



Crosscurrents

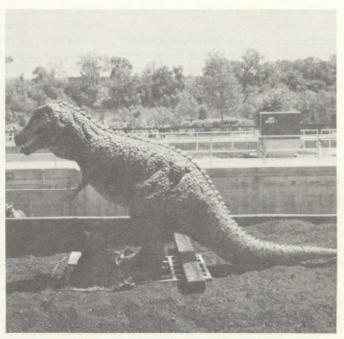
Vol. 9

No. 5

July 1986







You never know who, or what, you might meet while locking through these days. On June 5th, besides the normal barge and pleasure boat traffic, the employees at St. Anthony Falls and Lock and Dam No. 1 provided service to an unusual pair of customers; a 35-foot-long Brontosaurus and a 10-foot-high Tyrannosaurus Rex. The two dinosaurs traveled on a coal barge from north Minneapolis to downtown St. Paul promoting a new exhibit at the Science Museum of Minnesota. Crowds lined the lock walkways, bridges and different sites along the river to view the floating duo. The lock operators managed to keep their heads during this "monstrous" event though and provided first-class service. Now that's "customer care."

New Federal Retirement System provides three-tier plan

Washington(ARNEWS)—A new pension plan for Federal employees has received presidential approval, putting an end to the three-year struggle to develop a retirement system to succeed the current Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS).

The Federal Employees' Retirement System, signed by President Reagan June 6 as Public Law 99-335, provides a mandatory three-tier retirement plan for some 56,000 civilians hired after December 1983. The system, scheduled to go into effect in January 1987, provides benefits based on Social Security, a modified Civil Service pension and an optional tax-deferred voluntary savings plan.

Employees currently under the old retirement system may voluntarily enroll in the new system during an "open season" scheduled from July 1 through Dec. 31, 1987. This includes employees with 5 years of service creditable under CSRS who separated after Dec. 31, 1983, and later were re-hired subject to social security (as provided by temporary law). Employees who choose to remain under the Civil Service Retirement System will not be effected by any of the provisions of the Federal Employees' Retirement System, said Cecil Carlson, a civilian retirement officer with the Army's Civilian Personnel Center in Alexandria, VA.

Employees with less than five years under the Civil Service Retirement System who resign from federal service and are rehired within one year will be automatically converted to the new plan, Carlson said.

Employees covered by the Federal Employees' Retirement System will not only contribute to Social Security but also to a pension plan. They will contribute 1.3 percent of their salaries to the plan next year, 0.9 percent in 1988-89 and 0.8 percent in all subsequent years.

In addition, the new system offers employees a voice in how much additional money they want to put away for their retirement, he said.

This flexibility comes from the new thrift savings plan. Even though combined Social Security and pension benefits under the new plan won't equal the current retirement benefits, employees under the new plan could actually surpass CSRS savings by contributing to one of three tax-deferred thrift savings plans, Carlson said.

The thrift plan permits participants to put up to 10 percent of their salaries into investments, with the government matching contributions of up to five percent. They can choose to put their money into any of the three following plans:

—Government Securities Investment Fund;

 Fixed Income Investment Fund (with options such as insurance policies and certificates of deposit);

Common Stocks Index Investment Fund.

All of these options will have a fixed, although perhaps fluctuating, return that allows participants the opportunity to control their investments. To strengthen that control even more, the government will offer an open season at least twice a year when employees can move their savings between the three funds. "This will give employees the opportunity to shop around with their investment," he explained.

Under the new pension plan, the minimum retirement age will gradually be raised from 55 years to 57 years, with at least 30 years of credible federal service. Employees can retire at age 55 until the year 2003. After that, the retirement age will gradually rise until, in the year 2027, the minimum retirement age with 30 years of service will be 57.

Furthermore, the new plan would eliminate automatic cost of living allowance increases for retirees under age 62 and reduce the cost to the current consumer price index minus one percentage point for retirees 62 and older.

The Office of Personnel Management currently is developing orientation briefing packages that will prepare agency Personnel officials to educate and enroll employees in the new government program. Employees should have the opportunity to participate in an orientation program during September, October or November.

While newer employees might want to attend an orientation to gain a better understanding of their new retirement system, the "old-timers" should attend to compare the new plan with their current retirement system, Carlson said.

If employees under the old system decide to convert to the new, the assets in their CSRS account can be frozen and retained as future retirement annuity. The money also can be withdrawn, but employees will forfeit the deferred annuity.

Those who decide to remain under the Civil Service Retirement System but would like to supplement their retirement savings also have an option. They can participate only in the thrift savings plan. While they will be allowed to contribute up to 5 percent of their salary, they will not receive any Government contributions.

Once employees under the old system convert to the new, they cannot return to the Civil Service Retirement System. To help employees make the best choice for their future, the Army will offer employees access to computer programs that will enable them to estimate their potential retirement savings under the two systems, Carlson said.

The new retirement system will cost the government only 22.9 percent in employer contributions as compared to 25 percent under the Civil Service Retirement System. This difference is expected to result in a five-year deficit savings of about \$6.3 billion, Carlson said.

Weightwatchers whittle worker's waists

If you see a lot a people around that look unfamiliar, look again. It may just be a slimmed down version of someone you know.

The Weight Watchers program that was initiated by Feds for Fitness, has been very successful. There were 20 employees enrolled in the first 10-week session and they lost a total of 266 pounds in the first seven weeks. It was the highest weight-lose of any other at-work Weightwatchers program in the Twin Cities.

If you are interested in joining a bunch of real "losers", there is still time to enroll in the next session that starts on July 15th. For more information, contact Ann Wright or Charles Foye at ext. 7887.

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Chief, Public Affairs				-	,								Ken Gan	dner
Editor														

Mary Schommer receives OCE'S Planning Excellence Award

Mary Schommer, project manager in the Flood Plain Management and Small Projects Branch has been selected for OCE's Planning Excellence Award.

"I'm very honored to get the award," Mary said, "but I really don't feel any different. Maybe the full impact hasn't struck home yet."

The annual award is presented to an employee selected from Corp-wide nominations. Mary was the St. Paul District nominee and was selected by NCD to represent the division in the competition. She is the first employee in the district to receive the award.

The award was based on several aspects of Mary's job duties and accomplishments. One of these accomplishments was a dam project at Black Bear-Miller Lakes in Minnesota. Following the contract award, an Indian burial mound was identified in the middle of the project site. According to the nomination letter, Mary coordinated the redesign of the project with "essentially no loss in construction time and without significant additional cost to the federal government."

Mary's activities include planning and coordinating all phases of project studies assigned to her from the time funding is received until the project is constructed and turned over to the non-federal sponsor. She has managed erosion control projects at Hastings, Minn., Irving Township, Wis., and Hanover, Minn; a flood control project at Neche, N.D. and a navigation project at Zippel Bay, Minn.

Mary's citation states that "through her enthusiasm, dedication, 'willing-to-do-more' attitude, perseverance, and extraordinary planning abilities, she successfully served our customers in an exceptional manner. Her efforts truly exemplify 'the Corps Cares' image and are of the highest traditions of the of the Department of the Army civilian service."

Mary started working for the Corps as a civil engineer technician in April of 1979. She graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1983 and recently received her professional engineering registration.

Flood Control Act marks 50th anniversary

(Washington, D.C.)—On June 22, 1986, the Corps of Engineers commemorated the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Flood Control Act of 1936.

According to Lt. Gen. E. R. Heiberg III, chief of engineers, "Appropriations from Congress have enabled the Corps to invest \$23 billion in flood control projects throughout the nation over the past 50 years. Over \$150 billion worth of flood damages have been prevented by more than 300 projects currently operated by the Corps. This represents over seven times the original tax funds invested in these projects."

This flood control act was the first general flood control legislation in U.S. history, after a "century of floods." During the first half of the 19th century, floods were considered a local problem. However, as more settlers moved into the Lower Mississippi Valley, an area historically ravaged by spring floods, federal interest in flood control began to grow.

Historically, the cost of providing flood control has been shared between the federal government and the local community or region which receives protection benefits from the project. The 50th Anniversary of the 1936 Act is especially noteworthy in view of proposed legislation in Congress that would establish a new federal and nonfederal partnership for the next 50 years. The Administration is advocating this new partnership through its support of progressive omnibus water resources development legislation for the Corps of Engineers and

in its negotiations with local sponsors for new flood control projects.

Robert K. Dawson, assistant secretary of the Army for civil works, said "The cornerstone of these efforts is the non-federal sponsor's increased responsibility for paying for project construction and operation. This approach increases the number of worthy projects that can be implemented with limited federal funds and also provides a fairer test of a project's cost-effectiveness."

When President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the 1936 Act, it gave the Corps of Engineers jurisdiction over federal flood control investigations and improvements on the nation's waterways. This legislation also included the well-known "ABC requirements" which still apply to all new Corps civil works projects. These provisions required local interests to provide the lands, rights-of-way and easements; to hold the U.S. free from damages that might result from construction; and to maintain and operate the projects following completion of construction.

After 50 years this legislation remains the country's basic flood control policy. The "ABC requirements" are among those provisions likely to be included in the new legislation, along with requirements for cash contributions. With over 200 new flood control projects currently under construction or in various planning stages, Heiberg said he is confident the Corps will provide the nation and its citizens with continued flood prevention for many years to come.

Army implements new smoking policy

Editors note: The following regulation applies to all Army facilities, including the Corps of Engineers and its field sites. A decision on how and where smoking areas would be designated had not been reached before this issue of Crosscurrents went to the printer.

The Secretary of the Army signed the Army's "Controlling Smoking" policy on June 6th and it was implemented by the district offices on July 7th. The intent of the policy, developed by the major Army commands and Army headquarters, is "to protect non-smokers and to encourage smokers to quit," said Maj. Jim Paige, a project officer with the Army's Leadership Division at the Pentagon.

The policy allows commanders and agency supervisors to designate smoking areas, when possible, but these must be confined to places where the second-hand smoke can be sufficiently isolated to protect non-smokers from its effects. Areas that may not be designated as smoking areas include conference rooms, auditoriums, restrooms, gymnasiums, fitness centers and elevators.

Soldiers, Army civilians and contractor personnel who violate the policy face administrative action. Other violators could be removed from or denied access to Armyoccupied buildings.

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Irvin Diamond—Lockmaster (Lock and Dam No. 6)—"... worked diligently to achieve acceptable resolution to safety concerns about a marina proposed by the community."



Mary Street—Staffing clerk (Personnel Office)—"... truly cares about each customer, and her friendly, courteous and helpful manner conveys this caring to all visitors and callers."



James Ruyak—Headwaters Area Park Manager—"... has fostered an atmosphere of professionalism, dedication and innovativeness which has earned the Mississippi Headwaters Project many compliments."



Jody Rooney—Indian Coordinator— "Because of her efforts and caring, both Indians and Corps people have a trusting relationship which allows both to address common interests and issues."



David Hawkenson-Lockmaster (Lock

& Dam no. 3)-"His commitment to

safety, quality service and profession-

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a very favorable image with the public."

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Martin Ehrhardt—Park Manager (Gull Lake)—"... respects the dignity of people, is sensitive to their needs and has created a very complimentary image of the Corps with the public."



Catherine Smith—Supervisor (Examination Section)—"... is held in high esteem by her Corps customers for reliability, dependability, and helpful personal attention to their problems."



Lee Stenerson—Lower Area Lockmaster—"... has fostered an atmosphere of professionalism, dedication and innovativeness which has earned him great admiration."



Walter Hermerding—Park Manager (Cross Lake)—his commitment to quality service, professionalism and innovativeness has earned the project many letters of compliment and has caused his project to be emulated by others."



Robert Stahl—Lockmaster (Upper St. Anthony Falls)—"...has demonstrated his commitment to the people of Minneapolis to ensure that the Corps is willing to assist the city by keeping the locks at St. Anthony navigable even though very adverse water conditions exist."

Statue of Liberty's history includes the Corps

Washington (ARNEWS)—On July 4, Independence Day, the Statue of Liberty will reopen to the public after more than a year of renovations.

But "the lady in the harbor" isn't the only monument tourists will see when they visit Beloe's Island; the statue's base is somewhat of a monument itself.

The 11-point, star-shaped structure that now surrounds the base of the statue once enclosed Fort Eleazer Wood, a fortress built by the Corps of Engineers to fortify New York's coast.

The Army began construction of Fort Wood in 1808 in response to the threat of war with Great Britain. Col. Jonathan Williams, chief engineer of the Corps of Engineers, planned to protect New York City's inner harbor with strategically-placed forts on four islands—Manhattan, Governor's, Ellis and Bedloe's. These forts created a formidable line of defense that was never tested against an enemy vessel.

The latter fort was called "The Works of Bedloe's Island" until Nov. 9, 1814, when New York's Gov. Daniel D. Thompkins named the fort after Capt. Eleazer Wood. A West Point graduate and a Corps of Engineers officer, Wood had served as assistant engineer in the construction of the nearby defenses at Governor's Island. He was promoted to the rank of Brevet Lieutenant Colonel for "gallant conduct in the Battle

of Niagara" on July 14, 1814. In September, he was mortally wounded in the Battle of Lake Erie.

By 1820 Fort Wood was in a "ruined condition," according to an Army engineer's report. It was not until 1844 that the Corps of Engineers repaired and slightly modified the fort.

After its repair, the fort served briefly as hospital and recruit depot until the Civil War broke out, when it was regarrisoned for harbor defense. However, new military technology had rendered such forts less vital.

Fort Wood became a possible site for the Statue of Liberty when Frederic Auguste Bartholdi, its french sculptor, first visited the United States. When he entered New York Harbor, Bartholdi was impressed by the high visibility of Fort Wood and the surrounding islands, and decided that it would be an ideal place for his yet-to-bedesigned sculpture.

In 1877, the Secretary of War allowed the civilian committee sponsoring the project to construct the statue on the Fort's parade ground.

The committee tore down old barracks and began excavating in the area in 1883. Brig. Gen. Charles P. Stone, a retired officer of the Ordnance Corps and the infantry, was the engineer-in-chief of the pedestal construction. He created a base to prevent the

statue and pedestal from blowing over. The foundation, 90-feet-square and 38-feet-deep, required nearly 34,000 cubic yards of concrete. The statue was dedicated on Oct. 28, 1886.

At that time, that statue was placed under the jurisdiction of the Treasury Department's Lighthouse Board because the torch was considered an aid to harbor navigation. In 1901, the Lighthouse Board and the statue came under the control of the War Department. When President Calvin Coolidge declared the statue a national monument in 1924, its boundaries included the outer perimeter of old Fort Wood.

In 1922 the monument was transferred to the Department of Interior to be maintained by the National Park Service, although the rest of the island was retained by the Army as a military post. Four year's later the entire post was transferred to the Park Service.

In the 20 years following the transfer, the Park Service dismantled the remaining buildings on the post and developed the landscape of the entire island. Although it no longer serves the Army, Fort Eleazer Wood was an excellent example of early American military architecture. The old fort, built to defend America's newborn independence, stands today as the base of America's symbol of freedom, the Statue of Liberty.



Bill Goetz, chief of Construction Operations Division, sits in the dunk tank and waits patiently for the next batch of water to fall on him. The tank was just one of the amusements available at the Annual Engineers' Day Picnic that was held on June 27. Other events included an award ceremony for length-in-service pins and accumulated sick leave, volleyball tournaments and games for the children. The traveling trophy for the volleyball games went to the team called the Farsiders with the Cardinals as the runner up. Over three hundred food tickets were sold for the picnic with the excess food being donated to the Minnesota Food Shelves.

New performance appraisal standards approved

The new Performance Management Systems (PMS) was recently approved for Army-wide implementation by the Office of Personnel Management.

The new system consolidates the merit pay and general performance appraisal systems. It covers employees under the performance management system (GS grades 01-15 and all wage grades) and performance management and recognition system (GM grades 13-15).

The following major changes are included in the new regulation:

—"Supporting tasks" have been eliminated from the process of establishing performance standards.

—The use of "Equal Employment Opportunity" as a critical element is clarified and "Personnel Management" as a mandatory critical element is deleted.

—A performance plan will be prepared for each employee assigned permanently or temporarily to a position for 120 days or more. Cooperative education employees are excluded. —For an employee to achieve a "highly successful rating", he or she must "exceed" the majority of critical elements (including equal opportunity when it's a job element) and at least "meet" all other elements of the performance plan.

—The two ratings below "fully successful" have been redesignated as "minimally acceptable" and "unacceptable".

—Commanders and their designees now have the authority to deviate from the system's "summary rating table", depending on the merits of each case.

The changes take effect immediately for GM employees, but have a staggered implementation period for the GS/WG employees. That period calls for the changes to apply at the beginning of the employee's next rating period, as scheduled by local activities.

Two-day workshops are in progress for representatives from the major Army commands and local activities, who will train supervisors and managers on how the new system operates.

Grounded tow causes channel

closure

It was a dark and stormy night. Well, it was dark, unless there was a moon that night, and then it wouldn't necessarily have been that dark, if it was a full moon, but if the sky was cloudy or it was a new moon, then it would have been dark. The Motor Vessel Frank Peavy, laboriously maneuvering its bulky tow of twelve barges loaded with grain of unknown origin and bound for wherever grain barges go, collided heavily with a submerged bar of wet sand (you'd be wet too if you were submerged.) The barges groaned as they scraped the insidious sand and the sound pierced the still night, rising eerily to the ears of those on board the illfated vessel. There was a mighty gnashing of teeth and faintly discernible oaths muttered among the crew. Indeed, it seemed that the Peavy's luck had finally run

To make a long story much shorter, and probably less exaggerated, the Motor Vessel Frank Peavy and its tow ran aground on June 9th while going downstream on the Mississippi River. The towboat, with 12 barges of grain grounded in pool 4 near Wabasha, Minn.

"The area is an historic trouble spot," said Craig Hinton, chief of the Mississippi River Section in Maintenance. "It can be surveyed one day and then three days later, it can be closed off."

The barges were uncoupled and the Frank Peavy pulled them out one by one, freeing the last one at noon on June 10th. The channel was blocked to navigation and remained impassable after the barges were freed due to heavy shoaling and humps created by the grounded vessel. The U.S. Coast Guard established a safety zone in the area and prohibited all commercial traffic.

The Dredge William A. Thompson arrived at the grounding location and began dredging at 11 a.m. on June 11th. A pilot channel 250 feet wide was dredged first to allow waiting towboats to pass. At 6 a.m. on June 16th, the Thompson completed the channel and towboat traffic resumed. The Thompson will return at a later date to widen the channel to 400 feet, Craig said.

The total number of vessels affected by the seven day closure was 10 tows with 88 barges heading downstream and 12 tows with 147 barges going upstream.

Workman's Compensation benefits reduced

Washington (ARNEWS)—The Labor Department recently announced that it will apply an automatic 7.37 percent reduction to most medical payments or reimbursements processed through the Office of Workmans' Compensation programs.

The reduction, prompted by provisions of the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings legislation, affects both direct payments to health-care providers and reimbursements for claims by employees, including reimbursements of travel expenses incurred in obtaining medical treatment, said Leon Buchanan, Personnel Management Specialist for the Civilian Personnel Center in Alexandria, Va.

If employees pay the entire bill to the health care provider and send in a claim for reimbursement through the Labor Department, the 7.37 percent of the total bill will come out of the employees' pockets. The health care provider is not obligated to refund to the employee the reduction applied by the Labor Department. It is to the employees advantage, therefore, to let the health care providers bill the government, said a Labor Department spokesman.

Likewise, medical providers are not entitled to recover the difference between the amount billed and the amount paid by the Labor Department, Buchanan said.

Where the Labor Department does not pay the entire cost billed, employees are not obligated to pay the remaining amount. When medical providers sign form CA 16, authorization for examination and/or treatment, or form OWCP 1500, health insurance claim form, they agree to accept the government's charge determination as full payment for the covered services, Buchanan said.

If a health care provider should send a bill to the employee for the difference, the Labor Department recommends that the employee send this bill to his district office of workers' compensation programs.

The Office of Workers' Compensation is required to make reductions to those bills paid through September 1986, Buchanan said. Notice of the reduction will be sent with each check for a reduced payment.

The only bills exempt from the reduction are those for rehabilitation maintenance, for service from rehabilitation providers, impartial medical specialists, second opinion referrals requested by OWCP personnel and physicians acting as medical advisors or consultants. Salary compensation paid for disability or death also are exempt from the reduction.

Employees who do take a loss, either for payments to medical providers or for travel expenses that were not reimbursed, may claim this amount as a deduction on their 1986 income tax form.

Blackhawk Park offers rustic setting

Visions of the legendary Louisiana Bayou run through your mind as you drive down the dirt access road to Blackhawk Park near Victory, Wis. The road is lined by a swampy area and old, dilapidated trailers, but as you continue on, you eventually reach the entrance to the park and you know that you are still in Wisconsin.

Blackhawk Park was constructed in the early 1960's by Vernon County, Wis. on land leased from the Corps of Engineers. In February 1980, the lease was terminated by the county because of funding restrictions and the need to make costly improvements in the park. Since that time, the Corps has operated and maintained the recreation area.

The park is also referred to as Battle Island and it is believed that the final part of the Blackhawk War may have been fought there. Blackhawk, the leader of the Sauk Indians, engaged the U.S. Army in a final conflict known as the Battle of Bad Ax on the 1st and 2nd of August 1832. This marked the final battle between Indians and the Army in what was to become the state of Wisconsin.

The recreation area is a 70-acre facility adjacent to the main channel of the Mississippi River. The park has 146 campsites and is very rustic and natural. For those who enjoy camping and fishing in a rustic setting, this is the place. Two concrete culverts, which provide fresh water flow into the adjacent backwaters, were constructed last year to improve the already excellent fishing and reduce winter fish kill in the backwaters. Improvements to the

access road and the camping areas, plus adding handicapped facilities, are planned over the next several years under a rehabilitation program.





Most of Blackhawk Park is less than five feet above the Mississippi River and is subject to annual spring flooding. The park, which was scheduled to open on March 31st, did not officially open until June 2nd due to high water.

Employees recognized for length-of-service

TEN YEARS OF SERVICE

Blackdeer, Levi A.; Boller, John W.; Calhoun, John R.; Davis, Mary J.; D'Heilly, B'Florence L.; Earney, Lonnie J.; Edd, Sheldon D.; Ekstrand, David A.; Herreid, F Milford O.; Hoglund, Patricia A.; Kean, Allan M.; Kochendorfer, Lee M.; Kriesel, F William F.; Madison, Paul D.; McAloon, Thomas P.; Meixner, Lon P.; Mike, Robert P.; Morris, Joyce L.; Oncel, Bruce C.; Patterson, Lessie L.; Peterson, Stanley W. Jr.; Pfeiffle, Dale J.; Princko, Richard E.; Raster, Thomas E.; Rydeen, David W.; Scheie, Ann Marie; Scott, Barbara K.; Sing, Steve E.; Smith, Lucille C.; Whillock, Norman B.; Wood, Gerald E.

FIFTEEN YEARS OF SERVICE

Ahlstrom, Wayne; Anderson, Kathleen A.; Bakke, Daniel C.; Breheim, Sandra K.; Brommerich, Carl G.; Christoffersen, Earl J.; Copper, James R.; Dickson, Dennis V.; Dobberpuhl, Stuart V.; Duell, David J.; Dvorak, Joseph P. Jr.; Ecker, Larry J.; Ecklund, Howard J.; Elftmann, Gary A.; Engelstad, Robert G.; Geisen, Allen L.; Gilbert, James D.; Halling, Allen L.; Hedberg, Russell E.; Koerner, Wayne R.; Kulas, Leander D.; Loss, David C.; Murphy, James G.; Oksness, Thomas A.; Pedersen, Bernard A.; Poquette, Ellis E.; Powell, Donald L.; Pream, Jeannette F.; Precious, Thomas A.; Price, Marianne E.; Ragan, Bruce G.; Rothbauer, Richard; Schultz, Rodney E.

TWENTY YEARS OF SERVICE

Blackdeer, Levi A.; Boller, John W.; Calhoun, John R.; Davis, Mary J.; D'Heilly, Becker, Kenneth E.; Curran, Matthew C.; Dahlin, Edward T.; Ebner, Dale A.; Florence L.; Earney, Lonnie J.; Edd, Sheldon D.; Ekstrand, David A.; Herreid, Foye, Charles J.; Hentges, Leo A.; Hollom, Richard E.; Munson, Gilbert C.; Milford O.; Hoglund, Patricia A.; Kean, Allan M.; Kochendorfer, Lee M.; Kriesel, Peterson, Margaret J.; Schneider, Frederick M.; Schweitzer, Philip J.

THIRTY YEARS OF SERVICE

Benson, Paul O.; Dempsey, Lavane D.; Goetz, William L.; Hageman, Ruth M.; Martinez, Paul; McDonald, William L.; Munter, Marlin A.; Reinitz, Burnell L.; Rivett, Mary E.; Seelye, Irving L.; Taylor, David J.; Rasmussen, Rodney A.; Schaefer, Audre T.

THIRTY-FIVE YEARS OF SERVICE

Lindsay, George A. Jr.; Wedergren, Marian E.