



US Army Corps  
of Engineers®  
Rock Island District

# Tower Times

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Helping Fight the  
Flood on the Red  
River of the North

The background image shows a large-scale flood control operation. A thick, white, slurry-like material is being pumped from a large pipe into a turbulent, fast-moving river. The water is dark and churning, with white foam and spray. The surrounding area is a mix of snow and ice, with bare trees in the background. The scene is captured from a low angle, looking down into the river.



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May/June 2009

## *Tower Times*

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Engineers  
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## On the Cover

Flood-fight efforts are put to the test when the Red River of the North spills out of its banks.  
Photo by Paul Kowalczyk, Engineering and Construction Division.

## SAFETY CORNER

Wearing a life jacket can make the difference between life and death. Today life jackets come in many different shapes, sizes and colors, leaving no reason not to "Wear It!"



**Before boating check safety equipment:**

- \*fire extinguisher
- \*type IV throwable device
- \*life jacket
- \*sound producing device



# DISTRICT ORDNANCE TECHNICIANS CLEAR ARSENAL SITE

By Ron Plante, Military History Program Specialist

Two members of the Engineering and Construction Division's Ordnance and Explosives Engineering Section - commonly known as "The Bomb Squad" - used metal detectors to verify that an acre of Arsenal land was free of ordnance before construction could begin. The area surveyed, just east of our Rock Island New Orleans office, will be the site of new housing for military families assigned to Arsenal Island.

In accordance with AR 420-1, Facilities Management, a survey is required when there is a possibility of unexploded ordnance (UXO). Engineers from the Installation Management Command contacted the section to utilize its unique capabilities. Nick Heleg-Greza and Joe Vann, both former military Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) technicians, used Schonstedt magnetometers to check for metal objects down to three feet below the ground.

"Because of the Arsenal's history of ordnance-related work, especially the World War I high-explosive shell production, we surveyed the site to ensure it was safe before the contractor began turning dirt," said Heleg-Greza. "This is like our field work, except it's in our back yard. We're happy to help out."

Did they discover any ordnance? "Not at all," according to Heleg-Greza. "The magnetic survey produced nothing related to ordnance. The subsurface anomalies we located were a narrow gauge railroad track, nails, metal strap bands, surveying markers, lead pipes, and a roadbed."

Heleg-Greza had just returned from Cape Cod, Md., performing quality assurance and site safety duties at a former artillery impact area. "It was a typical UXO clean-up project, making sure the contractor does the job properly," adding, "We support military districts all over the country. Right now, EOD technician Jim Aschnewitz is in San Diego overseeing blasting work on the border fence project."

Closer to home, EOD technician Joe Vann has been intermittently working for Louisville District at the former Camp Ellis, a World War II training post south of Galesburg, Ill. He's also assisting Omaha District at the Iowa Army Ammunition Plant in Burlington, Iowa. Vann said "We're the government quality assurance representatives over the contractors. Although the two sites have very different histories, the work is the same: Ensure the ordnance removal contractor does the job safely."

UXO safety work is just one of the capabilities of the Ordnance and Explosives Engineering Section. "We also perform historical research at National Archives and Records Admin-



**Unexploded ordnance safety specialists Joe Vann (front) and Nick Heleg-Greza use magnetometers to check for buried metal objects at the Arsenal's new housing site.**

istration (NARA) repositories all over the country, including one in Alaska," explained Section Chief, Chris Churney. "Then we analyze the information and use it to conduct a Preliminary Assessment (PA), basically an ordnance-focused environmental history of a military site. Most of our projects are Corps-managed Formerly Used Defense Sites (FUDS), though we also do research and field work on active properties."

In another example of working close to home, section personnel have assisted Operations Division with information on old firing ranges at Saylorville and Coralville Lakes and Pool 13. "We've been able to provide only basic details," said Churney, adding that "Once we get the funding, we'll do the NARA research and a PA."

The Rock Island District's ordnance work began in 1991 within the Environmental Engineering Section under Dan Holmes. As the workload expanded, a separate Ordnance and Explosives Engineering Section was established in 1994. Team members have since completed ordnance work in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and even Bosnia. Section personnel have also supported USACE in New Orleans, Iraq, and Afghanistan. In addition to the research and field work, the section maintains a Corps-wide www site hosting FUDS project data called the Project Information Retrieval System, more commonly referred to as PIRS. 



# GIVING BACK DURING TIMES OF NEED

By Hilary Markin

**F**ighting floods is becoming an everyday job for many Corps employees. The recent flooding on the Red River of the North in North Dakota prompted the St. Paul District (MVP) to call upon neighbors for assistance. The Rock Island District (MVR) was more than happy to assist.

It was only 10 short months ago when MVP employees were sweating in the hot summer heat assisting us to help save lives and property during the June 2008 flood event within MVR. This time MVR employees bundled up in their winter weather gear to do the same in MVP.

The call was put out for assistance on March 17 and on March 22 employees had their bags packed and were on the road to North Dakota.

One of MVR's newest employees volunteered after only being on the job for nearly three months. Andrew Goodall, civil engineer, Engineering and Construction Division, MVR, left for Fargo, N.D. on March 22. When he arrived in Fargo, the situation was very dire. The crest projections were between 38-40 feet; the flood stage in Fargo is 18 feet. There was no choice other than to hit the ground running. After a short two-hour briefing with an experienced flood engineer he was left in charge monitoring the Red River of the North from Oak Grove Lutheran

**Above, the scoreboard sticks out of flood waters that inundated the fields at Oak Grove Lutheran School. Below, a resident watches as the temporary levee keeps the waters from spilling into his house.**



School to 16th Avenue North.

During the next several days Goodall directed four different work crews from two different contractors to raise and strengthen existing levees, construct new levees, and build contingency levees. He did all of this as if he was a seasoned flood area engineer and not a rookie with only a few months under his belt with the Corps of Engineers.

“MVP and the city of Fargo had a great plan in place to fight the flood waters of the Red River, and I was fortunate to be a small part of this monumental flood fight,” said Goodall.

The biggest challenge Goodall faced was a breach in a perma-

ment flood wall that protected the historic Oak Grove Lutheran High School. He called for geotechnical assistance from Darrell Morey, Engineering and Construction Division, MVP, to help assess the situation and decide on a solution. The solution was to call the Air National Guard helicopter support to strategically drop 2,000-pound sandbags into the breached area to stop the leak. Goodall successfully directed the placement of 11 sandbags to control the leak helping to prevent further damage to the school and neighboring homes. This event received national media attention and served as a “wake-up call” to the city of what could possibly happen if more levees breached.

The conditions for this flood fight were marked by temperatures in the single digits and approximately 20 inches of snow that fell during two winter storms, not to mention the winds that came with it.

“The blowing winds from an approaching blizzard increased the risk of levee failure due to wave wash,” said Drew Savage, planning study manager, Planning, Programs, and Project Management Division, MVR. This had everyone concerned and Savage was put in charge of an effort to protect the exposed levees.

Savage, along with help from Karl Schmitz, dredging



**Andrew Goodall, Engineering and Construction Division, MVR, inspects the drop location of the 2000 pound sandbags, to ensure they are placed in the correct location.**

coordinator, Operations Division, MVR, came up with a plan to place polyethylene on the river side of the levees and anchor the poly with sandbags to help protect them from potential wave wash. The problem was securing the poly below the water line to the sandbags without making holes in it. The answer - potatoes. Savage went to the nearest grocery store and purchased several bags of potatoes. The potatoes were then used as anchor points between the poly and sandbag anchors.

Working with a platoon of Soldiers from the Army National Guard, Savage and Schmitz were able to place several thousand feet of protection within 24 hours of the request.



**HESCO baskets are lined up along the banks of the Red River of the North in an effort to protect the nearby neighborhood from the flood waters.**

“This was an important undertaking and we accomplished it in a very short amount of time,” said Savage.

The MVR Emergency Management Team also worked long hours to provide flood fight support to MVP. Not only did they coordinate 11 personnel to assist but they also provided 15.8 miles of HESCO Bastion flood fight products from the manufacturer, local communities, and the state of Iowa. The cities and state provided the products with the understanding that the Corps would replace them as soon as possible.

“The innovative flood fight barriers were in high demand during the flood event,” said Sarah Jones, emergency management specialist, Emergency Management Division, MVR. “The benefit of quick assembly and reduced manpower compared to using sandbags was the primary reason for their popularity.”

Once MVR’s supply of HESCO’s was depleted the emergency management team immediately sought out other sources for the product.

“There was no hesitation; the state of Iowa, Cedar Rapids, Burlington and Rock Island immediately offered to loan us their HESCO’s; in some cases lending their entire stock. Normally, we (the Corps) provide the emergency supplies to local communities to supplement their flood fight efforts. I was amazed at the willingness of the state of Iowa and local communities to lend us a hand,” said Jones.

The District also provided 100,000 sandbags, 2,000 rolls of polyethylene, 1,630 linear feet of Port-A-Dam and 19 pumps to MVP.

“MVR is very happy to have helped our counterparts to the North in their epic flood fight on the Red River of the North; it was great to see the teamwork between two different districts united for one cause--keeping the city of Fargo dry,” said Goodall.

*Photos courtesy of Paul Kowalczyk, Engineering and Construction Division.*

# Around the District

## Retirements ...

**Murilene Knight**, secretary, Contracting Division, retired March 31, after dedicating 30 years, to the federal government.

**Ronald Meyer**, lock and dam operator, Lock & Dam #19, Operations Division, retired March 31, after dedicating 26 years and 8 months, to the federal government.

**Marion Taylor**, supervisory logistics management specialist, USACE Logistics Activity, retired March 31, after dedicating 22 years and 8 days, to the federal government.

**David Clements**, engineer equipment operator supervisor, Maintenance Section, Project Maintenance Unit, Illinois Waterway, Operations Division, retired April 1, after dedicating 31 years and 8-1/2 months, to the federal government.

**James Sturtz**, welder, Structural Maintenance Unit, Mississippi River Project, Operations Division, retired April 30, after dedicating 24 years and 9 months, to the federal government.

**Keith Wilson**, civil engineer, Structural Section, Engineering and Construction Division, retired April 30, after dedicating 25 years, 2 months and 23 days, to the federal government.

**Gary Hamilton**, lock and dam operator, Dresden Island Lock & Dam, Operations Division, retired April 30, after dedicating 22 years and 3-1/2 months, to the federal government.

**Michael Milobar**, electrician, Saylorville Lake, Operations Division, retired April 30, after dedicating 29 years and 3 months, to the federal government.

**Cynthia Archer**, program analyst, Planning, Programs and Project Management Division, Program Management Branch, retired April 30, after dedicating 29 years and 3 months, to the federal government.

## Sympathy ...



**Hubert O'Daniels**, 83, of Plainfield, Ill., died March 9, at his residence. O'Daniels was a welder/fabricator

for the Illinois Waterway in Operations Division for over 30 years before retiring.

He served in the Navy during World War II.



**Clifford "CJ" McVey**, 37, of Pleasant Valley, Iowa, died March 5, at his residence. McVey was a welder with the Corps at the Mississippi River Project in Operations Division.

He served in the Navy during the Gulf War.



**Dolan Diehl**, 89, of Keithsburg, Ill., died April 30, at Aledo Rehab & Health Care Center. Diehl was the lead welder with the Corps for 13 years, retiring in 1965.

He served in the Army during World War II.



**John George**, 77, of Bettendorf, Iowa, died April 7. George worked for the Army Corps of Engineers before retiring.

He served with the U.S. Air Force during the Korean conflict.

## NOTE

Please send achievements, births, and obituaries for this page to the editor at: [hilary.r.markin@usace.army.mil](mailto:hilary.r.markin@usace.army.mil).

Without your input, we may not receive the information that enables us to inform the District.





# Spotlight on the District

## Bob Riebe

Civil Engineering Technician

By Hilary Markin

Many have started their careers with the Corps in a different office and Bob Riebe is no exception. He started working for the Corps in 1960 on a construction survey crew at Lake Red Rock and spent a short time at Saylorville Lake working as the survey/layout chief.

During his time at these locations he learned a lot about construction projects and worked with many different contractors and Corps construction people. "It was very interesting working with people who had done projects all over the world, I learned a lot from them," said Riebe. When he left Red Rock, he was the assistant office engineer and had watched the flood control reservoirs begin their life on the Des Moines River.

Since then, he has become an expert in flood control projects but now concentrates on flood control projects along the Mississippi River. He came to the District office in the fall of 1969 as a civil engineering technician and has been there ever since. During that time he joined the flood area team for the Quad City area, providing technical assistance and advice to the local community and municipalities. On a few occasions he has directed contractors in the construction of emergency levees. He had the opportunity to learn from others during the floods of 1969, 1975, 1979 and became the lead flood area engineer for the Quad City area in 1992.

"When the 1993 flood hit, I was still new to the job, but quickly figured out what to do and who the key contacts were in the community," said Riebe. Riebe continues to be the lead flood area engineer for the area along with a team of eight District employees. "Being on a flood area team is a good way to become familiar with the levees, be involved in the yearly inspection, and watch them perform during a flood event," said Riebe. All of those are useful in his day-to-day activities working on the design of flood control projects. He also enjoys helping others during a time of need and watching his suggestions and recommendations make a positive difference.

He was recently highlighted in the TOASTMASTER maga-

zine for being a disaster expert who uses his Toastmaster experience to advise and assure communities during a crisis. This is an organization Riebe has been a part of since 1985, when he helped charter the Esprit De Corps club in Rock Island. He initially joined to help improve his communication skills and it has done just that and more. He is currently the only founding member still in the club and is serving as president. "I'm sure my Toastmaster training has helped improve my listening, speaking, and leadership skills in my job and outside activities."

Riebe also deployed to New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina for six weeks. He worked in the New Orleans District Office as a quantity and cost estimator for all of the government repairs. He worked mostly on the quantity aspect and really enjoyed the experience. "I was glad I could help with the Corps' efforts down there during a difficult time, and I wouldn't mind going back someday for a look at the progress," said Riebe.

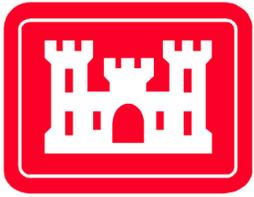
He has enjoyed working for the Corps for the last 49 years and looks forward to the rest of his career. "I really like the work that I do and interacting with the people I work with," said Riebe. "I also work with private engineering firms from time to time, and enjoy learning from them and being involved with people who do similar work."

When not busy with work, Riebe enjoys playing his trumpet in the office band. He first started playing while in grade school and hasn't put it down since. He has also developed a passion for building model railroad equipment and learning the history of the rails. In the past he has even built a few models for others and hopes to continue that in the future as well as "working" on his own railroad. He also is involved in several facets of his church which is why he originally joined Toastmasters.

When asked about advice, Riebe had this to say, "Get a good education, find a job you like, stay with it, work hard (but don't take yourself too seriously), do something to contribute to the world around you, and enjoy yourself." 



**Bob Riebe monitoring the performance of the temporary levee at Davenport during the flood of 2008.**



# 2009 Corps Day



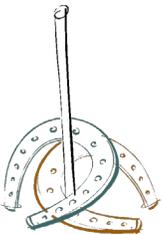
Thursday, June 18  
Memorial Field, Rock Island Arsenal  
10 a.m. to 3 p.m.



\*Picnic

\*Awards

\*Games



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