HEARTLAND ENGINEER

KANSAS CITY DISTRICT'S NEWS MAGAZINE

APRIL 2016

Reaching the children of today for engineering's tomorrow.

Photo by Diana McCoy

Michael Coates and Carolyn Hall work together to organize information gathered during a Civil Works Customer Charrette held at the Richard Bolling Federal Building March 9. The charrette was the first of its kind for the Kansas City District and will help the Civil Works Branch develop an action plan to provide more efficient service to its customers.

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Rusty Thomas and Jennie Wilson work behind the scenes to handle the "unspoken communication" not only for the Kansas City District, but other districts as well.

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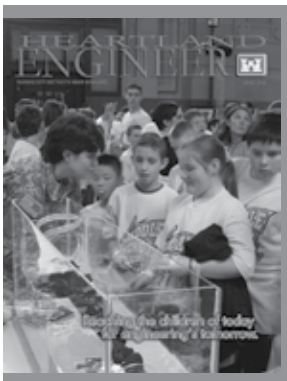

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ON THE COVER: Lt. Col. Kelly Butler explains the complexities of a fish ladder to local school children during the fourth annual Crayons to CAD day held at Union Station in Kansas City, Mo. This event brings major architechtural engineering firms together with local trade unions to get kids excited about engineering. (Photo by Diana McCoy)

When you were needed, you were there

COL Michael A. Rossi

I stand in awe of each of you who have deployed over the past three years. Sometimes I don't tell you enough, publicly or privately, how proud I am of your sacrifice or your accomplishments for our great nation. In an odd way, I think my personal inclination towards stoicism only validates your selfless nature. You sure aren't going into harm's way for the recognition—we could never do justice in speech, certificate, or medals. So I've seen you all each accept humbly whatever token of our gratitude we've mustered, then returned to your many duties here in the district. You are truly "quiet professionals."

Some of you have deployed to Afghanistan or Iraq, as Corps civilians, reservists, or active duty officers. You've put yourself at risk in support of our Army and nation in the first war of the 21st Century—the Global War on Terrorism, the long war. Truth is that the nation building in which you're engaged is more important in the long run than the initial and ongoing combat operations. This is ultimately a war of ideas. Six years ago, in reflecting upon the end of the last war—the Cold War—author Tom Friedman observed that Coca Cola and McDonald's did much to defeat communism, the East Block, and the nuclear and conventional arms race. It was "soft power," or the idea of America more than fear of defeat in war. In Iraq and Afghanistan, it's once again a war of ideas and the schools, hospitals, power and police stations, and infrastructure you're building are the true weapons in that war. It's the idea and hope of democracy against the fear of terrorism or retreat to totalitarianism. You and your Corps and Army brethren are in the front lines of that war—of course, to you who've been there, I'm not telling you anything that you don't already know.

Some of you have likewise deployed to Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana for 30 days or longer in hurricane relief support. Again, your nation is indebted to you. These deployments are another form of selfless sacrifice. The call for volunteers and for help often comes with little warning and you've had to put your job, your family, and your life on hold to help fellow Americans. You've seen the devastation first hand. We've sometimes perfectly tapped into your expertise but more often than not, imperfectly asked you to work out of your comfort zone because there is just so much to do in the chaos. To your credit you all have cheerfully just said, "What can we do?"

Lastly, I want to thank the professionals in our Emergency Operations Center. It's not easy standing watch and continually asking for help in a pinch. When it comes to deployments, Paul Flamm, Jud Kneuvean, Dave Hoover, Vira Dobbins and Stephanie Martens can each honestly say, "Been there, done that." They are absolutely superb.

Like the corny, '80's National Guard tune declared, "When you were needed, you were there. It wasn't always easy, it wasn't always fair, but when freedom called you answered, you were there." Well, I just want to say one more time that this old Soldier (24-years this May!) is truly humbled by each of you who have deployed in support of our Corps and our nation.

Essayons.

THRIFT SAVINGS PLAN SCAM

The Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board warned participants that a fraudulent e-mail requesting sensitive information has been sent to Thrift Savings Plan participants.

TSP received approximately 500 phone calls March 16 about e-mails that took recipients to a fake TSP account access web site. The phone calls notifying TSP of the scam tapered off March 17 to about 20.

At the fake web site, people were asked to enter their social security numbers and personal identification numbers. A subsequent screen requested credit card information.

According to FRTIB employees, misspellings led some TSP participants to believe the web site was fraudulent. After participants put in their social security numbers and PINs, the next page brought a screen that stated "account access bloked" and one screen from the web site used the letter "u" as opposed to the word "you."

FRTIB has temporarily suspended the account transactions portion of the TSP Web site and is working with the FBI to investigate this phishing scheme.

The fraudulent web site requesting the personal information was shut down March 17, according to TSP representatives.

On the TSP web site, participants are warned never to give personal, banking or credit information in response to unsolicited e-mails.

"There was no evidence that TSP security has been breached," according to the TSP web site.

TSP is processing all transactions—except loans and withdrawals—received before the web site was temporarily closed March 16. The majority of web transactions made on the TSP web site are being processed as normal.

"Loans and withdrawals that can be completed on the web site may be delayed for two days as we review the requests," according to the TSP Web site.

More information about TSP's response to the scam can be found at http://www.tsp.gov/curinfo/emailscam.html.

CORPS OF ENGINEERS COMPLETES LAST DEMOLITION IN IRAQ

After almost three years of hard and dangerous work, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers celebrated the last major demolition under the Coalition Munitions Clearance Program in Iraq March 16.

Col. John Rivenburgh, commander of the Huntsville Engineering and Support Center, Dr. John Potter, chief of the Ordnance and Explosives Directorate and Bill Sargent, program manager of the Coalition Munitions Clearance Program recently traveled to Iraq to witness the last major demolition and initiate the next phase of the ordnance destruction work.

"The last demo consisted of over 248 tons of stockpiled ammunition," Potter said. "Even though this was the last big one, there will still be some minor demolitions."

The demolition of stockpiled munitions took place at the Arlington Depot Feb. 14, which was originally controlled by Saddam Hussein's army before the war. The Arlington Depot is located 170 miles north of Baghdad.

"When the U.S. Army started taking over control of the Iraqi depots, they experienced many challenges," Sargent added. "The Iraqis had no storage or compatibility procedures. High explosive items were stored with detonators, which could cause a big explosion. The Corps organized the depots and folded six depots into two."

The destruction of ordnance items was taking place almost every day. This demolition contained items that either the new Iraqi Army did not need or the insurgents could use during attacks, such as rocket propelled grenades, hand grenades, landmines and other large ammunition.

The completion of the last demo signifies a change in mission. Instead of a clean-up mission, the Corps will now oversee a depot operation mission.

"One Corps employee per depot will handle quality assurance, contract surveillance and oversee the depot operations," Sargent said.

The Corps hired a new contractor, Explosive Ordnance Disposal Technologies, Inc., to operate the depots and train the Iraqis to take over running them.

"The Iraqis will learn how to maintain, pack and store ammunition, along with securing a depot," Potter said. "When they're ready, we will leave."—*Andrea Takash, Army News Service*

FITNESS CENTER REIMBURSEMENT PROCEDURES

The Kansas City District has negotiated simplified reimbursement procedures for membership to the Fitness Center which will allow employees to pay only the required membership fee, meaning employees will no longer need to seek a refund.

The simplified procedure will reduce overhead cost by eliminating the need for processing an SF1164 for reimbursement.

Membership fees remain at $170 per year, but employees will pay the Resource Management office instead of the Fitness Center. Payment will be made to RM-F in advance of the period covered and can be made annually or quarterly.

Application for membership will continue to be made through the Fitness Center, and after it has been completed, members will present a check, payable to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Kansas City District, to either Debra Knopke or Donna Tranckino in RM-F.

Those employees who have already paid membership fees to the Fitness Center for FY06 will receive a refund from the Fitness Center for all amounts paid for the year. When the refund is received those employees will need to present a check to RM-F in the amount of $170 for the year or $42.50 per quarter enrolled.

It is not too late to apply for a membership to the Fitness Center for FY06. Fees are less than $15 a month.

For more information, please contact Virgil Bridges at (816) 983-3376 or email at virgil.e.bridges@usace.army.mil.

SPRING CLEANING

Spring is here, and it's time to eliminate those excess items in your office and work areas such as files, folders, furniture, equipment, etc… Logistics Management is willing to assist you with this task. Please contact Terry Hill in LM to coordinate trash container delivery or the removal of furniture or equipment from your area.

Also taking place April 15 through May 1 is the cleaning of the tops of workstations (to be done by Goodwill). The schedule will be published and posted on the intranet as soon as it is completed. All items on top of your workstations must be removed before any areas can be cleaned. If items are not removed, the tops of the workstations will not be cleaned. For more information, contact Terry Hill at 816-389-3401 or email at terry.l.hill@usace.army.mil.

CALL TO RETIREES

The Heartland Engineer is now available online. It can be accessed at www.nwk.usace.army.mil. Click on "Organization," then "Public Affairs," then "Heartland Engineer."

In an effort to improve our retiree database by adding email addresses to alert retirees of unique opportunities, please contact the Public Affairs Office.

Also, if you would like to be taken off the mailing list and receive a notification by email each month when the newest issue is published, please contact Diana McCoy in Public Affairs at (816) 389-3485 or e-mail her at diana.mccoy@usace.army.mil.

The little things

It all started with a display for the local senior citizens' group. They were celebrating Abraham Lincoln's birthday, and his grandmother asked him to build a model of Lincoln's log cabin.

Building tiny replicas has been a passion for Walter Heimbaugh ever since.

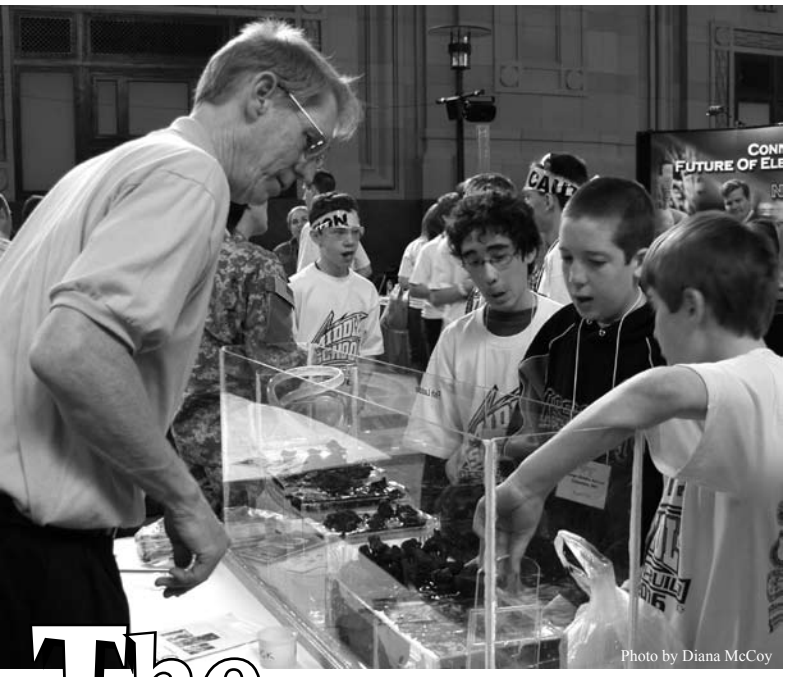

Photo by Diana McCoy

Walter Heimbaugh (left) explains the workings of a fish ladder with the help of a model he built for the Crayons to CAD event March 7. Thousands of middle school children showed up for the event held at Union Station in Kansas City, Mo.

"From there on out I made a lot of models," said Heimbaugh, an architectural engineer for the Kansas City District. "I always loved modeling, and it helped me with my school grades."

Included in Heimbaugh's collection is a quarter-inch scale model of the Globe Theatre, log cabin and plantation designs and a model of the Taj Mahal. Heimbaugh said when he was a kid he had to make his own toys.

"I built a bicycle, instant skis and a real sailboat the family could use with a tie dyed sail," Heimbaugh said. "Of course, that was during the '70s, and it's not around anymore. The bugs got to it."

Heimbaugh honed his replica-making skills when he was a teenager. He worked as an apprentice for a sculptor. He also worked as a silversmith and was fortunate to work with many craftsmen he considers unique.

Most recently, Heimbaugh has used his skills in conjunction with the district's participation with Crayons to CAD, an annual event aimed to get children interested in the field of engineering.

"When people visually see things, they grasp it better," Heimbaugh said. "I've made the models for the past two years. Last year I built a model of Brush Creek, and this year I built two models—one of the turbine which is at the Harry S. Truman Dam and Reservoir, and the other model is a fish ladder."

All three models are interactive and allow children to grasp hard-to-understand concepts.

"The Corps pays for the materials and some of my time, and some of it is on my time," Heimbaugh, who builds the models in his garage, said. "There's a mutual agreement that it's good for the kids."

Heimbaugh said the amount of time it takes to build each model varies. He said you really have to figure out what you want to do first and then figure out what you're trying to communicate through it.

"If it's too elaborate, then people miss the point," Heimbaugh said. "Simplicity is key."

With the Brush Creek model, Heimbaugh took it to the Visual Information Office and had them "touch it up" with trees and landscaping to make it look like the "real deal." But with the turbine model, he left off the extra fancy art work and made it as basic as possible, using only clear Plexiglas and caulk.

"With the turbine, it really reflects the cavitation of the water and really reflects what's happening out there," Heimbaugh said.

During the Crayons to CAD event, nearly 3,000 children were able to interact with Heimbaugh and his models. But that's not the end of it. Heimbaugh also periodically takes his models around to different schools and speaks to middle school classes about the importance of engineering.

"I enjoy building models, and I think they are important in helping people understand engineering," Heimbaugh said.

PEOPLEPOWER

People Power is a monthly column designed to highlight the outstanding accomplishments of a district employee. Supervisors and peers are encouraged to nominate team members to be featured in an upcoming issue of *Heartland Engineer*.

Nominations should include a brief summary of the nominee's accomplishment and contact information for the person submitting the nomination. Nominations should be submitted by the 15th of the month for consideration for the next issue.

Nominations should be sent to:

PEOPLEPOWER
c/o Public Affairs Office
700 Federal Building
601 East 12th Street
Kansas City, Missouri 64106
or e-mailed to:
thomas.a.o'hara@usace.army. mil

Visual Infor
...a regional re

Photo by Eric Cramer

Rusty Thomas works on a Women's History Month project in the Kansas City District Visual Information Office. The office helps with outreach, provides video and photography support and helps design and produce numerous graphic design efforts.

Tucked away in its own corner of the Kansas City District offices is a rarity in the high-tech and precision world of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers—a combination art shop, design studio and creative think-tank—the Information Management Visual Information Office—"VI" for short.

The office, consisting of Rusty Thomas, Ruth Crafton and Jennie Wilson, provides design and graphic support not just to the Kansas City District, but to offices throughout the Northwestern Division.

A "full service" shop, the VI team can design a logo, frame awards, lay out a magazine, take, crop and frame high-quality photographs, build three-dimensional models, produce video footage and provide numerous other creative and artistic services.

"They're an important part of our team," Col. Michael Rossi, Kansas City District commander said. "The VI department helps not only the Kansas City District, but other districts throughout the Northwestern Division in missions that touch our great Corps teammates as well as the public. By providing first class visual products, they truly shape the way people see the Corps, its missions and the people who perform those missions. Not only that, Rusty and Jennie's creativity balance out our stereotypically 'engineer' take on the world around us."

The office was also working on regional projects even before acting regionally became the driving force for modern Corps operations.

Omaha Public Affairs Chief Kevin Quinn said the Kansas City VI shop is a valuable resource.

"They've done a couple of different calendars for us. They're fast and they're good," Quinn said.

Quinn said his district lacks a graphics organization.

"We had the idea to act regionally," he said. "We do the same with our photographer, and he does regional work for other districts."

He said Tom O'Hara, current Kansas City public

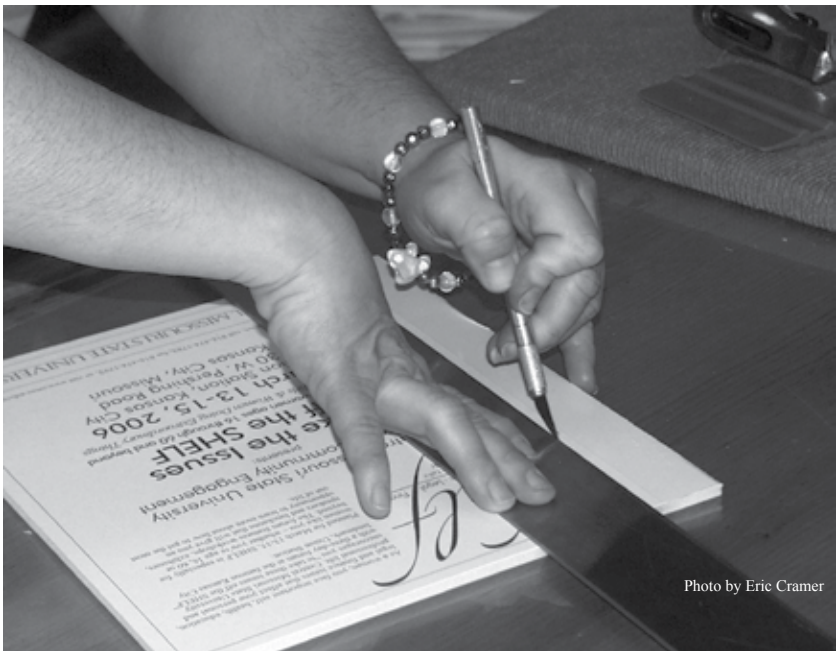

Photo by Eric Cramer

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source

Story by Eric Cramer

affairs chief, implemented the use of Kansas City's graphics department while working as a public affairs specialist in Omaha.

Quinn said one advantage of having the Kansas City graphics team work for him lies in the quality of products they produce.

"They have a high level of creativity. Everything they've done for us has shown that creativity," Quinn said.

This is an opinion shared by Michael Bart, currently the chief of engineering and construction for the St. Paul District. Bart knew about the VI office because he worked in the Kansas City District for 18 years. He made use of this Kansas City knowledge while working in the Walla-Walla District.

"I was familiar with the high quality of the graphics work they did while I was there," he said of the VI office. "I got the idea in Walla-Walla in 2003 or 2004 to have them help design a district seal. We had some people retiring and they had designed something similar for Kansas City."

He said the seal VI provided was an elegant design that showed the varying missions of the Walla-Walla District.

"It was nice to work with them, because they understood the missions already. We virtually described what we were looking for and they created it. We transferred them the money and they did the design," Bart said.

He said the work was both less expensive than it would have been if he'd gone to a commercial designer and faster than it would have been working with someone unfamiliar with the Corps.

"We did it in three-quarters of the time it would have taken, because we didn't have to explain everything."

Wilson said the approached used at VI is the same whether the customer is local, or from somewhere else in the region.

"The challenges come from working long distance. Most of the time people get me the products I need on time," she said. "We always manage to follow through with the product they want."

Photo by Diana McCoy

Jennie Wilson and Rusty Thomas provide the creative effort for the Visual Information Office. Their works can be viewed across the Northwestern Division, as they provide support to other offices besides the Kansas City District.

Thomas said the only difference is scheduling a specific project.

"We try to handle every job so they're the best they can be," he said. "But if there's a time crunch, our district has to come first."

He said this is seldom a problem.

Chester Walker, the Corps' program manager for office automation, said he asked the Kansas City "shop" for its help in designing a logo for the former Director of Information Management/Corporate Information Management Officer symposium, now titled the Regional Information Officers symposium.

"It was a quick turnaround for us," Walker said. "I had to get the logo up on our web site. We also had vendors who wanted to use it on some materials they were going to distribute at the symposium."

"The work they did was great!" he continued. "They did a fine job – we gave them *carte blanche* and they produced a product we could use.

Jennie Wilson cuts a precise line while placing a graphic on its mounting in the Kansas City District Visual Information Office. VI provides numerous artistic services to the Kansas City District and other districts throughout the region.

VI

Thousands of school children flooded Union Station in Kansas City, Mo., March 7 for the Crayons to CAD event. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Kansas City District provided two interactive models made of clear Plexiglass to demonstrate how engineering can control and make efficient use of water.

The noise level went from complete silence to a deafening roar as thousands of middle school children filled Union Station on March 7, each one excited to be out of the classroom and learning about something new.

They sported the bright colors of their school t-shirts as they zipped past looking for the most exciting displays and their unique project among the hundreds that were judged at this annual event known as Crayons to CAD (computer aided design).

"This is a program for middle school students who are given a prescribed set of instructions to resolve an engineering problem using middle school curriculum," said Larry Myers, executive assistant for the Kansas City District U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. "These students are mentored by a teacher and/or parent to develop the project for competing in a regional-wide competition, which is judged by engineering and construction professionals within the Greater Kansas City metropolitan area."

Basically, this is a three-part event. It starts with the children being given a theme to design around each year, and they have to make a model and do some research and come up with a cost estimate. Then their models are judged by engineering and trade organizations from around the Kansas City area.

The second part of the event is where the children get to actually come out and interact with those organizations and receive their awards, which are designed by the district's Visual Information Office for both the regional and national competition.

The Kansas City District has been providing a booth for Crayons to CAD for the past four years. The booth provides hands-on activities or models which attract kids and stimulate discussions with the district engineers who work the booths.

For 2006, Walter Heimbaugh, an architectural engineer who worked the booths this year, created a working scale model of the turbines and generator at Harry S. Truman Power Plant. He also created a working model of a fish ladder, similar to one that might be found in the northwest, to allow salmon to get past Corps dams so they can travel upstream to spawn.

Also working the booths this year were Lt. Col. Kelly Butler, Andrea Pouliot, Sue Gehrt, Greg Wright and George

Gregory Wright (far right) from the Harry S. Truman Powerhouse and George "Butch" Boban (second from right) from the Stockton Lake Power Plant help out at the fourth annual Crayons to CAD event at Union Station. Their booth displayed a model of the Harry S. Truman Dam and showed how power is generated from the water released.

Reaching children

Lt. Col. Kelly Butler (left) talks to school children who came from across the state of Missouri to take part in the Crayons to CAD event. Butler shows a model of a fish ladder and allows the kids to get their hands wet.

"Butch" Boban.

The third part of the event is the design award.

"All the schools are very competitive," Heimbaugh said, "so I suggested giving an award—an Imagineering Award for being creative. It's where you look at something and use different materials for creativity."

Last year, the challenge was stadium design. Heimbaugh said some of the children came up with ideas such as a "hot seat" (to keep guests warm during cold weather) with beverage holders and coolers to keep your drinks perfectly chilled.

"We look for someone being futuristic in thoughts," Heimbaugh said. "You know—new ideas—innovation. Some of the kids came up with the idea to create a dome over the stadium using fabric last year. This competition is really for children to get their thoughts out there and open up."

This year the challenge was power generation, and many of the projects were made with materials from around the house such as Popsicle sticks, the cardboard portion of toilet paper and paper towel rolls and glue. Some of the children dressed up their projects with glitter and markers.

Many of the local trade unions such as the electricians, steel workers and pipe fitters are involved, as well as major architect engineer firms and engineering societies.

"A neat thing about Crayons to CAD is it's a partnership with all those entities to get kids interested in an engineering or trade field," said Sue Gehrt, an engineer in the Operations Division.

Gehrt got involved through her membership with the Society of Women Engineers. She happened to be the president of the Kansas City Chapter the year they agreed to participate. Ever since, she has been assisting the Corps with their booth and hands-on activity.

"I like to teach kids about engineering—especially because at that age, I didn't know much about what engineers did, and it took me a long time to figure out that that's what I wanted to do because I hadn't been exposed to it," Gehrt said.

One year, Gehrt flew her out-of-town niece to Kansas City to let her talk to the different engineers at the district, just to show her engineering wasn't just sitting at a desk all day long with a calculator.

Her niece has since received her engineering degree from Ohio State and works for a power company.

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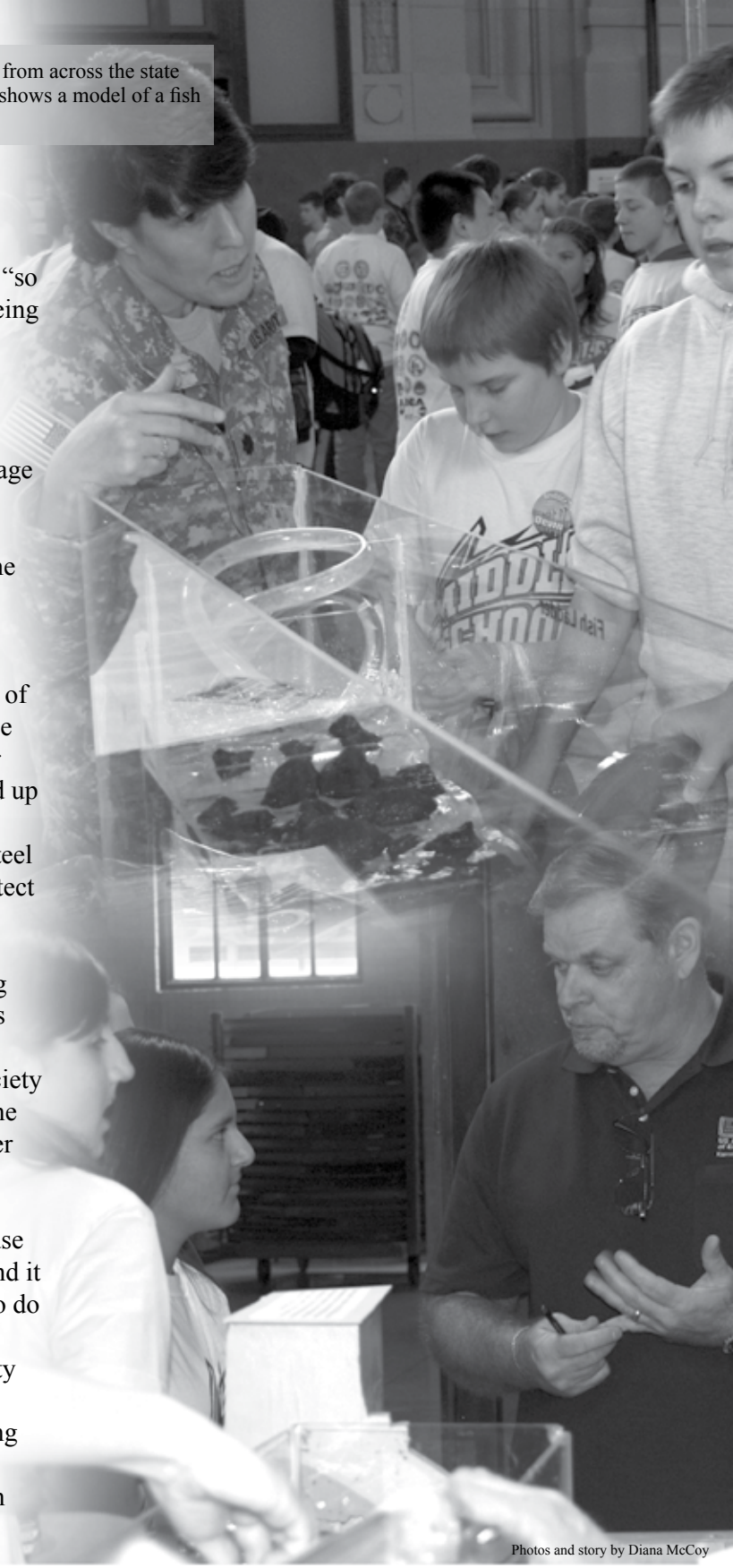

Photos and story by Diana McCoy

George "Butch" Boban (right) answered questions from school children about the model of the Harry S. Truman Dam, which is located in Warsaw, Mo. The model was interactive, allowing children to lift the gate and release the water, which would then spin a turbine and produce electricity.

After the STORM

Brian Wright, a park ranger at Pomme de Terre, works to clear a part of the park which opened for visitors April 16. Brad Meyers, operations manager, said they will be working on cleanup efforts for the next few years.

John Hoover from the Missouri Department of Conservation volunteers a week of his time to help remove trees with a fork lift provided by the MDC. The trees were destroyed in the tornado which damaged Damsite Park and Harbor Marina.

Just one week before the tornado, staff at Pomme de Terre and the Missouri Department of Conservation spent several hours cutting cedar trees for a fish habitat at the lake. “If we had only known the tornado was going to ‘cut’ a bunch of cedar trees for us, we could have saved a lot of labor,” said Brad Myers, operations manager at the lake.

At 10:15 p.m. on March 12 a tornado ripped through Pomme de Terre Lake touching down in several places.

Although no one at the lake project was injured, 14 people in the area were received injuries. There were no fatalities.

The next morning, staff at Pomme de Terre and workers from the Missouri Department of Conservation came to assess the damage and got to work restoring the lake to its original state.

During the recovery, many of the project's reservable sites will be closed down, and only a portion of the project will be open to visitors this summer. Brad Myers, operations manager, estimates the cleanup will take a few years to complete.

Jonathan Carlisle, a park ranger at Pomme de Terre, uses a chainsaw to clear away some of the debris from the tornado which ripped through the project.

Trees downed by a violent tornado render Damsite Park virtually unrecognizable. The storm, which lasted only a matter of minutes, caused about $130,000 in damage.

Managed by the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, an aerial view shows Milford's wetlands. It is the third largest wetlands in Kansas and was made possible through partnership organizations.

Milford Lake

Largest Lake in Kansas

www.nwk.usace.army.mil/milford/milford_home.htm

Location of Dam: Near Junction City, Kan.
Stream/River: Republican River
Miles Above Mouth of River: 7.7
Storage Date: Jan. 16, 1967
Total Acreage: 48,853 Acres
Lake Size: 16,000
Dam Length: 6,600 ft.
Yearly Visitation: 500,000

Story Diana McCoy

This is the seventh lake to appear in a series which will outline Kansas City District's 18 lake projects. All projects will appear in chronological order from the date they first stored water.

Just 25 miles away from controversial Tuttle Creek Dam, the reception for the project which holds Kansas' largest lake couldn't have been more different more than 40 years ago when the surrounding community practically begged Congress for flood control.

With the Republican River coming in from the northwest and joining up with the Smoky Hill River flowing in from the west, the confluence of the two rivers creates a third river, thus the need for Milford Lake and Dam in Junction City, Kan.

"If you have a tremendous amount of water coming down from the north, you're going to have a flood," said Cynthia Dierks, natural resource management specialist for the lake. "If you have a lot of water coming from the west, you're going to have a flood. And if you have it coming from both ends, you're going to have an even bigger flood."

Major historical record floods with loss of life and property occurred in 1849, 1869, 1903, 1935 and 1951 before the dam was built. A story told from Native Americans before white men occupied the area tells of a major flood in 1781, Dierks said.

"The floods were devastating to this area in part because Fort Riley has been here since 1854, so there has always been a community here in conjunction with the fort," Dierks said.

Harlan County Lake, trying to obtain funding the same time as Milford Lake in 1954, but with a lesser need for flood control, obtained funding first. The story behind that:

"It was kind of a battle as to who was going to get funded first, and the standard story around here is that Harlan County beat us out because it was a Nebraska congressman who headed the appropriations committee," Dierks said. "He was looking out for his own interests, and you wouldn't expect anything different."

The history surrounding the lake and the community is rich in diversity as well as controversy. From the famous Civil War generals that spent time at Fort Riley to the beloved Goat Gland Doctor of the early 1900s—Dr. John R. Brinkley, the community's history doesn't end with that.

"We have a Native American site called the Bogan Site which is special in that it's only one of two standing Pawnee Indian villages," said Brent Logan the lakes cultural ranger. "This site is protected and, we don't let people know where it is because there's three lodges—one which has been excavated and two which are still intact."

Birds rest at Milford Lake, which is on several of the major flyways for migratory birds. Birding, a growing sport, is a popular pastime for Milford Lake visitors.

Not to worry—there are still plenty of things for Milford Lake visitors to see and do.

"Our events start off with Eagle Days in January, and our last major event is the Physically Challenged Deer Hunt in December," Dierks said.

The annual Milford Lake cleanup, supported by the Boy Scouts, is held in April. In June, the project holds a kids fishing clinic and derby. In October, the project holds a limited archery permit draw which allows pre-chosen hunters to archery hunt for deer at specified locations

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Perry Lake
Lake of Trails

www.nwk.usace.army.mil/perry/perry_home.htm

This is the eighth lake to appear in a series which will outline Kansas City District's 18 lake projects. All projects will appear in chronological order from the date they first stored water.

Photos by Diana McCoy

Joe Lopez, Matt Beckman, Gaylord Cates, Heather Leopard, Ed Herman, Bunnie Watkins, Kenny Wade and Linda Murray (left to right). Not pictured are Erik Patterson and R.J. Harms. These 10 people take care of Perry Lake Project on a daily basis and work closely together to manage the lake's resources.

Location of Dam: Near Perry, Kan.
Stream/River: Delaware River
Miles: Above Mouth of River: 5.3
Storage Date: Jan. 15, 1969
Total Acreage: 39,314 Acres
Lake Size: 7,676 Acres
Dam Length: 7,750 ft.
Yearly Visitation: 384,368

Story by Diana McCoy

The first National Recreation Trail in Kansas, developed with the guidance of the Kansas Trails Council, sits at this project located in the Glacial Hills Region of the northeastern part of the state.

This trail isn't for the weak hearted.

"Perry Lake Hiking Trail is approximately a 30 mile-long loop with challenging terrain," said Kenneth Wade, the operations project manager for the lake. "We also have five other trails, which gives Perry Lake the most extensive trail system in the Kansas City District."

Thunder Ridge Trail, 2.5 miles long, offers visitors a self-guided hike with 30 stations and has a variety of ecosystems to view.

Delaware Marsh Trail is a 1.75-mile hike through a wetlands ecosystem. This trail was actually built by Perry Project staff and sits atop a low profile earthen fill levee. The wetland was built by the Corps in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

The last of the trail systems are a 25-mile equestrian trail, a 19-mile moderate to difficult mountain bike trail and a 140-acre all-terrain vehicle and motorcycle trail.

"Our ATV trail is very popular," Wade said. "A lot of times, our parking lot for the trail is completely full and even overflows out to the road."

Don't do ATVs? That's okay, too. The lake itself has plenty to offer.

"Perry Lake is a big lake," said Bunnie Watkins, the natural resource management specialist for the lake. "It attracts a lot of sail boaters, and we even have a yacht club."

Visitors can also bird watch, fly model airplanes, hunt, trap, camp and fish from a boat or from shore.

Named one of the best fishing spots in northeast Kansas by the Topeka Capital Journal a few years ago, Perry Lake recently held a regional crappie tournament, with more than 100 teams on the lake at the same time.

"Aside from fishing tournaments, we're also having the Collegiate Road Cycling National Championships hosted by the National Collegiate Cycling Association this year," Wade said. "This championship includes 160 colleges from around the United States, including Princeton University and Yale University, and they will race 28 miles around Perry Lake."

Other activities around the lake include the annual A Brotherhood Against Totalitarian Enactments motorcycle rally with more than 4,000 in attendance every year. Also, Perry Lake is a popular site for weddings.

"A lot of people want their weddings at the Old Tree in Cottonwood Tree Park," Watkins said.

Flowers are placed at these steps annonymously every year on Memorial Day.The steps are located at Old Town Park at Perry Lake. It is named Old Town because it is the location of the old part of Ozawkie which had to be moved to accomodate the lake.

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MILFORD LAKE

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inside the park. Milford Lake is also the site of an ECO-Meet for the high school, which is a competition on their knowledge of Kansas flora and fauna. A state ECO-Meet will be held at the lake in November.

New to the lake for 2006 is a National Hunting and Fishing Day event.

As far as recreational opportunities for visitors to the lake, they are no holds barred.

"People can do everything at our lake," Dierks said. "We really have diversity here. We have federal parks, state parks, county parks and city parks. We have concessionaires, and they all offer camping opportunities that range anywhere from primitive camping opportunities to full hook up. You can go boating, sailing, fishing from a boat or on the bank, parasailing, make use of the model airplane fields, equestrian trails, hiking trails and off-road vehicle trails. I can't think of anything you can't do here."

A sport which has been gaining popularity over the years and is drawing more and more interest to Milford Lake is birding. The lake holds the third largest wetlands in Kansas and is located on several of the major flyways for migratory birds.

"Two years ago, a birding festival was started at the north end of the lake," Dierks said. "Attendants visit the wetlands and the Konza Prairie and various other places, and our local newspaper said the festival is drawing national attention. People from all over the United States are scheduling to attend this birding event, which is an activity growing by leaps and bounds."

Recreation plays such a big role for the project; people often think it is the sole reason for Milford Lake to exist.

"The main purpose of Milford Lake and Dam to exist is for flood control," Dierks said, "and recreation was actually one of the last tasks to be added. Navigation is the next mission behind flood control because we make releases to supplement and extend the navigation season on the Missouri River. Then, water quality and water supply came on board."

Since Milford Lake began operations in 1967, it has prevented more than $940 million in flood damages, and continues to provide more than $200,000 every year in revenue to the federal government.

PERRY LAKE

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"Unfortunately we had to cut it down March 23 because it posed a safety hazard."

The tree was one of the largest trees in Kansas and stood 116 feet tall. Three main sections of the tree were blown down during heavy storms (see page 16.)

"Even though recreation is a big aspect of the lake, our primary mission is flood control for the Kansas, Missouri and Mississippi River Valleys," Wade said. "In addition to flood control, Perry Lake is used to supplement water flow for navigational purposes. We also have a fish and wildlife mission, as well as a water quality mission."

With more than 39,000 acres of land, the staff at Perry Lake work nonstop to maintain the property.

"Our job is a balancing act to use the money we have to get the work done and also work with our stakeholders," Wade said. "Also important to me is that I want everyone's visit here to be better than the last one."

LAST WORD

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contractor overcame this challenge by establishing a trade school to train local labor in basic construction methods, and imported experienced skilled labor from neighboring countries.

The ongoing low grade insurgency is a threat, though mostly to the Afghan people. Our contractor and military have taken additional security precautions to protect the work and workforce, thus far very successfully. None of our workers were injured by the insurgency, and there was virtually no property damage caused by the insurgents during my six month tour in country.

Afghanistan is a beautiful land. I found the Afghans friendly for the most part and very anxious to put the violence of the past behind them and get their country back on its feet. My tour there, alongside outstanding Corps civilians and Soldiers I worked with, was the professional highlight of both my USACE and Army career – one I would encourage anyone to experience.

REACHING CHILDREN THROUGH ENGINEERING

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Gehrt says she also enjoys being involved with Crayons to CAD because she used to be a teacher, and she enjoys interacting with the children and sharing her passion for engineering.

"The kids are really good, and they really and truly seem interested," Gehrt said. "We get a neat variety of kids every year, some who are interested in the technology side, some who are interested in the science side and some who are interested in the trade side."

Myers firmly believes in the value of Crayons to CAD, saying that it is an important program to the community, the nation and the Corps.

"The youth today are facing many challenges—more so than when we were their age," Myers said. "Thus, encouraging them to become interested in engineering, construction and technologies that are paramount to this industry is vitally important. It is critical to grab the attention of these kids while they're still in the stage of deciding what field of higher education they want to pursue."

Last Word By

Brad Eaton

Brad Eaton displays Soviet era rockets, grenades and mortar rounds found on and cleared from a construction site by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers contractor in Kandahar, Afghanistan. The U.S. Army Explosive Ordnance Disposal team collected the munitions and then disposed of them properly.

Being an Army Reservist and a civilian employee of the Kansas City District, I had a unique opportunity to deploy to Afghanistan as part of Operation Enduring Freedom as a military officer working for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Afghanistan Engineer District July 2005 through January 2006.

After receiving a 220-day release from my reserve unit, the 416th Engineer Command (which already has a command relationship with USACE), I was assigned as the area engineer at the Kandahar Area Office on Kandahar Air Field, Afghanistan.

The AED is currently spending a half-billion dollars in Afghanistan, rebuilding infrastructure, constructing military bases for the Afghan National Army and improving U.S. military facilities. About a third of that amount is being constructed out of the Kandahar Area Office.

Our office varied in size throughout the deployment, but generally had 16 civilians (construction representatives, project engineers and an office engineer) and four members of the military; three captains who were project engineers and the lieutenant colonel area engineer.

The contractor workforce numbered more than 2,000 personnel working eight different projects at four locations in southern Afghanistan. About half of the labor force was Afghan, with the remainder consisting of Pakistani, Turkish, Indian and Egyptian skilled laborers and engineers and a smattering of U.S. ex-patriots.

The pace was very fast and the projects were vitally important to preserving the independence and viability of the new Afghan government. The Corps is building numerous 3,000-man brigade bases throughout the provinces of the country, strategically located to exert the Afghan government's protection to the provinces and to provide economic development in depressed regions. These bases are small self-contained cities, each with about 70 cinder block barracks, maintenance and storage buildings, their own wells and sewage treatment facilities and six-megawatt power stations. The Kandahar office oversees the construction of three of these facilities, spread out in the three southeastern provinces of Afghanistan.

The office is also repairing and expanding the Kandahar Air Field runway, making it wider and longer and adding 600-meter concrete touchdown areas to each end. To make this project even more complex, the existing runway must remain in use while the construction is ongoing, resulting in limited work hours and the occasional job site evacuation due to unscheduled landings.

Accomplishing major construction in Afghanistan presents unique challenges. The country's infrastructure has been heavily damaged by 25 years of war. Getting materials such as cement and asphalt to job sites is a major issue. Bulk items are trucked overland from Pakistan or Turkey over abysmal roads and can take weeks to arrive. Extensive planning and coordination by the contractor, USACE and the Afghan government has mitigated this issue, with the supply chain operating quite smoothly – with only the occasional hiccup, such as caused by the recent earthquake in neighboring Pakistan.

The strife of the past three decades has also greatly reduced the number of trained Afghan workers. Our

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Kenneth Wade, operations manager at Perry Lake in Perry, Kan., bids farewell to one of the largest trees in Kansas on March 23, two days before it is to be cut down. Only one part out of four is pictured here. The other main sections of the tree were blown over in heavy storms, and the remaining tree was deemed a safety hazard. Cuttings were taken from the tree, a cottonwood, and plans are being made for one of the cuttings to be replanted on Arbor Day, the last Friday in April. The rest will be given away for the public to use. The photo at bottom, right is the tree before it sustained storm damage.

Photo provided

Photo by Diana McCoy