Two barges sit high and dry between Upper and Lower St. Anthony Falls locks in mid-November when a foundation failure at the Northern States Hydroelectric Plant resulted in the loss of the navigation pool between the two locks. Navigation in and out of the Port of Minneapolis was halted for a week while the power company built a 20-foot high earthen dam above the collapsed hydro plant. See pages 4 and 5 for more details on the events at Lower St. Anthony Falls.

Photo by Ken Gardner
Commander's viewpoint
By Col. Joseph Briggs

Mrs. Briggs and I approach this holiday season with many mixed feelings.

First, this is a special time of the year. It is a season of spiritual warmth and good will. It is a time for celebration, reflection and to be with family and good friends.

Secondly, this will be my last holiday season as part of the St. Paul District. This has been a special assignment for Mrs. Briggs and me. You have made us feel welcome and a part of the St. Paul family.

Finally, there is the excitement of the future. We don't know where our next assignment will take us but if the experience is anything like our time here, I know that it will be busy, challenging, and rewarding.

This has been an exciting year for the St. Paul District family. We started out the year with brand new authorizing legislation—the Water Resources Development Act of 1986—which changed the way we do business, especially in the area of cost sharing. The act also authorized more than $200 million in construction projects for the St. Paul District. This is the work you will be doing for the next 5 to 10 years.

During my extensive travels around the district this past year meeting with state officials and the local sponsors of proposed projects, I have been constantly reminded of the outstanding efforts of the men and women of the St. Paul District. Your professionalism as engineers, technical specialists and support people is widely acknowledged; your dedication to the people and resources of this region is obvious.

Your efforts have resulted in many accomplishments of which you all can be proud. We have successfully negotiated the signing of local cooperation agreements using the new cost sharing formulas for Rochester, Henderson, and Lake Andrusia and work on these projects is progressing.

Internally, one of our measures of success is our obligation and expenditure rates for available funds. During this past fiscal year, we attained an obligation rate of 97.4 percent and an expenditure rate of 91.8 percent. These are both very good rates and are indications of positive management of our valuable resources at all levels.

Another indicator of the fine accomplishments of the district occurred just recently when NCD selected four Take Pride In America projects and people to represent the entire division in the Corps-wide judging. Three of the four activities forwarded by NCD were St. Paul people or projects. A fine achievement.

We have also shown our leadership in mobilization with the development of the Mobilization Awareness Program. This program has resulted in a significant increase in our level of readiness and has attracted a lot of positive attention around the Corps since it started last July. It will be extended to field sites in 1988.

Of course, these are just of few of the outstanding accomplishments you have achieved during 1987.

This is a wonderful season. I urge you to take the time to be with your family and friends, to reflect on the real meaning of the season, and to let yourself be filled with the joy and happiness of a safe holiday.

Thank you for an outstanding year.

Hatch Act limits political activity

By Tom Joyce
American Forces Information Service

Each federal employee has the right to cast his vote in an election and is strongly encouraged to do so. However, attempts on their part to influence the votes of others is a different story.

The question of political activity by federal employees was first raised by Thomas Jefferson. But it wasn't until 1939 that Congress passed what is known as the Hatch Act, legislation that limits the political activities of federal employees. The Hatch Act restrictions apply when federal employees vote, campaign, or attend political events, as well as when they engage in other political activities.

Who is covered under the Hatch Act? Generally, all employees in the executive branch of the federal government, including part-time and temporary employees. The Hatch Act restrictions also apply when covered employees are on annual leave, sick leave, leave without pay, administrative leave or furlough.

There are exceptions, but they apply mostly to members of the military and employees of the District of Columbia and certain employees of state and local government. Its premise: Political activity by certain government employees had to be limited for public institutions to function fairly and effectively.

- Join political clubs or parties;
- Sign nominating petitions, and
- Campaign for or against candidates, question constitutional amendments, and municipal ordinances.

Covered employees MAY NOT:
- Be candidates for public office in partisan elections (An election is considered partisan if any candidate for an elected public office is running as a representative of a political party whose presidential candidate received electoral votes in the last presidential election);
- Campaign for or against a candidate or slate of candidates in partisan elections;
- Make campaign speeches or engage in other campaign activities to elect partisan candidates;
- Collect contributions or sell tickets to political fund raising functions;
- Distribute campaign material in partisan elections;
- Organize or manage political rallies or meetings;

Continued on page 3
Message from the Chief

This last year has been a busy time for the Corps...for all of us. In 1987, I spent more than 150 days on the road visiting a broad spectrum of our field activities. Most of the time the reasons were exciting and inspiring—a new Army or Air Force hospital, the deepening of a harbor, the 50th anniversary of a dam, a change of command ceremony, a new family housing project or motor pool, a meeting of professional peers.

While the past year may not go down in the history books in the way 1986 did (the year of the passage of the Water Resources Development Act), it has been for us more important. Let me first address our water resource work.

The future of the Civil Works Program depends on how successful our implementation of the Act is. It will not be easy. The law's passage and its immediate aftermath were filled with the exhilaration of a wedding ceremony and the honeymoon. But as each married couple knows, the test of a marriage comes later. That’s when daily routines begin to test true compatibility.

So far 47 sponsors have signed local cooperation agreements. We have to convince our state and local partners that we're responsible fiscally and that their money is being spent wisely.

In order to do this, we have to operate as much like a business as possible. We must streamline our methods and eliminate unnecessary bureaucracy.

Several programs are helping us in that direction. Our model construction agent program and Army suggestion program encourage workers to speak out when they have a better idea. In fact, early in 1988 we plan to merge the two programs under the umbrella of “Idea Express.” This will allow everyone to participate in the model construction agent program, not just employees from our targeted districts, divisions or labs.

I am deeply pleased with our value engineering program which continues to save us big dollars as engineers comb over project proposals and contribute even better approaches. During 1987, we saved $232.9 million, the most in its 23 years of existence. Since 1964, it has saved $1.7 billion, the entire cost of the Tennessee Torbombee Waterway!

But all of this cost-cutting is not at the expense of customer care or our institutional values. Recall last September when every member of the Corps attended a values workshop prepared by our lead team.

The lead team has just submitted a status report. The Corps leadership is understandably excited by the progress it has made. The team targets five items for management to change—command emphasis and culture, military/civilian relationships, development of people, performance appraisals and rewards, and recruitment and selection.

We need to save money, not just for the sake of our sponsors, but also for our taxpayers. The days of the yearly omnibus bills are over and I believe we have left the "Pork Barrel" aura far behind us. Even as we have a huge construction placement for our Army and Air Force customers, the program will soon be constrained.

Yet there are no discouraging words here. I know the Corps of Engineers is up to the challenge. I look forward to what it will accomplish in the years to come.

Even as we face the challenges of a new approach to water projects, and even as we find dozens of better ways to design and build for our defense customers...most especially the soldier and the Army family...we in the Corps will continue to prove ourselves not only the biggest free world engineering force, but the best.

My best to you and your families this holiday season, and Kitty and I hope to see many of you in 1988. In the late spring, I will turn over the reins of the Corps to a new chief, but we both look forward to remaining loyal members of the Corps family.

LT. GEN. E.R. HEIBERG III
COMMANDER, USACE

Deaths reported

Several deaths among the St. Paul family have been reported in recent weeks.

Retiree Vernon Holstrom, who worked in Construction, died on Oct. 12 in Thief River Falls, Minn. The deaths of retirees Leo Buhr and Verner T. Carlson have also been reported.

Finally, Lock and Dam 2 reports that Charles "Casey" Jones, recently died at the age of 72. Casey read the river stage gage at Prescott for more than a decade.
Hydro plant foundation failure drains pool

Shortly after 6 p.m. on Monday, November 9, Head Lock and Dam Operator Steve Lenhart noticed the level of the pool above Lower St. Anthony Falls Lock and Dam dropping unexpectedly.

Steve checked gate settings on the dam and then notified Northern States Power Company in Minneapolis. The pool level continued to drop despite all gates on the dam being closed. A short time later, the power company shut down power generation at its hydroelectric power plant located at the east end of Lower St. Anthony Dam.

The pool continued to drop rapidly. Even though the NSP power plant was shut down, Steve could still see a great flow of water boiling up into the Mississippi below the hydro plant.

A little more than an hour after Steve had first noticed the level dropping, the pool between Lower and Upper St. Anthony Falls locks was virtually empty. Nearly a half-mile of the Mississippi River bottom was exposed for the first time since the lower dam was completed in 1956.

Further inspection showed that the river was flowing beneath the foundation of the NSP hydro plant. Apparently, the foundation of the building, which dated back to 1897, had eroded allowing 14 to 15 feet of water in the pool to drain beneath the building. More detailed inspection on Tuesday morning showed that three of the stone arches on the downstream outlet of the plant had collapsed.

Prior to the collapse, several stone arches on the downstream outlet were missing and the building was sagging. Photo by John Asfinkson

The loss of the navigation pool blocked all commercial and recreational river traffic in and out of the Port of Minneapolis.

One loaded grain barge and two empty sand and gravel barges were left high and dry on the rock and sand river bottom when the pool went down.

In addition to the three grounded barges, 8 loaded barges, six empties, and the motor vessel Lois E. were stranded in the Port of Minneapolis above Upper St. Anthony Falls. Water level in the upper pool was unaffected.

Tuesday afternoon, North Central Division issued an emergency permit to allow clean fill for an access road to be placed on the river bottom just upstream of the hydro plant. Work was under way on the access road Tuesday afternoon when the central portion of the hydro plant collapsed shortly...
after 4 p.m., ending any question as to whether the building was repairable.

Following the collapse of the building, NSP changed its plan for the access road and their previously issued Department of the Army Permit was modified to cover construction of a 20-foot high earth dam.

Work proceeded on the earth dam for nearly five days. Meanwhile, with the pool drained and the river flowing at a fairly low rate of approximately 3,000 cubic feet per second, this stretch of the river took on a new look. Visitors wandered across the previously-submerged river bottom, looking for discarded items. Others visited the area just to see for themselves this river gone nearly dry. Ducks fed on organic material which just days before had been under 10 feet or more of water. And kayaks maneuvered the shallow river, passing under the historic stone-arch bridge, before shooting a short stretch of white water rapids where the current hit a rock outcropping.

The earth dam built by NSP was completed on Monday, November 16, nearly a week after their hydro plant failure. With the dam nearly completed, Lockmaster Bob Stahl and his crew partially closed the gates on the lower dam and started slowly raising the pool. They brought the level up six feet on Sunday, then four more feet on Monday. By noon on Monday, the river was open to navigation on a limited basis. With the pool not quite restored to its normal minimum of nine feet, navigation was limited to vessels drafting less than seven feet. This included empty barges, small craft, and towboats without barges.

The pool was returned to its normal operating level and the river re-opened to unrestricted navigation on Tuesday, November 17, just eight days after the hydro plant failure. However, the story didn't end there.

Shortly after bringing the pool up on Tuesday morning, NSP officials noticed that their earth dam was seeping where it connected to the east bank of the river. After only two hours at its normal level, the pool was dropped a foot to help reduce the pressure on the seeping earth dam. However, this small drop did not affect navigation and the river remained open. As Crosscurrents went to press, NSP officials were working on grouting the joint where the earth dam ties into the river bank.

In addition, NSP officials had not announced any long-term plans for the hydro plant site. Also unknown is the role of the Corps, if any, in future work at the site.
Stay-in-school program

By DonYel Erickson
Public Affairs Office

What program does the Corps have that gives students a chance to work, save money and gain practical job experience? Here’s a clue: this program also aids supervisors in getting many clerical and miscellaneous duties done. The answer is the Stay-In-School Program.

The St. Paul District is allotted 25 spaces for Stay-In-School students. To be eligible for the program, students must meet certain requirements. These requirements include family income that doesn’t exceed federal guidelines, be a full-time student in high school or college, recommendation from a school counselor and to be at least sixteen years of age. Handicapped individuals need not meet the financial requirement. Students are allowed to work twenty hours a week when school is in session and full time during vacations.

Although many students see the Corps as just a first step to gaining employment in their chosen field, some look at it as a career opportunity. Such is the case of Lupe Santos, Employee Development Assistant.

Lupe started working for the Corps in 1980 under the Stay-In-School program as a clerk/typist in the Training and Development Branch and became a permanent employee in 1982. Her responsibilities include keeping track of the cumulative record of training of every permanent employee and assisting employees with various computerized training.

Troy Nagengast, who works in the Information Management Office, may not work for the Corps once he is finished at the University of Minnesota, but he has carved a niche for himself here. You may not recognize Troy unless you see him with cables, micros, tools, and many other auxiliary items tangle around him. Troy isn’t a magnet for such things but in his role of fix-up, move-out, and set-up-of-microcomputers, these are tools of the trade.

Troy came to the Corps in 1985. Before that he went to school for a computer repair course. After he graduated, Troy decided that he would really like to work “with” computers not “in” them, so he is back at the University of Minnesota.

Troy feels that the Stay-In-School program is perfect for his life style right now.

He carries a heavy load at the University and the freedom of scheduling his working hours around his school load is very convenient.

Gina Erickson, a 25 year old University of Minnesota student, has been a part of the program for more than two years. During this time she has worked in Finance and Accounting and has gained experience in Corps finances as a result of her involvement in the billing system. According to Gina, some of the pluses of the program are “...the versatile scheduling and an accommodating supervisor.” Yet Gina still feels that there is room for improvement, primarily in the amount of hours a student can work. She would like to see a student able to work more than twenty hours during school if their schedules would allow for it.

Marianne Price, Chief of the Equal Employment Opportunities Office, offers a reason for the strict enforcement of a student’s hours. She says that a standard must be upheld for all students. Although there may be individuals capable of working more while in school, the majority probably could not. The hours are set to help the student, not to hinder the student. She also states that when the program started it was intended for high school students working only sixteen hours per week, “aimed at the four hours after school.”

Marianne goes on to say that when the program began to accept college students it was found that their schedules had more flexibility than a high school student’s. It was at this time that the hours were changed to what they presently are.

Marianne also feels personal satisfaction in watching a student grow and learn in an office setting. These students, she says “are an asset to the workforce.” Mary Street, coordinator for the Stay-In-School program agrees, and also adds that this program keeps the federal government in touch with the local community while projecting a positive image.

The Stay-In-School Program has become an institution within the Corps. It has also proven itself to be a viable and workable program, serving most of its participants and the Corps well.

Corps employee saves woman's life

Bill Vogt, Logistics, is being credited with saving a woman’s life recently.

On Sunday, October 11, Bill was leaving his church services, when he noticed that a woman, who had collapsed, was receiving mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and cardio-pulmonary-resuscitation (CPR) from a member of the congregation. Bill, seeing that she needed help, offered to administer the CPR.

Paramedics stated that the woman might not have survived without quick action and application of correct first aid techniques.

Bill said that the CPR and first aid classes he attended at the Corps gave him the training to act quickly during this emergency.

Editor’s note: The St. Paul District will be having CPR and first aid classes in January and February. Contact the Training and Development Branch at ext. 7517.

District Holiday Party

Day: Friday, December 11, 1987
Time: 12:00 to 4:00 p.m.
Place: Prom Expo Center, Quality Inn, 190 North Smith (Across the street from the Civic Center in downtown St. Paul)

Reservations for employees: John Blackstone (612)725-5949
Reservations for retirees or others: Eleanor Williams (612)725-7600
Large-scale fish removal improves fishing at Sandy Lake Dam

by Kenton R. Dean
Park Ranger, Sandy Lake Dam

Wow, mom! Look at those carp!

Words similar to these are heard everyday people gather above the spillway at Sandy Lake Dam. Most people mistake the 35 pound bluish-grey buffalo fish for his European cousin the carp. Usually, a park ranger will correctly identify the different species seen from the dam. They also tell how these gentle looking giants became a nuisance.

As a rule, most rough fish spawn after game fish. This gives the game fish a jump on the growing season and they will be large enough to eat the hatching out rough fish.

Rough fish reproduce in larger numbers and while smaller, are the main food supply for sport fish. This food chain would stay in balance if not for bad spawning conditions and the appetite of man. Good eating-size sport fish have enormous appetites which usually keeps the population of medium sized rough fish in balance. But, that enormous hunger also makes them end up in your frying pan.

Unchecked, the buffalo grew too large for any predator to eat. Full-size adults lay many times more eggs than medium sized ones, so Mother Nature's scale gets tipped out of balance.

Herds of several thousand buffalo fish could be spotted from the dam, displacing the more desirable sport fish. They are almost impossible to catch by normal means and because of this, sport fishing below the dam became non-existent.

The Corps of Engineers staff at Sandy Lake Dam knew something had to be done. Representatives from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources confirmed that the buffalo would have to be thinned out.

Commercial fisherman were called in during the peak spawning run which usually happens around June 5. A plan was coordinated between commercial fishermen, the DNR and Corps personnel.

A large flat-bottomed boat waited downstream for the dam to be shutdown. At the ranger's signal, the boat crossed the stream, stringing net to the other side. A smaller boat then went to the base of the dam. Using hand operated concussion devices, small weighted fire works, and rattling chains, they proceeded to drive the fish downstream against the net.

When feeling the impact of the spooked fish, the first boat moved back across the stream encircling them in a horseshoe-shaped trap. The center of the net was 30-feet wide and, when pulled tight against the bank, it created a large purse, which was used to sort and hold the fish. The sport fish were carefully removed. The buffalo catch was estimated by volume to determine the size of vehicle needed to transport them; in this case, a semi was called in.

The fish were first loaded by hand from the net to a 4-wheel drive vehicle which took them to the waiting semi. There, they were packed on ice, placed in boxes and loaded into the truck. They were then hauled to a fish cleaning plant at Lake Pepin. After being gilled and gutted, they were repacked in ice and trucked fresh to markets on the east coast. Due to its white, flaky meat and because they come from non-polluted waters, the small mouthed buffalo are a rare and sought after item. The fish's value paid for the capture, shipping and handling—without cost to the government.

This cost effective removal of rough fish was definitely beneficial to sport fishing downstream of the dam. Three successful nettings in 1986 produced 60,000 pounds and after several tries in 1987, only 3,000 pounds turned up. Small mouth bass numbers have increased dramatically along with walleye, crappie, sunfish, and northern pike. Even several trout sightings have been reported. Now, it's no longer a rarity for campers to come away with a large catch of sport fish while at Sandy Lake Dam.

Rangers often explain this rough fish harvest to campers to help the public understand that proper management produces beneficial results. With proper management, there will always be fish to watch below Sandy Lake Dam.
Around the district
by Ken Gardner
Public Affairs Office

This month we have some people news and a another reminder from Personnel. (Last month’s reminder from Personnel to get your FERS registration forms in created such a rush of activity that we thought we would try another one.)

First, the reminder from Personnel.

Last year the chief of engineers unveiled his Leaders in Customer Care program and NCD created a division-level Customer Care Award. A number of deserving St. Paul people were nominated and received those awards. Well, the NCD Customer Care Award program still exists—it just hasn’t been very active lately. So if you have an employee who demonstrates that she or he cares about our customers, nominate them for a Customer Care Award. Check with Personnel for details.

Now for some people news.

In Engineering, Peggy Peterson A/E contracts coordinator (officially she is the Engineering Program Support Assistant), will be leaving the district office in early December to devote her full time and efforts to her family and her and Don’s farming activities. Peggy has been replaced in Engineering by Sandy Olk, who was the Program Support Assistant in Project Management.

There are also some changes in section chief assignments in Engineering. In a three-way developmental rotation, Chuck Spitzack, LaVane Dempsey and Grant Westall all changed jobs just before Thanksgiving. Chuck traded his position as chief of Specifications and Estimating Section for the job of chief of General Design Section. Grant moved from chief of General Design to chief of Geotechnical Design. And to complete the trilogy of assignments, Lavane moved from Geotechnical Design Section to become the new chief of Specas and Estimating. The developmental assignments can last up to 18 months.

Dean Peterson, ED-GHH, has transferred to the Winona Project Office, where he will work on the major maintenance effort on the locks and dams.

Finally, one last Engineering change. Anne Martin, illustrator in drafting, has been named to fill the new visual information specialist position in Information Management.

I try to catch people changes when they happen but once in a while an event slips by and is lost forever (or until I run into the person in the elevator and am embarrassed to find out they changed jobs five months ago). This is one of those items. Not old enough to become a truly “historical” event but not current news either.

In Contracting, Mary Barbo has been selected to fill a new position as a procurement analyst working directly for Contracting Division Chief Sid Schmidt. Prior to the change (which took place in May), Mary was a contracts specialist in Contracting Branch. By the way, Mary’s old job was filled by Patrick Peine, who transferred in from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

One last item. Denise Yale, public affairs assistant and editor of Crosscurrents for the last 19 months, transferred to Rock Island District as a public affairs specialist in early December. She will be replaced in Public Affairs by Joe Yanta, a writer-editor whose job in Planning was eliminated earlier this fall.

And that is what’s happening Around the District this month.

District receives three TPA awards

Several St. Paul district activities and people have received Take Pride in America awards.

The district recently recommended two activities and two people for TPA awards. Three of the St. Paul nominations were selected for TPA awards by North Central Division and will be forwarded to the Chief’s office for a Corps-wide award. District activities and people receiving NCD Take Pride in America awards included the Mississippi Headwaters Project, Tim Bertschi, Western Flood Area manager, and Joe Campbell, Prairie Island Sioux Reservation.

In a separate TPA awards program, Balldhill Dam was awarded first place in the wildlife management category by the State of North Dakota. Park Manager Steve Odegard and Ranger Randy Melby received the first place award during a November 13 ceremony with North Dakota Governor George Sinner. The project was cited for its outstanding efforts in wildlife management which included extensive reforestation and development of wind breaks.

In the NCD awards program, the Mississippi Headwaters received the award in the Federal Project category for its efforts in public lands clean-up, recycling aluminum cans, reforestation, landscaping, and a special educational program on the Constitution developed by several headwaters rangers.

Tim was selected for an individual award in the federal employee category. He was cited for managing a wide variety of projects including extensive wildlife areas, coordinating a volunteer water quality monitoring program at Lac qui Parle, aluminum can recycling, and coordinating a public information plan for Lake Traverse.

Joe was nominated in the non-federal employee category for his efforts in the clean-up campaign at Prairie Island. A member of the Prairie Island Reservation, Joe was instrumental in coordinating the clean-up of an unauthorized dump on Corps land.