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District Tides

NORFOLK DISTRICT

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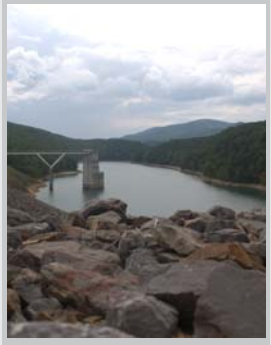
Lake Moomaw!

Also in this issue...

In this issue...

From the Cover



Lake Moomaw is the reservoir created by the damming of the Jackson River by Norfolk District's Gathright Dam boasting 43.5 miles of shoreline. (Photo by Patrick Bloodgood)

District Tides

Commander's Corner

Col. Dionysios Anninos

This past week, I came across the July-August publication of the Harvard Business Review entitled "Going The Distance." This particular issue features a collection of articles centering on the virtues of managing for the long term while simultaneously "doing the many right things now." Coincidentally, the publication complements the Chief of Engineers Lt. Gen. Robert L. Van Antwerp's recently announced command theme of bridging the gap to take the Corps from a "Good to Great" organization.

The Business Review publication has four primary, consistent threads or themes woven throughout its pages that address how organizations can achieve enduring success. We can learn from or build upon these themes and have already gone a long way in doing so:

- People (skills, abilities and the leadership brand of the organization);
- An agile, responsive and adaptive organization;
- The alignment of investments; and
- Making the whole greater than the sum of its parts.

In light of this discussion, let's look at what we are doing in the Norfolk District today in relation to the four primary themes out-lined in the above publication. In examining our organization's Lines of Operations, we are challenged with 1) Military Construction and Center of Standardization workloads that are growing tremendously; 2) a stable Civil Works program that has the potential to grow to address the many regional challenges; 3) the constant need to efficiently and effectively balance our nation's environmental capital through our regulatory program; and 4) the necessity to adopt innovative solutions in our real estate program to poise us to meet current and future project requirements. Overlaying these four areas is our ever-present mission to respond to man-made and natural disasters as well as to support our nation at war.

Branding the district

As we go the distance across our Lines of Operations, the question we have to ask ourselves is: What do we want our organization to be known for? For example, *FedEx* touts itself as "Absolutely, positively, doing whatever it takes;" *Procter & Gamble* for "Brands you know and trust." *Apple* is known for "Innovation and design." And *Boeing* is known for "People working together as a global enterprise for aerospace leadership."

As you know from our visioning process, we want our organization to be one that ***"…serves with pride and integrity, delivering quality products and services on time and within budget."*** Each of us must do our part for our district to attain and retain this branding. While doing so, we will not only set the behavior of our district workforce to embody this brand, but we will be doing our part to make the Corps as a whole greater than it is today.

We are already on the way in setting the conditions for future greatness as a district. Some examples: We are a Center of Standardization for seven design areas within the Corps. We were given the mission to build a Community Hospital at Fort Belvoir, an important and historical event. We have two strong navigation relationships, the James River and Eastern Shore partnerships. We expect to set history as the comprehensive Oyster Environment Impact Study comes on line to map the direction for oyster recovery in the Chesapeake Bay. We are leading the way in addressing water supply and water quality issues for the Commonwealth, and we are driving change in our regulatory program and our interactions with state agencies in that regard.

And, so, as the Harvard Business Review article advises, we're "doing the many right things now" while simultaneously managing for the long term. You should all be proud of what you have done to set the conditions for the district to "go the distance," or, in Lt. Gen. Van Antwerp's parlance, going from "Good to Great." However, while we have worked hard to set the conditions, we cannot attain our brand and deliver on

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Commanders Corner: Going the distance

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our program without a capable, respected, talented and empowered work force that is led by leaders who, according to *Papa John's International* (Pizza) founder John Schnatter, "build the people who are going to build the company.

A note on safety. All the above dialogue, our reputation and the brand name we want to achieve is easily derailed if we cannot execute our mission safely both on, and off, the field of play. Each and every one of us is the key in making our district accident free.

A thought for those deployed. Finally, please keep your thoughts and prayers on all those deployed and their families in time of war. A particular thank you to: Jaime Pastrana, Antonio Bastidas and Nandy Perillo who are currently deployed in Afghanistan, and Johnnie Saunders who, any day now, is expecting to deploy.

BRAC military construction kicks off at Fort Lee

Story by Patrick Bloodgood

"Ready! Set! Dig!" With those action words uttered by Pam Sutton, chief of the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Synchronization Office for Fort Lee, shovels dug into the earth as dignitaries, high ranking military officials and construction representatives broke ground for the more than 220-thousand square foot Sustained Center of Excellence Headquarters, part of a tremendous BRAC workload at Fort Lee.

Representatives from the communities surrounding Ft. Lee and the post's leadership join U.S. Representative J. Randy Forbes in a June 25 ground breaking ceremony. (Photo by Brittany Brown)

"This groundbreaking closes a chapter in the history of our Army and begins the first page of another," said Maj. Gen. Mitchell Stevenson, commanding general of the U.S. Army Combined Arms Support Command and Fort Lee, in his address to the crowd.

For the Norfolk District, that new chapter's first page means the start of the construction phase of the District's largest military construction program ever. Projects totaling nearly $2.1 billion are scheduled for Fort Lee and other Virginia military installations over the next five years.

By the direction of the BRAC Commission and through the design and construction efforts of the Norfolk District, Fort Lee will be forever changed with the addition of more than three-million square feet of new facilities and approximately 3,100 new military and civilian personnel. The construction efforts will center on the consolidation of the Combined Arms Support Command (CASCOM) Ordnance Center and School, the Navy/Air Force Culinary Arts and Transportation School, the Defense Commissary Agency, the Defense Contracting Management Agency, and other support units. Fort Lee will also see an increase in its student population to the tune of 27,000.

The greater Richmond, Va. metropolitan area, home to Fort Lee, will also benefit from the growth. According to Rep. J. Randy Forbes (R-4th), the expansion will generate at least $1.2 billion a year in new economic regional activity over the next five years.

"Those numbers are the horsepower that helps drive the economy of the Tri-Cities and greater Richmond metropolitan area," said Forbes.

District major player in Corps' disaster response evolution

Story by Stan Ballard
Norfolk District Emergency Manager

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineer's disaster response concept and procedures have evolved considerably since the early 1990s. Following the Hurricane Andrew response and recovery operation in 1992, the Corps began a major process review of its planning and execution of disaster missions. In 1997, the Corps formed a Readiness Implementation Team (RIT) to evaluate its current disaster response doctrine and to develop recommendations for future operations which evolved into the birth of Readiness 2000.

Regional response concept: readiness 2000

Readiness 2000, or R2K as we called it, was built on the premise that a major disaster was too large a response for any one district to manage, regardless of how robust that particular district was. This was the beginning of the regional response concept. The RIT recommended that the Corps form specialized Planning and Response Teams (PRTs) that were structured and trained to manage the planning and execution of one particular mission.

Every district in the Corps would be assigned one or two PRTs. The Corps developed the structure of the PRTs and conducted its first training in the Spring/Summer of 1998. The missions planned for included: Ice, Water, Emergency Power, Debris Removal, Temporary Housing, Temporary Roofing and Structural Safety Assessment.

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Deployment News

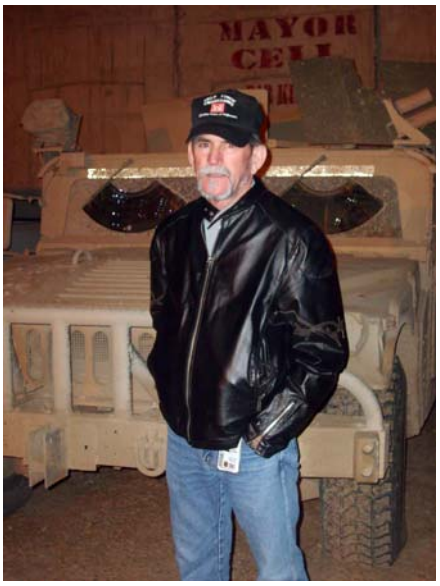
It's pride, contribution for Seay, not money

Story by Patrick Bloodgood

Glen Seay, an electronics technician in Emergency Management, is no stranger to working in high-stress, highly-dangerous situations, ranging from his service in the U.S. Army in Vietnam to Hurricane relief support to volunteering for the Global War on Terror in Afghanistan and Iraq in recent years. His most recent exploits landed him in the Green Zone of Baghdad, Iraq, living in a CONEX container for a 120-day deployment.

Seay served as a program manager for the Gulf Region Division (GRD), where he briefed high-ranking officials on the progress of the many projects GRD was working on. In addition, Seay also served as the lead and expert on Economic Support Funding projects which included Provincial Reconstruction Development, Infrastructure Security Protection, Capacity Development and Prisons, as well as many other tasks that came his way.

"It's really different to go over from your normal everyday position to that of a division program manager," said Seay. "It takes time to ramp up and get up to speed. I would say it really wasn't until the last month that I had a full grasp on everything. I highly recommend that if anybody goes to the sandbox (Iraq) that it needs to be for at least six months."



Glenn Seay stands in front of a up-armored Humvee in Iraq. (Photo courtesy Glenn Seay)

Hard work and admiration

Having only four months to tackle the immense nation-building tasks in Iraq, Seay says it left little down time to unwind and catch your breath.

"You are so dedicated in that 14 to 16-hour day; you really enjoy the short amount of down time more. It was work, work, work, eat, eat, eat, exercise and sleep," revealed Seay.

As part of his duties in Iraq, Seay worked side-by-side with many Iraqis, both Sunni and Shia Muslims, in the nation-building effort. Seay was responsible for trouble-shooting, tracking and analyzing data about the ongoing projects that GRD was responsible for to see what needed to be done to bring the project in on time or what obstacles were in the way for a particular project.

"I had to keep the generals and commanders informed on the status of all the projects, in addition I had to brief the folks in Washington (D.C.) as well.

They Iraqi's Seay worked with expressed their feelings to him about the ongoing efforts being made in their country.

"They all appreciate what the American government is trying to do," said Seay, "and I just hope we are not doing all of this in vain."

When Seay talks about his deployment, you can see in his face the concern for those troops and Corps employees who are still in-country trying to build and secure the nation. At every corner people are being ripped apart by an insurgency and other factions looking for their own personal gain rather than that of the Iraqi people as a whole.

In-coming rounds tend to increase stress levels

When you take a 14 to 16-hour day and mix in insurgents and other factions who are bent on undoing the very fabric you are trying to sew into a nation with a working infrastructure, it makes for a very dangerous and stressful situation. Seay says it became a frequent occurrence to have incoming mortar rounds from insurgents landing in the Green Zone, and he says when you left that area you became a target for kidnappers or snipers.

"Any individual that goes over has to consider the danger, it is not a game; it's not a hurricane recovery mission," said Seay.

On his last day in-country one of the incoming rounds came a little too close for comfort; however, Seay says he viewed it as a going away party on his behalf.

"At least, I found out I could run just as fast as I did when I was 19."

With the exception of some scrapes, bruises and other minor injuries he wouldn't disclose, Seay came away from the attack relatively unharmed. Unfortunately, according to Seay, a fellow Corps employee, received some shrapnel and had to be medically evacuated.

The reasons that drive Seay

Though the monetary rewards of working in a combat zone are great, it's not what drove Seay to make the trip to war-torn Iraq.

"The highest honor for anybody is serving their country. If you go over for the money... you are going for the wrong reason. I would encourage those to go with the attitude that it is a mission, it is about pride, it is about serving our country and it is about seeing democracy in Iraq," said Seay.

Seay added that he would return to Iraq if the "general" (his wife) would let him, but he said that may be a tough sell since he has deployed so often in the past five years.

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Rays, scientists wage war over oysters

Story by Nancy Allen

Norfolk District is on the front lines of battle with a predator that could wreak havoc on a major Corps initiative.

The enemy? The cownose ray, or *Rhinoptera bonasus*.

Its target? Millions of oysters planted on new oyster reefs constructed by the Corps and other agencies.

Cownose rays are not new to the Chesapeake Bay. In fact, John Smith, who noted that oysters lay "as thick as stones" in his early explorations of the bay, had a nearly fatal encounter with one of the creatures in 1608.

Today, nearly 400 years later, the population of cownose rays has risen dramatically because their main predators, sharks, have been overfished. One study estimates that the population has grown by 20 times in the last 30 years. The cownose ray is a migratory animal, arriving in the Chesapeake Bay in May and staying until late September or October. They are voracious eaters and like to feast on soft clams, hard clams, scallops and oysters. Some of their main food items, such as soft clams, have also been greatly reduced by disease, which has caused the rays to focus more attention on other food items, such as oysters.

Scientists are studying unprotected oyster reefs as well as protected reefs to see how cownose rays react to them. (Photo courtesy Dave Schulte)

Large schools of cownose rays devoured a Corps' test-planting of oysters in the Great Wicomico River three years ago, and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation also lost nearly a million oysters to the hungry animals. The rays have also been causing problems by eating oysters on many sites throughout the Bay, impacting private leaseholders by eating their seed oysters in many rivers that support on-bottom oyster culture.

Protecting oysters from rays

When the Norfolk District began seeding reefs in the Great Wicomico with native baby oysters in 2004, a bio-security plan was put in place to protect the project. A large net pen was used, but maintenance proved difficult and expensive. Now, preparing to embark on a similar restoration project in the Lynnhaven River, Corps' biologist Dave Schulte and the team are looking for new options.

Working with experts at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS), the team has devised a plan to plant hundred of thousands of broodstock oysters in a variety of locations throughout the Lynnhaven River. The study is designed to gather information on the sizes and types of oysters the cownose rays can and cannot feed upon, and also to test bio-security measures.

Some oysters will be deployed on granite rip-rap throughout the Lynnhaven and others will be planted on existing shell reefs. On the shell reefs, some oysters will remain unprotected while others will be covered with a mesh netting. And a VIMS scientist will test a new idea in protecting against cownose rays – guarding reefs with electro-magnetic fields that will hopefully repel the rays.

The team will also experiment with different reef densities – the number and size of oysters needed per unit area. According to Schulte, this will help determine what is needed to create new reefs that will be capable of growing vertically as cohesive reef units, as did the historic abundant reefs in the Lynnhaven. Such cohesive reefs provide a natural defense against cownose ray predation, as the rays cannot feed on oysters meshed together into a solid reef structure.

Initial positive results

Preliminary results are indicating that the nets work quite well. Sites where nets are used to cover the oysters have not been impacted by the cownose rays. The rays have been recorded at most of the test sites and unprotected oysters near the ones covered by the nets are being consumed.

Additionally, the preliminary data is showing that the largest oysters (90 mm and up) cannot be eaten by the rays. If this continues to hold true throughout the study, this will provide important information to manage the oyster's recovery.

"We will gather critically needed information on the types of oysters that rays prefer to feed upon, and if there are any types that they cannot feed effectively on, we'll figure that out too," said Schulte. "The oyster industry and the restoration program need this information badly."

All of the Corps' research will be useful as Norfolk District embarks on the full-scale Lynnhaven project this fall. The plan calls for construction of approximately 30 acres of restored reefs – nearly five times the acreage of reefs that now exist in the river. The reefs will be seeded with both broodstock and spat-on-shell Lynnhaven wild stock oysters.

While Lynnhaven oysters were once world-famous and plentiful, due to overharvesting, disease and diminishing water quality, historic populations of native oysters in the Lynnhaven and throughout the Chesapeake Bay have fallen to less than two percent of what they once were.

"We're excited about embarking upon our next oyster restoration project," said Project Manager Brian Rheinhart. "The Lynnhaven River is considered a prime spot for oyster restoration because it is a trap estuary with high salinity, had historically high populations of native oysters and has considerably higher oyster recruitment today than many other sites in the Chesapeake Bay."

According to Rheinhart, the project combines the latest techniques in restoration science with information gathered more than 100 years ago – Corps scientists used such tools as hydrodynamic modeling and maps and historical records of productive oyster grounds to determine the best sites for reef construction.

The Commonwealth of Virginia, as represented by the Virginia Marine Resources Commission, is the non-federal sponsor for the project. Other partners include the City of Virginia Beach, Lynnhaven River Now, VIMS, Chesapeake Bay Foundation and NOAA.

A perspective from the 'pen' of Jim Thomasson

Opportunities abound for professional engineers

Jim Thomasson, Deputy District Engineer of Programs

Recently I was talking with someone about the vast opportunities that are developing for our district employees now that we are responsible for the hospital project at Ft Belvoir and since receiving the authorization for the other BRAC-related projects. I want to share some of my observations and insights for those who may be looking to the future.

Over the next several years, the district and Corps can expect to experience an unprecedented number of challenges, and especially opportunities, particularly in the engineering arena, as we tackle projects associated with the district's overall $ 2.1 billion BRAC program. Subject to available funding, this is also true for the civil works arena as the nation addresses aging infrastructure issues brought to public attention recently.

I see these opportunities as both career enhancing and personally gratifying when compared to what non-government engineers may experience. For me, and perhaps for many of you, these are opportunities to work on major, exciting projects that enable me to contribute to something important for the nation and, at the same time, allow me to use it for my own career development and professional certifications.

Staffing challenges

Yes, the projects are interesting professionally and technically, but we face a staffing challenge. If you want or need new experiences, we need you. We've had some difficulties attracting people to high cost of living areas or encouraging careerists to relocate 120 miles from their hometown.

For FY08, Norfolk District plans to recruit over 90 positions mostly for the Ft. Lee and Ft. Belvoir projects. The majority of those positions are technical in nature with some at the GS-13 level. Watch for the announcements or go to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) website for job opportunities.

Recruitment is underway

Recruitment for the hospital field office at Ft. Belvoir is now underway, with Ms. Kathleen O'Neill having just been hired as the Chief for Project Development. We are currently working on the selection of the Senior Construction Manager and Project Manager, and will soon announce recruitment actions to fill the following positions at the Ft Belvoir Integrated Planning Office (IPO):

Position	Position Duty Title	Grade
1	Senior Design Manager	13
2	Contracting Officer	13
3	Project Manager	13
4	Resident Engineer	13
5	Admin Assistant	7
6	Financial Analyst	11
7	Construction Engineer	13
8	Construction Engineer	13
9	Project Engineer	12
10	Contract Specialist	12
11	Construction Engineer	12
12	Construction Engineer	11
13	Admin Assistant	7
14	Mechanical Engineer	contr
15	Electrical Engineer	contr
16	Scheduler / Estimator	contr

Opportunities abound

Many of you have heard of DB (design-build), MT (MILCON Transformation), CoS (Centers of Standardization) and IDBB (Integrated Design Bid Build). These are just a few of the Corps' innovative ways to acquire construction. Each project offers its own unique opportunity to be innovative and creative in solving problems. Many of the projects must be completed and available to the customer before Sept. 2011. The Ft Belvoir hospital, for example, is scheduled to be built in only 30 months. Challenges like this are not overcome using a "business as usual" approach. It is so rewarding to know that my boss and the organizational culture support innovation. I know that it's OK to make a mistake when I'm operating outside the box to execute these demanding schedules. Where else but in the Corps of Engineers can engineers have the support to seek these types of creative and innovative solutions on behalf of their country — this environment is so empowering.

Equally exciting for me are the challenges facing Project Managers. If understood and executed correctly, the Project Management Business Process (PMBP) is an enabling and effective way of doing business. Even though we may think we still need to improve our skills in PMBP, we are still so far ahead of the private sector in this arena that we can teach others PMBP. Don't overlook being a Project Manager as a way to expand your career experiences. It is an excellent way to develop leadership skills leading to supervisory and management level positions.

Fort Belvoir Community Hospital Project (BRAC)

Now, some discussion on the district's Fort Belvoir Community Hospital project:

Norfolk District started working on the hospital back in early January of this year. There was just Dennis Pritchett, serving as Chief of the IPO and me, as the Norfolk District Deputy for Programs Management and Senior "Project Manager" on the Project Delivery Team (PDT). The responsibility for the project transferred from Baltimore District to Norfolk District in April. Since then, Pete Reilly and Debbie Gray have joined the Belvoir hospital IPO. Other district employees have provided assistance along the way in many areas.

Two really major milestones occurred when we released the solicitation on June 16 and received construction contract proposals on August 16. After the contract award in late September, construction will start, meaning that the district must work quickly to begin filling out the rest of the IPO team with qualified, experienced people to meet the demands of managing and completing the $747 million project.

By the time we fill all the required in-house positions, there will be approximately 30 Corps employees working on the hospital project. We will also have 30-plus contractor personnel on the job. Some of the in-house

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After the storm, district responds time and again

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Norfolk's first PRT mission

Norfolk District was assigned the ice mission and was in the first group of Corps PRTs deployed to a disaster. The district Ice Team consisted of Mission Manager Steve Powell, Mission Specialist Michele Muller, Contracting Specialist Karen Coccio, Logistics Specialist David Monacelli and Stan Ballard as Action Officer. That first disaster was Hurricane Georges in 1998, a category four hurricane that swept through Puerto Rico. We had just completed our ice training, but nothing could have prepared us for what we faced. We were the first PRT deployed to a major disaster, implementing a new concept and working from an island environment. It was a struggle at each phase of the operation, but somehow we made it through, procuring, delivering and distributing over 18 million pounds of packaged ice.

Stan Ballard (right) receives a situation update from the Corps team at the FEMA Region II Disaster Field Office in Lower Manhattan, a week after the Sept. 11, 2001 collapse of the Twin Towers in New York City. (Corps photo)

PRT's have changed

The number and makeup of the PRTs has changed much since the early days of R2K, but not the concept of the regional response. Our PRTs are in reality project delivery teams and this regional response process is actually the project management business process (PMBP) in its purest form. Today the Corps maintains 43 deployable PRTs. The teams fold into the response organization of the responding district and manage the planning and execution of the mission from "cradle to grave."

The Corps' ice team has also evolved into a Commodities PRT that manages both water and ice. It has grown from five people to a 16-member team, with an additional dozen or so quality assurance personnel available depending on the requirements of the mission.

Norfolk District's disaster response

Since the 2005 hurricane season, and our nation's response to Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has committed to deploying emergency resources to the field four to five days in advance of a hurricane landfall. In the event the Commonwealth of Virginia is targeted, Norfolk District must be postured to not only receive these resources, but execute its various FEMA missions (Commodities, Emergency Power, Debris Removal, etc). Geographically, Norfolk District is unique throughout the Corps, as we have the only district headquarters located on waterfront property and subject to tidal surge. Therefore, we must be prepared to execute FEMA mission assignments independent of the Waterfield Headquarters building.

Since the early 1990s, the District has deployed a team to the Richmond, Va., area a day or two in advance of a projected hurricane landfall here. The mission of the team is to receive and execute FEMA mission assignments, independent of the District Headquarters, as well as receive and support other Corps assets deployed to Virginia. What began as a last-minute "pickup" team of about 12 members, has evolved into a response organization staff of about 35. Currently, our response team deploys three to four days prior to the storm's landfall here.

Recovery Field Office-advance

The hub of this activity is the Recovery Field Office-advance, which is established in a hotel on the west end of Richmond, just 10 miles from the state Emergency Operations Center. Its location provides easy access for the hundreds of Corps team members arriving from around the country.

One area of emergency management that often goes unnoticed is the "unsung heroes" back at the District who take on the mission essential workload of those deployed. Norfolk District could not respond to and execute its disaster mission responsibilities without the folks back at the District who take on the additional workload.

Every disaster deployment is unique

I've deployed to disasters since 1985 and, though all are different, a few stand out. I vividly remember our first day in Puerto Rico in support of Hurricane Georges. It was around midnight and we got lost driving back to the hotel from the FEMA office. There was a 100 percent power outage on the island and it was overcast. I felt like I was driving in an inkwell. We finally "righted" ourselves and made it back to the hotel in San Juan.

My memory of September 11, 2001, and my deployment to Ground Zero remains my most memorable deployment. We stayed in New Jersey the first couple of days after the Twin Towers went down and rode a boat to lower Manhattan each morning to the FEMA facility. I remembered seeing the Statue of Liberty at 5:30 each morning. It was before sunrise and you could see the smoke swirling around it with the glow of the fires at the Twin Towers. It seemed so surreal at the time; a memory I'll never forget.

Disaster response work is very exciting with high job satisfaction, but it can put a tremendous strain on a family, especially if you do it for a living. During my deployments, my wife, Sue, has had to play the role of mom and dad to our two kids. It's that role and her steadfast support that has allowed me to be in this business for 22 years and advance this far.

One man's dam history

Story and photos by Patrick Bloodgood

(Covington, Va.) — Nestled amongst the sun-kissed Alleghany Mountains -- miles away from the nearest bustling community-- where hummingbirds and yellow finches dart from one feeder to another, sits one of the most remote facilities of the Norfolk District, Gathright Dam and Lake Moomaw. Completed in 1981, the 257-foot high dam spans 1,310 feet between two steep cliffs on Virginia's Jackson River, mere minutes from the Virginia/ West Virginia state line. The facility provides flood and water quality control for communities located downstream on the Jackson and James Rivers.

William Whitt opens the security gate to the intake tower at Gathright Dam.

"We control 345-square miles of drainage to the north and about 90 percent of the time we are on water quality with the remaining 10 percent being flood control," explained William Whitt, Gathright Dam facilities manager.

By opening up the gates at different lake levels in the intake tower, the operators of Gathright can keep a constant water temperature down stream which is perfect for fish habitat and spawning.

Down by three, crew keeps dam going

To keep this 26-year-old dam up and running at its peak performance normally takes a team of nine highly dedicated Corps employees who oversee the day-to-day operations, seven days a week. Currently, the staff is operating with six employees due to recent retirements.

Led by Whitt, the team is responsible for monitoring in-flow, out-flow, lake height, water temperature at various depths, and maintaining a water temperature of the outflow at 60 degrees for wildlife downstream, plus handling the general maintenance and upkeep of the facility and surrounding grounds.

"We have to maintain at least 268 cubic feet per minute of flow for proper water quality down stream," said Whitt.

Depending on what month it is, that flow of water fluctuates. According to Whitt, when the dam first came online, calculations of water flow were handled by a slide rule and a reference manual containing the mathmatical equations showing the rise of Lake Moomaw during a set period of time. This was used to determined how much water was flowing into the lake. Then the employees could adjust the flow coming out of the dam accordingly to maintain a set lake level or control potential flooding down stream.

"You would be surprised, it was actually pretty accurate," said Whitt.

And he should know; Whitt has been at Gathright since well before the Dam was in place. In fact, the stoic grandfather from Virginia's coal mining country worked as a contractor on the project during the planning phases in 1965.

"When I came in, there was nothing," Whitt explained. "They told me there is a place in a gorge we want to place a dam, go find us the closest point in which we can do that."

Whitt worked with the drill crews that took rock samples to see if the surrounding terrain could support the Mobile (Ala.) District-designed earthen dam.

The views of the Appalachian Mountains from atop Gathright Dam are simply breathtaking, making it for what the people in the field office call paradise.

"Those drill crew boys from Mobile and Baltimore Districts knew how to go up and down but not on an angle. We had to set the angle on the drill to take the sample," said Whitt.

Towards the final stages of the dam construction, Whitt explained that the second largest flood event on record occurred on the Jackson River; the near-completed dam actually performed its flood control duties quite well.

Gathright Dam controls the flow and temperature of the water downstream for both fish habitat and flood control.

"We lost part of the dikes that keep the water back from the dam, but it wasn't too big a thing," said Whitt

Whitt was on the construction of the dam for almost the entire process with the exception of a small stint between his days as a contractor and a Corps employee. Since becoming an employee 35 years ago, Whitt has observed Gathright Dam hold back the Jackson River numerous times during a major flood, just as designed. In fact, Whitt revealed that the flood event of 1985 paid for the dam.

Single event pays for dam

In October 1985, Hurricane Juan hit the Louisiana Coast and traveled northward, dumping torrential rains on many portions of the Southeast, including the Jackson River, causing large-scale flooding. Gathright Dam didn't waver during the onslaught of water and saved $72 million worth of damage during that single event.

For Whitt, the event was another notch in his illustrious tenure at the dam; a time in which he can remember the days when all the calculations for inflow and outflows were done by slide rule and text. Today it's done by computer with near instantaneous readings being sent via satellite to the Norfolk District headquarters. Whitt said that if that computer system ever went down, they could easily pull out the old manuals and slide rule and not skip a beat.

Not ready to hang it up

With such institutional knowledge of the Gathright Dam project, so much so that his fellow employees refer to him as a walking encyclopedia, it's hard to imagine Gathright Dam and Lake Moomaw without Whitt, but even he contemplates retiring.

Gauges down stream from Gathright Dam constantly measure the flow and height of the Jackson River

"I just got my 35-year pin, I've got a few other things to do, it just depends on my health," said Whitt.

Whitt and his team consider the area a paradise, far removed from the faster pace in Norfolk. And they wouldn't change things for anything in the world.

Fort Belvoir Hospital

Strategic, tactical and innovative thinking key to success

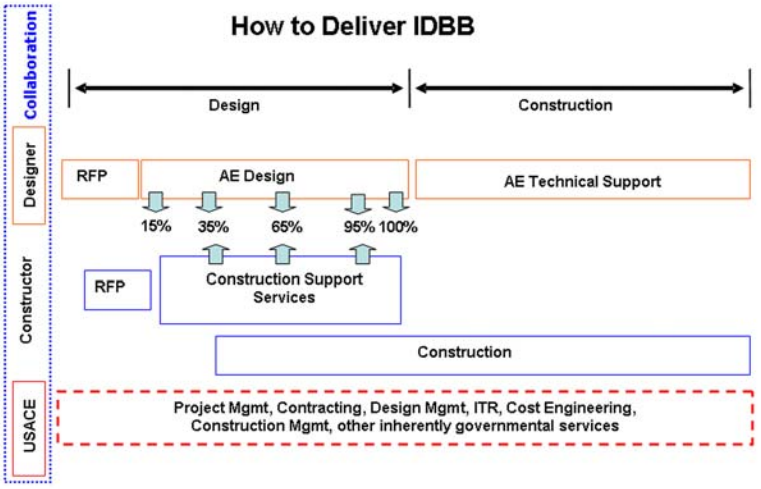
By Jim Thomasson
Chief, P3MD

The Fort Belvoir Community Hospital is one of two new or expanded hospital facilities designed to provide full health care support for the National Capitol Area (NCA). The hospital will be a new $747 million facility constructed by the Corps' Norfolk District. The other facility will be the expanded Bethesda Naval Hospital, in Maryland, which will be renamed Walter Reed National Military Medical Center.

The hospital project is being designed by an outside Architecture-Engineering (AE) firm and constructed using an Integrated/Design/Bid/Build (IDBB) methodology. This integrates both design and construction into a single process, enabling the construction contractor to review and provide input as early as 15 percent of the way into the facility's design. As the graphic below depicts, the construction contractor and the A-E (design) firm remain engaged together throughout the design phase. This results in fewer design omissions and coordination errors. Actual construction can begin earlier in the design process rather that wait until the entire design phase is complete, thus enabling the project to be completed sooner.

The IDBB process:

- Allows the government to retain direct control over both design AE and construction contractor;
- Allows for Fast-Track Construction (i.e. Construction beginning earlier in the process);
- Allows the customer to participate in the collaborative process; especially valuable for fast-paced, time-constrained Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) projects;
- Provides better opportunities to achieve cost and schedule objectives, and to identify potential problems areas early in the design phase; and
- Provides a real-time pulse of the construction market (materials, labor, transport, access) and the ability to take immediate advantage of those conditions.



Size of hospital and cost

The 120-bed in-patient hospital and four out-patient clinics are housed in an interconnected facility of 1,278,251 square feet. Additionally, there is a detached administrative building of 86,400 square feet, plus a detached 27,100 square foot central energy plant building. Parking is provided by two garages with a total of 2000 spaces and a parking lot for 600 cars.

The original program cost for the project was $498 million for a 784,076 square foot hospital/clinics and an 84,715 square foot medical office building. However, the size and cost subsequently increased to add additional medical functions that would be needed to replace Walter Reed Army Medical Center and to complement the Bethesda Hospital facility. This resulted in an increase to the scope of the Fort Belvoir hospital and an acceleration of the construction timeline. With the increase in facility size to what it is now, the program cost is currently $747 million.

Project Schedule accelerated by nine months

Prior to March 2007, the hospital project appeared to be a routine BRAC project. But that changed quickly when national focus accentuated the importance of replacing the aging Walter Reed Army Medical Center as quickly as possible. The project delivery team rapidly expanded beyond just a Corps-level working team to now include members from the Departments of the Army and Defense. The focus on project planning shifted from tactical to strategic: This meant needing to find ways to build a 50 percent larger hospital nine months earlier than originally planned versus having as your priority the more standard daily tasks associated with the project.

As a result, the IDBB contract will now be awarded prior to the end of Fiscal Year 2007. Actual construction of the hospital project is scheduled to take 30 months, beginning in December 2007, with completion expected in August 2010, nine months sooner than the original May 2011 date.

Rethinking the entire design process

How is it possible to build the hospital nine months earlier than originally scheduled? The answer is a combination of innovation, top-driven milestones, high-level attention, acceptable risk-taking and a high performing team with a "let us try" attitude.

It was necessary to rethink the entire design process. In lieu of submittal requirements that are normally standard for medical projects, the team, working with the Corps Medical Mandatory Center of Expertise and the A-E firm, substituted construction packages (roads and utilities, building frame and exterior walls, and interior completion) that will enable the IDBB contractor to actually start building as soon as each construction package is finished. The team eliminated the standard 30-day review period, replacing that process with a 5-day on-board review process. This means that all reviewers meet together and discuss the design documents collaboratively as opposed to independently.

The original hospital was a Fiscal Year (FY) 2008 project. To award the construction contract earlier, the team had to reprogram

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IPBC puts troops to the test one year after completion

New Infantry Platoon Battle Course features 43 stationary infantry target emplacements. (Photo by Jerry Rogers)

Story by Jerry Rogers

On Nov. 1, 2006, Norfolk District transferred to the Virginia Army National Guard's Maneuver Training Center another in a series of quality construction projects, the $5.6 million Infantry Platoon Battle Course (IPBC). The IPBC project was delivered ahead of schedule and well within budget by Project Manager Craig Jones and longtime District Construction Representative for Fort Pickett, Kevin D. Arthur.

The IPBC provides Soldiers the skills necessary to detect, identify, engage and defeat stationary and moving infantry and armor targets in a tactical array. The course comes complete with a range control facility, ammunition breakdown area, latrine, canopy mess, 43 stationary infantry target emplacements, 14 moving infantry target emplacements, 15 mortar simulation emplacements, 13 infantry hostile fire emplacements, 7 stationary armor target emplacements, 19 machine gun bunkers and a moving armor target emplacement.

Fort Pickett Range Officer Asher Weaver said of the new IPBC: "This new Infantry Platoon Battle Course takes us from 1960s know-how to 21st century technology. It positions Fort Pickett to train to standard for 15-20 years into the future."

The IPBC comes on the heels of the equally impressive Maneuver Area Training Equipment Site (MATES) facility, completed by Norfolk District and delivered to Fort Pickett in November 2005. The expanded 153,000-square-foot MATES facility eliminated existing World War II vintage buildings, where much of the maintenance on more than 600 items of combat arms, combat support and combat service support equipment took place. Equipment maintained at the MATES facility includes Abrams tanks, self-propelled howitzers, armored and command carriers, as well as related support equipment from over 80 Army National Guard units in Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia.

When units arrive to train at the IPBC, they first draw their equipment from the MATES facility. Weaver added that an increasing number of units from other military services have heard the glowing reports on the IPBC, and are bringing their own equipment to take full advantage of the course's excellent training environment. "This is not your typical 'basic training' scenario taking place here," said Weaver. "The IPBC was constructed primarily to provide training opportunities for the Army's new Stryker Brigades; it's advanced range preparatory training."

Range Safety Specialist John Mellick said safety is job number one at all times at the Maneuver Training Center. "We coordinate safety requirements with units using the IPBC months ahead of their scheduled training time. When they arrive here they know exactly what's expected of them while negotiating this advanced course," said Mellick.

Both Weaver and Mellick, retired Army Noncommissioned Officers, are visibly proud of the new IPBC and Fort Pickett's training safety record. "We train about 80,000 military service members annually at the Maneuver Training Center and we haven't had a training accident resulting in fatality since 1993," beamed Mellick.

Weaver sees the IPBC as another important tool in the installation's growing training suite. "This is another one of several initiatives currently under way which supports Virginia's vision of making Fort Pickett the premier maneuver training center on the east coast," said Weaver. "And as long as we have Kevin (Arthur) here, Norfolk District will always be our partner," added a smiling Mellick.

Summer hires set benchmark for future students

Story by Brittany Brown

In May, the Norfolk District welcomed 16 students as part of an ongoing program that provides an opportunity for local college students to gain first-hand experience in the workplace. Based on their individual interests, the 2007 summer hire students worked in various areas including Engineering, Real Estate, Logistics, Information Management, Public Affairs and Human Resources. Not only were students able to contribute to departments on-site at the Waterfield Building, but some students also opted to work in the Langley Resident Office at Langley Air Force Base in Hampton, Va.

The 2007 summer hires gather around the bench they created for the Norfolk District. (Photo by Patrick Bloodgood)

Student project

During student orientation, Jim Thomasson, deputy district engineer for project management, suggested that the students use their talents, skills and knowledge acquired from experiences within their respective departments to work on a single project. By doing this, students would be able to apply the processes, tools and techniques which characterize project management. After meeting several times to discuss various ideas for a group project, the summer hire students agreed to create a bench that would be dedicated to the Norfolk District.

The bench project was collectively decided on by the students for a variety of reasons. The bench would serve as a way to improve the landscaped outdoor areas at the Waterfield Building. With the unique location of the Waterfield Building, the bench would provide another way for people to observe the sights the Norfolk District location offers, such as the historic Fort Norfolk and the dozens of vessels that pass by each day. The bench would provide yet another seating option for Waterfield employees and guests to the Norfolk District. Most importantly, this bench would signify the first project in Norfolk District history that was completed by a group of summer hire students.

Thomasson stressed to students, "No matter who says this is just a bench, it signifies more than that. It is not the product, but the process."

In their efforts to employ project management principles, students planned the project from start to finish in stages. Throughout the process, Norfolk District carpenter Johnnie Saunders aided the team of students in nearly every capacity. Not only did Saunders offer innovative ideas about the design of the bench, but he also offered to purchase supplies and supervise the students to ensure safety as they performed various tasks at the Waterfield Building. After being provided materials, team members Stormie Batten and Shelby Batten constructed the bench at their home.

Once the bench was delivered on-site, the remaining team members completed the project according to their plan. Students roped off the area for safety reasons, excavated the area, poured concrete, placed stone, set the bench and attached a Corps logo.

At the completion of the project, the bench was officially dedicated to the district in a ceremony hosted by the summer hire students. During the ceremony, the students addressed their supervisors and individuals who aided not only in the project, but also those who were instrumental in their growth at the district. District Commander Col. Dionysios Anninos and Thomasson expressed their appreciation of the summer students who diligently completed their assignments at the Norfolk District. Following remarks, those attending the ceremony were able to see the bench embedded with a Corps logo and plaque dedicating the bench to the district on behalf of the 2007 summer hires. The students collectively decided that Saunders would perform the ribbon cutting based on the tremendous amount of time and effort he dedicated to the project.

Paula Bradshaw, human resources officer, does not recall a time when the district did not rely on summer hire students to assist the various branches at Fort Norfolk.

"For as long as I can remember, the District has been using students as summer hires. I've been around almost 32 years so I would say for many, many years," said Bradshaw.

By providing summer employment for local students, Norfolk District gives students an opportunity to gain practical experience in the workforce that complements their collegiate curriculum.

Engineers asked to climb on board

Continued from Page **6**

positions could provide promotional opportunities for you. Some might provide an opportunity to expand your skills. Some of the positions will be just plain exciting. The field office will be a new 15,000 SF modular facility located on a 9-hole golf course at Ft Belvoir.

Most of the positions will provide valuable experience and added qualifications to enable those interested to become certified as Project Management Professionals (PMP) and USACE PPM Level III certification. I am excited that USACE now recognizes the need to certify qualified individuals as Project Manager Professionals.

Customer care and relationships

Something else that is really enjoyable about this project is the great group of customers, users and stakeholders with whom we get to work. Customer care is essential for project success. When we had our first five-day on-board review of the Request for Proposal (RFP) package, there were over 100 project delivery team members involved. Participating were doctors, nurses, engineers, architects and other professionals. They were both military and civilian coming from some 20-plus organizations. When a PDT shares a common vision and goals, leading the team is easy and fun.

In addition to all the above, I view this as a call to public service, given the importance of providing quality health care to our military men and women serving our country. If Fort Belvoir is too far for you to go and work, then take a look at the opportunities that are provided at Ft Lee – a $1.2B program that will transform that installation into the premier training facility for Soldiers who will be fighting for our freedom. The opportunities with the district and Corps are endless; they're there for the taking. Climb on board!

Jim Thomasson is Norfolk District's Deputy for Program Management & also serves as the Ft. Belvoir hospital's PDT Senior "Project Manager".

District Field Office serves as butterfly hatchery

Story and photos by Patrick Bloodgood

Richard Vinson checks on the chrysalis and caterpillars living in the habitats feasting away on the milkweed set up for them in the Gathright Dam Field Office.

Walking into the Gathright Dam field office you see things you normally would expect at a Corps dam site — informative brochures, maps and historical information about the dam and the surrounding area. However, two peculiar cylinders made of netting rise up from a small tabletop towards the back of the room. Each cylinder contains jars filled with water and milkweed sticking out the top, teeming with crawling caterpillars feasting on the green leafs of the plant.

The caterpillars are in the Gathright Dam field office under the watchful eyes of Richard Vinson, a retired military fire chief, and his wife Mary Ellen who are, as they like to call it, full-time recreation vehicle dwellers and volunteers for the U.S. Forest Service.

"When we retired we were too young to just sit down and do nothing, so our goal is to do something and give back," said Richard.

'Giving back' means they volunteer wherever their travels may take them. For the past four summers, the South Carolina natives have staffed the information desk, which is leased to the Forest Service, inside the Gathright Dam visitor's center. Three years ago, the couple began harvesting caterpillars and releasing them into the wild when they matured into monarch butterflies.

"The U.S. Forest Service office in Covington brought us up some habitats and we started doing some research," said Richard.

This harvesting and releasing of caterpillars and butterflies is actually a part of a major research project being conducted by the University of Kansas, which is tracking and researching the migratory patterns of the Monarch Butterfly. Entitled Monarch Watch, the project requires the couple to raise the caterpillars to butterflies, tag the wings with a sticker that has a number on it, record that number and then set the butterflies free to begin their migratory journey to Mexico.

If one of the Vinson's butterflies makes it to Mexico and is found dead by a Mexican national, that person can take the sticker, call a special number set up by the University of Kansas and receive a $5 reward. Back in Covington the Vinson's can look online to see if one of their butterflies have been recovered.

"The butterflies we release may not make it because they only live for about six weeks, so what happens is they will lay their eggs along the way and then the next generation of butterflies continue the journey southwestward," said Mary Ellen.

The butterfly project serves as a great talking point for all the visitors that walk into the facility and allows the Forest Service volunteers to talk about not only the butterflies, but the national forest and Gathright Dam.

"I'll go on and explain about the operations of the dam, its history, the gentlemen that pushed for its existence, and oh yeah, the butterflies and the entire program that we are involved with," said Richard.

For more information about Monarch Watch, visit them on the web at www.**monarchwatch**.org.

District Safety

Near miss accidents—take them seriously

What is a "near miss"? A near miss is an unplanned occurrence that could have caused an accident or injury. In the 1930's, W. H. Heinrich introduced a theory that is widely accepted today. His theory asserts that although each near miss could have resulted in a serious injury, most do not. However, once an incident is in progress, its ultimate outcome is mainly a matter of luck. The fact that most near misses do not result in negative consequences contributes to acceptance of unsafe decisions. In short, we can work on "autopilot," take short cuts or become complacent about safety.

Statistics show that for every 300 near misses there are 29 minor and one serious injury. A worker may perform an unsafe act hundreds of times without incident. But eventually, if the act is continued without correction, the number of repetitions brings one closer to the peak of the triangle. The good news is we can make use of near misses to prevent accidents and serious injury. The more problems or issues we can identify and correct, the better the chance of eliminating a serious mishap.

What can cause a near miss or accident?

- unsafe acts such as improper lifting
- improper postures at computer workstations
- grinding or chipping without safety glasses
- improper use of personal protective equipment
- lack of planning before starting the job
- unsafe conditions such as poorly maintained equipment
- oil and grease on walking surfaces
- poor housekeeping
- rushing and taking risks or short-cuts to get the job done faster

The same things that cause accidents cause near misses. Think about how you proceed each day and how you can prevent near misses.

Report and discuss near misses before they become accidents. Once a near miss occurs, share the incident with your supervisor and co-workers. Share with others at tool box or safety meetings. If a near miss is the result of an unsafe condition, do not continue to work under that condition until the problem has been corrected. If the incident is the result of unsafe acts, be certain that everyone involved has been alerted to their actions before the job continues.

Don't let a near miss go unreported. Correcting actions and conditions will enhance your safety and provide a better working environment. Remember, ***YOU ARE THE KEY, MAKE NORFOLK DISTRICT ACCIDENT FREE!***

IDBB helps to accelerate hospital project

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the project to FY 2007 and earmark $10 million toward the project's initial increment. Mandated milestones and a May 2007 decision by the Department of Defense to "accelerate" the process enabled the team to expedite the start of the project.

Additionally, the team identified design, construction and contracting innovations to enable it to meet the accelerated construction timelines. These included building repetition into the construction process by having the AE firm design a uniform-sized building module that could be repeated throughout the hospital project's buildings. The team also developed a funding requirements schedule that would ensure earlier funding availability than for a routine project for "long lead time" materials, such as steel and HVAC equipment.

Back to normal: With the anticipated award of the IDBB construction contract in September, the daily activities are expected to shift back from the extraordinary to the routine and from the high-level visibility to the working-level execution. But, given the attention and importance of this project, it's unlikely that the Fort Belvoir Community Hospital Project will ever be 'just another project.'

New deputy comes to district

There is a new face in uniform roaming the halls of the district — Lt. Col. Michael R. Darrow fills the position of Deputy District Commander, vacated by Lt. Col. David L. Pedersen when he retired in mid-July. Darrow didn't travel too far from his last assignment; he was at Joint Forces Command in Suffolk, Va., serving as Chief, Joint Engineering Training and Doctrine.

This marks the second time in Darrow's career that he has held the position of a deputy district commander, having served in that capacity for the Buffalo District in Buffalo, N.Y., from 2001 to 2003.

Darrow received his Bachelor of Science degree in civil engineering from Clarkson University and his Master of Engineering in environmental engineering from Cornell University.

Federally Employed Women

A decade of serving Norfolk District

Story and photo by Brittany Brown

This year marks the10th anniversary that Federally Employed Women (FEW) has been in existence at the Norfolk District. FEW is an organization working as an advocacy group to improve the status of women employed by the Federal government. This membership organization offers a venue for personal and professional growth by providing members with opportunities to develop and refine management and organizational skills.

FEW encourages diversity and equity in the workplace and participation is open to any person (not just women or Federal employees). Despite a decline in the Fort Norfolk Chapter membership which threatened the demise of the chapter, officers were able to recruit new members to keep the chapter alive with a grand total of 20 members.

Fort Norfolk Chapter President Melinda Worrell stresses the importance of the FEW's legislative work. Worrell states, "I encourage not just FEW members, but also other District employees, to visit this link http://capwiz.com/few/issues/basics/?style=com and find out about legislative issues that matter across the board."

FEW President Mendy Worrell (Center) stands with FEW Vice President Cherie Kunze (Left) and FEW Secretary Teresa Murphy.

Actively involved organization

The Fort Norfolk FEW Chapter has been actively involved in various programs and projects serving not only Norfolk District employees but also the local community. The Fort Norfolk chapter's involvement spans an extensive array of areas such as the establishing events for the Health & Safety Week at Norfolk District, fundraising to benefit the HER Shelter for battered women and children and providing donations to St. Mary's Home for Disabled Children. During the "Take Your Daughters and Sons to Work Day", the Norfolk District Chapter of Federally Employed Women welcomed students with a warm and hearty breakfast to get their day started.

In addition to providing programs locally, the Fort Norfolk Chapter occasionally teams with other chapters belonging to the Mid-Atlantic region. For instance, the Norfolk District utilized a fundraising idea given to them by the James River Chapter. Another indication of the collaborative efforts is illustrated by the Fort Norfolk partnership with the Peninsula Chapter for quarterly regional planning. During these sessions, FEW members engage in a series of opportunities for professional growth. This year's quarterly regional planning session is scheduled for October 20.

Fort Norfolk Chapter member Denise Huffstickler cites the importance in teaming with other chapters saying, "Collaboration with other FEW chapters lets us exchange ideas so that each chapter can grow and learn from each others' successes."

The collaboration efforts of FEW members across regional and chapter levels has made FEW a highly viable, professionally managed organization providing legal assistance, educating government employees and assisting other organizations with compatible goals. FEW hosts a National Training Program (NTP) featuring motivational guest speakers, panel discussions, workshops, and training classes that offer a wide range of information to develop and improve skills to enhance one's career. The Fort Norfolk Chapter sponsored one individual to attend the NTP in July, where she received Microsoft Excel training, in addition to taking classes for personal growth relating to writing well, caring for aging parents and effective goal writing.

The various FEW programs provide the opportunity for members to network across the multitude of Federal agencies while developing interpersonal skills. Since 1968, FEW has become a worldwide organization with 11 regions and over 100 chapters.

Miscellaneous

The newly elected officers for the Fort Norfolk FEW Chapter were sworn in by Adriane James, Fort Norfolk FEW legislative representative, during the June 10 meeting. These board members will serve in their respective positions for the next two years. F.E.W meets the second Tuesday of each month at noon in Room 1C, except for the months of September and December, when they don't meet.

In their own words

Regulatory Chief recalls starboard fleet experience

Editor's Note:

In June, the crew of the Corps Vessel Harrell and the Chief, Regulatory Office Bob Hume had the honor of participating in Norfolk, Va.'s annual sailing extravaganza, the Parade of Sail. The following article, written by Hume, details he and his wife, Susan's, experience sailing in procession up the Elizabeth River.

A participant in the Parade of Sail stands on the bow of a sail boat waiting for the Gorch Fock II to sail by. (Photo courtesy Bob Hume)

Story by Bob Hume

Like the Black Pearl materializing from the fog in Disney's "Pirates of the Caribbean", a single tall mast full of sails appeared out of the haze, then another right behind it and then a third. This was no ghost ship, though; this was Germany's Gorch Fock II gliding on the waters above the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel, the first of the square rigged tall ships in the Harborfest Parade of Sail on the morning of June 8.

Watching the annual parade of tall ships from shore has always been a Harborfest ritual for me, but this year my wife Susan and I decided to change our perspective. Anyone with a boat can take part in the Parade of Sail (the "sail" part is optional) so we signed up our 31-foot sloop Tournesol that we've owned for several years. The organizing committee assigns different boat clubs to escort different tall ships, and ours was assigned to the tallest of the tall. The Gorch Fock II is a replica built in the 1950s of the original Gorch Fock, which was one of five sister sailing ships used to train German navy sailors before World War II. All five were seized by the Allied nations as war prizes; the United States' ship is now the Eagle, used by the Coast Guard as a training ship. It is also a periodic visitor to Harborfest.

The Corps Vessel Harrell passes by as it participates in the Parade of Sail. (Photo by Patrick Bloodgood)

The tall ships all assembled and anchored in the Chesapeake Bay off East Ocean View on Thursday. Our escort fleet of over 100 recreational boats met early Friday morning just west of the bridge tunnel, off Hampton, where we were instructed by radio to link up with the rest of the boats and motor around in an oval while we awaited the arrival of the big ships. After we located the rest of the boats from our club and fall in behind them, I gave the helm to Susan while I attached the Corps flag I had borrowed from Steve Baum in Operations Branch. Every couple of minutes we'd glance toward the bridge tunnel looking for the tall ships but even the tunnel islands were hard to see. The humidity had formed a heavy haze on the water that limited visibility to several hundred yards. Today was forecast to be a scorcher.

Suddenly, after a half hour or so we saw the outline of the Virginia, Norfolk's new ambassador sailing ship, appear out of the grayness of the east to lead the parade, followed by a couple of larger schooners. Soon thereafter we spied the silhouette of a big three-masted bark moving fast under engine and sail, but we couldn't tell for certain that she was the Gorch Fock II until she was already beginning to pass our waiting rendezvous fleet. We turned to follow and I gunned my little 18 horsepower diesel auxiliary engine for all she was worth, but the big German was already ahead of us and increasing her lead. Our best angle to catch up with her was right into the wind so we couldn't use our sails, and we were falling farther and farther behind. It looked like our ship had sailed and we had missed it!

Thankfully, for some reason, the procession slowed to a crawl for a few minutes at Sewell's Point, and we were able to take up our intended position. Even better, as the channel bent around more to the south we had a better angle on the wind, so we unfurled our sails, and that gained us enough speed to stay even when the tall ships picked up the pace again. Finally we were able to relax enough to enjoy the view, and what a view it was. I doubt a more unlikely armada has ever entered Norfolk Harbor: 30 wind-driven giants from an earlier era, each surrounded by its Lilliputian honor guard of local boats; helicopters bearing photographers buzzing about like curious dragon flies; replica 17th century pirate ships firing broadsides at the modern warships tied up at the Norfolk Naval Base.

Our group of escort boats was officially referred to as 'the starboard fleet' since we were directed to stay on the right side of the tall ships. That way we wouldn't interfere with the view of the main attraction from the Norfolk waterfront. Unfortunately that meant that we were too far away when we passed Fort Norfolk to make out individual people, but I could easily see the crowd around the big tent at our helicopter landing area. I tooted our air horn and waggled the Corps flag when I could, but as the parade was nearing downtown Norfolk the tight quarters and increasing boat traffic demanded most of my attention.

Of course the Parade of Sail is only the beginning of the Harborfest weekend. We enjoyed the many new additions (the Jamestown Village, the Freemason area homes and Victorian-era re-enactors) as well as the traditional ones (great fireworks!). As we sailed home Sunday afternoon, though, there was no question in our minds as to the highlight of the fest.

Letter from the Editor

District Tides expands online for employee information

As life changes so must we. In this edition of *District Tides* you will notice a few "added" pages. Many of you may already know, but for those that don't *District Tides* is printed every issue and sent to congressional representatives, stakeholders and partners so they too can be informed and see all the excellent work that you, the employees of the Norfolk District, perform. Because of this expanded distribution, *District Tides* has as of late been more geared to pointing out project and activity-related items to keep all of our audiences informed, focusing on people and internal workings that might, specifically interest employees.

Because it is you, the employee, our primary customer that we on the *Tides* staff serve, we are expanding the online version of *District Tides* to include a couple of pages of internally focused information. Much like *District Tides*' sister publication, *Tides in Brief*, handles internal information, so will the extra online only pages focus on the events and people that make the District tick like a finely tuned Rolex watch.

As always we welcome any input and feedback you have to offer, so please feel free to contact anybody in the Public Affairs Office and let us know what you think! Also, if you have written a story, have a story idea or person who you believe should be highlighted, please pass that along to us for consideration.

Thank you and happy reading,
Patrick Bloodgood
Editor, *District Tides* and *Tides in Brief*

The CPAC Moment
with Paula Bradshaw & Carleen Gwinn

New section on LES shows Government benefits

The Leave and Earnings Statement has a new section titled "Benefits paid by government for you". This section displays the employer contributions associated with employee deductions. The name of the employer contribution fall under the column heading "TYPE", while the current pay period contribution amounts fall under the column heading "CURRENT", and the total amount of contributions for the pay year go under the heading "YEAR TO DATE". This was established to give employees a better understanding on exactly what benefits were being paid on the behalf of each person.

District Retirements

Willie S. Clark	08-31-2007	35 years, 5 months
Denise C. Huffstickler	08-03-2007	34 years, 7 months
Albertus F. Opstal	09-03-2007	36 years, 5 months
Charlotte E. Shelburne	09-01-2007	33 years, 11 months

Welcome new employees!

Clara J. Butler	P3MD
Karen W. Hammond	TSD-Engineering Branch
Chico C. Bradley	Fort Lee - BRAC
Paula Loomis	TSD-Engineering Branch
Kathleen O'Neill	Fort Belvoir - Hospital
Kimberly L. Stone	Fort Lee - BRAC
Tracey J. Hughes	Contracting

The breakdown of what the Government pays for

FEHB: The Government share of premiums paid is set by law. For most employee's the Government determines the program-wide weighted average of premiums in effect each year, for self only and for self and family enrollments, respectively, or 75 percent of the total premium for the particular plan an enrollee elects.

FEGLI: The Government pays one-third of the cost of your Basic Life Insurance the employee pays two-thirds. The cost to you is currently 15 percent per thousand dollars of insurance per pay period.

Social Security: Employee pays 6.2 percent and the Government pays 6.2 percent.

Medicare: Employee pays 1.45 percent and the Government pays 1.45 percent.

Retirement/CSRS: Employee pays 7 percent and the Government pays 7 percent.

Retirement/FERS: Employee pays .80 percent and the Government pays 11.20 percent.

TSP Basic: Government pays 1 percent for basic contributions.

TSP Matching: Government pays 100 percent matching for the first 3 percent and Government Pays 50 percent matching for the next 2 percent.