23 July 1980

Second Interview

Q: When we talked last summer, Colonel Badger, you had been District Engineer (DE) here for about 60 days, and I asked you how you found the transition from OCE staff to District Engineer. You said you had to consciously move out of doing things into supervising. Has it been difficult to keep your hands off projects?

A: Not really, because there is so much going on, I just don't have time to get involved in all the different projects and activities. It becomes obvious when you see the scope of your responsibilities and authorities that the job will keep you very, very busy.

To stay on top of the job, you have to establish a management style that will give you the information and you have to decentralize to the maximum. You have to get the right personnel in the right jobs so that, when you delegate to them, they make the jobs go for you.

You see that when you are at the management level -- dealing with state and federal representatives, attending meetings for the Corps or briefings, meeting with the local people -- you have time for only a certain level of involvement with any given topic. To be able to see the big picture, you have to look at all the problems a little bit and not get too involved in a single problem or in one project.

You do get more involved in the projects that have problems. Each time you get involved in an old problem, you get in a little deeper. There are certain problem areas that I can talk about to a great extent because they seem to be recurring. The rehabilitation of Lock and Dam 1 is an example. We closed the river for five months and that meant the city of Minneapolis, the port of Minneapolis, was closed off. That cost them about a month's shipping time in April, so they were conscious of that closure. We were meeting with them monthly in Congressman Sabo's office and reporting on that project. Each time before I would meet I would get more deeply involved in Lock and Dam 1's rehabilitation. So the problems were recurring and each time you get involved to a greater depth.

Q: What are some of the other problem areas that have taken a lot of your attention?

A: Well, you come into the District and the boss gives you your goals and objectives. One of the things that General Morris has been up-front with is that my primary mission as District Engineer is to be the contracting officer. We have a system where you go to Huntsville and study contracts. I did that before I took over the DE job and I also had experience with contracts in Saudi Arabia. The shortfall, though, is that you have no experience as a contract manager. You do not have the training in management indices to know when a contract system is not working.

When I got here I encountered large numbers of contracts. Now I have 56 active contracts. You find yourself so busy with managing the contract system that your knowledge about contracting is not what is really needed.

A different type of course should be explored and I recommended a change to General Harris and also to General Noah in Huntsville. The Huntsville Division should have the responsibility for putting a contracting management course on video tapes. They would make 15-minute professional tapes to be sent out to the field to redirect the contracting course to contract management, not just contracting. So when the DE comes in, he will be able to look at the contract management video tapes and be able to determine as a manager that the contracting system is working.

The first problem area that I got into was to improve the contracting capability, allocation of funds, and fund control. I hired a new chief of P&S (Procurement and Supply Division) who does the contracting for us. We hired an extra contract person in the division and established some cross training. When I first arrived at St. Paul we depended on one person to do all the work herself. Now she has extra help and we have the flexibility to insure that every contract action is done right. Since this is one of General Morris' top priorities and such an important area, we felt we had to make great strides in improving the contracting system. I believe we did.

Q: You also told me last year that you were satisfied with the organization's structure and the professional level. You said that your efforts are to try and make this good machine run a little faster. Is that still your goal?

A: Yes, but I find that the system is working against me in attempting to make things go faster. We're going through a period of more public interest in water resources management. States are now making demands for more states' rights. They feel they should have greater involvement in water resource development.

Senator Durenberger was pushing for a new water resource policy. The federal government would grant funds to the states, the governor would set the priorities for water resources work and allocations of funds, and the Corps would be used more in a technical role.

I think the states feel the Secretary of the Army and the Corps of Engineers play too large a role in the decision-making on water resources. I feel the trend in water resources is in coordination and accommodation of the environmental groups; trying to get balanced plans; and looking at the environmental, economic, and social aspects. We are trying to do more coordination when we develop projects so that the projects are better, and this process takes longer.

As our system becomes more involved, the time drags out. Even though we want to speed up the process so that we can better help the people in water resources, or in regulatory functions, we find there are more obstacles in the way than we first thought.

We are looking for ways to streamline and make the Corps perform better. I think we have many innovative approaches to do that and, if you like, we'll discuss it.

Q: Well, this is what I actually wanted to get at. My question was in terms of the organizational structure and professional level within the District. The problems that you are talking about are actually outside the District organization, is that right?

A: Yes. I thought I would spend more time during my first year, my learning year, working within the District. The second year would be more for formulation of strategy and plans, moving projects. My last year would be more dedicated to institutionalizing what we have established.

In the learning year, looking within, we found that we really needed to have team-building in the Engineering Division. We conducted team-building classes so we could communicate better within the Corps family and determine what our problems were. I thought it was very productive. People became more sensitive to each other and we now have much better communication.

Then we had a team-building course by the same consultant for the project managers. Now the project managers communicate better. The project manager is primarily concerned with the project and the functional managers supervise the technical people who do the hard-core engineering or environmental work on the projects. So you have this dual supervision, one supervising the project and the other supervising the function. Communication is essential in this dual system.

We have worked that out quite well. We established monthly meetings where the project managers brief me. I have delegated responsibility in guiding these projects to the project managers. I try not to be the driver of the train from the executive office. I let that happen with the project managers.

We have set up a system of two types of staff meetings. One week we have the standard staff meeting of the personnel officer, the safety officer, etc. The next week we have a staff meeting of the construction-operations and the engineering personnel -- the technical staff. It gives me a chance to interface with the standard staff and with the construction and engineering areas. Sometimes actions go on without the District Engineer having the chance to interface with them. Alternating staff meetings provides me a chance to see all the actions.

This is one thing I noticed in OCE when I was in the Civil Works Directorate. A lot of time the management element or the "green suit" element will be working in an area of hot issues or reacting to problems while the civilian staff is plugging along with water resource projects. Sometimes I felt there was not a close working relationship, so by having alternating staff meetings, I am hoping to get a closer relationship with the projects.

Q: How does it look so far?

A: Well, I think it is good from my viewpoint. I am more aware of what is happening in the engineering and planning and on the technical side than I would be if I had just the standard staff meeting. It helps build the importance of the corporate image. About 30 people in this organization attend one of the two staff meetings, and those people form the corporate body. What you want to do, or at least strive for, is to make them feel this is their District, they play a major role in the management of this corporate body, and they influence where we go as a corporate body.

I am trying to get those 30 people involved as a corporate body and moving as a family instead of saying "This is Bill Badger's District and if it fails we don't care." This is our corporate body and the survival of the organization is important to all of us.

Q: Dependent on all of us.

A: Dependent on all of us. I think the corporate image is built by having two different types of staff meetings. I think the communications have been great. The thing about communications is this: communicate internally continuously and you should communicate externally very selectively and very professionally. Tell your story correctly the first time when you go outside the Corps family. Inside the Corps family, you can tell the story all the time instead of occasionally.

Q: Now, as far as internal communication is concerned, you have more contact with your staff than just these two kinds of meetings?

A: Well, I try to keep my involvement in any one problem to a minimum so I have time to see all the problems. I try not to get bogged down in the administration so that I have more time to spend with the people who have problems or to visit. The more time I can spend with them, the more time they can spend with the boss, the better the feedback. Hopefully, I have created an environment of trust so that there is continuous feedback and I, as District Engineer, am informed of what is going on with the problems we have.

The greatest fear I have as a manager is that there are problems that are not recognized by other people or myself and do not get corrected. Once you have identified the problem, you can usually

solve it. I have found in my career that problems do not come with red ribbons around them. You have to be very perceptive to determine where the problems are.

Q: How candid do you think your staff members are with you? Do they come to you with their problems?

A: Well, I think so because they are the District and part of the corporate body. We spend a lot of time developing feedback. We have gone into the retired community and we had a luncheon with 200 retired people. On the Corps' birthday we had all the employees in the auditorium and gave them a state-of-the-Corps message and told them about what is going on in the District.

So I think communication within has been helpful. We put together a 21-minute briefing called "Keeper of the Waters" and, if you can, I would like you to come in tomorrow morning and see this.

Q: What other items have you worked on?

A: On my arrival, General Harris said, "Badger, improve the professional image of the Corps." So I said to myself, "How can I do that?" Well, the obvious way is to improve our performance but after you improve your performance, you need to improve in telling your story.

So we contracted for a professional voice, we drafted a good script, took color slides, and put together a professional briefing with background music. We have done that with six key areas within the District. So we have vastly improved our briefings and communications. Any time Corps employees go to a meeting to represent the Corps, they have all the latest information and they know the Corps' position. They also know the objective of the meeting and what they want to accomplish. They represent us in a professional manner and communicate in the best way possible. When Corps employees go out, they are prepared. Preparation is the key to success.

I think all the above has helped to raise our professional image. I've talked so long I've missed the question.

Q: No, you've been right on the question, which was the efforts to improve the organizational structure and professional level of the District. You centered pretty much on communication.

A: Yes, but I think we have gone into deeper and more meaningful areas. Hopefully, we haven't done the cosmetic fix: we have been fixing the system on the long term. We have established a sabbatical program. The professors from universities would come to work with us for a year, or a year-and-a-half, and we would improve our engineering skills in exchanging information with the university. They would see what we are doing and go back and improve our image with the university.

The only problem with that was the moratorium on funding. They cut the money and I had to stop the sabbatical program. I was setting it up for 12 professors from 12 different universities. Next year, when the funds start flowing, I will set up the sabbatical program.

We have started different training programs within. We recognize that, with the high cost of housing, we will not be able to hire new employees to come to St. Paul because they probably can't sell their houses in their old location and they can't afford the interest rates in the new location. This situation has made us less mobile with our civilian workers, so when we promote, we probably will have to promote from within. It is obvious that we have to train our own, so we are very concerned about this training.

In our Construction-Operations Division we have four GS-13 branch chiefs. On October 1, I will move the Chief of Regulatory to be the Chief of Construction and the Chief of Construction will become the Chief of Regulatory. The Chief of Maintenance will become the Chief of Project Operations and Chief of Project Operations to Maintenance. So I will have four GS-13s who will be trading places, energizing, getting new life, a new job. . . .

Q: More depth?

A: More depth, more experience. When we have to replace a very great Chief of Construction-Operations, we will have four supervisors who are trained and capable of moving up.

We are looking at the same thing in the Engineering Division; we are doing some cross-training and making some moves. We hope that it vitalizes the personnel in the system. I feel confident that we are moving in the right direction.

Q: How did you get this idea for cross-training branch chiefs?

A: Well, we will not be able to hire somebody from another organization because of the economics of moving. So we have to hire within.

Q: Is this something you developed yourself?

A: Well, we developed it together here. If I have to hire a GS-14 from within and I don't want to train my GS-13s, it's shame on me. We felt it was prudent to train our GS-13s.

Recently, when we filled two key positions, the Chief of Supply and the Chief of Planning, we decided to do it in the open. I set up part of the corporate body as an interviewing committee, including our Chief of Counsel, our Chief of Personnel, the Deputy, Chief of Engineering, and Chief of Construction-Operations. Later, on another nominating team, we added the Comptroller. Those people interviewed the candidates for the jobs. They made their recommendations through the Chief of Engineering to me and we made the selection.

The corporate body had a part to play in who was hired. I think we saw that we had a very good system of hiring people. We also saw that most of our hiring would probably be done within, since we do not have mobility in the Corps. We had better train our people from within so we have qualified people.

Q: They don't get bored that way?

A: Oh, no. Cross-training, I feel, gives people new life. When you have people who work eight years in a planning mode, and you are not getting water resource projects out of the pipeline because of the change in environment or change in administration, it is frustrating. I think we have some very difficult jobs in the Corps and we have to exchange jobs for these people to keep them interested. . . .

Q: Have you had any problems with people on the District staff who have risen beyond their levels of competence?

A: Yes, we have.

Q: People in jobs they cannot handle?

A: Yes.

Q: What did you do?

A: We had one case in the Regulatory Branch where somebody was promoted one grade above his capabilities. We had problems with English and we provided writing courses to get his ability up so that he could perform at that level. We were not successful.

The supervisors were getting frustrated and the man was getting frustrated, so we talked to him and we said, "Hey, we've got a problem. What's the solution?"

The solution was that we backed off a grade. We gave him a job that he had more talent for and was able to do. I think today the man seems happier. His supervisor is getting a better product. That was one solution. But when we identify a person who is out of his element, as managers we will help that person get back in his element so that he can perform better. I think in this case, treated as an individual action, it worked very well.

In another case we had an employee, the Planning Branch Chief, who was 70-years old. The job he was in changed during his 43 years of employment. The man had an uncanny ability in writing and understanding the planning system. But I had 50 percent of the Planning Branch work out on contract and that required the Planning Branch Chief to be the COR, the contracting officer's representative. This older manager did not have experience in contracting and I felt we needed a person who provided the leadership, had the technical qualifications in planning, but also could be a COR since we did half of the work on architect engineer

(A-E) contracts. This required a change in management style. The man in that job did not want to make the transition because his strong points were in planning, writing, and doing projects. So he retired and we hired him back as a retired annuitant to work on the most important study we had, the District Engineer's report to the GREAT (Great Environmental Action Team) I study.

He is happier now because he is working in an area for which he has the most talent. We have a younger man who is 42 now managing the Planning Branch and doing contract work. He had experience in contract management.

I think you have to be very careful. We take the people and get them in the right box. I find that once you make those decisions, once you do those things, everybody is happier.

Q: Yes, yes.

A: I felt very good about both of those examples.

Q: When did you last command troops?

A: I had the command of the 52d Engineer Battalion Combat Heavy at Fort Carson from 1975 to 1977.

Q: It may sound like a drastic change in my line of questions, but the reason I asked you that is -- have you thought much about the difference between military command and your job here?

A: Well, you know, the similarities are amazingly close. There are certain aspects of the District Engineer's job where you are commander and director and certain aspects where you are manager of resources. The tie-in is that you are a leader of people, you are a commander; you are still a manager of resources, but in a lesser role than in the District.

We have a 60-40 split in the District, but the skills are the same. People have people problems and I am a people manager. Organizations have organizational problems and I manage an organization. You have a budget for the battalion and you have a budget for the District. So the training you get as a battalion commander fits very nicely into the training you need for a District. The one significant change is that with the troops you are dealing with much younger people. You may have different types of problems: drugs, drinking, sex. . . .

Q: Maybe the need for a surrogate father?

A: It's more of a need for counseling. In the Engineer District, you have more professional people who are older, have established families, and are established financially, so you don't have the

personal involvement with their problems. But you still have sickness and death. You play a role as a commander. But amazingly, Mickey, the two jobs are so similar.

Q: I was going to ask you, the more we talk, about it -- there are lessons you can take from one area of leadership to another.

A: I sat down after being battalion commander and came up with ten rules, management philosophy. One was to create an environment of trust. Another philosophy I had as a troop leader was to always have a plan B. The same goes for District work. You can make the best plans in the world, but if something goes wrong with that plan, you have an alternative, plan B.

Know your boss. You have to know who you are working for; you have to know what he wants. We as managers are commanders; we owe it to our bosses to be supportive. They have objectives and goals and we should be listening to our boss and doing a good job here. There are many similarities between commands.

Q: I was going to ask you which projects in the District are causing the most trouble. You mentioned that Lock and Dam 1 has been difficult because it was closed for so long.

A: Well, Lock and Dam 1 is difficult from the management-construction viewpoint, the technical viewpoint. We, the Civil Works District, don't have the depth of construction management and contract

management experience that we should. We gave up the military programs out of the District, all those little construction projects scattered all over. The many engineers who have been trained in contract administration and construction management have left us. In the civil works area you have large, long-term projects and you put your construction manager and contract people on those and they stay with them. We didn't have the broad base in construction management and contract management in the Civil Works District that I thought we would.

When we moved into a $40-million total project, the Lock and Dam 1 rehab, we found that we had a real need for a lot of those extra people we didn't have. So we had a training program. When we closed the river, the port of Minneapolis was closed off and we had a time problem. We held meetings every month with congressmen and people from Minneapolis and they were very concerned that we live with the opening date.

When you do blasting and open up the 50-year-old locks, you don't know what you're getting into. We were basically going into the unknown. We used demolition to internally blast a reinforced concrete structure; this had never been done, so we were pushing the state of the art.

We put our two young captains and the project officer out there and we built the office up. We got the Chief of Construction and the Chief of Construction-Operations involved. We did a cost analysis

to see if our decision for a cost-effective acceleration was cost-effective and looked for new ways to get it done.

We opened it six days early and stayed within the financial bounds. It was a well-run project. We were not geared up for it so it became a challenge to get squared away so we would do well. We have another year of it, but I am not nearly as apprehensive because the people have proved during the first year that they can stay with a schedule and can do quality construction.

Now, you were asking about other problems.

Q: Yes. One I had in mind particularly was La Farge Dam on the Kickapoo River. It's been a real political problem.

A: Well, that's right. As you know, La Farge Dam matured at the time when the environmental movement was at its height and had its greatest influence. La Farge Dam was built in Wisconsin, which is probably the most environmentally sensitive state. The project was about 30-40 percent completed.

The people in the Kickapoo Valley were for it because they needed flood protection. The environmentalists were against it. They envisioned problems with water quality and they said that the reservoir behind the dam would become a dead lake. They had a governor at the time, Patrick Lucey, who didn't support the project

and two senators, William Proxmire and Gaylord Nelson, who were against it.

Q: For different reasons, I presume.

A: For different reasons, but they were against it. The governor stopped supporting it and when you lose your state support, the project is going to stop. And it was stopped.

Now Congressman Baldus has put an item in a House bill that the La Farge Dam in the Kickapoo Valley should be studied for a dry-dam concept, and not be deauthorized.

The official Corps position is that if the people want to deauthorize it, so be it. The Corps has recommended that it be deauthorized. So it's kind of in limbo.

Of course, it really creates problems for me because it is not being funded and yet I have to maintain it. I have to keep it clean and keep security on it. I have a small amount of funds this year and I'm still relocating a transformer station. I've run out of funds this year. On 1 October I will have no more funding but I will have the responsibility for it. It's still on the books.

But this project won't be deauthorized, I guess, until Congress makes a point or the study is done on the dry dam. A task force was

formed in Washington. The White House, Kathy Fletcher, was involved in this task force as the Corps was. This task report was finished and it really didn't give a lot of direction on how to solve the flood problem in the valley.

HUD has moved at Soldiers Grove and put out some funds to help relocate part of the town. The town of Gay Mills wanted me to come in and do a section 205 small flood control project study under the continuing authority. Since the project has not been deauthorized, I am unable to do a 205 project. Since then, the government has said that the FEMA, Federal Emergency Management Agency, now has overall responsibility over the Kickapoo Valley.

So it's one of those areas where we were taken out of our traditional role of flood control and a lot of other people got involved and they haven't been any more successful than the Corps. I always said that people who get into water resources management areas and haven't been there before need to learn the lesson of how difficult it is. Usually they won't get involved a second time.

I think there's a lesson learned for everyone. It's a very difficult problem. It doesn't take much of my time. It happened before me. I'm aware of it, I answer questions when they come in, and keep tabs on it, but it's not one of our real problems in the District.

When you look at the Corps -- I think we have real problems. I

would say that you come into a District and you say, "What is the strategy, what is the management philosophy, where is the District going for the next 20 years?" You will probably get the answer "I don't know."

And we had to get the realignment problem behind us when the Duluth area office was transferred to Detroit. Anytime you reorganize or realign, you have all kinds of political headaches and internal headaches. We did realign and I think it was done for a good reason. We wanted to make two lake districts and two river districts within the North Central Division, with St. Paul being a river district and Detroit a lake district.

So we dedicated ourselves to making a smooth transition and transferred Duluth to the Detroit District. And I think we've accomplished that. Since it was done, we have two major areas in the St. Paul District; the Upper Mississippi River where I have 240 miles, and the Red River Valley up north. The Red River basin is about the size of Kentucky. The Red River flows north and has all kinds of problems and it seems to flood annually.

So I said that to have a strategy and philosophy and direction for the District, I need something for the Red River Basin and the Upper Mississippi. On the Upper Mississippi River, we have a combined state and federal agency team working on the GREAT I study. The study was a $3.5 million, five-year effort and involved the Fish and Wildlife Service, the EPA, the states of Wisconsin, Iowa, and

Minnesota, the Corps, and the Coast Guard. The Corps cochairs it with the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Now the GREAT study is being printed; we are putting it together. This is a time where, hopefully, we have a balanced interagency plan, economically, socially, and environmentally. The environmentalists have their say in where we should go in the Mississippi River.

So I am doing the District Engineer's report that will try to implement the GREAT I report. After I saw what the GREAT report was trying to do, I said we have to set up a philosophy and here is what we are going to do. We are going to support the GREAT report even though we don't fully agree with it. We know it's a multiagency report and we can never fully agree with a multiagency report. But I think the effort that went into it was good, the ideas were good, and they are trying to do the right thing. So we anticipated that the Corps should support it, and I am supporting the findings and trying to implement them as quickly as possible.

We put together a task force to work on the DE report that will help implement the GREAT report. Maybe before this year is out we'll have those two reports. I will use those reports as a plan to give the District a 20-year strategy for where we're going in the District.

Now we have a Red River recon report. This is a six-month effort

which has taken all the water resource reports and activities in the Red River Valley and put them together in one report and an executive summary. We're looking for direction on what needs to be done in an innovative sense, what we have to do so the Corps can help the people in the Red River Valley.

Currently we're doing well in emergencies in the Red River Valley. In a flood we can demonstrate to the people that we can get something done and go right out on emergencies. We're giving them technical assistance on the Red River. We're doing a computer model. We're working with the two states on the levee problems that they have. Minnesota would raise the levee on one side and North Dakota would do it on the other side. The standards were different and it's causing interstate problems. So we're working in that area.

We have the standard water resource projects in the Red River Valley. We also have a new concept we call short-range, ring levees around the farmsteads, because in the Minnesota Valley-North Dakota area, the farms are built in the glacial lake bed and it's very flat. A one-foot rise of the Red River and it floods for 20 miles. It's good farmland and the farms, in essence, are little businesses with silos and equipment. We found that, cost-benefit wise, we could ring-dike the real property, the farmsteads, and the federal government would get an agreement from the farmer that he would not ring-dike the agricultural land. We would be using it for temporary storage.

Because of all that water in the Red River Valley and no place to go, we need to get storage, so that's the trade-off. Build ring levees around these farmsteads and get temporary storage. The floods in the Red River are snowpack floods. They happen early in the year. We can have that temporary storage, and then it drains off and you can plant your crops in time to get a full crop. So we've used that ring-levee concept and I think it's worthwhile.

Q: Do you deal with the Canadian Government a lot? The Red River problem?

A: Yes, but I'll get to that in the next question. Let me finish up on the Red River.

Q: Yes.

A: So we've made those efforts. We're going to take this recon report, brief all of the congressmen from the states, and try to come up with a strategy of what to do in the Red River Valley in the next 20 years. With that document and strategy and the GREAT document and strategy, I think the St. Paul District can plan from where we're going. So as a corporate body, we have a direction.

So much for management and let's move on to the IJC (International Joint Commission).

Q: Carrying this one a little further, one of the problems you mentioned last summer was that the District was too often reactive -- to the press, to politicians, to environmentalists -- it didn't have any real direction, didn't know where it was going.

A: Well, I think maybe it's a little hard because Colonel Gay had. . . .

Q: Maybe I misquoted you a little too.

A: Oh no, you're right. But I think Colonel Gay, the former District Engineer, had a real good management philosophy, he had the direction. I think the organization was such that when I came in as a new person, I did not know where I was going, and in that learning year had to learn those things that Colonel Gay learned to be able to get this direction.

I want to get some documentation so that when a person comes in to replace me, there is a corporate body plan. The district will know where it's going. A new DE can come in . . . .

Q: And know where he's going?

A: And take over. He can go with the District or he can change direction as he becomes more attuned to what's going on. I guess when I first came in, I wasn't attuned and I felt that we were in this transition. I think the transition was typified by this realignment study. So we had to do a regrouping. I don't want to

leave the idea that I took over an organization that was floundering around. That's not true. I took over a good District from a good District Engineer and I tried to make it better.

Q: Do you have dealings with the Canadian Government over the Red River?

A: Well, let's get to that. I think that the St. Paul District job is exciting because I'm on three different boards with Canada -- I'm on the Souris-Red River Board, the Lake of the Woods Board, and the Rainy River Board. We meet every six months. In October we meet in Canada and usually in April we meet in Washington. On the Red River Board there is a representative of the United States Geological Survey, the Bureau of Reclamation, and the Corps. There are three members from the Canadian side and we deal with problems in water resources that affect Canada and the United States.

They're very concerned in Canada about what we do on the Red River because the Red River flows north. They don't want us to channelize it and dump our flood problems into Canada. They want us to handle our flood problems and they're very concerned about our actions in the Red River because it has international impact. So our dealings with the IJC with Canada are very extensive.

Q: Do you deal with any particular Canadian agency or just as a member of these boards?

A: Well, the members of the boards I'm on from Canada belong to water resource-type agencies in Canada. One is regional and one is national, so it's the same.

They don't deal with the Corps, they deal with me but I represent the Corps and I represent the United States. So there's kind of a dual-hatting there.

I deal with an agency in Manitoba which is similar to the Corps of Engineers and they deal with me. But we do it through the board. And the board that I'm on, the Souris-Red River Board, is a board under the International Joint Commission. The International Joint Commission overlooks the entire border from New York to Portland.

Q: Burlington Dam. Has that been the focus of controversy with the Canadians? That's on the Souris River, isn't it?

A: Yes. We had a task force that looked at the impact on Canada. The impact and dollar values came out like $360,000, so it's very insignificant. But it's significant in doing the report well and we're going to brief the commission in October so that the people understand the impact. We're looking at the impact of floods on water quality, carp migration, and the environment. We will set up the system so that Canada will be reimbursed even for the small amount which will never go over the $300,000 range. But I think

it's healthy that we make this effort, even though it's a token effort, so it clearly demonstrates that the Burlington Dam has really a minor impact on Canada.

Q: Yes, that's important. How would you characterize your relationship with the press here in St. Paul?

A: Well, when I came into the District I was very skeptical. I had seen cases where District Engineers had been used by the press. I was very fortunate that my boss said, "Bill, tell it like it is." So I have the freedom of being up front, as honest, I guess, as I would ever want to be. It helps you sleep better at night.

The main thing is that if you're candid and up-front with the press, they sense this. I feel our relationship has been excellent from the point of view that we haven't been misquoted or abused by the press or television. We've had a policy in the District of our people being encouraged to talk about their area of expertise with the press. I think it's important that we qualify that a little bit. We want our engineers to talk about engineering, legal to talk about legal.

I feel that our coverage from the press has been very good. General Morris has said when the facts are not straight, write them a letter and straighten them out. I haven't had to do that.

The other day I wrote a letter complimenting the Minneapolis Tribune because a story on a very difficult project, on a Control Data permit and a Department of the Interior moratorium, was handled very factually. This factual handling of it really defused the issue. The newspapers help me tell the people our story.

So I wrote the editor and said, "It really makes my job easier when you do a complete reporting job like this."

I'm pleased to say the editor printed the letter.

Q: Yes. What about with politicians, with the congressional delegates?

A: You know, you always get the image that everything is done in the back room, cigarette smoke and cigar smoke behind the scenes. In my dealings I have not seen that with the 22 congressional people I have in my area. They have been well chosen by the people. They are concerned citizens, concerned with their states, and have been very helpful. They seek out information and we in the Corps give it to them in a timely manner. We do that quite well. So I think that we serve a real purpose in providing good information to the congressmen and senators. I was pleased that they received me in a friendly mode.

They don't seem to second guess you when they ask for your determinations. I have not had a single case where a Member of Congress tried to put pressure on me to get the Corps moving in a certain way.

We have a very good relationship but I have the feeling that they are seeking changes in the system. I feel that they are very, very open to make changes and that they are not happy. Senator Durenberger is looking for new ways to handle the money and priorities in water resources projects so it's not all roses for me. I don't feel they all agree with what we're doing. But I think that they're very cordial. Senator Durenberger kind of disagrees with where we're going, but we are working well together.

Q: Yes, but you're honest with each other?

A: Oh, I think so. We give a lot of information. This is helpful because one time I was in Rochester talking about my flood control project and an unhappy person who was being displaced because of the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) reservoir attacked the Corps instead of SCS.

I felt a little chagrined because it's hard to come to your own defense. Congressman Erdahl stood up and said, "Hey, you're wrong. The Corps did not do that. The Corps is a good organization." He set them straight. It really set a nice tone for me because the congressman stood up and defended the Corps and our action. Even when you're right, it's very difficult to counter accusations. But someone else, a third party, can very easily do this. I felt very, very good about that type of action.

Q: The pamphlets -- "Water Resources in Minnesota" and "Water Resources in Wisconsin" -- list reduction of flood damage among the major needs of all river basins in the District. Is flood control the main focus of the District's program?

A: Interesting question. I never thought of it in those terms. I would say flood control on the Red River is our greatest concern. Probably our greatest concern on the Mississippi is navigation, and maybe environmental aspects because when we deal with the navigation problem we are more sensitive to the environmental issues right now.

So I would say that I have to divide that out.

Navigation on the Mississippi: I have the 13 locks and dams and 240 miles. This is so important because we are in a period of difficult economics. The nine-foot channel is an economic lifeline to the Upper Midwest.

It is very important, in terms of mobilization effort, if our nation had to mobilize. The importance of the nine-foot channel is in feeding the nation during mobilization -- this is really the focus of how important the navigation is.

So I would say it is two answers: the lower part, navigation on the Mississippi, and the upper part, Red River and Minnesota River flood control.

Q: How can you reconcile the need to maintain that channel and the pressure from environmentalists?

A: Well, before they built the nine-foot channel, they had a river that was lazy and moved around. I would say once we built the dams and the slack-water pools, we had more wetlands, more fisheries, and more environmentally sound areas than we did before.

I'm not so sure that, by building the dams for the nine-foot channel, we weren't the environmentalists' friends even though we might not have been thought of as friends. Probably the greatest concern the environmentalists have today is the silting in of backwaters, where some of these nice wet areas that are now slack-water pools will be lost in the future. I think the environmentalists' greatest concern is in the future and where we will go from there.

The environmentalists probably want us to develop more recreation. We own a great deal of land in these slack-water pools, and we have signed over a large amount of it for fish and wildlife refuges. I feel that we do quite well environmentally in the slack-water pools and I think probably our public image in this area has not been recognized. We're sensitive now to where we put our dredged material. We are spending a great deal of money to put the dredged material where it is less damaging to the environment.

I think the nine-foot channel and the environment can live well together on the river, and any plan you have has to be balanced socially, economically, and environmentally. The impact of the nine-foot channel on the economics is great, great, great. The GREAT study will show that. I think that the plan we will get out of this GREAT study will be a balanced plan that will be better received.

Q: Yes. Do you still think this is the greatest job in the world?

A: Well, I enjoy being the District Engineer because it's a challenging job and one that can hopefully help people. We do the water resource planning, stop floods, have the nine-foot channel operating. We are serving people so this is a service job.

It's a job where I meet a lot of people. I enjoy that aspect of it. I enjoy being the boss. I think that there are too many jobs around that have undue pressures and all these pressures are self-induced or induced by the boss. And I think we have set up a climate here for getting the job done, being efficient. That's where the job is rewarding and satisfying to me. I don't think that I'll ever get a job again that is as enjoyable as being the District Engineer.

It has changed over time. When I first got in the job, the challenge was more work and fewer spaces, but the money was not a problem. Twelve months later the money was a problem and the

spaces were not a problem because I wasn't getting enough money to pay for the people I had. Then the real challenge was to pare down what we were doing so that we didn't overspend.

So within a year, the management emphasis reversed itself 180 degrees. You can't get complacent in the job because the challenges are there. But they are challenges that every engineer manager would enjoy because they are the kinds of things that we were trained for. It is a rewarding job.

Q: What do you think about Ray Merritt's history of the District?

A: Well, the District history by this gentleman was a contract effort over a three-year span. The scope of work given to the man on this contract must have been well-written because the history was well-written. It's not one glorifying the Corps or reciting the names of everybody who served in the District. It's not something we tried to do to build the image. I think it was written with the idea of telling the story.

From my reading of it, I get the idea that the gentleman did very well telling the story and looking at it across the board, not dwelling on any one area too long. I think there was a good balance. I gave a copy of it to Governor Dreyfus of Wisconsin, the former chancellor of the University of Wisconsin. He is a local history buff and it just tickled his fancy. He read every bit of that history that dealt with Wisconsin.

I think Merritt did a very good job of showing what the Corps does without harping on the Corps and yet treating the history well. I feel pleased with it and I'm going to recommend that each District Engineer write a supplement chapter at the end of his three-year tour and put in perspectives hopefully in the same professional way as Ray Merritt did in his writing so that each three years will have an update. Maybe after another 10 or 20 District Engineers, someone will go to volume two.

Q: You're going to give us an update at the end of your tour?

A: Oh yes, I'm saving all my letters to the General and interviews with the press and yourself -- I'm going to take all those at the end of my tour and sit down and do something that -- I'll break my own rule and write it myself.

I've always felt that a District Engineer who picks up a pencil other than for his signature was taking his time away from guiding the ship of the state. So I'm going to break my rule and write this myself, because I feel this hopefully will be something that the new DE can use to bridge the gap.

Q: Is this volume by Merritt useful to you?

A: I'm sure that anytime we tell a story well, it is useful to the organization in the sense that it improves the professional image of the organization.

I read it as a new DE and it gave me an understanding of where the District came from and a feel for history. Hopefully, when we understand history, we don't make the same mistakes. So I would say yes, in the personal sense, it prepared me for the job. For an organization, it's helpful to tell the story in a professional way, but, if there are other benefits, I haven't run across them yet. I'm still looking for ways to use the history. The other day I did use part of it in a speech; it was good background for that.