Wilmington District News

Volume 25 • Number 6 June 2004

Corps Day 2004

Wilmington District News

Volume 25, Number 6
June 2004

Wilmington District News is an unofficial publication authorized under the AR 360-1. It is published monthly by U.S. Army Engineer District, Wilmington, reproduced, and circulated through distribution to CESAW employees. Submission of articles, photos, letters, and graphic arts of interest to the general readership is encouraged. Letters to the editor are welcome. All manuscripts are subject to editing and rewriting prior to publication. Deadline for submission of copy is the eighth of each month. All photos are official U.S. Army photos unless otherwise stated. The views and opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Corps of Engineers or the Department of the Army. Printed circulation: 750.

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 Charles R. Alexander, Jr.

Chief, Public Affairs:
Penelope Schmitt

Managing Editor:
Hank Heusinkveld

Inside This Issue

Ops Plan Update 3
Earning the Professional Engineer License 4-5
Life Outside the Green Zones
Danny Kissam: Victory Base, Iraq 6
Sarah Tingley: CEFMS Queen of Baghdad 7
Corps Day 8-9
Taking a Second Look at our Projects
From a "Bird's Eye" Point of View 10-11
Joseph S.J. Tanner, II Environmental Education Center 12
Kerr Lake "Giant Serpent" Rumors Stir up a Storm!! 13
Website Highlights 14
Brown Bag Tips for Windows 2000 14
Reaching Out 15
Corps Family News 15
2004 ROCAME Jamboree 16

On the Cover:
Sarah Fonseca watches as her horseshoes partner Tony Carter nails one during a game at Corps Day. (Heusinkveld Photo)

A Corps of Professionals

This month's newsletter features the trials and triumphs of Wilmington team members who have sought and won their Professional Engineer's license (see story on pages 4 and 5). We are proud of their efforts!

And we remember that their professionalism and high skill levels are typical, not exceptional, around the Corps and in our District. Licenses and professional certification are part of many professional fields represented here. We have certified divers, mariners who hold licenses at various levels, attorneys who have passed the bar exam, certified accountants, contracting pros, and wetlands scientists. Whether our team members are performing confined space entry or arguing before a federal court, we know they are the best at what they do.

As a learning organization, we applaud those who go the extra mile to enhance their abilities to serve the Nation. Wilmington District, like the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as a whole, is full of folks who not only know their jobs, but have gone beyond basic education and on-the-job training to earn licenses, diplomas, and certifications.

How about you? Do you know what types of professional certification is available for someone in your career field? Does your Individual Development Plan (IDP) reflect potential certification goals? The work you put into your certification is something that not only benefits our District and the Nation – it is something you can take with you wherever you go. The sky is the limit!

Ops Plan Update:

Expand Environmental Education (Part Two)

Editor's note- In last month's issue we told you about an interactive learning tool to be used in Objective 3.1. In this issue we talked with Ashley Hatchell who describes in detail her contribution to the objective.

"If I ran that dam . . . !"

A new learning tool being developed by Wilmington District water managers and an environmental education working group will let members of the public 'test drive' a variety of ways to manage a reservoir. It's an important component of Objective 3.1 "Expand the Environmental Program" in this year's operations plan.

"It's designed so that kids as young as elementary school could learn something from looking at the pictures and graphics. Older students and adults can actually put some of their water management ideas to the test," explained Ashley Hatchell, who works on the team developing the learning tool.

"It's not really a model, but rather more like a computer-based story. The program will show a typical river basin that has a reservoir and dam in it, and shows a variety of stakeholders at points upstream and downstream from the dam. At each point along the story, users get to choose conditions that affect the basin, and they can take a variety of actions to respond to those conditions. The program will then tell them the results of their actions, and actually show them the conditions that will likely result for all the stakeholders."

For example, the 'story' may start with the River Basin in a drought, flood, or normal condition. Users can choose a variety of operations actions for the dam, including what the Corps water control manual would require, and see what happens when they implement the action.

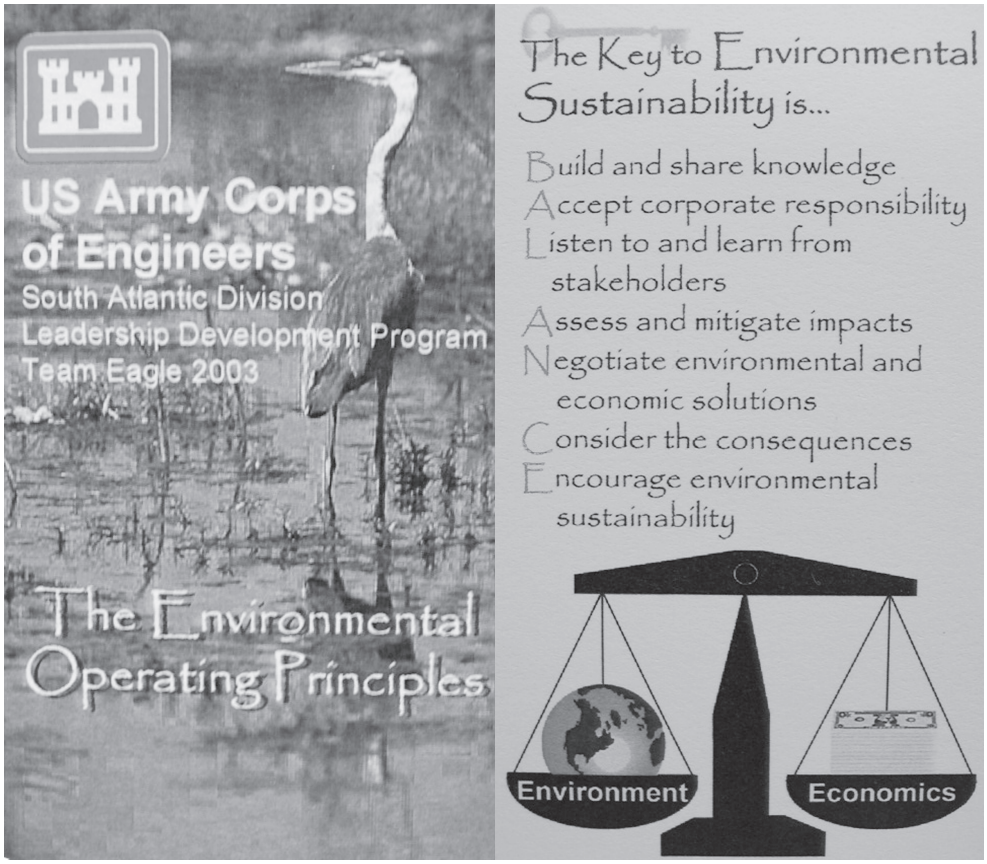
"One very familiar suggestion we hear is that the dam should release water ahead of a major storm system or hurricane," Hatchell said. This program lets users try that solution, and see what happens in the river basin depending on whether the storm hits the reservoir or misses.

"A classroom could test out different sequences and students could compare the results," Hatchell said. "Or our water controllers could actually use the tool at public forums to help them explain why we choose certain operations approaches. You could even make use of this tool in a Congressman's office to illustrate problems and impacts for various consitutent groups."

The program will also link to a wide variety of information about related reservoir and river basin issues like recreation, fisheries management, water quality, and water supply.

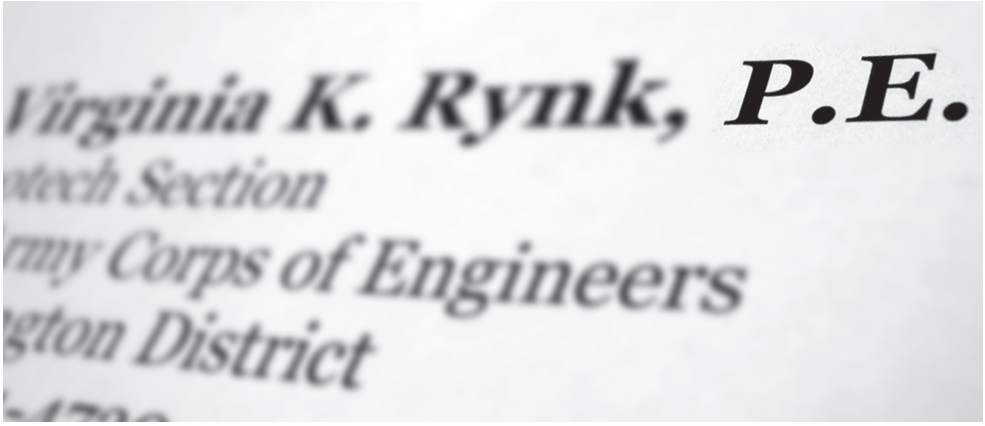
Hatchell emphasized that this is a learning tool, not a 'model' in the sense of a sophisticated predictive tool. "This program has enough complexity so that it can illustrate some of the factors we must take into consideration as we manage a river basin, but it is in no way intended to be a tool people could use to test out scenarios in any actual river basin. Such models are much more complicated and require a great deal more knowledge and understanding of specialized hydrographic techniques than we could expect of the general public."

When can we expect to see the tool in action? "Our team will demonstrate the tool for the Quality Steering Group later this summer. We hope that it will be ready to implement for the use and enjoyment of students and adults sometime during the coming 2004-2005 school year."



Another operations plan objective 3.1 action this year is to develop some information products, like this business card, that help our team members and customers understand and remember our Environmental Operating Principles.

Earning the Professional Engineer License



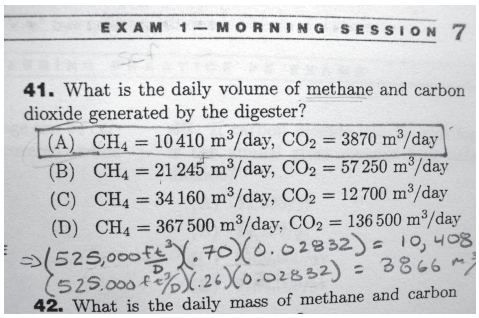
The title of PE sets an engineer apart as someone who went the extra mile to learn more about and be dedicated to the profession.

Story and photos by Hank Heusinkveld

Successfully completing jump school earns Soldiers the U.S. Army Parachute Badge or "jump wings." It means the Soldier was willing to not just jump out of an airplane, but to set personal goals and measure his own leadership potential.

Earning the Professional Engineer license is similar to earning jump wings. Though not physical in nature, it indicates dedication, integrity, hard work, and creativity. More importantly it means that an engineer has attained a significant level of competency. According to the National Society of Professional Engineers, employers in all disciplines indicate that they find licensed professional engineer employees to be more dedicated, with enhanced leadership and management skills. These employers look to licensure in evaluating the advancement potential of employees. In addition, licensed engineers also achieve status in the eyes of the public, who equate the engineer with professionals licensed in other fields.

The first step in getting the PE begins in college, usually in an engineering student's senior year, by taking the Engineer in Training test. Once that's accomplished an engineer must work no less than four years under the supervision of a registered professional engineer to be eligible to take the PE examination. Terry Brown took the exam at N.C. State in 1981. His certification hangs prominently in the center of his cubicle.


EXAM 1—MORNING SESSION 7

41. What is the daily volume of methane and carbon dioxide generated by the digester?

(A) $CH_4 = 10\,410\ m^3/day$, $CO_2 = 3870\ m^3/day$

(B) $CH_4 = 21\,245\ m^3/day$, $CO_2 = 57\,250\ m^3/day$

(C) $CH_4 = 34\,160\ m^3/day$, $CO_2 = 12\,700\ m^3/day$

(D) $CH_4 = 367\,500\ m^3/day$, $CO_2 = 136\,500\ m^3/day$

$\Rightarrow (525{,}000\ ft^3/D)(.70)(0.02832) = 10{,}408$

$(525{,}000\ ft^3/D)(.26)(0.02832) = 3866\ m^3$

42. What is the daily mass of methane and carbon

Questions like this are typical for the PE examination.

"That was a very rigorous exam; four hours in morning and four in the afternoon," he recalls. "Back then one of the two four-hour sessions had word problems citing references, documentation, and you had to show all of your work."

Brown says the pass/fail rate was 65 to 35. He passed on his first attempt (out of three allowed) and continued his career with a sense of accomplishment.

"I think it gave me a lot of additional confidence. It was a milestone."

Former Deputy District Engineer Major Randy Powell took his PE exam three years ago while an instructor at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. He in fact earned his jump wings in the Army, and feels earning the PE was just as rewarding.

"I equate it to life; you have to run a marathon once just to say you did it. That's how I viewed the PE. It means being organized and forcing yourself to work problems before you take the test. That was the reason for my success on the first try."

Nowadays, the Professional Engineer license exam is all multiple choice. For some engineers it's a source of controversy.

MAJ Randy Powell discusses various types of engineering questions prospective professional engineers need to know for the PE exam. Attending the session are Rolando Serrano (far left), Ashley Hatchell, and Doug Wall. Ed Dunlop (lower left) helps facilitate the study group.

"It used to be that you were given a problem and you had to solve it and show your work," Powell says. "I thought that was a way to better measure an engineer because it made you apply engineering problem solving and methodology, make some assumptions, solve the problem and work through it. With multiple choice you have to work the problems which takes away a lot of rational assumptions to get to a solution."

Sharon Haggett, who earned her PE in 1992, also feels the test she took was a better measure of the various ways engineers can reach a solution to a problem.

"For an engineer there is no single answer that's the right answer. Each person looks at something differently and that's what they're checking; your design abilities and how to solve a problem. Multiple choice leads you to believe that there's only one answer when in reality there's more than one. As a professional engineer you want to give your customer the best possible solution or solutions."

Multiple choice or not, the examination is still a grueling eight-hour test of mental endurance and engineering competency. And it still takes hours of free time to prepare, sometimes a year out. Here in the District a group has been set up to help those who plan to take the PE exam. They meet on regularly scheduled days for at least two hours. Ed Dunlop helps future PE candidates prepare for the exam. He earned his PE in 1990, but looking back he feels his study strategy was wrong.

"When I took it I studied by myself. I think if you go into it with a group of people it gives you some motivation, and also a team approach is better than going it alone."

Ashley Hatchell, who took the PE exam in the Spring, explains to Doug Wall the rules involved when taking the eight-hour exam.

Once an engineer has earned the PE, the learning doesn't stop. The engineering profession is self-regulated, which means engineers must keep abreast of the latest trends and technology. And the profession keeps tabs on people with a professional engineer license. In North Carolina engineers must complete 15 hours of continued education every year.

"It has to be documented and you may be audited," says Haggett. "We have had the opportunity to be audited before. The audit includes a certificate; 'is it an accredited continuing education, and when did you take it?' So, those are the state requirements in North Carolina and that's typical for every state. It's no different than a professional license for a doctor. There are standards you've got to meet."

Classes like this are available within the District for professional engineers to keep up with their mandatory continuing education.

It's a mark of dedication and respect for the engineering profession. Not having a PE doesn't discount the competency of other engineers, however.

"Having a PE doesn't mean you're a better engineer," says Brown, "but it does mean you chose to take on a difficult challenge and succeeded."

Danny Kissam: Victory Base, Iraq

Life Outside the Green Zone

Danny Kissam, second from left, shares a few laughs with coworkers at Victory Base.

When Danny Kissam first returned to the District from Iraq you could see a change in his face; fatigue and trepidation. A seemingly reserved person, he was eager to share what he'd seen during his deployment to Iraq. And after a few weeks of time to decompress he looks back at his mission with a sense of pride and a feeling of hope for the Iraqi people and U.S. troops deployed there.

Kissam spent his time at Victory Base which is located four to five miles from Baghdad near the infamous Abu Ghraib prison. He worked as a contract officer making sure GIs had suitable accommodations and stress-busting outlets like gymnasiums. Occasionally, he'd leave the confines of Victory Base for a mad dash to the Green Zone or to make bi-weekly payments to Iraqi contract workers.

"I was in danger every day, every hour," he says matter of factly. "I was in the Iraqi crowds quite a bit because I had to post information on a public board. Did I worry about it? No. If it's your time, it's your time."

No stranger to stressful situations from working in Special Operations during his time in the Air Force, Kissam looked at his situation pragmatically. Danger was just another part of life for USACE workers.

"Victory Base was surrounded by villages. There wasn't a day there when we weren't attacked. We always got hit with gunfire and mortars. It almost became second nature after nine o'clock at night. We had a few attacks at mid-day, but most of the time it was after evening mosque prayers. That's when we experienced the most incoming rounds."

According to Kissam, not all Iraqis wanted foreigners out of their country. And insurgents had bounties on the heads of their fellow countrymen.

"The average worker made about 15 to 20 dollars a day as a laborer. Their lives were in danger all of the time. They were constantly getting threats not to work with the Americans. There were insurgents everywhere. At one time we had a couple of kids who were hanging around a gate. We finally had to run them off because they were trying to identify Iraqi contractors for the insurgents who didn't want them making money from the Americans for their families."

One worker, whom Kissam befriended, stepped too closely to a line drawn by insurgents who decided who would live and who would die.

"He was probably one of my better contractors. He was a Kurdish Iraqi. The day that I flew back home he had just been by the office and been paid and was on his way home. He was ambushed and his driver was killed, too. It was a sad day in my life. He wasn't just a good contractor he was a good human being...easy to deal with...always there anytime. I depended on him. As careful as he was...it 's hard for me to picture him getting ambushed. There were spies everywhere."

Kissam experienced another sad chapter in the life of an ordinary Iraqi, a man who spent 12 years at Abu Ghraib.

"He took a newspaper with Saddam's picture on it. Reading what the article was he balled it up and said BS and was put in prison for doing that. That's why I'm glad we're here because nobody deserves scars on their back like this man had. It was the most unholy thing I'd ever seen. It's like somebody had taken a bullwhip and just literally cut the meat off his back. So, for that I'm glad that we've done what we've done.

Life as a volunteer to support the Gulf Region Division is fraught with violence and at the same time hopefulness in knowing that you're contributing a piece of yourself for the greater good. Kissam found himself in dangerous situations many times, but he continued his mission.

"Even though it was dangerous, it was gratifying because you could see the end results of all of your hard work. And if you weren't scared you were a fool. You got complacent because you didn't control your own destiny. There were a few people who couldn't handle it and we had to send them home early. I don't begrudge them, though. It's rough over there."

In my opinion, I think about 80 percent of the Iraqi people are happy that we're there. 0 percent, my estimate, is that it wouldn't matter who was there. These people have been fighting it seems forever. They would still be out making a mess of things. It's just the way it is over there.

Sarah Tingley: CEFMS Queen of Baghdad

The "stigma" of CEFMS, the Corps of Engineers Financial Management System, is alive and well in Iraq.

Sarah Tingley, who recently returned from her deployment to Baghdad, helped set up the cumbersome, yet effective tool while working as a budget analyst for the Finance Office of the Project Management Office. According to her, others outside of USACE began a love-hate relationship with CEFMS when it was up and running.

"We were getting the same response from these people that we all have been through with CEFMS," she said with a grin. "They hated it, too. They didn't understand why the Corps had this system, but it worked. And it's probably the best that's out there. CEFMS simply is the best for handling government funds."

Sarah Tingley poses at the Project Management Office within the Green Zone.

The heavily fortified entrance to Sarah's living quarters is affectionately called "Embassy Suites."

Tingley said she learned more about CEFMS during her deployment than she ever has in her career, mainly because she was bombarded with so many questions about how it worked that it forced her to take her existing knowledge to a new level. She also fell back into the computer management world, her primary background before moving to resource management.

"I was doing things there that I'd never be able to do here. I was doing in-depth CEFMS. Not only was I doing a lot of budget work, I was doing a lot of Information Management functions, too. We had no IM people there."

Tingley says life within the Green Zone was relatively calm. Her first experience with hostile bombardments left her more alert, but she quickly adapted.

"I never felt like my life was in danger in the Green Zone. Had I been outside the Green Zone I might feel differently, but there were times when I was a little uncomfortable with explosions. But I was never close enough to feel like I was in harm's way."

One big factor that added an indirect sense of security was the close bond she formed with her coworkers. Time was made for creature comforts like "Spa Night" where women could get together to be women. And her roommate, an Army Lieutenant Colonel, taught her the ropes of living under hostile conditions.

"The first few nights that we had the bombings, yeah, I'd wake up. I'd listen for the 'giant voice' that was our warning system. A voice would come on over the loudspeaker to tell us to take cover. You'd hear it all over the place, and when the bombings would stop the voice would come on again and say 'all clear'. We had bunkers all over the place, so if you were outside you'd just find a bunker. If you were in your trailer you'd cover yourself with a mattress. But by the time it was over you'd just get over it. I'd roll over and go back to sleep!"

Tingley feels proud of her duty working under the Coalition Provisional Authority. It gave her a sense of accomplishment and gratification.

"And maybe that's why I feel like I would go back."

PHOTO BY SARAH TINGLEY

Mary Beal from Fort Stewart, Georgia applies mud from the Dead Sea to Pat Hatcher, an auditor from the Defense Contracting Audit Agency, during "Spa Night" in the kitchen of the palace at the Project Management Office.

Corps Day 2004

No softball? No big deal. Bring on Bocci Ball!

Even though Corps Day was rescheduled from 11 June to 25 June because of the government day of mourning following the death of President Ronald Reagan it was filled with fun for everyone. Folks were recognized for their years of service with the Federal Government, and two District employees took top honors as Employee of the Year and Suggester of the Year. Chuck Wilson's dedication to his job earned him special status as Employee of the Year, while Carmine Forcinito's desire to "think out of the box" earned him Suggester of the Year.

We saw old friends who stopped by to join the fun, and we paid special tribute to our coworkers who volunteered for duty in Iraq and Afghanistan and who are there still.

All in all it was simple, but it sure was fun. Special thanks to Justin McCorcle and the Recreation Committee for a successful Corps Day 2004.

Tayvon Vann, great nephew of Elaine Hayes, enjoys "pampering time."

"Bocci Ball" became a popular surrogate sport to play since the traditional softball game was cancelled.

Congratulations to Chuck Wilson (left) and Carmine Forcinito (right)! Chuck is the District's Employee of the Year, and Carmine is the Suggestor of the Year.

Jordan Collins, 6, daughter of Jocelyn Collins, gets her face painted by Ashley Hatchell.

Holly Glasson, left, helps serve Rhonda Wiggins in the food line. Also in line from left to right are Ron Stirrat, Allan McDuffie, Phil Payonk, Doug Greene and Donald Peterson.

17-month-old Justin, grandson of Trudy Wilder, enjoys a beverage while in the comforts of his stroller.

The ever lovely Linda O. Linder poses for a candid shot.

Nancy Cox, Patty Hargrove and Penny Schmitt bide their time during a cozy game of bingo.

Taking a Second Look at Our Projects:

Editor's note – This is the second of a two-part series highlighting the uniqueness of each of our projects. In this issue we feature Falls and John H. Kerr.

From a "Bird's Eye" Point of View...

By Dana Lee, Falls Lake

I haven't been around Falls Lake that long, you know. I really just came to the area a few years ago. The neighbors tell me that the 'Triangle Area' is made up of Raleigh, the Capital City; Durham, the City of Medicine; and Chapel Hill, for which I don't think a nickname exists. Anyway, this 'Triangle Area' is pretty busy and from what I can tell, growing very rapidly. It seems like new subdivisions and shopping centers are built every day.

When I first arrived here, I remember a developer plowing down one particular forest near Falls Lake. This forest had one huge oak tree that the logging crew had left standing by itself. A small hope emerged in me at the time, and I thought that maybe urban sprawl isn't paving over everything in its path. At almost five feet in diameter, the tree was just magnificent. I can only hope that whatever was made from the wood was magnificent too. You guessed it, it was cut down a day later. I happened to pass by as a crowd of men sawed and hacked their way through that great trunk. The good news is that if you like movies, a video rental store stands there now.

It seems that Falls Lake is becoming the only natural space left around here. You know, I've even talked to some friends who live near Jordan Lake and they say that Falls and Jordan Lakes make up over half of the open green space left in the Triangle! No wonder there are no houses on those public lands!

Oh my, I really am rude, aren't I? I haven't even introduced myself to you. My mother raised me better than that! I'm one of the six adult bald eagles that nested here at Falls Lake over the spring. Now that my chicks have fledged, I have some time to myself. I've been flying around, checking out what you humans do around here. Let me give you the inside scoop on Falls Lake.

"I know I'm a beautiful bird and the symbol of America, but please keep your distance. I'm wild, you know. I value my privacy. My great-great grandchildren thank you."

I suppose you're not that interested in the recreation facilities. Though they are nice, they really aren't much different from many other recreation areas at many other lakes. Falls Lake has campgrounds, day use areas, swim beaches, fishing areas, boat ramps, and picnic shelters. The facilities aren't what makes this lake stand out. I've come to find out that the people around this lake are pretty amazing. That complement doesn't come easily for me as eagles are not so trusting of humans after the DDT years.

It seems to me that there are a few different agencies working around the lake. Their uniforms look similar, but I'm pretty sure they all manage different areas of the lake, yet somehow work together as well. Some of the people I've seen work for the NC Wildlife Resources Commission, the NC Division of Parks and Recreation, and US Army Corps of Engineers. That's a lot of different agencies with a lot of different views on how Falls Lake should be managed. From what I can tell, the Corps acts as the glue that keeps everyone together. They still own the land around the lake, but have leased it to the other agencies for management. They refer to these agencies as 'partners'. I suppose they mean partners in the effort to protect and maintain Falls Lake. Let me tell you some about each agency.

Let's start with the agency who has the largest bit of land, the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (WRC). At Falls, the WRC manages most of the timber stands around the lake both for the health of the ecosystem and for timber sales. They also manage other areas for wildlife as well. Much of what they do improves habitat for games species such as deer and turkey, but they manage for animals like me too! (I'll get to that part in a minute.) From their management efforts, there are plenty of us animals running around the lake.

Unfortunately, all of the animals at the lake means plenty of targets for those who like to hunt. I won't get into hunting too much since it's not my favorite topic. I hear humans talk about it all the time as a management tool, and I know that the enforcement branch of the WRC regulates all of the

hunting and fishing. I see those guys talking to hunters and even fishermen all around the lake. Writing tickets and keeping at least some of the animals safe. They seem to be doing a pretty good job.

Maybe we can talk about the NC Division of Parks and Recreation now. They are similar to the WRC enforcement officers because they both carry weapons and act like police sometimes. However, DPR has a smaller bit of land to manage, and they manage people more often than wildlife. DPR runs all of the recreation areas on the lake. You want tent or RV camping? How about a swim beach? A picnic shelter? They've got it all waiting for you.

Speaking of swimming, at the DPR swim beaches there something I specifically wanted to show you. A strange wooden kiosk sits in the sand at every swim beach. This kiosk has orange articles of clothing on it that people are constantly wearing in the water and then returning. I guess you could call it a Loaner Station of sorts. It's been rumored around the lake that those orange things are called 'life-jackets' and that they help keep you afloat in the water! That sounds crazy to me, but the kids seem to love them. If you watch, every Friday morning, a Corps ranger checks all of those 'life-jackets' at all of the swim beaches. The ranger will take some down if they look old and put new ones in their place.

Well I guess, all that is left to talk about is the Corps of Engineers. Unless I'm missing something, they only have about 6 people on their staff! Compared to the other agencies, that's a small number of people, and they have a relatively small piece of land to directly manage. They work from down on the south end of the lake, near the dam. I go fishing down there occasionally, and even taught my two chicks how to fish there this year. They don't stay down there though. I see those rangers all over the place! They are out on boats patrolling during weekends, checking on timber prescriptions, assisting visitors, and even operating the dam after a flood.

The Corps rangers have a lot to do for such a small staff. Just the other day, I saw two of them walking part of the 250 miles of boundary line. They were looking for things called 'encroachments'. I could never figure out what those are, but I think they found some dumped trash and a flowerbed or two on government land. They seemed very concerned and wanted to fix the problems right away. Good for them! Falls Lake is too precious to allow people to trash public lands!

"Don't forget to use one of these devices that help humans float. They're free to use."

The Corps also has a project that is near and dear to my heart, endangered species management. In fact, that was a big selling point when I was looking to move here. I found a forest stand that is exactly how I like it. My home has lots of room between the trees for a big bird like me to fly, and many tall pine trees along the waterfront that are just perfect for a nest. I recently found out that the Corps helped the WRC manage this stand of trees so an eagle like myself could use it. I think the Corps leads the other agencies in all endangered species management, plants and animals alike.

The only complaint I have about the management is the peeping toms around my nest! Every week, I see a different uniform watching my nest and chicks. I know it's someone from the Corps or the State, but they bring a big spotting scope and binoculars, and it's a bit disturbing. They stare at us for a good 20 minutes and make notes on what we're doing. I don't like that at all. One of the other eagles that has been here longer says that the people are watching to make sure we're nesting successfully. I suppose that's a good thing. It just goes to show you that all of these agencies work together on important matters such as my species' survival.

There are plenty of others who work at Falls Lake such as those from Wake County and the marina owners, but I don't want to keep you all day. What I'm really trying to get across to you is that it's not necessarily the facilities that make Falls Lake great, I'm beginning to think it's the people. I understand if you don't believe me, and if you want a human's point of view, you can stop by the Corps office just by the dam. They seem friendly and know a lot about the lake. In fact, I think most of them will talk your ear off about how great the place is!

– Projects continued on page 12

Joseph S.J. Tanner, II Environmental Education Center

By Sherrie Storm

Want to have the most fun you ever had in one spot? Come up to Kerr Reservoir-JOHN H that is, not W. Kerr which even District folks get confused-and visit the Joseph S.J. Tanner Environmental Education Center!

Everything you ever wanted to know about SNAKES is right here...you can view live indigenous specimens through the safety of a glass cage, OR you can even have a close encounter by handling one or two if you like. None of the snakes inside the Center is venomous, so you have nothing to fear!

There's lots more to see and do right here in this beautiful spot that overlooks the Tailrace, Buggs Island, and Kerr Dam. I'll bet you want to know just how it all came to be...like, just how did the Corps of Engineers get into the snake business? What's a Tailrace? You mean there really is a Buggs Island?

Yes, and there is a Train under the Lake, and Buddy Ebsen of Beverly Hillbillies fame used to hang out here, and Giant Catfish are reported to be here, and there's rumored to be a man buried in the dam, and Civil War battles were fought and there is a Revolutionary War hero buried on a seven-mile long hiking trail. There are hunting spots, and wildlife viewing spots...fishing spots, too, but I don't know them because I have yet to catch a thing!

Let me first tell you what the Tanner Center is, and how it came to be. The Tanner Center, formerly the Corps' Resource Manager's Office at John H. Kerr, was used as an informal nature center each summer as part of the interpretive programming. One summer ranger had an office there, and volunteers operated it. As a nature center it was wildly popular, visited by 2500 people each season. Simple displays, hands-on specimens, live snakes, and children's activities were highlights.

In 1999 the flat roof, which had been in place since 1950 and had undergone innumerable repairs began to leak. The leaks became so profuse, that water ran through the ceiling light fixtures and down the walls. It became necessary to make the decision to remove the building or permanently fix the roof.

Summer Park Ranger Judy Elliott and Shelby and Alex King share a moment with Mr. Jingles, the Tanner Center's house mouse.

From fall 2000 to summer 2002 a new vaulted roof was constructed, interior walls removed and paneled, carpentry work was done, electrical repairs made, new carpet laid, and a central heat and air conditioning system was installed.

On September 28, 2002 the center was named officially for a former Operations Manager and Corps retiree, the late Joseph S.J. Tanner, II. Mr. Tanner was an avid supporter of environmental education and children's nature programs.

The Tanner Center is dedicated to environmental education and interpretation of the natural resources of John H. Kerr Dam and Reservoir and the six counties in Virginia and North Carolina in which it lies. The education focus is on management responsibilities of the US Army Corps of Engineers in five areas of stewardship: forestry, wildlife, aquatics, hydroelectric power, and recreation (people). The goal is to impart stewardship values in the children and adults of today and the future.

At present, the building has been renovated 90%, the deck and the amphitheater with electrical outlets have been completed, landscaping is nearly finished, the "Tugboat Dan Display" is in place, and the center has been open to the public since the summer of 2003.

Displays are continually being created by the staff by using as many resources "on hand" as possible, to avoid any further major expenses. Mounted specimens, on permanent loan from the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, live snakes on loan from a local high school as well as personal collections belonging to the rangers, photocopies and handouts are used to educate the public. A variety of programs are offered daily and on weekends: nature walks, nature crafts, Discovery Camp, snake programs, live music and campfire stories are some of the programs offered.

As for the rest of the mysteries? YOU are going to have to come up and see it! For more information, please call 434-738-6143 x 151. We'll see you here!

– By Sherrie Storm

Kerr Lake "Giant Serpent" Rumor Stirs Up A Storm!

By Sherrie Storm, Park Ranger

"US Army Corps of Engineers, Tanner Center, this is Sherrie," I answered routinely when the phone rang.

"Yes, this is Terrie over at the Sheriff's Office," came the reply. "We have a report of a giant snake that was killed in Clarksville and everyone is saying it was about 18 feet long, and we were thinking that couldn't be right."

I immediately thought of a picture that a coworker recently sent to me of a dead snake. The digital photo was taken at an angle that made the snake look incredibly large.

"I saw a picture about a week ago, of a Copperhead and a guardrail, is that it?" I asked.

"That's the one," she said. We talked about the snake, and how the angle made it look very large, but there were clues of relativity to alert the viewer to its real size.

I hung up, figuring that would be the end of it. Well, the next call was from the News Progress newspaper in Chase City. They were getting calls from all over about this giant serpent that was circulating around on the internet and that it was brought to the Dam for identification.

How big would you say this "monster serpent" is?

> *"...oh, yeah, the snake is 20 feet long, it was brought to you, you didn't know what it was, and a homing device was put on it and it was released so you could track it."*
>
> **– ROBERT BENNING**

Robert Benning, reporter for the News Progress said, (in as serious a tone as he could muster through strained laughter) "oh, yeah, the snake is 20 feet long, it was brought to you, you didn't know what it was, and a homing device was put on it and it was released so you could track it."

Great. "No, just rumors," I said, and he agreed that it was getting kinda crazy. It still wasn't over, though. Before the week was out, I had gotten calls from as far away as Oxford, NC about the giant poisonous snake that was roaming the waters of Kerr. Another was from an "Animal Rights Activist" who was upset that I had allowed the serpent to be killed!

The rumors have included that we sent it to a zoo, set it loose, sent it off to a lab for analysis, and on and on.

The snake is a Copperhead (Agkistrodon contortrix), a venomous reptile found in every county in North Carolina and Virginia. There's "Northern" (A. c. mokasen, occurring in Virginia and NC) and "Southern" (A. c. contortrix, also in NC), and then there's the "zone of intergradation", where the two subspecies overlap. The record length is 53.0 inches, with most individuals less than 3 feet. Their habitats are varied, in forests, abandoned fields, ravines along creeks, rock walls, and woodpiles. They eat small mammals, frogs, and small birds. The young have greenish-yellow-tipped tails, and are born alive in litters of about a dozen or more.

I share the picture with you all, so you can judge for yourself. Look for clues! (Hint: rivets, post, size of guardrail...).

Website Highlights

Jan Wutkowski

This month's column explores the GI Bill, email hoaxes, coastal erosion, and golf. Let us know about sites you think others will be interested in and we'll examine for inclusion in this space.

Southwest Washington Coastal Erosion Study
http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/sea/swces/index.htm

The US Geological Survey Coastal and Marine Geology Program and the Washington Department of Ecology created the Southwest Washington Coastal Erosion Study (Columbia River) to predict management scale coastal change, and provide "coastal communities with decision support tools for integrating scientific research with coastal decision making and long-term land use planning efforts." The informative research link provides information about the study's five key components: coastal change, sediment budget, coastal processes, predictive modeling, and management support. The authors are currently compiling the data collected. Presently, researchers can find data about the beach profiles and the shorelines.

GI Bill
http://www.gibill.com/

Created to assist American veterans returning from World War II, the GI Bill (amended and renewed several times) has provided educational opportunities to servicepersons who are seeking various forms of education to ease their reentry into civilian life. On the site, you can learn about the Montgomery GI Bill, the Tuition Assistance Top-Up, and the Veterans Education Assistance Program. The site also provides information on the academic degrees that will be in particular demand over the coming years. Also, the site has updates about various military relief acts, such as the Tax Relief Act of 2003, and is rounded out by a news ticker that contains updates about news stories of particular interest to those in the military and their families.

Hoaxes and Urban Legends
www.hoaxinfo.com • www.snopes.com

We've all received emails over the years that on the surface appear to have merit, yet something makes us question the authenticity of the information contained—the one that claims Microsoft will pay you hundreds of dollars to forward a particular email, or the one that wants you to boycott all French products (some weren't even French!) because of Chirac's leaving the G8 meeting before Memorial Day. These two sites provide a means of researching those emails to debunk any false information being passed on to others.

One For Fun!

**** All Golf Links, All The Time**
http://www.all-golf-links.com/

Peruse this directory of golf courses in the US, and what are described as "carefully reviewed and hand picked Golf only web sites." This site is of note for its level of detail about the courses, listed by state. Under the "View Details" button you will find the address, phone number, Web address, e-mail, screen shot of the site and the weather in that area.

Windows 2000 Brown Bag Tips...and more!!

Editor's note – Welcome to IM's Shannon Rinehart who will give you useful information on how best to use your computer.

Shannon Rinehart

If you want to send a quick e-mail, perform one of the following steps:

- Type mailto: in the Run: box (found in the Start menu).
- Type mailto: in the Address: box of Internet Explorer.
- Create a shortcut (for starting a new mail message) by typing mailto: in the Location text box of the Create Shortcut wizard.

You'll save yourself a few steps by not going into your default e-mail application and starting a new mail message.

General Office Tricks

You can use the scroll button on your mouse to zoom in and out of documents quickly. Just hold down the Ctrl key and roll the scroll wheel forward to get a closer view of the document or roll it back to shrink it.

Sorting by a single column in Outlook is a simple matter of clicking on the column head. But multiple columns is easy also. First, sort by the first criterion, such as from, by clicking on the column head. Then hold the Shift key down as you click on a second heading, such as Received. Your messages will be sorted primarily by sender, and all the messages will be ordered chronologically.

If you want to streamline your desktop and frequently used applications, simply drag a desktop icon to the Quick Launch portion of the taskbar. The relocated icon appears next to the other Quick Launch icons (e.g., Internet Explorer, Outlook Express).

To remove the icon that still remains on the desktop, locate the icon again and drag it to the recycle bin. With this icon removed from the desktop, it'll be one less desktop icon to hunt for when you need to start a commonly used program.

If you need to access My Computer on a regular basis, drag the My Computer icon to the Start button, and you will automatically create a cascading shortcut to My Computer that will expand to reveal your drives, folders, and files. With Windows 2000 incorporating the use of tooltips, you can also hold your cursor over a partition in the Start Menu for a moment to view its free space and capacity. You can execute a file just by single clicking on it in the Start Menu, and open a folder by double clicking.

Just as you can right-click and choose Save Target As to pull a file from a Web site, you can also right-click pictures on Web pages to download copies to your hard disk. To download a picture, right-click the picture and click Save Picture As on the shortcut menu. In the Save Picture dialog box, choose a destination folder for the picture and click Save. A copy of the picture will be saved in that folder.

Reaching Out

Howard Varnam spoke at the 2004 Maritime Industry Day at Cape Fear Community College on May 27th. The event was sponsored by sponsored by MSO Wilmington. He gave a status report on the budget and current dredging of the Coastal Inlets with Government Plant. He also sat on a panel to discuss current waterway issues with Coast Guard and Cape Fear Pilots.

Park Rangers **Tyree Robertson** and **Iverson Ryland** of John H. Kerr participated in the 33rd Annual Youth Conservation Camp in Halifax Co., VA at Staunton River State Park. Water Safety was presented to 160 middle school students.

David Deemer presented two water safety programs at two schools for at total of 280 elementary school students.

Park Ranger **Susanne Hicks** conducted three environmental education outreach sessions over the Memorial Day Weekend. 65 people attended the programs focused on general characteristics of owls. A reading of "Screech Owl at Midnight Hollow" by C. Drew Lamm (a Smithsonian's Backyard Book) followed

Park Rangers **Susanne Hicks** and **Susan Traxel** had 44 students and chaperons from Irisburg Elementary exploring Philpott Lake through a scavenger hunt, guided hike, and "Lost but Found Safe and Sound" session.

Shannon Maness, Park Ranger JHKerr, represented Wilmington District at the Lewis & Clark Bicentennial celebration in Alton, Illinois. He was proud to represent the Corps and the US Army at this event, which drew 12,000 people. Ranger Maness was able to take his wife Martha along, to take part in the festivities as well.

Judy Elliott, Park Ranger JHKerr, represented the Corps of Engineers at National EMS Week with the Fire and Rescue Squads in Mecklenburg County, VA to promote water safety. Ranger Elliott and her interactive display touched 100 members of the community participated.

Sherrie Storm, **Kevin McDaniels**, and **Dianne Edwardson** presented a program to the Vance County, NC Leadership Team and showed the movie "Titan in Concrete—the Making of Kerr Dam". Following the presentation, the group toured the Powerhouse with Buddy Sikes.

David Deemer, Park Ranger JHKerr, manned a general information booth at the VA Welcome Center in Bracey, VA as part of VA Tourism Partnership. Over 400 visitors were recorded in the 4 hour period. The Corps will spend one Wednesday a month throughout the summer at the Center, greeting I-85 travelers.

Mike Large, Park Ranger, JHKerr, represented the WD Lake Projects at the Occoneechee Council Adult Leadership Conference in Raleigh. Over 170 scout leaders participated in the day-long event.

Sherrie Storm, Park Ranger, JHK presented an overview of the Tanner Center to 20 members of the Boydton Ruritan Club, on environmental outreach efforts.

Corps Family News

Major Randy Powell receives the deFleur Medal from Col. Alexander.

The District bid farewell to Deputy District Engineer **Major Randy Powell** who leaves Wilmington for an assignment in Heidelberg, Germany. COL Ray Alexander presented MAJ Powell with a Meritorius Service Medal and the engineer regimental professional excellence award, the deFleur Medal (see photo at left). The District also said goodbye to two retired members. **Lennie Farmer**, a Vietnam Vet, served for 33 years with the Federal Government, three of which were in the U.S. Air Force. (photo, bottom right) **Leon "Buddy" Sikes** of the John H. Kerr Powerhouse served for more than 20 years with the Federal Government. All three will be greatly missed by their friends and colleagues.

Timothy A. Rainey, Assistant Manager of Shoreline at John H. Kerr Project, announces the arrival of his firstborn. Timothy Sullivan Rainey was born on Thursday, June 17 at 3:30 pm at Duke University Hospital in Durham, NC. He weighed seven pounds, 10 ounces.

Wilmington District sends its condolences to the family of **William H. Goode**, Sr., 76, of Boydton, VA, who passed away on May 15th. Mr. Goode was a retired USACE employee. He was employed at John H. Kerr Reservoir Maintenance Department from 1974 until 1982, at which time he transferred to Falls Lake where he remained until his retirement.

Lennie Farmer, center, is accompanied by his wife, Anna.

2004 ROCAME Jamboree

ROCAME (Region "O" Council for the Advancement of Minorities in Engineering) was established in 1979. The purpose of ROCAME is to establish the sound foundation for a viable and accountable program to encourage minority youths to enter the fields of engineering, science and technology. Education's responsibility is to identify students in grades 6-12 who have an aptitude for science and math. They guide the students in choosing the necessary curriculum, monitor grades and provide guidance counseling and program administration. Industry and government responsibility is to provide awareness to the various engineering/technical careers through plant tours and role models, technical expertise for competitions and summer/co-op employment for ROCAME college students.

Doug Greene accompanies a participant during the ROCAME pentathalon event.

During the past 25 years, ROCAME students have participated in annual ROCAME jamborees where they have competed in hands-on projects based on engineering principles, extemporaneous speaking, technical paper writing and quiz bowls.

Recently, the annual jamboree took place at Dobo Hall on the campus of UNCW. More than 200 students from middle and high schools of Brunswick, Columbus, New Hanover and Pender counties participated in the event.

District representative Tony Carter, ROCAME President, coordinated volunteers from the District for the regional competition. Doug Greene and James Lewis helped out with the pentathlon event. The pentathlon consisted of 5 tests of physical skill followed by math and/or science questions. Other events included egg drop, Powerpoint presentation, mystery architecture, chemistry clue, math test and a quiz bowl.

The jamboree was concluded with lunch and an awards presentation. The overall jamboree champion for 2004-2005 is New Hanover County.

– By Tony Carter

Department of the Army
US Army Engineer District
Wilmington Corps of Engineers
Post Office Box 1890
Wilmington, NC 28402-1890

OFFICIAL BUSINESS