

This note turned out to be lots longer than my usual notes but I found I had lots to say. It all came from my heart so I hope some of you will take time to read it.

We have certainly come a long way. When I first came to HQ in 1980, I was fresh from the field and knew that all I had to do was to get into HQ and I could make a difference. My optimism didn't last long but we have made some significant changes. Back then we still had secretaries who typed all our memos from our hand written drafts and used carbon paper to make copies. Corrections were major deals that were avoided at all costs. Lee Johnson was one of these people. It was a big deal then to get a FAX as there was only one machine in Civil Works and it took special permission to use it.

I remember Fowler Sims who was my supervisory when I first came here. Fowler was a WWII vet and brilliant man who knew just how to word things to get the right results. I learned lots from him. When PCs first came out, Fowler got one of the first ones but was terrified of it and let it sit on his desk until he retired without turning it on.

When I first came to HQ, Gerald Purvis was the NRM Branch Chief. Gerald had more fun than any three people deserved. Gerald once told me that "Experience is the accumulation of mistakes. Wisdom is having the vision to use that experience for the good of the future." That has been valuable advice to me as I have certainly made my share of mistakes. I hope that I have had the wisdom to put that experience to good use.

After a year or so, Gerald went to SAD and Darrell Lewis came in from the Interior Department. Beyond a shadow of a doubt, Darrell was the best supervisor I ever had. He saved me (and my career) several times and I learned a great deal from him about how to deal with people and difficult situations. We have eaten several elephants together. Still, today, when I come up against difficult situations or decisions, I ask myself, "What would Darrell do?" That little thought has saved me more than once. Doing the right thing is important to Darrell as it is to me. I only hope that I have been half as good a mentor to a few others as Darrell has been to me and countless others.

Another top quality person who taught me a great deal is Dave Wahus. Dave retired several years ago but I had the privilege of working for and with him for many years. From him I learned how to organize myself and how to generate quality presentations. We were all sorry to see Dave go when he retired but I especially have missed his great sense of humor. He taught me that a work place without humor is no place to work. People must have fun at what they do or it becomes drudgery.

While lots of things have changed over the years (and change has been constant in the Corps) one thing has not changed. That is the dedication of our NRM folks to furthering the enjoyment of the American People and protecting the resources which our projects are based on. I have worked for other agencies (the NPS and the USFS) but have never experienced this sense of dedication and passion that the Corps NRM people have for what they do. We have been at the absolute end of the food chain in the Corps but because of our people and their dedication, we have continued to be innovative and provide quality service to the public. At the heart of this dedication and innovation are Scott Jackson and his team at ERDC (Kathy Perales, Julie Marcy, Bonnie Bryson, Ginny Dickerson, Dr. Wen Chang, and others). I am proud to have been associated with people of this caliber. No where else in the Federal Government can you do more and more with less and less and still provide citizens with quality products. It has certainly been my privilege to lead the NRM group for the past three years.

I cannot go without saying something about the HQ NRM Staff. We all know that they are top quality people. To me they have been not only top quality employees but good friends also. They are always willing to pick up the slack for someone else and get the job done the way it should be done when the chips are down. Also, they have not been afraid to tell me when they think I have made a bad decision and are quick to offer advice on a fix. No leader wants to be

surrounded by a bunch of “yes men.” They are all outspoken and that is as it should be. Everyone should have their say but once the decision is made should move forward together. Judy, Steve, Denise, Tim, Janice, and Debra are all national experts and have fulfilled this role. Our program would fail without any one of them. I trust them all. We have not had the luxury of back-up coverage on any subject. We have also been hindered by the organizational structure we have had to endure. Even with the staff spread all over the building, we have somehow managed to hold our little programs together and function with some semblance of organization. Everyone is at least dual-hatted. Some wear three or four hats. Beyond a shadow of a doubt, these are the best people I have ever worked with. They care about what they do, they care about each other, they care about the field people, and they care about the resources. What a team we have been! It has been both a privilege and a pleasure to work with these people.

One other person deserves some special mention here. Many of you may not know her, but Christine Vassar started here at the HQ a few years ago as our Branch Secretary. Since then, she has moved on to bigger and better things as the Secretary for Operations Division. Chris has contributed significantly to my success and the success of the NRM CoP. She is a good, level headed thinker who keeps all of us in line as far as correspondence and other issues are concerned. She is good natured and is an expert at what she does and I am pleased to call her a friend. Thanks, Chris, for all you do to make all of us successful.

I must say a few words about the leadership here at the Corps. All the Chiefs of Operations, the DCWs and all the Chiefs during my tenure have been extremely kind and generous to me. They have allowed me to have opportunities I could never have had any place else. When I was a young man I remember saying to someone “I’ll never go to work in Washington! Those people there are nothing but stuffed shirts.” How wrong I was. They have all been exceptional and have personally supported me as well as our program. I couldn’t have asked for better leadership.

In closing, I want to say a heart felt “THANK YOU!” to all of you for making my time with the Corps so much fun, so productive and so successful. I have developed many lasting friendship with many of you over the years. I will greatly miss all of you and I hope that our paths will cross again some day. I am one of the few who can say honestly that I have done what I wanted to do with my career. It worked out far better than my wildest dream. The Corps has been the right place for me. Thanks to all of you for making it that way.

George E. Tabb, Jr.
Chief, Natural Resources Management
NRM Community of Practice Leader
U. S. Army Corps of Engineers
Phone: 202-761-1228
FAX: 202-761-0633