US Army Corps of Engineers
St. Paul District

Crosscurrents

Vol. 23, Nos. 9-12 Fall-Winter 2000

Retirees gather in St. Paul for 25th reunion; Spychalla named to Hall of Fame

St. Paul District photo

Top and center is Bill Spychalla, the newest member of the St. Paul District Hall of Fame. District Commander Col. Kenneth Kasprisin recognized Spychalla's outstanding contributions to the district at the 25th annual Retirees' Reunion held in St. Paul on Sept. 14. (See "Spychalla named to Hall of Fame" on page 8.) Other Hall of Fame members, seated from left: Bill Goetz, Chief of Construction-Operations Division, 1957-90; and Catherine A. Smith, Chief of Examination Section, 1976-89. Standing, from left: Jim Kursu, Chief of Programs Management Branch, 1975-94; Lou Kowalski, Deputy District Engineer for Project Management and Chief of Programs and Project Management Division, 1957-96; Spychalla, project manager and flood area engineer, 1971-99; Peter A. Fischer, Chief of Engineering Division, 1955-87; and Robert B. Fletcher, Chief of Design Branch, 1955-89.

District expresses generosity through contributions to CFC, Santa Anonymous, food shelf

By St. Paul District Commander Col. Kenneth Kasprisin

Thank you for your contributions to the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC), to Volunteers Enlisted Against Poverty (VEEP) and Santa Anonymous.

We in the Corps, especially in the St. Paul District, have a legacy of investment in our community, our nation and our world. That legacy continued in 2000 when we contributed more than $25,000 to the CFC and more than 140 pounds of food to VEEP. Contributions to VEEP, a food shelf in the Twin Cities, were the result of an initiative by the Holiday Awards Committee. Additionally, the district has had a long-standing commitment to Santa Anonymous. We make life better through our projects and operations on a daily basis. Corporate citizenship and community involvement are two aspects where our generosity has supported the communities in which we work and live.

I believe that charity is a very personal decision. I also believe that the CFC is a great tool to help make the process as painless as possible. Our campaign ran in October and November with these goals:

• Make sure everyone understands the CFC program;

• Make sure everyone has the opportunity to participate.

And you did.

If you're not already affiliated with a charitable organization, find an agency in your local region that you can feel good about supporting and join me in making a contribution to help others. Through the CFC and personal efforts, we can give to agencies that help solve the problems of today and prepare for the challenges of tomorrow.

Again, I want to say thanks to everyone who took time to help those less fortunate.

Public affairs – whose job is it?

By Chief of Public Affairs Mark Davidson

Public affairs – whose job is it? The people on the fifth floor in St. Paul? The people at the locks and dams who talk to the public? The project managers doing briefings at public meetings? The Corps people at recreation sites working with and talking to the public? The engineer at a field site talking to the sponsors? The person who answers any telephone for the Corps? Whose job is it?

My name is Mark Davidson, the new chief of Public Affairs for the district. **In my opinion, public affairs is part of the job for every Corps employee.** In this day and age of government cutbacks and constant scrutiny from the news media and special interest groups, every Corps employee should be aware of who is watching and what kind of image they are projecting. This is the reality of the new century.

In my first seven months here I have seen and heard how district employees have done public affairs work, either as part of their job or as a volunteer. On behalf of the Public Affairs Office (PAO), Peter Verstegen, Nadine Du Pree and myself, we sincerely thank you for your efforts. We can't be everywhere. Your involvement with public affairs as part of your job or as a volunteer shows that it's a total district effort. That's the way it is, and to be successful as a district, that's the way it has to remain.

PAO will be asking for your help during the next year as we organize, and then expand, the public affairs effort. Here are ways you can help:

• Take a few minutes and respond with sincere answers to the public affairs survey that is coming out. There will be questions about Crosscurrents and other command information items; there will be questions on the use of the district internet and intranet web pages and how to further utilize them; there will be questions on community relations and your involvement at this time and in the future; and there will be questions on working with the news media.

• Keep PAO informed about "stuff" going on in your office or field site. It might seem mundane and routine to you but it might be a great item to publicize about the Corps. E-mail us, call us at 651-290-5201/02 or visit the office. If it's something out of the ordinary, we want to hear about it. Please tell us about the tours, speeches, open houses, mentoring programs and other positive efforts you are accomplishing.

• PAO will be conducting a news media "blitz" of positive news items about the Corps and the district in the first few months of 2001. Let us know if you have an idea to publicize.

The bottom line is that public affairs is everyone's job – it's just that some people might be a little more involved than other people.

District gathers for Holiday Awards Banquet

Photos by Jon Lyman

Safety Officer Jeff Pfannes and Operations Technical Support Specialist Shelly Shafer dressed as Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus for the Holiday Awards Banquet held Dec. 14 in St. Paul. With them is former Minnesota Vikings kicker Greg Coleman who was a motivational speaker at the event.

Julie Ritter (left) of Real Estate Division and Mark Davidson, chief of Public Affairs, accepted food shelf donations and registered retirees at the awards banquet. Signing in, from left, are: Mary Jane Trcka (recently retired) Resource Management Division (RM); Jean Shafer, RM; Rick Femrite, Engineering Division and Ben Wopat, assistant chief of Construction Operations.

Gary Jones (left), Information Management Office (IM), talks to David Berna, IM chief. Jones began with the district in December 1998. He works as a computer specialist in the Support Services Branch. Berna came to the district in August 1999.

District celebrates common heritage, diversity

Photo by Peter Verstegen

Marianne Price, Equal Employment Opportunity Office program officer (right), introduced the theme, speakers and programs for Diversity Appreciation Week (DAW) Nov. 6-9. DAW combines observances for the Martin Luther King Birthday, Black History Month, National Women's History Month, Asian/Pacific Heritage Month, Minnesota Heritage Month, National Disability Employment Awareness Month and National American Indian Heritage Month.

DoD payroll savings plan adds 'I bonds'

From the American Forces Press Service (Based on a news release from the Defense Finance and Accounting Service, Arlington, Va.)

WASHINGTON — Civilian employees can now buy the new inflation-indexed Series I U.S. Savings Bonds through the Payroll Savings Plan. The option became effective in April for active and retired military members. The Defense Finance and Accounting Service began offering civilian workers the option March 1.

The Payroll Savings Plan offers I Bonds in denominations of $50, $75, $100, $200, $500 and $1,000. Civilians and military members on the plan can buy bonds with allotments as small as $5.

The Treasury Department announces earnings rates for Series I and EE bonds on May 1 and Nov. 1. The rates are good for the following six months, but are determined entirely differently.

Series I bonds sell at face value and their special features are a guaranteed fixed-base interest rate and a semiannual supplemental rate adjustment figured on the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Consumer Price Index-Urban. The fixed base rate in effect on the date of purchase is guaranteed for the bond's entire 30-year earning life. I bonds earned 6.98 percent through April.

The familiar Series EE bonds sell for half their face value and currently earn 5.19 percent. The rate has floated with no guaranteed minimum since May 1995. The EE semiannual earnings rate is 90 percent that of prevailing five-year U.S. Treasury bonds.

Series I and EE bonds are exempt from state and local taxes and also from federal taxes if used to pay tuition and fees at qualifying schools.

Savings bonds customarily carried the portraits of presidents and other historical figures until I bonds were introduced.

Series I is the first to honor prominent, contemporary Americans and members of racial and ethnic minorities. All are deceased.

Nobel physicist Albert Einstein is on the $1,000 bond. Gen. George C. Marshall is on the $500. Chief Joseph, leader of the Nez Perce Indian tribe in the late 1800s, appears on the $200 bond. African-American civil rights leader Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., is on the $100 bond. Hispanic veterans' rights advocate Dr. Hector Garcia, founder of the American GI Forum, is on the $75 bond. Author Helen Keller, advocate of Americans with disabilities, is on the $50.

U.S. Sen. Spark M. Matsunaga, a Japanese American, is on the $10,000 bond. African-American opera star Marian Anderson is on the $5,000 bond.

For more information about Series I and other U.S. Savings Bonds, interest rates, investment tips, tax rules, and downloadable calculators and other aids, point your internet browser to the Treasury Department's Savings Bond Web site at http://www.savingsbonds.gov or write to the U.S. Treasury, Bureau of the Public Debt, Savings Bond Operations, Parkersburg, WV 26106-1328.

Activation of air bag releases smoke

Courtesy of the Safety Office

This is a good reminder to review with family what happens when an air bag deploys.

Recently, a mother and daughter were involved in an automobile accident during which the air bags in their vehicle deployed.

The air bags functioned properly (in conjunction with the seat belts) and fortunately neither the mother nor daughter were seriously injured...another reminder that seat belts work also.

The reason for the note is that while the air bags worked properly they also created a condition of significant concern because the family had not fully discussed what would occur if the air bags ever deployed.

The family had discussed things like 'do not sit on the edge of the seat or lean over the dashboard when the vehicle is in use,' 'sit up straight and well back in the seat,' 'always use your seat belt,' etc.

What the family had not discussed was the fact that when air bags inflate/deflate they release smoke along with nitrogen gas which creates a dense fog in the vehicle. An offensive odor was also evident.

The end result was that the daughter panicked (thinking the vehicle was on fire), quickly removed her seat belt, and bolted from the car into the adjoining traffic lane.

Fortunately, no cars were passing by at the time. The mother also quickly exited the car suspecting it might be on fire. There have been reports of people being trapped in their cars after the air bags have deployed. Some indicated being almost hysteric because they didn't understand what was occurring.

The Safety Office conveys this information in the event anyone else has discussed most of what to expect and think about regarding air bags, but may have missed the same point this family did.

District office personnel experience Dredge Thompson at work on Mississippi River

Photo by Peter Verstegen

More than 75 people visited the Dredge William A. Thompson on June 21-22 when it was in St. Paul for channel maintenance. Among the visitors were (left to right) Micaela Shiue, Project Management; Mary Ham, Engineering Division; and Nadine DuPree, Public Affairs. DuPree is showing them a digital camera image taken moments earlier on the Thompson. The Thompson dredged 116,000 cubic yards in the Upper Mississippi River near the St. Paul downtown airport and excavated a channel cut of 2,450 feet at mile 838.

Flowers takes command of Corps

Lt. General Robert Flowers took command of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on Oct. 23 in a ceremony at Fort Meyer, Va. He is the 50th Chief of Engineers,

In July, Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen announced that the President had nominated Flowers for appointment to the grade of lieutenant general with assignment as chief of engineers and commanding general of the Corps. When he was nominated, Flowers was serving as the commanding general, U.S. Army Maneuver Support Center and Fort Leonard Wood and commandant, U.S. Army Engineer School, Fort Leonard Wood, Mo.

District, AFGE Local 1441 sign contract

Photo by Jon Lyman

The new contract between the St. Paul District and the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) Local 1441 became effective Sept. 21, 2000. Assembled to sign the contract are (seated from left): Bill Neeley, president of AFGE Local 1441; District Commander Col. Kenneth Kasprisin; and Carl Brommerich, secretary-treasurer of Local 1441. Standing from left are Ben Wopat, assistant chief of Construction-Operations Division; Linda Krueger, acting chief of the Civilian Personnel Advisory Center (CPAC); Bob Stone, AFGE Local 1441 vice president; and Jim Maybach, plant engineer at the Fountain City Service Base (FCSB). Neeley is a head lock operator at Lock and Dam 3 at Welch, Minn., near Red Wing. Brommerich works as a machinist at the FCSB and Stone is an equipment mechanic at Lock and Dam 3. Absent is Dean Peterson, project manager for the locks and dams project.

Con-Ops offices consolidate at La Crescent

The Construction-Operations Division consolidated three offices in La Crescent, Minn., this summer. Office personnel hosted nearly 50 people for an open house on June 2 to commemorate relocating the Resident Construction Office and Regulatory Office from separate locations in La Crosse, Wis., to join the Mississippi River Natural Resource Project under one roof.

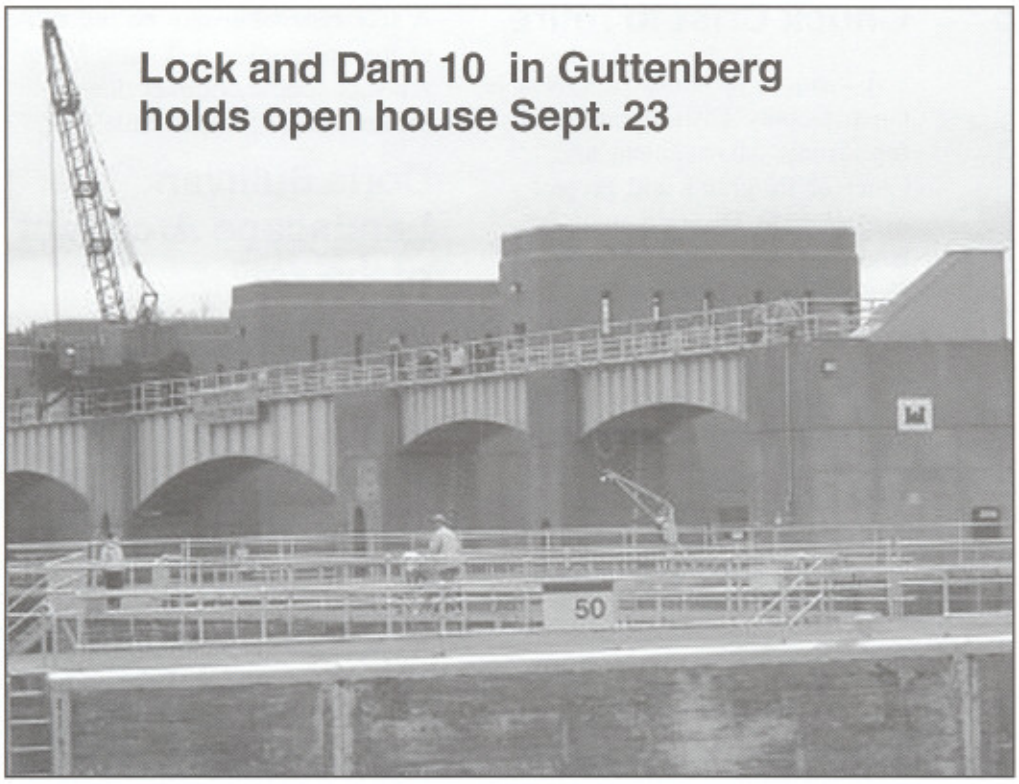
During the peak summer season, about 15 people will work there.

The location features an expanded Geographic Information Systems (GIS) room and conference area.

The street address is 1114 South Oak Street in La Crescent.

The phone numbers are:

- Lacrosse Resident Construction Office: 507-895-3381; 507-895-3382 (fax);
- La Crescent Regulatory Field Office: 507-895-8059; 507-895-4116 (fax);
- Mississippi River Natural Resource Management Office: 507-895-6341; 507-895-4116 (fax).



Lock and Dam 10 in Guttenberg holds open house Sept. 23

Lock and Dam 10 in Guttenberg, Iowa, held an open house for the public as part of the community's German Fest celebration on Sept. 23. Visitors learned about the locomotive crane (far left) which has a 20-ton lifting capacity and sits on 900-foot-long rails. The rails allow movement along the dam for maintenance, repair and placement of bulkheads. (Bulkheads block the flow of water during maintenance.) The complex has a total length of 6,510 feet -- 1,200 feet of fixed spillway, 4,547 feet of earthen dike and 763 feet of moveable gate section. Congress authorized the facility in 1932; it was completed in 1936.

Photos by Darrel Oldenberg

Barbara Hooper (right), head operator, gave her family and relatives a tour. Operators lock through nearly 7,000 commercial vessels and pleasure craft each year. Fourteen million tons of commodities pass through annually, including grain, coal, petroleum and chemicals.

Kimberly Bahls (left), an administrative assistant at the lock and dam, answered questions about daily operations from visitors.

Spychalla named to Hall of Fame

Bill Spychalla, project manager and flood area engineer who worked in the St. Paul District from 1971 to 1999 was named to the St. Paul District's Hall of Fame during the 25th annual retirees reunion on Sept. 14 (front cover).

Spychalla performed outstanding service for the Corps in the development of flood control projects in the Red River of the North basin. He was flood area engineer for major Red River floods in 1978 and 1979.

He was the key manager for Devils Lake projects, leading the 1996-1998 emergency actions to prevent damages from unprecedented rising lake levels. Known for professionalism and integrity throughout the Corps and by project sponsors, he was a mentor for many project managers. His civic work included building schools in third world countries. Bill was Civil Servant of the Year in 1998, and received the Engineer Regiment de Fleury Medal in 1999.

Chuck Crist to retire

A banquet in honor of Chuck Crist, Deputy District Engineer for Project Management and Chief of Programs and Project Management Division, will be held March 2 at the Holiday Inn East in St. Paul. Social hour begins at 11:30 a.m., lunch at noon, and the program at 1 p.m. A going-away coffee is scheduled for March 1 in the district office. For further information, contact Angie Peterson at 651-290-5755.

Highchairs recalled

Cosco has recalled 1 million of its highchairs for infants and toddlers after receiving reports of children being injured when the seats collapsed or restraints gave away. "Stars and Stripes" reported that consumers should stop using the highchairs immediately and call the Cosco hot line at (800) 221-6736 to get a free repair kit. The recalled chairs have model number 03-286 and a four-digit manufacture date from Dec. 1, 1997 through Aug. 11, 2000. Both numbers are printed on the bottom of the seat. A free repair kit may be ordered at the company's web site: http://www.coscoinc.com/services/productrecall/temp1.html.

Doris Sullivan: Landscape Architect of the Year

Photo by Peter Verstegen

Doris Sullivan received her first public recognition at the district's Town Hall Meeting this summer when MVP Executive Assistant Capt. John Weidner announced that she was named the Landscape Architect of the Year for the Corps of Engineers.

She works as a landscape architect in the General Engineering Section of Design Branch. Since starting with the Corps in 1989, she has contributed significantly to numerous award-winning flood control projects and recent site make-overs at lock and dam sites from Minnesota City, Minn., south to Genoa, Wis.

Sullivan was formally honored at the Senior Leaders-Emerging Leaders Conference on Oct. 24.

Crosscurrents

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Crosscurrents is an unofficial publication, authorized under the provisions of AR 360-1. It is published monthly by offset for the St. Paul District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Editorial views and opinions are not necessarily those of the Corps of Engineers, nor of the Department of the Army.

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