research and document the history of an area to give each tour a personal touch. The detailed itinerary allows the rangers to provide insight of what happened during and immediately after Katrina and what is now being done to make it better.

Shea Sennett and Emile "Skip"

Jacobs are the most recent park rangers on assignment with the bureau. Sennett, who earned a degree in forestry and wildlife biology from Mississippi State University, is from the Port Barre field office in the Atchafalaya Basin Floodways System. A ranger for six years, Sennett

**Shea Sennett and Skip Jacobs were two recent park rangers who took care of business at the JVB. (Photo by Scott Riecke)**





served in New Orleans with FEMA as a debris-site supervisor immediately after Katrina hit. And from her perspective, people are missing the day-to-day improvements that have taken place.

“There have been tremendous changes,” she said. “But the extent of those improvements has not yet been fully recognized.”

Skip Jacobs, with 38-years of Corps experience, is a local resident and an interpretive services ranger at the 8700 acre Bonnet Carré Spillway. Jacobs doesn’t see a huge difference between the demands of his usual tour and his temporary assignment with the JVB. “What I try to do is give folks a 3-D perspective, so they get a sense of sight, smell and sound,” he said. “That’s the same approach we use in communicating with some of the most important people - in this country and in the world - who come here seeking insight and understanding. We try to keep it real.”

Both Sennett and Jacobs understand the importance of their roles in communicating the extensive changes that have taken place, mining facts, clarifying misinformation and countering the urban legends that have surfaced. And it is their professionalism in carrying out their roles, as well as their high level of commitment and enthusiasm, that continues to shape the JVB and provide a personal perspective on the Corps’ progress.

“There’s no doubt about their value and contribution to the JVB,” Maples said. “From the moment the first pair of rangers joined us in July to those currently on assignment, the succession of park rangers has been invaluable in achieving our mission. From the start, we called upon their help and they have continued to respond.”

While visitors may see a great deal, of paramount concern for the JVB is that their guests understand what they see. Out-of-town visitors might not fully grasp the significance of an operating FEMA trailer adjacent to a damaged house, an apartment with white stickers visible on newly installed windows or lights suddenly visible in previously darkened neighborhoods. “Those signs might not mean much to our visitors,” said Maples. “But to me it means that folks are staying and it’s important that our guests understand what they are seeing.”

#### Venice, from page 5

Corps employees who work in the Venice office must be near the survey boats that gather channel-bottom data to update navigation charts and the dredges that gather channel-bottom sediment to restore channel depth, said Bobby Chartier, the chief of the Corps survey team at Venice.

“Time is important,” Chartier said. “We are a crucial link in assuring that the updated hydrographic survey data quickly reaches the maritime community and our Web site to help commerce flow safely to and from these great ports.”

- Navigation surveys in New Orleans District can be found at: <http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/ChannelSurveys/index.htm>.
- Lower Mississippi navigation maps are at: <http://www.mvd.usace.army.mil/Gis/navbook/html/corps4.htm>.

#### BEY, from page 9

recognized for their hard work. “There are a lot of good engineers that I work with that could qualify just as well,” he said.

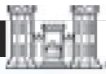
Regardless, Butler was a key member of Task Force Guardian’s engineering team soon after Katrina. He coordinated the relocation of all pipelines, utilities and roads affected by levee and floodwall reconstruction in Orleans, St. Bernard and Plaquemines Parishes. The task was accomplished in nine months, compared to the typical several years. Butler oversaw part of the \$798 million program that supported 59 construction contracts executed by seven delivery teams.

“As ‘the point man’ I had to step up to the plate and deliver because of several utility owners, designers and project managers turning to me for the answers, but I never could have made it through without my team giving me that support,” said Butler.

With that same support, both Hawkins and Butler know their roles with the recovery efforts are vital to rebuilding New Orleans.

“I enjoy New Orleans,” said Hawkins. “It’s been very good to me and my family. I want to be a significant entity in bringing back New Orleans.”

Both engineers find it flattering to be honored, but at the end of the day, their hearts reveal a more personal agenda – to serve and protect the citizens of southeast Louisiana.



# The misconceptions on MRGO

*Frequently asked questions on the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet since Katrina*

by Susan Spaht

**W**hen Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast in August 2005, the New Orleans metropolitan area suffered a great deal of flooding and wind damage. St. Bernard Parish was one of the hardest hit areas.

Some people believe that the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO) served as a “hurricane highway” and was a direct cause of undue flooding in St. Bernard Parish. Many residents and some elected officials have called for the immediate closing of the MRGO; some want it plugged up; some want it filled in.

Yet, others depend on the MRGO for commercial navigation and for recreational and commercial fishing and shrimping. Most users of the MRGO value it as an easier, quicker outlet to the Gulf.

Since Hurricane Katrina, questions about the MRGO abound: Why did the Corps of Engineers build the outlet in the first place? Who uses MRGO? Is it a threat during hurricanes? What will be the fate of MRGO? And who will decide? Here are some questions and answers:

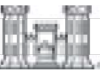
## 1. Where did the idea for a Mississippi River Gulf Outlet come from?

Alternate routes for outlets from the Mississippi River to the Gulf of Mexico have been investigated in the interest of seagoing navigation from time to time for over a century. Corps records show that a ship canal was considered as far back as 1852 in a report to Congress.

In the 1940s, officials with the Port of New Orleans, as well as local and nationally elected officials, requested that the federal government build a shorter navigation route from New Orleans to the Gulf of Mexico. These leaders, along with the Louisiana Legislature, envisioned two purposes for this channel. It would serve as a safer, quicker route to the Gulf, and it would expand the navigation capabilities of the area. Their vision included expanded port facilities and a new Centroport, a vast, import/export complex complete with warehousing, a cargo airport, and road and rail connections. The Centroport was planned for the area that is now the north and south shores of the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway (GIWW) in the Almonaster-



**In this pre-Katrina photo, a deep-draft ship steams its way from New Orleans to the Gulf of Mexico in the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet, while a shrimp boat heads north toward New Orleans. (USACE Photo)**



Michoud area in both Orleans and St. Bernard Parishes, as well as the area on the west side of the MRGO in St. Bernard Parish.

The Louisiana Legislature of 1944 officially empowered the Governor of Louisiana (Jimmy Davis) “to aid and assist the federal government in obtaining and completing...a tidewater canal from New Orleans to the Gulf on the eastern side of the Mississippi River...” The U.S. Congress authorized channel construction through the River and Harbor Act of 1956, and authorized it to be built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Construction began in 1958 and concluded 10 years later. It was named the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO).

Note: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, by law, must receive authorization and funding from the U.S. Congress to proceed with any construction project. And all Corps projects must be signed into law by the President of the United States. The normal process involves local officials requesting a project (usually with shared funding) from the federal government. Local sponsorship of a project is required. If approved, Congress provides the funding and authorizes the Corps of Engineers to proceed. This is a very complicated and regulated process. To better understand how this process works, you may go to <http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/hps/Status%20Report%20Newsletters/September28.pd>.

In a 1956 editorial, The Times-Picayune newspaper fully endorsed the plan for the MRGO:

*“For more than a decade civic leaders of the Mississippi valley have urged building of a tidewater channel from New Orleans to the Gulf of Mexico. This worthy project was moved closer to realization Wednesday when the public works committee of the United States Senate, without a dissenting vote, approved legislation to authorize the channel...The new channel, of course, will serve two fine purposes. It will provide a shorter, less hazardous route from New Orleans to the open sea. It will make possible expansion of the port by providing additional water-frontage where industrial plants and more wharves can be built....Spearheading the effort has been the New Orleans Tidewater Development Association, with full co-operation from the Louisiana delegation in Congress and legislators from many other states.”*

## **2. Did anyone consider the environmental implications when the outlet was built?**

Yes. Prior to and during construction of the MRGO, the Corps of Engineers conducted or participated in numerous studies which included environmental considerations of the effects of digging the channel. One of these was the “Pre-Construction Study of the Fisheries of the Estuarine Areas Traversed by the Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet Project” by George A. Rounsefell, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The principal aim of this study “was to determine the environmental and biological conditions prevailing prior to channel construction from the fishery standpoint.” The study included hydrographic and biological observations, water temperature, oxygen values, turbidity readings, salinity, currents and biological sampling.

Also, in the Corps of Engineers’ publication “Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet, Design Memorandum No. 2, General Design, June 1959,” the Corps documented a variety of investigations made subsequent to project authorization.

These investigations, funded in fiscal year 1957, included soil borings, salinity sampling and testing, fish and wildlife studies, wave direction and velocity and tide studies, etc.

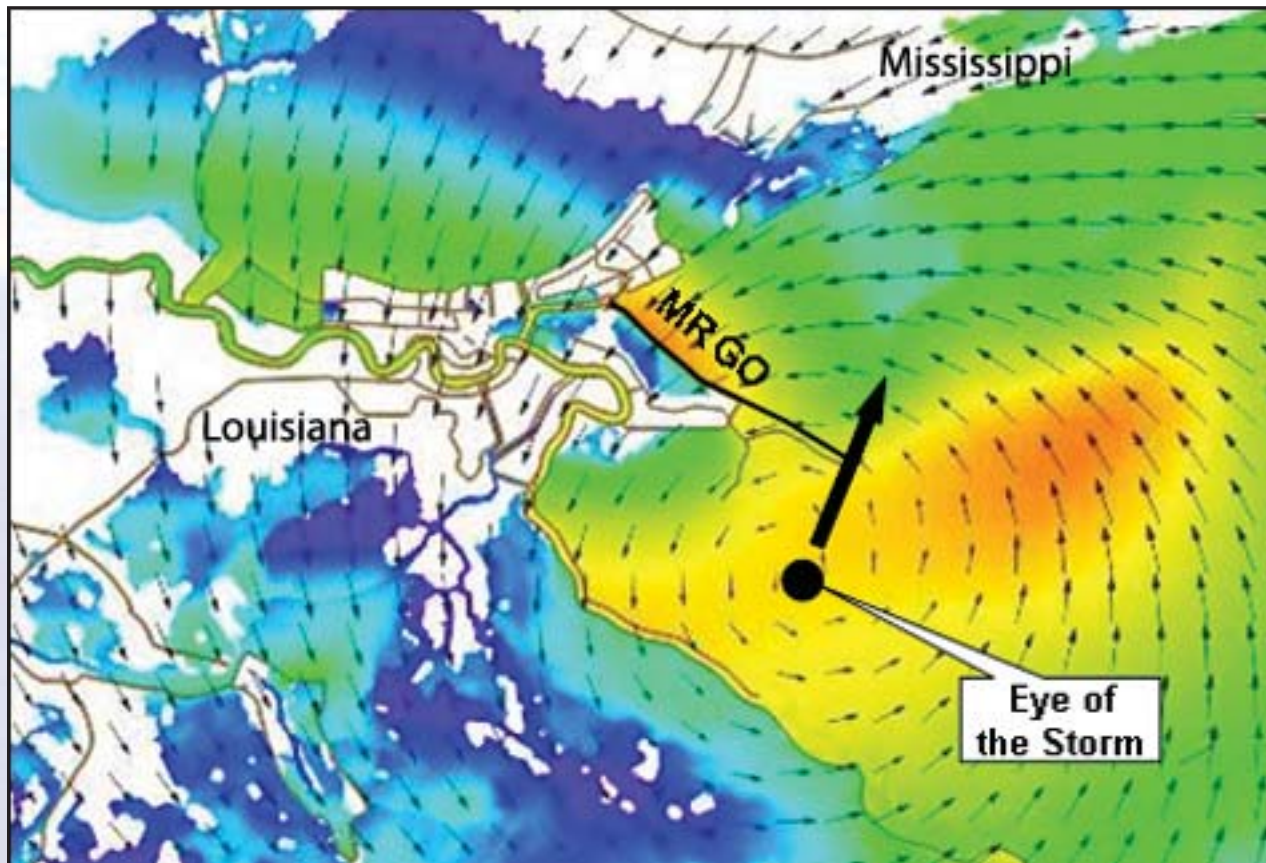
It should be noted that during the time the MRGO was built, between 1958 and 1968, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) was not in existence. NEPA was passed in 1969. In construction of the MRGO, the Corps of Engineers followed all federal, state and local regulations in place at that time. The Corps of Engineers will not proceed with any construction project until that project is in compliance with all environmental requirements.

## **3. Didn’t the MRGO cause the extensive flooding in St. Bernard Parish when Hurricane Katrina hit the area?**

While the Army Corps of Engineers is still investigating the causes of flooding, two independent studies have been published that examine the effects of Hurricane Katrina on the MRGO.

A 2006 study by the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources found that the southeast – northwest channel of the MRGO from the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway (GIWW) to the Gulf of Mexico does not contribute significantly to peak storm surge during severe storms where the wetland system is overwhelmed with water, and that closure in this section of the channel will not

see MRGO, next page



**This IPET computer illustration (approx. 7:10 a.m., Aug 29, 2005) shows Hurricane Katrina’s storm surge and winds (arrows) moving across the MRGO from the east in a counter clockwise motion from the eye. The storm surge and waves inundated levees along the MRGO and surrounding area. (IPET Illustration)**

**MRGO, previous page**

provide significant, direct mitigation of severe hurricane storm surge.

An investigation by the Interagency Performance Evaluation Task Force (IPET) reached the same conclusion in a draft final report. According to the IPET draft final report on the Performance Evaluation of the New Orleans and Southeast Louisiana Hurricane Protection System, storm surge animations and post-Katrina aerial photos indicate that storm surge from Hurricane Katrina built first from the winds out of the east prior to landfall, with subsequent winds coming from the southeast, then from the south as the storm made landfall and tracked just east of New Orleans.

Computer models from the report show Katrina on a north by northeast course following landfall on Louisiana’s southeastern tip moving toward the Mississippi coast, with counter-clockwise winds causing an enormous water surge (topped with waves) moving at angles nearly perpendicular to the long MRGO channel section. These findings appear to

indicate storm surge and waves that inundated levees along the MRGO and surrounding area would have come from Lake Borgne instead of up the channel from the Gulf of Mexico. Further Information on water levels and wave conditions can be found on IPET report Vol. IV at <https://ipet.wes.army.mil>.

**4. Why doesn’t the Corps of Engineers just close the MRGO?**

The Corps cannot act on its own; it takes direction from the U.S. Congress and the President of the United States. Since congressionally-authorized projects must be de-authorized by Congress, closing the MRGO requires authorization and appropriations for closure from Congress. Note: please see the Process link in Question 1.

**5. Who uses the MRGO?**

- Shallow-draft and deep-draft navigation vessels carrying a wide variety of commodities, including petroleum products, chemicals, forest products, In



manufactured goods, food and farm products, and machinery.

- Some of the oil and gas industry relies on the MRGO to service offshore oil platforms in the Gulf of Mexico.
- Recreational and commercial fishermen use the MRGO to reach the Gulf of Mexico. Some shrimpers and fishermen fish directly in the MRGO.
- NASA's Michoud Assembly Plant regularly sends its external propellant tanks aboard a special barge through the MRGO en route to Florida. (Note: NASA is not dependent on the MRGO; they can use the GIWW also.)

Statistical data shows that use of the MRGO steadily increased in terms of tonnage until its peak in 1978; and in terms of the number of vessels, it peaked in 1982. In the last 20 years, use of the MRGO has generally been decreasing.

At its height, the MRGO container ship traffic had a higher dollar value than bulk cargo ships using the Mississippi River. However, prior to Hurricane Katrina, the Port of New Orleans relocated all of its container terminals to the Napoleon Avenue wharf on the Mississippi River.

A key element on the outcome of the MRGO will be the fate of inland (towboat and barge) traffic. The MRGO and Baptiste Collette Bayou together form the preferred alternative route for the eastbound Gulf Intracoastal Waterway if, for some reason, the Inner Harbor Navigational Canal (IHNC) is closed. However, the need for this alternative route is frequent.

#### **6. Didn't Congress authorize and provide funds for the Corps of Engineers to close the MRGO?**

No. Following Hurricane Katrina, Congress passed Public Law 109-234, the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Defense, the Global War on Terror, and Hurricane Recovery, 2006, which reads in part:

*"...the Secretary of the Army, acting through the Chief of Engineers...shall develop a comprehensive plan...to de-authorize deep-draft navigation on the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet, Louisiana...and submit an interim report to Congress" by December 2006...The plan shall include recommended modifications to the existing use of the Outlet, including what navigation functions, if any, should be maintained and any measures for hurricane and storm protection..."*

In response to Congressional direction, the Corps conducted a series of public forums to identify various

plans and proposals for the future of the MRGO. Meetings included technical presentations and open discussions on topics including wetlands, navigation, storm protection, and the local economy. An independent team of technical experts was chartered to review the results.

The Corps of Engineers presented its MRGO Deep-Draft De-Authorization Interim Report to Congress in December. You may read the full report at the following address:

[http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/PAO/RELEASES/MRGO\\_Report\\_Congress\\_061214\\_Final.pdf](http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/PAO/RELEASES/MRGO_Report_Congress_061214_Final.pdf)

A fully developed and coordinated de-authorization plan will be incorporated into the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Report (LaCPR), due to Congress in December.

#### **7. What did the Corps' Interim Report recommend?**

According to John Paul Woodley, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civic Works, the Interim Report does not contain a final recommendation for construction or de-authorization but does identify a preliminary assessment for further evaluation. However, the report does suggest closure of the MRGO channel to both shallow and deep-draft navigation by an armored, earthen dam just south of Bayou La Loutre near Hopedale, La. The Corps must also comply with a federal law requiring the agency to weigh the environmental effects of the closure decision (i.e. NEPA). The official recommendation will be included in the LaCPR Technical Report to Congress due this December.



**This illustration shows what the proposed armored earthen dam could look like over the MRGO at Bayou La Loutre.**

*(USACE Illustration)*



# POSTCARD FROM IRAQ

By Barb Windham of Operations Division  
Baghdad Area Office  
Administrative Support Assistant  
Gulf Region Division Central District

For more information on the Iraq mission, go to [www.grd.usace.army.mil](http://www.grd.usace.army.mil).



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**"I plan to turn out  
the light."  
-- Windham on  
extending her tour.**

---

Windham sends her greetings  
across from the Al-Faw Palace in  
Iraq. (Courtesy Photo)





**M**y New Orleans co-workers ask when I am coming home, and I respond, “Not soon; I plan to turn out the light.” This was not my plan when I left the Big Easy in June 2004. I had opted for a 6-month tour because I wasn’t sure that I could commit for a longer duration. Little did I know that the Army Corps of Engineers’ mission in the Gulf Region would become more than a tour.

I serve in an administrative support role in the Baghdad Area Office (BAO). We are one of three Area Offices in Gulf Region Division’s Central



**Windham takes on long hours and challenges at Camp Victory, Iraq.** (Courtesy Photos)

District and are headquartered at Camp Victory, Iraq. Our four resident and two FOB offices combine to make a team of 33 Americans and 67 Iraqis. Together we administer contracts that renovate and build schools, hospitals, public health clinics, fire stations, gas stations, training academies; sewer, water, and potable water projects; public roads and bridges; electrical transmission and distribution projects in the Baghdad area.

We work long hours and typically confront monumental obstacles in the course of a project. In meeting the challenges, we find we can commit. We dedicate our talents, our knowledge, our time — for as long as it takes — in the hope that the people of Iraq will benefit from our having been here.

## LOUISIANA RECOVERY FIELD OFFICE BY THE NUMBERS

### DEBRIS MISSION

Debris Mission Total: 28,422,989 cubic yards  
Removed Total: 27,223,972 cubic yards  
Percentage Completed: 95.78%  
Completed in Orleans Parish: 97%

### DEMOLITION MISSION

Demolition Mission Estimate: 17,804 structures  
Structures Demolished: 5,657  
Percentage Completed: 31%  
Orleans Parish Structures, est: 15,000

For more information on the mission, please go to [www.faceofthecorps.com](http://www.faceofthecorps.com).

Status as of 5 April 2007



# GRADUATE OF DISTINCTION

Col. Wagenaar recognized by his alma mater

by **Melanie Marcec**

**C**olonel Richard Wagenaar noticed the certified letter was from the Alumni Association of his alma mater, State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry. Wagenaar said he immediately wondered, “The Alumni Association—what do they want—how did they track me down?” He read the first line of the letter, expecting it to be the common plea for money, but instead it read, “It is our pleasure to inform you that you and two other individuals have been selected as the recipients of the 2006 Graduate of Distinction Award.” When asked what he felt after the initial surprise, Wagenaar said, “Humbled and honored.”

The Colonel and his family flew to Syracuse, New York, for the December convocation where he received his award plaque and spoke to the midyear graduates, their families and guests. In his speech Wagenaar remembered his 1982 graduation and the path he chose after receiving his degree in environmental science and forestry. Even though he didn’t become a forester as he expected, Wagenaar said the best thing college taught him was to exercise his mind. Wagenaar urged the most recent graduates not to get mired down in the specifics of what they learned, but to view their degrees as the “certification that allows you to go out and accomplish great things.” Wagenaar spoke from his 27-year Army career and his experience with Hurricane Katrina and challenged the grads to seek new solutions and never blindly accept the status quo.

Back in New Orleans, Wagenaar keeps his plaque at



**Col. Wagenaar stands next to the “Graduates of Distinction” board where his name is now prominently displayed. (Courtesy Photo)**

home. When asked to describe the plaque, Wagenaar said that his award is a miniature of a huge display on the wall of the school’s alumni lounge. His name is engraved on the big display. Wagenaar said, “At least my name will be somewhere for the history of mankind—until that school goes out of business.”

The other alumni awardees were Curtis H. Bauer, who received the Lifetime Achievement Award, and Steven J. Anlian, who was recognized for his dedication to rebuilding after the Armenian earthquake in 1989 and his current work with the Millennium Challenge Corporation.

# Toastmasters seeks to develop your confi

*Developing your communication and leadership skills*

by **Felix Cretini**

**T**oastmasters International is the leading organization devoted to making effective oral communication a worldwide reality. In the world of faxes and e-mails the spoken word is still very important. We are not only judged by what we say

but how we say it.

The mission of a Toastmasters Club is to provide a mutually supportive and positive learning environment in which every member has the opportunity to develop communication and leadership skills, which in turn foster self-confidence and personal growth.



# BEING ARMY STRONG

*New slogan gets stronger*

by Rene Poche

The U.S. Army launched a new advertising campaign, "Army Strong," to support Army recruiting efforts. Army Strong builds on the successes of past campaigns and captures the unique brand of strength found in the U.S. Army Soldier.

The advertising campaign was launched publicly Nov. 9, 2006, and initially involved television, radio and online spots and an updated goarmy.com web site. Print ads began running last December.

Army Strong highlights the strength the Army finds and forges in young Americans. U.S. Army Soldiers consistently take pride in making a difference for themselves, their families, communities and nation. Army Strong conveys the message that there is a career, a challenge, a mission and the opportunity to become a stronger person in the U.S. Army.

Every Soldier portrayed in the new Army Strong advertising campaign is an actual U.S. Army Soldier.

According to Col. Richard Wagenaar, New Orleans District commander, Army Strong is more than the Soldiers in uniform. "Soldiers and units are Army Strong because of the strong support base provided by our civilian workforce," he said. "More than any advertising campaign can convey, each of you represents and reflects the essence of Army Strong. In every interaction in the local community, in your daily lives and in your work, you and every other member of the



## ARMY STRONG.™

*This is the sixth slogan the Army has adopted since becoming an all-volunteer force.*

### PREVIOUS ARMY SLOGANS

- "Today's Army wants to join you"  
1971-73
- "Join the people who've joined the Army"  
1973-79
- "This is the Army"  
1979-1981
- "Be all you can be"  
1981-2000
- "An Army of one"  
2001-2006

team that is the New Orleans District carry the Army's image and demonstrate the Army Strong message."

## dence!

Toastmasters International is a worldwide, non-profit educational organization.

Toastmasters meets once a month at the district and can help you improve both your listening and speaking skills at work and in relationships. Leadership skills can also be gained from membership by being a mentor, or by serving various Toastmasters offices such as president, vice-president of public relations,

vice-president of membership, sergeant-at-arms, vice president of education, secretary or treasurer.

For information on Toastmasters International, visit their web site at [www.toastmasters.org](http://www.toastmasters.org). To find out more about our Toastmasters chapter, Castle Toastmasters, headquartered at the New Orleans District, contact Felix J. Cretini at ext. 2916, or "KC" Clark at ext. 1935.

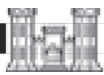


# COMBAT ZONE



**New Orleans District employee, Joyce Hamilton, makes her way through the Afghan refugee camp, Derulaman. She has been stationed in Kabul with the Afghanistan Engineering District (AED) since July 2006. This is her second tour-of-duty in support of the Global War on Terrorism. Hamilton previously served in Baghdad, Iraq. (Photo by Beverly Stone)**

*For more information on the Afghanistan mission, go to [www.aed.usace.army](http://www.aed.usace.army).*



# 12 Actions for Change

As a world-class engineering and science organization, the Corps has worked to constantly improve the way we conduct our business. USACE has a rich 230-year history of service to our nation, but the failures of the levees during Hurricane Katrina forced us to examine both our processes and our institutional culture. The Corps needs to change in order to stay dynamic and relevant to the great nation we serve. These 12 Actions are the guideposts for that change.

## Effectively Implement a Comprehensive Systems Approach

With full stakeholder participation, comprehensively design, construct, maintain and update engineered systems to be more robust.

### 1. Employ an integrated, comprehensive and systems-based approach.

- Plan, design, construct and operate projects as parts of larger, integrated systems, accounting for natural and social system features and the local and regional implications of alternative concepts for achieving project goals.
- Use a systems approach in conjunction with all stakeholders and partners to facilitate collaborative planning, design and construction.
- The systems approach must be flexible and adaptive to allow continuous upgrades as new knowledge emerges and new engineering practices are developed.

### 2. Employ risk-based concepts in planning, design, construction, operations and major maintenance.

- Incorporate consequence analysis that considers and evaluates a broad range of social, economic, environmental and health and safety impacts, including risk to population.
- Identify residual risk and plan, design and communicate accordingly.

### 3. Continuously reassess and update policy for program development, planning guidance, design and construction standards.

- Collaborate with the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works to develop long-term programmatic changes that may be needed in the civil works budgeting process.
- Implement an immediate review of current planning guidance and design standards. Update guidance and standards to include modern approaches for incorporating resilience and redundancy into designs and systems approaches.
- Review and refresh planning guidance and engineering standards at a greater frequency that keeps pace with the generation of new knowledge.

### 4. Employ dynamic independent review.

- Projects with high consequences, especially the potential for loss of life, must have continuous, recurring, independent external technical review during the full life of the project.
- Reviews must provide in-depth technical review in critical domains, such as structural, geotechnical and hydrological, and a review of project components to ensure the project is performing as part of a system.

### 5. Employ adaptive planning and engineering systems.

- Generate a culture of planning and design for expected and unexpected changes to provide long-term life-cycle solutions for the public.
- Develop methods to routinely include dynamics and non-linear processes, such as climate change, in planning and design criteria.
- Assess existing infrastructure to meet future relevant needs of the nation.

### 6. Focus on sustainability.

- Change corporate behavior and processes to focus on the sustainability of projects and compatibility with our environmental operating principles.
- Embed a philosophy of asset sustainability and environmental compatibility.

### 7. Review and inspect completed works.

- Initiate a review of all works, whether completed or currently under design and construction, against planning assumptions and design standards.



- Establish a more robust program for periodic inspections of completed works.

#### 8. Assess and modify organizational behavior.

- Assess our organizational behavior and processes.  
- Develop and implement changes to provide seamless integration and collaboration across functions, projects, regions and USACE.

#### **Communication**

Effectively and transparently communicate risk and reliability with the public and within the Corps.

#### 9. Effectively communicate risk.

- Integrate effective communication of risk and reliability concepts and alternative levels of risk and associated consequences to the public and other stakeholders.

#### 10. Establish public involvement risk-reduction strategies.

- Inform and facilitate a national dialogue with stakeholders and public professionals on establishing risk reduction policy for engineered systems.

#### **Reliable Public Service Professionalism**

Continually improve the state of the art and Corps dedication to a competent, capable workforce. Make the commitment to being a “learning organization” a reality.

#### 11. Manage and enhance technical expertise and professionalism

- Maintain professional ethics and technical capabilities and methods.

- Effectively manage and enhance technical expertise in planning, design, construction, operations and maintenance through continued learning, growth and professional accreditation.

- Collaborate consistently and effectively with government, industry, academia and stakeholders to improve our projects and systems.

#### 12. Invest in research.

- Invest in research in order to improve the resilience of structures, seek new knowledge and capabilities for updating design criteria and discover new approaches for creating adaptive planning and design capabilities and products.

- Focus research investments on “big picture” future needs, carefully defined by long-term strategy for USACE.

## THE SEVEN ARMY VALUES

Members of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District personify the seven Army Values everyday. These enduring values are the foundation for serving the armed forces and the nation.

### Loyalty

Bear true faith and allegiance to the U.S. Constitution, the Army, your unit and other Soldiers/Civilians.

### Duty

Fulfill your obligations

### Respect

Treat people as they should be treated.

### Selfless Service

Put the welfare of the nation, the Army and your subordinates before your own.

### Honesty

Live up to all the Army Values.

### Integrity

Do what's right, legally and morally.

### Personal Courage

Face fear, danger or adversity (physical or moral).

The seven values form the acronym, LDRSHIP, or Leadership.



# Around the District

## CONGRATULATIONS

To **Steven A. Schinetsky** (OD), whose daughter Johlee Schinetsky, was the 1st runner-up at the Teen Miss Dance of Louisiana competition held on Jan. 25-27. Johlee will compete again this summer at the DMA National Convention in New York City.

## CONDOLENCES

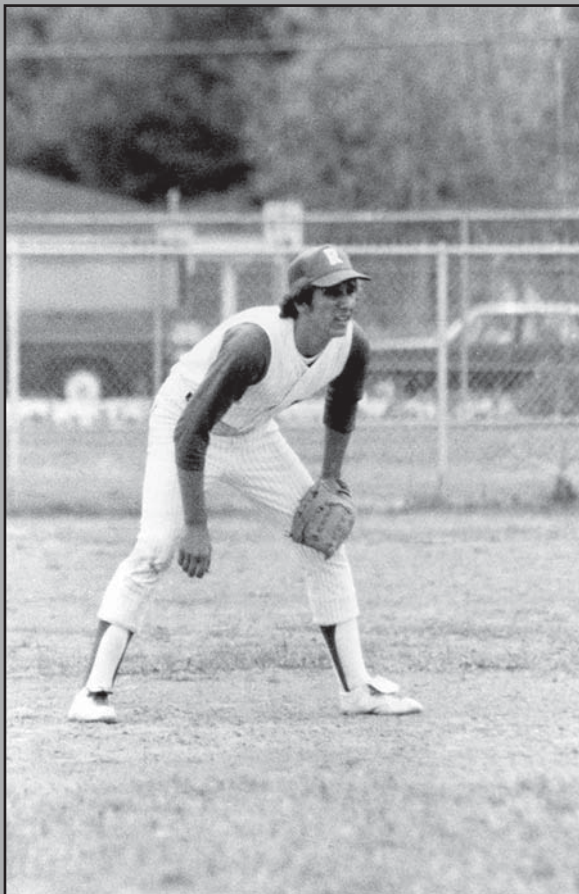
To friends and family of **Thomas Bludsaw** (IM), whose mother Alice Holloway passed away Dec. 21, 2006.

To friends and family of **Bill Emmett** (OD), whose mother Garnet Emmett passed away Jan. 7.

To friends and family of **Wallace James Farge**, a retired Personnel Director who passed away Jan. 28. Steven Falati, his son-in-law, and Jeffrey Falati, grandson, currently work with MVN.

To friends and family of **Jeannette Jane Dufresne Hall**, a retiree who passed away Feb. 7.

To friends and family of **John Hoshman** (OD), whose sister Amanda Aurand passed away in Feb.



**Chris Accardo, Operations Chief, circa 1976, as a member of the Rummel High-School baseball team. (Courtesy Photo)**

## Hitting the Right Move

*Father and son play series 30-years apart*

by **Rene Poche**

It's like deja-vu all over again. That's what Yogi Berra would say if someone told him Chris Accardo's son, Brett, would be playing in the American Legion World Series. Accardo, Chief, Operations Division, was part of the Archbishop Rummel High School-based team that made it to the series in 1976.

Thirty years ago, Chris's team finished fourth at the American Legion World Series in Manchester, N.H. The result was different for the younger Accardo's team. Another Rummel-based team, Nationwide Restoration, beat Terre Haute, Ind., 6-4 to win the 2006 American Legion World Series.

"I remember the days when I was little," said Brett, who is a freshman at LSU. "He still has a picture of the '76 team and he's always telling me, 'This is one of the best teams that Rummel ever had.'"

"And now it's like a dream come true," he said. "I'm in the same place as my dad, and now he's saying that our team is the best team that ever came out of Rummel."



To friends and family of **Brenda Jones** (CD), whose mother Alice Marie Chaisson, a retired MVN employee, passed away Nov. 6, 2006.

To the friends and family of **Bonnie Obiol** (PM), whose mother Shirley Simms passed away Dec. 12, 2006.

To friends and family of **Reginald D. Peoples** (OD), whose daughter Malika P. Randolph passed away Jan. 13.

To friends and family of **John B. Petitbon** (ED), whose father John E. Petitbon passed away Nov. 11, 2006.

To friends and family of **J. Wesley Stewart**, a retiree who passed away Feb. 10.

To friends and family of **Gerard Winter** (OD), whose mother-in-law Shirley Mae Hennessy passed away Jan 20.

To friends and family of **Col. William "Will" Everett Sommer** (right), a retiree who passed away Dec. 24, 2006 at the age of 78. Col. Sommer was a civil engineer with the New Orleans District between 1960 and 1975. He later retired from the Savannah District.



*(Courtesy Photo)*

## FAREWELL

To **Anthony J. Bertucci** (ED), who departed Jan. 6.

To **Kathleen A. Bradley** (OC), who resigned Mar. 16.

see ATD, next page

**Chris Accardo and his son, Brett, show off the 2006 American Legion World Series trophy. Chris went to the same series as a Rummel High School student thirty years before. However, his son's team, Nationwide Restoration, actually won first place. (Courtesy Photo)**



"This team was much better than the team I was on," Chris said. "This team was far superior."

This bond goes deeper than the American Legion World Series. "I practiced with him as soon as he could walk," Chris said. "I also coached all his playground baseball teams."

"He says he taught me everything I know," said Brett. "Yeah, he did. He's been there as a role model for me all my life. And I thank him for it."

The Accardo's weren't the only member of the Corps family to experience being part of the National Championship team. Kevin Weidenbacher, son of Glenn Weidenbacher from Engineering Division, was also a member of the team. Steve Slumber from Operations Division coached both Brett and Kevin during their younger years.



## USS NEW ORLEANS



The mighty Mississippi finally felt the raw power of the USS New Orleans, which left the Avondale shipyard to be commissioned as the newest ship in the Navy fleet. The New Orleans is 684 feet long and operates as part of an Amphibious Task Force. Corps employees got their first glimpse on March 6.  
*(Photo by Scott Riecke)*

To **Joseph A. Cormier Jr.** (CD), who transferred to another Corps of Engineers Office Feb. 17.

To **Thelma Craig** (OD), who departed Dec 5, 2006.

To **Anthony G. DePalma** (OD), who transferred to Philadelphia District.

To **Doug Dillon** (ED), who transferred to Minerals Management Service in January.

To **Gerald Alan Dixon** (OD), who departed Jan. 20.

To **Maurice Falk** (L), who transferred to Minerals Management Service in March.

To **Raymond B. Floyd II** (PM), who transferred to El Paso, Tx. in January.

To **Barbara Garcia** (ED), who departed Jan. 6.

To **Mark Golden** (OD), who departed Jan 6.

To **Lisa Gomez** (OD), who transferred to Fort Worth District in January.

To **Ariane Hailey** (OC), who departed Jan. 29.

To **Larry M. Hartzog** (HPO), who transferred to Mineral Management Service in January.

To **Kristen Hite** (OC), who resigned Mar. 25.

To **Michael A. Kelley** (OD), who resigned Mar. 29.

To **Melanie Labiche** (ED), who departed Jan 5.

To **Douglas Landers** (OD), who transferred to another Corps of Engineers Office in January.

To **Renata Lawrence** (OC), who departed Jan. 3.

To **Randy Marchiafava** (SB), who transferred to the Small Business Administration in March.

To **David McDaniel** (ED), who transferred to Sacramento District 16 Feb 07.

To **Robin N. Miller** (ED), who departed 31 Oct 06.

To **William Morrison** (OD), who transferred to Kansas City District.

To **Barry Obiol** (OD), who transferred to Minerals Management Service.

# Around the District



To **Maryclaire Peterson** (IM), who departed Jan. 17.

To **David Ramirez** (ED), who departed Nov. 11, 2006.

To **Sharon G. Richarme** (PM), who transferred to MVD.

To **Stephanie Robbins** (ED), who resigned Feb. 3.

To **Tammy M. Rodriguez** (RM), who transferred to Memphis District in Dec. 2006.

To **Casey J. Rowe** (PM), who transferred to Minerals Management Services in January.

To **Desiree Schellinger** (CT), who transferred to Minerals Management Service in February.

To **Miyoushui F. Smith** (WCSC), who departed Feb. 17.

To **Adam Tarplee** (OD), who transferred to Jacksonville District.

To **John L. Walsdorf Jr.** (OD), who departed Nov. 11, 2006.

To **Frederick S. Young** (HPO), who transferred to Federal Energy Regulatory Commission in February.

## RETIREMENTS

To **Sheryl B. Austin** (RE), who retired Mar. 30.

To **James R. Baker** (OD), who retired Jan. 3.

To **Yvonne P. Barbier** (RE), who retired Jan. 3.

To **Gregory E. Breerwood** (EX), who retired Jan 3.

To **Larry J. Broussard** (OD), who retired Dec. 31, 2006.

To **Peter R. Cali** (ED), who retired Feb. 3

To **Roger Canon** (CD), who retired in March.



## PUMPING for Life



Lt. Col. Starkel and Wellness Coordinator Peggy Plaisance cut the ribbon to the newly-expanded district gym.

Lt. Col. Starkel and Michael Bourgeois are "gonna pump you up!" - on different fitness scales.



Employees get their first glance at the new state-of-the-art equipment.

No more excuses! Being Active for Life (AFL) is now possible. The district unveiled its newly expanded gym on Jan. 31, coinciding with the launch of the AFL program, a 20-week health and fitness team competition. *(Photos by Scott Riecke)*



# Calling it a day...

Greg Breerwood retires after 37 years

by Amanda Jones



(left) Greg Breerwood retired Jan. 3 after 37 years; (top) Younger days, circa 1968. (USACE Photo, courtesy photo)

In his last days at the New Orleans District, Greg Breerwood allowed me an exclusive interview on his retirement from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District. He was happy and sincere and spoke fondly of his Corps family, noting that his retirement should not be a story. He felt the work the New Orleans District is doing should come first, but conceded for the sake of fulfilling my job requirement and Riverside tradition.

**Q. What made you decide to retire now?**

A. I am retiring after 37 years and it's been a great career. I've enjoyed every minute of it and now I'm looking forward to spending more time with the family, working on my house and I'll probably do some volunteer work.

**Q. Are you going to come back as a contractor?**

A. I do not intend to come back as a contractor. I'm retiring because I want to retire, not because I want to work. Not only that but I want to retire before I retire from this life. It's been a while and it's time. I do want to spend some time with my family, you know, the grandkids.

**Q. Are you at all concerned about the district's and the Corps' reputation with our upper management now retiring?**

A. I don't think so. I think that

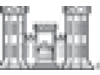
we're going through some difficult times and the Corps has been through these things before. I think the quality and professionalism of all the Corps family will provide enough to get through this.

**Q. What would you say is your greatest personal accomplishment during your time here?**

A. I don't really know if I have one. There are several things that I appreciate. Personal accomplishments in our organization can really only be accomplished with the assistance of the rest of the organization. I'm going to be honest with you; without the support of all the folks of the New Orleans District, and for that matter, the entire Corps, it would be difficult to have any personal accomplishments. So I think a value that we have done, that I have participated in, is of course the initial response after Katrina. That is a significant event that I as well as the rest of the good folks here at the district provided a great deal of value to.

**Q. Is that also your most memorable time here?**

A. Well, you know, after 37 years here there are quite a few memorable times. It goes from professional to personal, linking in with the professional because I've made a lot of friends and I've done a lot of things with the folks here at the district, not only professionally but personally, that I've enjoyed. Really, there's not one...the good times and the challenging times. Some of the challenging times were some of the accidents we had at some of



# Around the District

To **Allen Coates** (ED), who retired Dec. 31, 2006.

To **Brenetta Daniels** (PM), who retired Jan 2.

To **Dennis W. Dauzat** (OD), who retired Dec. 31, 2006.

To **Carmen DeSoto** (SS), who retired Dec. 29, 2006.

To **Edwin H. Diehl Jr.** (PM), who retired Mar. 31.

To **Edward J. Drinkert** (WCSC), who retired Jan 3.

To **Robert (Bob) Grubb** (ED), who retired Sept. 30, 2006.

To **Mary G. Hebert** (PM), who retired Dec. 1, 2006.

To **Joseph I. Janis** (LD), who retired Jan. 31.

To **Cliff Mathews** (ED), who retired Oct. 31, 2006.

To **Walter Moreau** (ED), who retired Jan. 3.

To **John R. O'Neill** (ED), who retired Jan. 3.

To **Michael M. Palmieri** (RE), who retired Dec. 15, 2006.

To **Carson C. Petry** (CD), who retired Jan. 3.

To **Raymond J. Rollins** (OD), who retired Jan. 2.

To **Paul Salassi** (ED), who retired Jan. 1.

To **Paulette Salassi** (RM), who retired Feb. 3.

To **William Schwarze** (ED), who retired Dec. 31, 2006.

To **Paul Sullivan** (OD), who retired Jan. 31.

To **Robert W. Smith** (ED), who retired Sept. 29, 2006.

To **Herbert "Gene" Taylor** (SS), who retired Jan. 31.

To **Burnell Thibodeaux** (HPO), who retired Jan. 16.

To **Nathan Turner** (OD), who retired Apr. 3.

To **Ronald Ventola** (OD), who retired Mar. 31.

*Correction: Willie James received a 35-year Length of Service last year. His name was left off in the last issue.*

**To include a message in "Around the District," e-mail Pamela Boutte at [pamela.m.boutte@mvn02.usace.army.mil](mailto:pamela.m.boutte@mvn02.usace.army.mil).**

the locks...those were memorable. Hurricane Georges was memorable because we stayed here... Then of course there's Hurricane Katrina and I stayed in Vicksburg and that was memorable. The good times are those times in my life when we completed those projects. It's the same thing...when we got the city dewatered...the times were all the same. But the really memorable thing that I can say that I can liken to the Corps, and

this comes from the heart, is that my association and kinship with all the people. I really do think that we have a family, a working family. The feeling that I have for the New Orleans District Corps of Engineers, this working relationship is a part of my life, a part of my family's life, and something that I'll always remember and that's the truth.

**Q. What advice can you give to the person who's going to try to fill your shoes?**

A. The only advice would be to keep an open mind and to work with all the folks here at the district. I'm sure that individual will be more than capable of carrying on the mission here at the district.

*Breerwood retired January 3, 2007, after 37 years. He was the Deputy District Engineer for Project Management.*

# MVN at Work

## PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

### **SOUTHEAST LOUISIANA URBAN FLOOD DAMAGE REDUCTION PROJECT (SELA)**

*Additional funding required to continue progress*

**U**nder the SELA Project, channel and pumping station improvements in Orleans and Jefferson Parishes are being made to support the parishes' master drainage plans and generally provide flood protection on a level associated with a 10-year rainfall event. The project also reduces damages for larger events.

The first construction contract was awarded in March 1997. A total of 48 contracts have been awarded in Jefferson and Orleans Parishes - 39 have been completed and 26 remain to be awarded. No

contracts have yet been awarded in St. Tammany Parish, which lacked a master drainage plan at the time of SELA's authorization - unlike Orleans and Jefferson Parishes, which had plenty of work ready for construction.

Studies were done with several municipalities in St. Tammany Parish. The parish government has expressed an interest in supporting SELA work in the parish. A project management plan in which the parish would serve as the local sponsor is now being prepared.

Due to funding constraints, the SELA project



## 2007 District Coin

The title for this year's theme is "Serving Louisiana and our Nation - Passionate About Our Future."

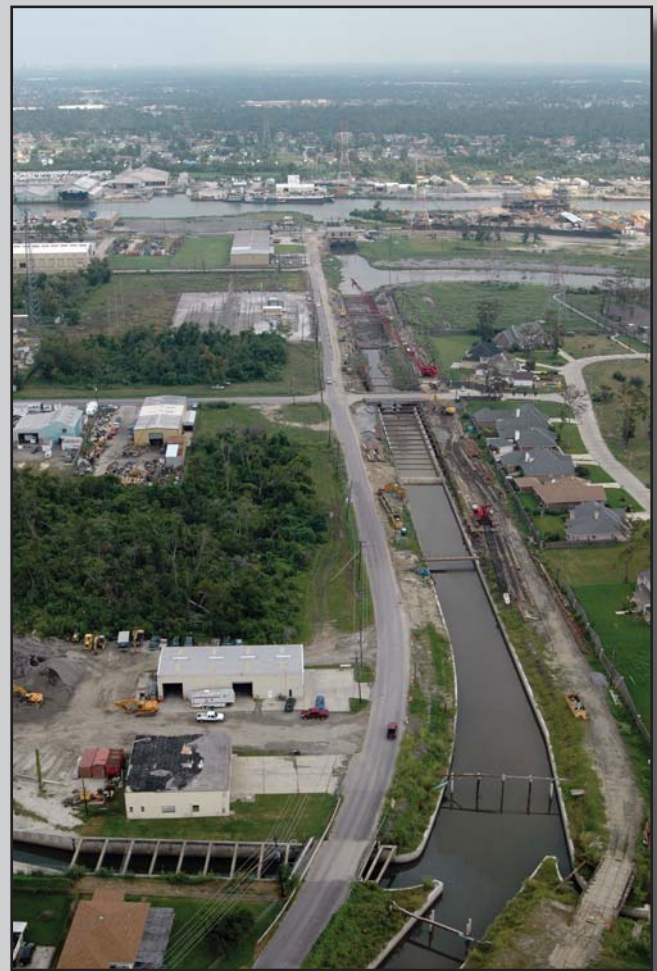
Congratulations to Shea Sennett (OD) for providing this year's theme, and Nancy Mayberry (IM) for the design.



in all parishes could be significantly delayed. The Department of Defense Appropriations Act of 2006 made available \$224,755,000 to be expended at full federal expense. These funds are not sufficient to complete the SELA project and this project is not included in the President's Budget for fiscal years 2007 or 2008.

Given the escalation of construction costs in the New Orleans area since Hurricane Katrina and the recent approval of a significant amount of additional work in Uptown New Orleans, it is anticipated that another \$800 million will be required to complete authorized SELA work.

**Two-Mile Canal is one of numerous SELA drainage improvement plans. The work includes construction of a 3,600 foot U-shaped concrete canal, slope paving, removing and replacing roadways, and installing guard railing and sheet piles. The estimated completion date is May 2007.**  
(USACE Photo)



## CLAIMS COUNTDOWN



New Orleanians drove by the front of the New Orleans District Headquarters to submit their Katrina claim forms before the March 1st deadline. Many Corps employees volunteered to collect forms.  
(Photo by Scott Riecke)



**Castle Kids marched in typical Mardi Gras-style through the district parking lot on Feb. 16.**  
*(Photos by Anne Marino and Nancy Mayberry)*



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