

Mississippi Valley Division Awards Day

By MVD Public Affairs

The Mississippi Valley Division, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, held its annual awards ceremony June 11 and the following awards were presented:

ERNEST P. BLANKENSHIP AWARDS

The Blankenship awards are among the highest honorary awards presented to Mississippi Valley Division employees by the local commander. The awards cover three categories: engineer/scientist, professional and technical /administrative. Established in 1987, they remember and honor the commitment, dedication and knowledge of the long-time Mississippi Valley Division Executive Assistant who died in 1973.

Engineer/Scientist Award

Brian Chewning received the Ernest P. Blankenship Engineer/

Scientist Award for exceptional performance of his duties while serving as deputy for the Lower District Support Team, with primary responsibility as the division's point of contact for the Memphis, Vicksburg and New Orleans districts.



Brian Chewning

He also served as the senior program manager responsible for directing and leading the coordination of all activities in the lower three districts that required Mississippi Valley Division and/or higher U.S. Army Corps of Engineers or Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works) action.

Chewning's leadership helped advance planning initiatives for Calcasieu Lock, West Shore Lake Pontchartrain, Southwest Coastal, Quiver River, and Memphis Metro feasibility studies. He also led the reviews for approval of numerous decision documents.

Chewning provided timely guidance for review and development of the New Orleans District's Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System decision documents to allow solicitation of mitigation and armoring contracts.

Chewning's knowledge and leadership were instrumental in furthering the efforts and accomplishments of the projects and programs of the Memphis, Vicksburg and New Orleans districts. His leadership helped advance planning initiatives, reviews for approval of decision documents, and execution of complex policy and authority issues.

Professional Award

Bob Anderson received the Ernest P. Blankenship Professional Award for the outstanding performance of his duties as the Mississippi Valley Division and Mississippi River Commission public affairs officer.



Bob Anderson

Anderson assisted with the design, implementation and deployment of an on-line planning tool that allowed project managers and public affairs officers across the Corps of Engineers to create strategic communication plans based on the strategic communication process. He used the tool to create or improve more than 20 strategic communication plans for key Mississippi Valley Division projects including topics related to aging infrastructure, invasive species, drought, flooding and hurricane response.

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Around the Bend



Maj. Gen. Michael C. Wehr
Commander,
Mississippi Valley Division

President-nominee,
Mississippi River Commission

MVD Team,

On this day in history, 239 years ago, an assembly of brave and determined Americans met to announce to the world the birth of a new nation - a nation borne of ideals -- not coercion -- where the power to govern rested with the consent of the people. Adams, Franklin, Livingston, Sherman, and Jefferson -- starting with just a few words etched on simple parchment, these bold colonists set in motion a radical experiment in democracy and in free enterprise. In time, that experiment would be known to people all over the world by many different names -- the Land of the Free, the Home of the Brave, the Arsenal of Democracy, the Shining City on a Hill, and the World's Last Best Hope.

As modern Americans, who have enjoyed these blessings for so long, it is easy for us to forget just how groundbreaking this experiment really was. Not surprising, the Declaration of Independence signed by those visionaries caused panic in the capitals of Europe. It struck fear in the courts of monarchs, most of who believed that government and tyranny were one in the same.

But the Declaration of Independence also inspired enlightened men everywhere -- statesmen, scientists, philosophers, and theologians -- to abandon old ways of power and privilege and to embrace new ideals of freedom and justice. Slowly, they began to remake the world on principles that the Founders believed were self-evident. And the world has never been the same.

For this is a simple fact of our history - that the swords of independence were drawn in battle before the words of independence were drafted in ink. A year before the signing, citizen Soldiers in New England had already paid in blood for those very rights that Jefferson would call "inalienable." Scores fell at Lexington and Concord. Thousands more would die at places like Princeton, Brandywine, and Charleston before the United States of America became a reality. Today we follow in the footsteps of that generation, liberating the oppressed, fostering democratic reforms and, above all, protecting the American people - - - even if it means making the ultimate sacrifice. As long as America is blessed with such heroes, the efforts of the Founding Fathers will not have been in vain and the fruits of their labors will be preserved for each future generation of Americans.

As you enjoy time with family and friends during this holiday weekend, please do so safely! Remember your training ... SAFETY FIRST. May God bless you and may God continue to bless America.

Essayons! Building Strong! and ... Army Strong!

Maj. Gen. Mike Wehr



MVD's military shine at 2015 Engineer Castle Ball



MVD's military members sport their "blues" at the 2015 Engineer Castle Ball June 6 at the Vicksburg Convention Center in Vicksburg, Mississippi. Pictured from left to right are Col. Torrey DiCiro, MVD deputy commander; Maj. Gen. Mike Wehr, MVD commander; Capt. Zach Rozar, MVD aide-de-camp; and Capt. Correy Elder, Readiness and Contingency Operations officer. Hooah!

MVD's civilians achieve success! *(continued on page 8)*



Lt. Col. James L. Booth, interim MVD deputy commander, presented Peter A. Taylor with the U.S. Army's Achievement Medal for Civilian Service June 30, for exceptional service during the period of April 4 through July 3, 2015, while serving as the acting director of Programs, Mississippi Valley Division. He also served as principal advisor to the commanding general on numerous projects and other topics during this time.



MVD Awards Day *(continued from page 1)*

Anderson served on the Corps headquarters national steering committee for public affairs, and in this role he helped create and manage the Public Affairs Rising Star Program for promising new leaders in the public affairs career field.

He and his team worked with the Mississippi Valley Division commander to improve storyboard communication tools for key projects and programs to help the division leadership effectively and proactively share the division's critical issue narratives with members of congress and other influential regional leaders within the Mississippi River watershed.

His initiative and diligence produced an outstanding public relations campaign that provided partners and the public insight into the projects of the division and the commission.

Administrative Award

Cindy Simmons received the Ernest P. Blankenship Administrative Award for the outstanding performance of her duties as administrative assistant for Business Management and Business Technical divisions.



Cindy Simmons

During the past year, Simmons produced top quality products and services in a challenging environ-

ment. She was the only administrative employee who supported two separate divisions.

Her administrative support included maintaining property accountability, requisitioning supplies and services, maintaining a government purchase card, preparing travel orders and vouchers, initiating personnel actions, preparing budget documents and ensuring proper records management. These efforts were complicated by the fact that many of the employees traveled frequently, one was a virtual employee, and there were several people serving on temporary developmental assignments.

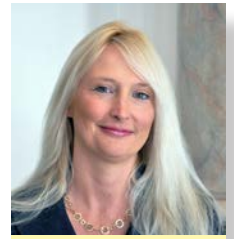
When the division implemented new time and attendance procedures, Cindy ensured all employees in both divisions were trained and ready to enter their time when the new system became operational.

Simmons worked hard to make the transition of new employees seamless and efficient—from processing the necessary personnel paperwork to ensuring office space was set up, computer and phone access requested and operational upon their arrival, and myriad other details that allowed the employees to begin work immediately.

WOMAN OF THE YEAR

Tonya Acuff, chief of Regulatory, was the recipient of the Mississippi Valley Division Woman of the Year Award.

Over the past year, Acuff served as a key regional leader in guiding development of standardized processes to improve regional consistency in the regulatory program, re-baselined general regulatory funding within the region (the first Corps division to complete this action), served as the division's sustainability program manager, and was instrumental in selecting the first Corps of Engineers region-wide energy savings center.



Tonya Acuff

OTHER AWARDS

Four employees were recipients of the Department of the Army Achievement Medal for Civilian Service: Alicia K. Bounds, procurement analyst in Contracting; Katie S. Shows, finance and accounting officer in Business Resource Division; Terry S. Smith, deputy chief and regional strategic planner for Business Management Division; and Scott Whitney, regional flood risk manager in Operations Division.

LENGTH OF SERVICE

Approximately 27 employees, representing 585 years of federal service, received length of service certificates ranging from 5 to 40 years of service.



Congratulations and good luck in your new jobs!

Congratulations to Rene on her selection as deputy to the MVD programs director and chief of the Civil Works Integration Division. She replaced Glenda



Rene Turner

Jackson who recently retired. In her new assignment, Renee will be responsible for MVD program and project development, defense and execution. This makes Renee the first female engineer to serve at a GS-15 level at MVD headquarters!

Prior to accepting this position, Renee was a senior program manager and deputy chief of the Upper District Support Team for the St. Paul, Rock Island and St. Louis districts. Renee currently represents MVD on the USACE Programs and Project Management Community of Practice Steering Committee, and is an officer in the Society of American Military Engineers and the Society of Woman Engineers. She is a graduate of Mississippi State University with a degree in civil engineering.

Congratulations to Rosalyn on her selection as the Mississippi River & Tributaries program analyst in the Civil Works Integration Division! She will be replacing Janet Clark, who retires in July.



Rosalyn Johnson

Rosalyn began her career with the Vicksburg District in the Hydraulics Branch of the Engineering Division. Her experience as a program analyst includes time spent in both the Planning, Programs and Project Management Division and the Operations Division within the Vicksburg District.

Rosalyn came to the Mississippi Valley Division in 2013, where she has worked as a program analyst in the Civil Works Integration Division. She is a graduate of Mississippi State University with a bachelor's degree in business.

Congratulations to Becky on her selection as Programs Directorate secretary. She will be replacing Ann Laird who retires in July.



Becky Brown

Becky has worked for the Corps of Engineers for 35 years and at MVD for 32 years. She began her career in April 1980 in the Construction Division at the Vicksburg District and worked there as a clerk-typist for three years. Following that assignment, in June 1983 she moved to the Lower Mississippi Valley Division (predecessor to MVD) as a secretary in the Urban Studies Branch of the Planning Division. While at MVD, she worked in the Plan Formulation Division as a secretary; and also as the administrative support assistant in the Environmental Branch, the Business Technical Division and the Upper District Support Team for St. Louis, Rock Island and St. Paul.

Becky earned a bachelor's degree in business education from the University of South Alabama in Mobile.





Farewell and wishes for a long and happy retirement!



Janet Clark
MR&T Appropriation Manager
Civil Works Integration



Ann Laird
Secretary
Programs Directorate

To my MVD family:

“As I reflect on my time served here as the MR&T Appropriation manager, I can truly say it has been a great pleasure and a rewarding experience. Your professionalism and integrity is a reflection of true success and greatness.

I will miss you and may you continue to do ‘great things’.”

Clark first worked at MVD in the Technical Engineering Branch from February to September 1977. She then worked at the Vicksburg District in the Finance and Accounting Branch for four years, as well as in the Programs Management Branch and Project Management Branch for more than 23 years. She returned to MVD and worked in the Programs Directorate, Civil Works Integration Division, for 10 years.

Clark’s last day in the office will be July 10.

“After 37 years of government service (10 years with the Veterans Administration in Jackson, Mississippi, and 27 years at the Mississippi Valley Division --10 years in Human Resources, 17 years in Programs Directorate), I am happily retiring to spend more time with my family and friends (and spoil my two grandchildren).

I have thoroughly enjoyed all of my jobs (ok, except for the Workers Comp for four months!), but God is leading me in a new direction. I will miss the dear friends I have made, but it’s time to begin a new chapter in my life.”

Laird’s last day in the office was June 26.



Survey says: Make a friend before you need a friend

By Eric Haliburton, MVD Readiness and Contingency Operations

Top five answers on the board: Name the biggest benefit to the MVD RCO Annual All Hazards Synchronization Exercise. The title is the number one answer given and the overarching theme of what occurred June 17th in the Vicksburg District's All-Purpose Conference Room where MVD RCO hosted its inaugural Annual All Hazards Synchronization Exercise. If you are old enough, that should have conjured images of Richard Dawson, one friendly fella, shaking hands and kissing the ladies.

We have all kissed a few frogs, but this was not one of them. The fruits of the efforts of the MVD team putting this together were realized in the relationships fostered and those established. Conservatively, there were 148 attendees representing 23 different agencies (i.e., industry trade groups, contract support teams, levee boards, FEMA, Coast Guard, EPA, state and local governments, Team Rubicon) and, as a direct result of the After Action Review conducted from the 2014 MVD ROC Drill, the number one comment was incorporated into the agenda and time was built into the exercise in the form of extended breaks to encourage relationship building and networking.

Carl Pigott, event facilitator and MVD PL 84-99 Program manager, proffers, "the informational briefings generated a lot of in-depth discussions because the players kept delving deeper into the subjects."

The topics were stimulating and prompted comments from some of the newer participants intimating the fact that not all of our audience was aware of the breadth of our capabilities and partnerships established and what is required in responding to an event.

There are a few colloquialisms that the Emergency Management (EM) Community of Practice (CoP) perpetuates. Among them are (1) if you've been to one disaster, you've been to one disaster and (2) all disasters are local. Granted, there are some commonalities, hence the term All-Hazards, but all disasters come with their own unique set of circumstances and they do affect our local communities. We in the EM CoP earn our keep in dealing with the uniqueness of each disaster. We accomplish this through

training, exercises and staying relevant by deploying to events as opportunities present themselves.

Chris Gilbeaux of GOHSEP (Louisiana Governor's Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Preparedness) said of this exercise, "This synchronization meeting is imperative to ensure that our local, state and federal partners continue to prepare our communities to respond to and recover from any disasters that we may face. Communication is the key to success and this event sets us up for a successful response."

Chad Callender of MEMA (Mississippi Emergency Management Association) commented, "Exercises are essential to identify gaps and areas for improvement before a disaster happens. The worst time to identify areas for improvement is during an incident or event. This synchronization exercise proved that communications between organizations need to be seamless. Exercises like these continue to strengthen relationships to ensure we are all successful during an incident."

During the day, we were able to recognize two of our numbers with the Civilian Award for Humanitarian Service for their role in responding to Hurricane Sandy in 2012. The two recognized **below** are representative of the microcosm of USACE responders. To a man, they will tell you they don't do this for their glory, everything they do they do to the glory of God.



Pictured left to right are MVD Commander Maj. Gen. Mike Wehr, David Sills (MVD retiree) and HQUSACE Contingency Operations and Homeland Security Director Karen Durham-Aguilera.

Pictured left to right are MVD Commander Maj. Gen. Mike Wehr, MVD RCO Program Analyst Eric Haliburton and HQUSACE Contingency Operations and Homeland Security Director Karen Durham-Aguilera.



Survey Says: Make a Friend Before You Need a Friend *(continued from page 7)*

I would like to thank all of the participants for their engagement and leave you all with a quote from our Commander, MG Wehr, that serves as a challenge to everyone.

“Your most effective response and recovery actions will rely heavily upon relationships that you started well before the disaster. The All Hazards Exercise offered the opportunity to start and strengthen these relationships. Join me in taking up the FEMA Corps challenge—establish a relationship now with at least three people who attended.”



MVD Commander Maj. Gen. Wehr addresses participants of the All Hazards Exercise June 17 at the Vicksburg District.

MVD's civilians achieve success!



MVD Commander Maj. Gen. Michael C. Wehr presented Michael Ballard, systems administrator for the Vicksburg District's Contracting Office, with the U.S. Army's Achievement Medal for Civilian Service June 29. Ballard proactively accomplished the development of the Procurement Action Request (PAR) SharePoint tool, assisting the Region in the development of procurement packages for purchases of supplies and services less than \$150,000 (or, approximately 75% of MVD's procurement actions). Upon full implementation of the PAR tool, regional savings could exceed \$198,000 annually.



Maj. Gen. Wehr presented Katie Shows with the U.S. Army's Achievement Medal for Civilian Service June 29. Shows, MVD budget officer/finance and accounting officer, was instrumental in streamlining the fiscal year budget process by developing new budget templates and conducting the Regional Working Program Budget Advisory Committee (District budget officers). She successfully orchestrated and consolidated regional metrics from the districts in order to present the Regional Operating Budget. As a result of her dedication and professionalism, accountability for execution has been enhanced significantly.



Welcome Aboard!



Col. Michael Derosier
MVD Deputy Commander

Colonel Michael C. Derosier will assume the duties of deputy commander, Mississippi Valley Division, Vicksburg, Miss., July 15, 2015. He will also serve as secretary of the Mississippi River Commission. He comes to the division from Newport, R.I., after graduating from the United States Naval War College. Prior to that, he served as the military assistant to the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works) at the Pentagon (2012-2014) and commander of the Detroit District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (2010-2012).

Derosier was commissioned a second lieutenant in 1992 after earning a Bachelor of Science degree in civil engineering from the United States Military Academy, West Point, N.Y. His previous assignments include platoon leader, company executive officer and assistant brigade engineer, 41st Engineer Battalion, Fort Drum, N.Y.; (Operation Continue Hope, Somalia and Operation Uphold Democracy, Haiti); company commander, B Company, 62nd Engineer Battalion, Fort Sill, Okla.; project engineer, Far East District, USACE, Chunchon, South

Korea; resident engineer, Schriever Air Force Base, Omaha District, USACE, Colorado Springs, Colo.; plans officer, I Corps, Fort Lewis, Wash.; battalion operations officer and executive officer, 14th Engineer Battalion, Fort Lewis, Wash. (Operation Iraqi Freedom); and brigade operations officer and executive officer, 555th Engineer Brigade, Fort Lewis, Wash (Operation Iraqi Freedom).

Derosier earned a Master of Science degree in civil engineering from the University of Colorado – Boulder in 2000, a Master of Military Art and Science degree from the School of Advanced Military Studies in 2005, and a Master of Arts degree in National Security and Strategic Studies from the United States Naval War College in 2015. His military education includes U.S. Army Ranger, Sapper, Airborne and Air Assault courses, the Engineer Officer Basic and Advanced Courses, and the Command and General Staff College.

Derosier is a registered professional engineer in the state of Missouri.



Jerry Lindsay
ACE-IT Operations Officer

Jerry Lindsay recently joined MVD as an ACE-IT Operations officer.

Lindsay is married to Michaela (she is German), and they have four children: J.D. (27), Samantha (23), Lilly (12) and Linda Lou (7).

Lindsay is a native of Euless, Texas; loves football (huge Cowboys fan); and likes to spend time with his family, play golf and hunt.



If you have a new employee in your office, or if you ARE a new employee to the Mississippi Valley Division, please contact the Public Affairs Office at cemvd-pa@usace.army.mil, so that we can introduce you to everyone in Open Channels.



Around the Division



Essayons, Marce! — Lt. Col. James L. Booth, interim MVD deputy commander, presented Marce Robison, MVD Military Human Resources specialist, with the Achievement Medal for Civilian Service June 26 during her pre-deployment and farewell ceremony in Vicksburg. Robison will soon deploy to Afghanistan for one year to assist in Military HR related duties. Hooah!

Happy 4th of July!

And thanks to all who serve!



Open Channels

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Mississippi Valley Division



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