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Wilmington Harbor project contracts awarded

By Penny Schmitt

Preparations have been under way for months, and now the real work of deepening the Cape Fear River Channel is set to begin. On August 22nd, the Wilmington District awarded the first two major construction contracts for the harbor deepening project.

Great Lakes Dredge & Dock Company successfully bid for both contracts. The first, in the amount of \$13.6 million, is for Bald Head Shoal Channel Dredging, Station 120+00 to Station 355+00. The second, in the amount of \$56.2 million, is for Station 60+00 Lower Brunswick Channel to Station 55+00 Keg Island Dredging.

Construction begins at the Harbor Bar channel, and will work upriver in stages. The bar and entrance channels will be deepened from 40 to 44 feet.

The Wilmington District is currently working toward bid solicitations on a further two contracts, for work in the area of the Horseshoe Shoal channel reach and a second contract for the ocean bar area.

Work to prepare for the project is already under way at Eagle Island, where construction is being done to ready the long-used disposal site so that it can receive additional dredged material resulting from the project. The first phase of Eagle Island improvements will be complete in November of 2000.



Another contract already in progress is the Island 13 environmental mitigation site. Beginning in May 2000 and working until May 2001, the Corps contractor for the project will carve and reshape the former dredged material disposal island, and move dredged material to another site across the river. The resulting area will be an estuarine habitat that will provide primary nursery areas for fish and other tidal and marine species, and a new wetlands area. The 30-acre site is intended as mitigation for about 15 acres of wetlands that will be consumed during harbor project construction.

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Operations Plan 2000:

are we going to slide into home?

By Penny Schmitt



“The jury is still out on our bonus award points for the Year 2000 Operations Plan,” said BJ Suggs on September 14. “The points are still possible—but barely.” She cited a combination of factors in the situation that leaves this year’s game ‘too close to call’ as we go to press.

Achievements have been solid. All of our “Managing Technology” objectives will be complete by the end of September. “The things that we have done to create GIS databases and get technology support to our field offices are going to be sources of enhanced productivity in the future,” Suggs said. “That’s a major accomplishment.”

Our Capable Workforce objectives, with the exception of our Safety objective, all have been achieved. “I am pleased that we have met all those milestones, and that we have filled one upward mobility position and have conducted interviews for a second. We are al-

ready making changes that will benefit our Objective Organization and develop our staff.”

The safety objective—good for six points toward our bonus award—has been missed because of a combination of contractor and Corps employee lost-time incidents. “Safety is an area where we all, without question, have an opportunity to contribute to the success or failure of a year’s plan and bonus award. Bill Harris’s Focus on Safety for September highlights having a vigilant attitude about safety. We urge people to increase their alert, aware approach to the work environment.”

Our Business Process objectives have all been completed with the exception of the Budget PAT recommendations. But that will happen by year end. “We’ve done a good job in this area,” Suggs said, “although maybe the results have not yielded as much productivity increase as we hoped.”

Corporate Outreach—specifically execution of programs and adver-

tising of a second pair of Wilmington Harbor Project contracts—are still short of home plate. In some cases, the major factor seems to be delays beyond the District’s control. “If we have done our part in good time to stay on track, then another agency allows a decision to slip, that may not be our fault. On the other hand, if we caused delays, or estimated the needed time improperly, we have to take responsibility,” Suggs said.

Still, she emphasized, “There are people in the District who have literally worked until 3:00 A.M. to see that plans or programs hit the target window,” Suggs said. “Those people should know that their extraordinary efforts will be recognized and rewarded.”

Whatever happens, there will be no “stealing home plate” in this year’s contest. If we achieve the bonus award, it will be because our District TEAM is found to have done its best to bring about the results we planned for last October.

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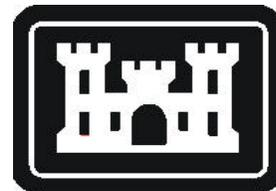
Address mail to:

U.S. Army Engineer District,
Wilmington
ATTN: CESAW-PA
P.O. Box 1890
Wilmington, N.C. 28402-1890

Telephone: (910) 251-4626

Email: Penny.Schmitt@usace.army.mil

Commander and District Engineer..... COL. James W. DeLony
Managing Editor and Chief, Public Affairs..... Penelope Schmitt



Wilmington Harbor project dredging to begin at Big Island

In a preconstruction meeting held at US Army Corps of Engineers, Wilmington District Headquarters on Monday, September 11th, all the organizations involved in the \$56 million Big Island construction contract discussed their roles in the undertaking.

Equipment for the project was slated to begin arriving on the Cape Fear River the weekend of September 15 to 17, with dredging to begin about the 18th of September.

Represented were the Corps, Great Lakes Dock and Dredging, Inc. (the contractor), the US Coast Guard, the State Ports Authority, and the Cape Fear River Harbor Pilots Association. The convened group included engineers, safety officers, contracting specialists, environmentalists and navigation experts. All will work intensively in coming months to ensure that the challenging project can come in safely, on time, and within budget.

Great Lakes airs construction plan

As a means of conducting the operation most efficiently, Great Lakes proposed to dredge first, and deal with rock second. First, they will use a hydraulic dredge to pump overburden material into a spider barge and send it on scows downstream to a designated Ocean disposal site. "We believe that stripping the overburden will allow



us to identify exactly how much rock needs to be removed, what its configuration is, and whether blasting is required," said their project engineer, Sam Morrison. Great Lakes' goal is to avoid blasting if possible by removing overburden and then dredging rock where feasible.

"We think this plan could be very beneficial in minimizing time and expense," Mullins said.

Partners discuss river traffic

Safety and keeping traffic moving on the river while construction proceeds are major concerns for the Ports Authority, the Coast Guard, and the River Pilots Association. Lieutenant Commander Jeff

Novotny, Chief of Port Operations at the Coast Guard Marine Safety Office, reported that special, lighter weight and smaller buoys had been placed in the channel, in order to make it easier to move aids to navigation during construction.

Scheduled construction operations information for the project will appear in the Coast Guard's weekly "Notice to Mariners," published each Wednesday.

For the next five to six weeks, mariners on the river may see what looks like an ordinary dredging operation. "It's not going to be significantly different from maintenance dredging," said Great Lakes representative Morrison.

August SAME speaker discusses new County Jail facility



Cape Fear Post's August meeting featured a talk by Greg Thompson, who talked about engineering challenges of prison construction. Thompson discussed the soon-to-be-built New Hanover County Jail and Administrative Facility. The current facility is too small, and does not provide adequate security for the public or those who work in the building. The county is also spending more than \$100,000 each month for the costs of housing inmates at other area jails. The new jail has incorporated design elements that address prisoner transport, family visitation areas, private interview rooms, and security concerns. The new building has also been designed to meet the requirements of recent legislation. The new, \$50-million facility will have space for 648 inmates, administrative space for the 150-person Sheriff's department, property storage and laboratory areas. Ground-clearing will begin in November.

Workload sharing— the future is now

By Penny Schmitt

The South Atlantic Division (SAD) set itself a goal to examine the potential for Workload Sharing by October first this year. At recent Regional Management Board Meetings, Jim Crews, Director of Engineering and Technical Services at SAD, unveiled the preliminary conclusions of the Process Action Team (PAT). The PAT recommendations were adopted during the August Board of Directors meeting.

Eugene Tickner, Deputy Director for Programs and Project Management at Wilmington District, served on the team. “The workload sharing goal we were assigned at the SAD Senior Leaders’ Conference was twofold,” he said. “First, we could not succeed if we did anything that would threaten district staffing levels. That would have been a show stopper. Second, we should aim to enhance the regional business center’s technical capability through Workload Sharing.”

In a world where each District has long been a very well defined kingdom among other kingdoms, the idea of leveling or sharing workload naturally raises concerns. “It’s another dramatic new concept in a time when we’re wrestling – often with surprising success—to absorb a host of new ideas about how to do our business,” Tickner said. “Still, the unknown can be scary, with lots of grist for the rumor mill!”

The PAT addressed a number of strong concerns about workload sharing, including worries about past Reductions in Force, and some difficulties anticipating the entire workload, managing the dynamics of a lot of different workloads, and the difficulty of reacting flexibly to new demands. Most of all, the team

members were concerned that a poorly conceived workload sharing plan could weaken the quality of our customer service.

The Regional Management Board and the Board of Directors for SAD responded to these concerns by clarifying their intent for workload sharing. “The goal is to shift work so as to level out normal fluctuations in workload. That way, all five districts can continue to meet their sustainable strength,” Tickner said.

“We are going to continue to have five districts within SAD, and all of them will continue to have a viable workload. With the massive projects coming down the pipeline in Jacksonville District, and full plates in other districts, we should not have people worrying about Reductions in Force. The Division has a mountain of work to get done—and great people in five districts who can and should share the burden of doing it,” Tickner said.

How will work be shared? The Process Action Team evaluated six alternative methods, including establishing sister district relationships, ad hoc/ just in time responses, moving projects, moving programs, creating niches or centers of expertise, or establishing functional alliances. Of these, the last alternative emerged as the most beneficial and viable.

“Creating functional alliances offered the best combination of flexibility and tapping the right people to plan ahead for success,” Tickner said. We looked at a number of factors, and that alternative looked best across the board.

Here are some benefits of creating functional alliances:

- **Time impacts**—We can have six months to a year advance notice of anticipated needs, based on quarterly coordination meetings.

- **Work to be shared**—There’s no limit. Virtually all combinations of products, deliverables, and disciplines can be brought into play for our customers.

- **Stakeholders**--The right people from the districts and from division are developing the workload sharing program.

- **Risk and uncertainty**—We have significant flexibility and advance planning built in under this alternative.

- **Resource considerations**—We can be highly flexible about moving expertise and resources if our programs are volatile.

How should the division go about creating the functional alliances that will multiply our ability to respond to customers? “We will have to involve Engineering, Construction Operations, Real Estate, and Project Management, and get them or the team they designate to meet regularly for an honest evaluation of our workload and needs across the division,” Tickner said.

“We envision this as a discipline or product-focused look at what’s needed. We will have to collaborate closely to assess our regional capabilities to support the workload with the right manpower and expertise. And of course everything we do must be designed to meet our customers’ requirements. If need be, we have to be ready to reach beyond the SAD boundary to find the right resources elsewhere in the Corps or in the academic or Architect/Engineer communities.”

Is SAD ready to create functional alliances today? The PAT members believe that the Regional Business Center is making the right moves, and that interdependence is going to make the Corps a stronger, better resource for our customers.

Bradley Inducted into Gallery of Distinguished Employees

By Penny Schmitt

Jim Bradley, who retired as Wilmington Districts first Chief of Technical Services Division in 1998, was inducted into the District's Gallery of Distinguished Employees at an August 31 Town Hall meeting.

Only a few District employees receive such accolades after they retire. Bradley was judged by a panel of District leaders to be one of the very best, **EVER**, people to serve the District and the US Army Corps of Engineers.

To become a member of the Gallery, retired Corps members must meet some demanding criteria. They are chosen after a serious and thoughtful process. This year the panel considered seven nominees, and named Bradley as an employee who worked in a way that was "clearly exceptional and pre-eminent among all who have performed like duties."

He was also recognized as someone who "developed or improved methods and procedures that produced extraordinary benefits for the Corps of Engineers," and who "contributed substantially to the reputation and honor of the Corps", and "performed loyally and faithfully throughout his or her service to the District."

Bradley crowned 34 years in South Atlantic Division with accomplishments at Wilmington District. He won a Hammer Award for Chairing the Headquarters Task Force on Top-to-Bottom Operations and Maintenance restructuring. He worked with Ca-



Jim and Joyce Bradley proudly display the Distinguished Employee Award

nadian officials to develop a system that is used to assess site conditions at hydroelectric dams. He led in implementing TQM within Wilmington District. He was recognized with a Meritorious Civilian Service Award. His colleagues remember him with honor as a person whose honesty, hard work, and intuitive common sense placed him in high demand, not just nationally, but beyond our boundaries.

Those accomplishments keep on giving life and vitality to this organization. Today we have a dedicated staff member who oversees our TQM and internal review processes, because Bradley helped us to learn how important a constant focus on quality could be. The changes his task force sug-

gested are taking shape in better operations methods and better facilities throughout the Corps. The people he mentored are maturing in their careers, and promising excellence for the future.

All of us have an opportunity to leave behind a legacy of conscientious and faithful service in our careers. Those are the bedrock values that sustain an organization. Bradley not only gave such service, he also transformed this organization in ways that will help it survive and thrive in years to come. The Wilmington District is grateful that Jim Bradley gave his talents and time to us, and we are proud to have inducted him into our Wilmington District Gallery of Distinguished Employees.



How to do business with Wilmington District - It's a Web thing

By Penny Schmitt

"We were already doing a lot with the Internet, and now we are becoming totally web-based," said Sherrell Bunn, Chief of Contracting Division for the Wilmington District. "Everything prospective vendors and contractors need to know to start doing business with us is now available at the screen on their desks."

The new Contracting Division web page features information and access to the District's business opportunities. "Because most of the actual construction work the US Army Corps of Engineers performs is outsourced to private sector contractors, we have to compete at the cutting edge for the best bidders," Bunn said. "We want our information to be as timely and complete as possible."

To reach the web page, go to www.saw.usace.army.mil, and on the Wilmington District Home page, choose the link to Contracting Division's Information and

Business Opportunities page.

The new page includes features like the **Electronic Bid Set (EBS)**, which lists active solicitations, bid results and contract award information. Prospective bidders can complete forms online and register for a solicitation.

"An important change in our business process is that we no longer mail out pre-solicitation notices for construction contracts, including dredging. All notices of solicitation for Wilmington District construction will be published online in the Commerce Business Daily at <http://cbdnet.access.gpo.gov> and also in our own web site. We encourage businesses to check both sites frequently for opportunities."

Other information includes:

- **Central Contractor Registration** information and material required by the Director of Defense Procurement before businesses can bid on Corps work. See <http://www.ccr2000.com>

- **Emergency Contracts** under the Advanced Contracting Initiative (ACI) for water, ice, debris management, temporary roof repairs, and generator Operations and Maintenance. The site is <http://www.sad.usace.army.mil/aci>

- **Electronic Commerce Resource Center (ECRC)** By the end of 2000, most Government purchasing will be done via computer. See <http://www.ecrc.ctc.com>

- **FACNET**, which announced smaller procurement opportunities costing between \$2,500 and \$100,000, is also available.

"We are pleased that we are able to offer our information, and access to a broad network of information about working with the Department of Defense, through our web site" Bunn said. "It is exciting to know that our office is truly 'One Door to the Corps' for the many excellent businesses who work with us and with the Corps worldwide."

A Project Management Plan for every project: P M B P im perative #5

Have you ever been driving down the road towards your destination when all of a sudden you realized that you were not certain of the route? What do you do? Most would stop and ask directions, or pull out the old road map.

This holds true for project development. We must know where we are going in order to get there, and thus we need a map—the Project Management Plan (PMP). Imperative Number 5 of the Eight Imperatives of Program and Project Management states that each project will be managed by a PMP. The plan is a living document that guides the project delivery team in their development and execution of a project.

The Project Manager must pull the various parts of the plan together and compile the finished product. However, this document is developed by the Project Delivery TEAM, with emphasis on TEAM. It must be a TEAM-developed product. No individual knows enough about all aspects of the project to write a PMP alone. The PMP includes narratives from each discipline describing how they will accomplish their parts of the project.

The plan includes discussions of the resources required to carry out the project, including manpower, other Corps assets, contracts, other government agencies. It also describes what's needed to develop

separate project products. The reports included in the plan are:

- *Expedited Reconnaissance Report*,
- *Feasibility Cost Sharing Agreement*,
- *Feasibility Report*,
- *Planning, Engineering and Design (PED) cost sharing agreement*,
- *Plans and specifications*,
- *Project Cooperation Agreement*,
- *Construction contracts*, and
- *Operations and Maintenance Manuals*.

The PMP also includes the project development schedule and the estimated costs for project development from reconnaissance through construction and final turnover of the project to its sponsor.

Career Development for Corps Employees: Wilmington District has worked diligently to "invest in people" by taking steps to create a capable work force. Initiatives in our Annual Operations Plan for the year 2000 addressed upward mobility, enhanced recruitment, and planning for future staff needs through the Objective Organization Plan. Career development isn't just corporate business. It's also the business of every person to build the best possible career. The following articles cover two special career development programs and discuss ways to prepare for job interviews as you move up the Corps career ladder.

Brodmerkel & Bjorkquist return from long-term assignments

By Penny Schmitt

Six months at another Corps activity is not just the same thing someplace else, agreed Jan Brodmerkel and Al Bjorkquist, newly returned from long-term developmental assignments. "Another district isn't like a sister or a brother, we're more like cousins," Bjorkquist said. "Jacksonville is REALLY different from Wilmington—in size, some of the missions, and the way things are organized."

Brodmerkel, who spent six months on the natural resources management team at the Corps' Construction Engineering Research Laboratory, saw an even more dramatically different organization. "The Corps Labs are just coming through a major reorganization. I got to see how it works to have consolidated support functions serving a number of separate labs, and to work with a research and development community."

"I was also getting my first exposure to the military side of the Corps," she said. "I have spent half my career as an environmental engineer focusing on Restoration. That's just one of the four pillars of the environment the Army supports. This assignment gave me opportunities to work on Conservation, and exposure to the Prevention and Compliance missions."

The Wilmington District TEAM members are members of the Career Program 18 Leadership Development Program initiated in 1998. The program was designed to bring intensive training in leadership and executive skills to people at the GS 12 and GS 13 level in their careers.

"The program includes a lot of great training," Brodmerkel said.

We have been through LEAD, OLE, and other courses."

"The 12-weeks at Army Staff Management College is coming up for us both, too," said Bjorkquist, who is slated for the Fort Belvoir training in January.

Both have made major commitments to participate in the program, which requires a six-month developmental assignment away from the candidate's home station. "I think willingness to accept the unknown time, place, and duties is a major component of the training," Brodmerkel said. "It asks you to be willing to make the sacrifice and show flexibility. I couldn't have done the whole thing this far without great support from the District here!"

At the program's outset, Corps Headquarters identified 9,000 CP 18 careerists as eligible for the program. Only about 290 took on the challenge, and more than 100 of those have left the program.

Unwillingness to commit to time away from home has held many back. "I made about ten visits home during the six months," Bjorkquist said. "Three times, I was on official travel to Wilmington for meetings. The other seven trips were on me." Because Jan Brodmerkel's husband works for an airline, she was able to return home more frequently. "Being able to get home often was a key part of my willingness to be part of the program," she said. "But I came out of it feeling that I would be more willing to make a move for career reasons. You can do it."

"I can say that I am really glad I did this, and if I had it to decide

today, I would go right ahead and do it again," Bjorkquist said.

He spent six months in the Operations Division at Jacksonville District. "My job was a bit like Bob Sattin's job in our Navigation section," Bjorkquist said. "The demands and issues are right NOW, not so much about long term planning. Yet planning and vision are very important underpinnings for that mission. Florida has a big maintenance dredging mission. Jacksonville District maintains several deep draft navigation harbors in Florida and Puerto Rico. The Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway extends down to the St. John's River. Then the Intracoastal Waterway (IWW) picks up and goes all the way to Miami, on the Gulf side, the GIWW is another vital channel that needs to be maintained."

Although it wasn't planned, Bjorkquist's Jacksonville assignment will have direct application to the position he has been newly promoted into after returning to Wilmington Was LDP a factor in his promotion? "I don't know," Bjorkquist said. "I know there were a lot of good candidates for the position, and that some others were also in LDP. I personally feel that the experience I've had in the program will be a big help to me."

According to Olivia Henry, the coordinator for the program at Corps headquarters, "LDP is a vigorous and viable program, looking forward to a new class. Application materials for the next class will be made available on or about February 1, 2000." If you are eligible, now is a good time to start looking at your options!

Practice makes perfect in job interviews

By Penny Schmitt

“There are quite a few jobs opening up both in Wilmington District and around the Corps,” said Coleman Long, at a recent Lunch and Learn session held at the District Headquarters. “Many of you and your colleagues may want to compete for some of these new opportunities. We want to share what we know so that our folks can truly take their best shot at job openings.”

Long, Chief of the Planning and Environmental Branch, along with Tom Corder, Chief of Engineering, Susan Dixon of the Personnel Office, and District Deputy Director for Projects and Programs Management Eugene Tickner, all contributed during session conducted on August 29th and September 13th.

The presenters also reminded the group that our Federal Women’s Program will sponsor a seminar on interviewing techniques, possibly including some role playing, for this November.

The application package:

Susan Dixon reviewed some important factors that weigh heavily well before an interview takes place. “The important thing to remember is that *what is in writing* counts most,” she said. “The job description given in the job announcement will be the basis on which you ultimately are interviewed. Study the announcement carefully, and make sure that your application package addresses the specific requirements of the job. Take time to show how your qualifications—experience, education, training, awards, knowledge, skills and abilities—fit you for that particular job.”

Currently, Wilmington District and South Atlantic Division are still using the task method for identifying qualified applicants. When

you are responding to a task list, you must circle a “3” on all the critical tasks for the job, indicating that you have not only done these tasks, but also that you have performed them independently. When RESUMIX takes over, the applicant will need to be sensitive to key words in the system that indicate competency and qualification.

“Come and talk to us in the personnel office if you have any questions!” Dixon said. “Just as the written announcement defines the job, your written application will define the strength of your candidacy for it. Make certain that you give a complete picture!”

The panel interview:

Candidates for supervisory GS 12 and 13 positions will almost certainly be interviewed by a panel, and candidates for other jobs may be.

“We recently used a panel process to interview candidates for a GS 5-GS 9 environmental position,” Long said. Panel interviews include a representative from personnel and the Equal Employment Opportunity Office, as well as subject matter experts and the prospective supervisor.

As Long and Corder described it, the panel interview has a standard agenda that is fairly consistent throughout the Corps. The panel chairman welcomes the interviewee and introduces the other panel members, then briefly explains the interview procedure. Interviews may last from 30 minutes to about an hour. Each interviewee is asked the same questions by the interviewers, who do not explain or elaborate on the questions they pose. “Your interpretation of the question is up to you. That’s another good reason for being well-prepared,” Long said.

Typical questions include:

- Will you take the job if it is offered to you?
- What’s your leadership style?
- What are your qualifications for the job (give examples)
- Name some successes or strengths
- Discuss a weakness you think you have
- Discuss the importance of teams to your work
- What are your long-term goals
- What problems/opportunities do you see facing the Corps?

Penny Schmitt, of Public Affairs, added that candidates should think through potential questions about how they would handle a crisis or a tough situation. “I was asked what I would do if I got word one of our dams was going to fail in 12 hours,” she said. “Think through your worst possible day at work scenario—what would you do?”

After the interview, the panel members each rank their choices for candidates separately, then confer before making a recommendation to the hiring official.

Tom Corder strongly advised that job candidates take two vital steps: prepare carefully for the interview, and tell your whole story to the interviewer or panel. “When you are applying for jobs here in the District, there’s a tendency to assume that the panel members must know all about you and what you have done. This may not be so! Also, panels are obliged to stick to the written record—what you show them on the record and what you tell them in the interview is what counts. Make no assumptions. The best thing you can do is try to think and respond as if the people on the panel were complete strangers to

(Continued on page 9)

Practice job interviews continued

By Penny Schmitt

(Continued from page 8)

you—that way you HAVE to tell them all about yourself or they can't know," Corder said.

Long encouraged applicants to take time to learn about the organization and the job. Visit the web site. Call people up. Learn what the organization does, what its vision is, how it sees itself. That can give you a clue about what your best contribution might be."

Knowing the job was also an important factor. As much as possible, show that you understand what's being asked of you and how to accomplish those tasks. Relate your own abilities to the specific requirements of the job.

Tom Corder reported that he had spent a weekend reviewing his abilities and past accomplishments in preparation for another job application just before interviewing for his most recent promotion. "I remembered things I had even forgotten that I did," he said. "The day I spent going over my past achievements and thinking through questions and how I would answer

them, was invaluable to me when the day for the interview came."

Sherrell Bunn, Chief of Contracting, agreed. "I spent about 20 hours preparing, she said. I went on the computer and researched potential interview questions, and then wrote out my answers. I related all my answers that I could to the specific requirements of the job. In terms of knowing the organization, I just about memorized the District Operations Plan for my interview. Then I had my husband coach me and interview me."

Schmitt said that she prepared a notebook with of products and projects that she referred to when asked to give examples. "It was a great confidence builder for me, and allowed me to put my hands on proof," she said.

"Don't hesitate to jot down a note if it will help you order your response to the various points of a question," Corder added. "You don't have to be empty handed during the interview!"

Part of preparation, all agreed, is to make sure that the time and

situation are as comfortable for you as you can make them. "I allowed myself to be bumped forward a day on the schedule because of flight problems for people who were traveling here to be interviewed," David Franklin said. "That was a mistake. I should have asked to be bumped back a day, so that I could be prepared."

"Take a little annual leave so that you have time to think and come in fresh," Tom Corder said. "I had my interview late in the day, took leave, came in and parked in a different place and entered the building by a different door. I did as much as I could to make myself see this as a new place and the interviewers as new faces."

If they said it once, they said it dozens of times—the key to successful interviews is preparation. Prepare by reviewing your career, evaluating your experience, getting a lot of good examples straight in your mind, researching the job and the organization, and practicing, practicing, practicing!

CFC giving season is almost here!



Are you starting your holiday gift list? Consider putting one or more of the Combined Federal Campaign participating agencies right at the top. Your spending can even be deferred until after the holidays, if you choose the payroll deduction option!

And what gifts could be more rewarding than supporting one of hundreds of fine organizations that put help within reach of thousands in our area? Through CFC, children find homes, patients receive lifesaving care, troubled minds rediscover clarity, homebound seniors discover meals and warm smiles at their door, music and the arts take wing.

This year's campaign will kick off on Monday, September 18 and last until November 3d. Our key workers will soon be distributing campaign information for your consideration. Think it through! Your key worker can answer your questions—don't be afraid to ask.

The Gallup Interview Process – you can prepare

“It’s dangerous. It can ruin you if you don’t take it seriously. And Headquarters has made it mandatory,” that’s both the bad news and the reality about the Gallup Interview Process, according to Eugene Tickner, Deputy Director for Programs and Project Management.

The good news? Preparation for the interview can help you make a success of the experience. Reviewing your career achievements will be time well spent.

“You spend five days a week, for 20 years, building your career. Spend at least a weekend of your time preparing for this interview,” Tickner advised. “I have seen preparation make a dramatic difference.” In fact, those who have gone through the process indicate that putting more than just a weekend into preparation would be a great idea.

What is the Gallup interview?

The Gallup Interview, now required in the interview process for all supervisory GS 14s and 15s in the Corps, and also used by many Districts in the process of selecting GS 13s, is a third-party interview designed to diagnose leadership style and competencies.

“The interviews are tailor-made for the Corps based on a Great Leader theory of what good leadership within the Corps looks like,” Tickner said. “To design the interview, Gallup interviewed all the General Officers, Senior Executive Service members, and quite a few District Commanders and GS 15s. From those interviews, they constructed several profiles of successful leaders within the Corps. The interview questions are designed to elicit your responses and see how well they match with the profiles of excellent leadership within the Corps.”

When a District seeks to fill a vacancy at the senior level, they pay Gallup to conduct the interview. Candidates make an appointment—

during work or at home during working hours at their own option—and the interview is conducted over the phone. “Usually the interview takes about an hour,” Tom Corder said. The interview results are kept for a period of three years. After that, a candidate may have a new interview.

Interview questions are open ended and evaluative. Once the interview is done, the tape is transcribed. Two other people who did not participate in the phone interview analyze the transcript. When a selection panel interviews candidates, the panel receives verbal feedback based on analysis of the interview transcripts. The interviewee receives written feedback.

Preparing for the interview:

“Let me tell you a story about the difference preparation makes,” Tickner said. “I sat on a panel that interviewed a man for a GS 14. It was a terrible interview, and although the man had great experience and qualifications, he didn’t get the job. A few months later, the same man, with the same qualifications, sat before the same panel, and got the job hands down because of his stellar interview. While this was not a Gallup Interview, the principle applies.

“The minute he was hired I went and asked him what made the difference. He told me that he had asked his friends to interview and coach him, he had read a lot to prepare, he had asked his wife and daughters to interview him, all as practice. Same man! Same experience and qualifications! Similar questions! Same panel! Totally different results. You *can* make a difference.”

Corder passed around a summary of the qualities the Gallup interview is designed to assess. He advised candidates to get a copy of this material, and to specifically think through everything they have done that shows their strengths.

The matrix discusses four primary competencies sought out in Corps leaders: Direction, Drive to execute, Relationship, and Management. Each area of competency is assessed for strengths in three or more qualities.

Corder suggested that people preparing for the process should also talk widely with their colleagues about their experience and strengths in each of the areas the interview will assess. “You tend to forget the good things you have done,” Corder said. “People who have worked with you will remind you.” Corder and Tickner both strongly emphasized the worth of thinking through specific examples that could bolster answers to your questions. Again, they pointed out that it is unwise to assume that people will know what you have done, or that your written materials will be ‘enough to say.’

“Don’t neglect to review what you do outside the office as well as your work experience,” Tickner advised. “Your community volunteer work, your activities at your church . . . all of that should be part of the picture of yourself you are giving the interviewer.”

The interview includes such questions as:

- Is it ever ok to lie?
- What did you learn from your mother? From your father?
- How much time do you spend at work?

“Answer quickly, honestly, and realize that you’ll be asked to give an example,” Tickner said. “If you say you’re organized when you’re not, imagine how hard it is going to be to answer the follow up question, “Describe your total day yesterday, exactly.”

And answering quickly and honestly doesn’t mean that you have to be spontaneous – as in completely unprepared!

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The Gallup Interview Process continued

(Continued from page 10)

Coleman Long recommends reading a book called Knock 'em Dead, 1999, by Martin Yate. "Coleman reports that a good third of the types of questions asked on the Gallup are given in the book. Take time to read it, think about your true answer and how best to frame it, and a couple of examples of how you live out your answer," Corder said.

A word to the wise . . .

People attending the seminar, as well as Corder, Tickner, and Susan Dixon of the Personnel Office, agreed that the Gallup Interview presented some significant challenges. Corder reported that his written feedback from his interview contained information that was flatly contradicted—to his detriment—by the Gallup personnel who spoke to the panel that interviewed him for two positions. Worse, the negative assessment verbally released by the Gallup

staff member eventually circulated to at least two other Districts. Although Corder alerted headquarters personnel about the problem, he has seen no real resolution.

Steve Aiken observed that the people supplying verbal comment to the interview panel were obviously at several removes from the actual interview, and thus their observations could be less than reliable.

All who had participated in the interview process cautioned prospective candidates to prepare carefully for the interview. Both Corder and Tickner urged candidates to make a very strong effort to give the widest and deepest picture of themselves and their work possible, and to avoid jokes, ironic remarks, or statements that could appear completely different in print from how they sound when they're being spoken. Tickner said he thought it very important not to allow the interview to be conducted in an open situation where you can be over-

heard and possibly interrupted. Corder advised candidates to pick the time of day when they are freshest and feel best.

Dixon reminded the group that the Gallup interview might be powerful, but it was never the only factor in a selection. "You must keep in mind that you're competing with other candidates, one of whom may be 'just right,' and with a host of other factors. Be aware and prepared when dealing with the Gallup interview, but remember it is not the only or even the controlling factor."

Coleman Long reported last week that a recent panel he sat on selected two of the Gallup-recommended candidates, and two others that Gallup had not recommended.

So – the Gallup Interview process is a bit on the scary side, but you can, with careful preparation, make it work for you by recording the real you.



New grandson for Wayne

Wright: Harrison Wayne Wright was born on 15 August—a big guy at 9 lbs. 13 oz. And 22 and ½ inches long. Mother Suzanne and dad Andy are happy. Andy is con-

sidering a football team, but Suzanne is not as enthusiastic!

Great expectations: Mike Hosey and his wife Marta (Klesath) Hosey are expecting a baby next spring.

The Hoseys met while working as Co-Op students in the Wilmington Regulatory Office. Mike is now enjoying himself as the Conservation Biologist for Falls and Jordan Lakes, while Marta is finishing up a second Master's degree at NCSU in Toxicology. She has recently been hired to a permanent position as a Biology Instructor at Central Carolina Community College.

Graduating Troop: June Pauley's daughter, Nichole, graduated from Army Basic Combat

Training on September 7th. She has been assigned to Fort Gordon for 25 weeks of Advanced Individual Training to become a Radio/COMSEC Repairer.

Who were those masked golfers?

We've had the hint that you should ask **Jim Stirling** and **Jim Bradley** about their victory in the National Golf Championship. Tiger, watch your tail!

Aloha Joel: Joel Hendrix, Chief of Emergency Management, seems to prefer hurricanes by any other name (like TYPHOON), and will leave us on 28 September for a three-year assignment as Chief of Emergency Management for Honolulu District. Beth, Charlie, Leanna and Joel are looking forward to an exciting three years. Aloha!!!

RETIREE

NEWS



By Bob Swart

We had a fair crowd of 16 in attendance this month. We were glad to have the following retirees and spouses with us: Virginia Uzzell, Bettye and Bob Swart, Lawrence Crawley, Max Grimes, Dorothy K. Everett, Edith and Jim Vithalani, Joe Lewis, Henry Jerome, Bob Doetsch, Sylvia and Rex Phillips, Doris and Ken Old, and Robert Venters.

In asking the folks what had been going on with them, things seem to be going along pretty slow. The rains had put a halt to a lot of the outdoor projects. Joe Lewis came

up with the comment "counting." I was at a little bit of a loss until it dawned on me that the county had recently mailed out tax assessment forms and in having been around Joe all these years, I then understood. Edith Vithalani is still waiting for the time of her swearing in as a US citizen. Jim seemed to be quite content for the Immigration people to take their time. It seems that he and Edith are planning a trip to India to visit Jim's family, and Jim is wondering if Edith does not get sworn in that he might just have to leave her there. Edith did not appear to be too concerned, either. After all, Jim's family treats her like a queen when she is with them.

There has been some traveling by some of the folks recently. Henry Jerome visited some of his relatives in Boston. Bettye and Bob went to Jupiter, Florida, to visit their daughter, her husband and the two youngest granddaughters during the first week in August. Virginia

Uzzell went to a family reunion in Tomahawk, Wisconsin, where there were 159 people in attendance coming from eight states. Now that's what you'd call a real get together.

Lloyd Tyndall's mother had been very sick over the last several months, and we learned that she passed away on Monday, 11 September. The funeral was held on the 13th in Kinston, NC. Our prayers and condolences go out to the family at their loss. We will continue to maintain contact with Jere Danford, who is presently being cared for at the Hospice Center. Our prayers go out to him and his family.

Hope to see some more of you folks back with us next month. Mark the date, Thursday, October 2, on your calendars. Now, you occasional attendees and those who would like to join with us, use the BIG yellow markers to remind you that you are certainly welcomed!

U.S. ARMY ENGINEER DISTRICT,
WILMINGTON
CORPS OF ENGINEERS
P.O. BOX 1890
WILMINGTON, N.C. 28402-1890



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