

From Dewey to Washington

My CAP Experience, Feb – Jun 2005

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In putting pen to paper for my Career Advancement Program (CAP) experience, I considered what I brought to HQUSACE as well as everything I received. At the time of my CAP assignment, I was serving as the Lake Manager at the Keystone Lake Office in Tulsa District. I was born and raised in the small northeastern Oklahoma town of Dewey, where my influences were different than that of the Capitol City. I believe these unique participant perspectives are what make the Natural Resource CAP so beneficial for the Corps of Engineers in delivering our civil works missions.

My background is a reflection of where I come from including the values and experiences gained by not only working as a Park Ranger and Lake Manager at projects in Oklahoma and Kansas, but also having grown up boating, fishing, hunting and camping on these Corps lakes. In the past 15 years, I have been blessed to have additionally served as the Chief of Natural Resources in the Tulsa District Office and in my current assignment as the Operations Project Manager for the Trinity Region of Fort Worth District. In addition to my regular job duties, I have served as the Southwestern Division Representative on the Recreation Leadership Advisory Team (RLAT) and developmental assignments as an Operations Manager in Galveston District and as the Chief of Logistics in Tulsa District. It has been an interesting and thoroughly enjoyable 38 years with the Corps of Engineers.

There were many highlights of my CAP assignment to HQUSACE. One of my first jobs was to route the memorandum making the Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) program for Chief of Engineer's signature (more difficult than one would think). This took the better part of three months but allowed me to interact with a wide variety of decision-makers in HQ as well as thinking about things from a "national" perspective.

I was involved in working with Congressional interests, and leadership from OPM, other Federal land resource management agencies, US Army and USACE on: The Corps' role in the America the Beautiful program, development of the ES-Best budget tool, efforts to gain recreation fee retention authorization, coordination of HQ Day for the annual OPM Course, and coordination of the National NRM Conference in St. Louis, MO. Helping inner-city children fish for the first time as a part of National Take a Kid Fishing Day, but doing so on one of the ponds on the National Mall with the Lincoln Memorial staring at you from one end and the Washington Memorial looming from the other, was a bit of a surreal experience.

The opportunity to work and develop friendships with such great professionals as NRM Chief George Tabb, Judy Rice, Steve Austin, Tim Toplisek, Heather Burke, Scott Jackson, Kathy Perales, and Wen-Huei Chang, were probably the best part of this assignment. All of these folks were so positive in allowing me insight and input into the myriad of vital assignments that they were involved on. They provided me with a once in a career opportunity to have my perspective heard, the field office perspective, and truly utilized and respected my input in making policy for the agency. My appreciation for their leadership and friendship cannot be overstated.

I believe that my experience in this five month program provided me with a broader perspective, increased institutional knowledge, and important professional relationships that enhanced my ability in new jobs and challenges. My preparation for understanding the "big picture" has been especially vital in my work at the District and National level and impacts daily responses and decisions to this day.

Personally, I had the opportunity, on weekends, to indulge my love for history by touring battlefields, museums, and beautiful natural parks. When my wife and sons were able to join me for the last month, they were provided with time to really SEE the Capitol completely.

In closing, perhaps the most vivid memory that I have of this assignment came on the first morning that I was preparing to go into the office. My apartment was in Arlington, VA, just across the Potomac River. As I rolled out of my bed that dark winter morning, the first thing that I saw from my window, perfectly framed, was the outline and lights of the top of the Lincoln Memorial, the lights of the Washington Memorial and the lighted dome of the United States Capitol building. They were aligned in a manner that they just offset one another and could not be missed. That day and each day afterwards, this view served to remind me how fortunate that I was to have this opportunity, to serve the Nation that day, and what my responsibilities really were.

Truly a long way from Dewey, Oklahoma, truly a great journey.