

# ST. LOUIS ARMY ENGINEER DISTRICT *ESPRIT*

Vol. 43 No. 5

www.mvs.usace.army.mil

May 2004



Students visiting the National Great Rivers Museum learn about the Lewis and Clark Expedition from a Corps ranger. Daily presentations and demonstrations included diplomacy techniques, music of the time, recruiting and journaling.

## Lewis and Clark Signature Events in Illinois

*Forty Corps employees from twelve districts help tell Army story*

Three years of planning and preparation came to an end May 13-16 as a two-and-one-half year observance of the bicentennial of Lewis and Clark's exploration of the Louisiana Purchase began in Hartford and Madison, Ill. The National Signature Event marked the expedition's departure from its winter post at Camp River Dubois as expedition

re-enactors began their journey up the Missouri River in three authentic replicas of the boats used by the explorers.

Heavy rains on the 13th and 14th forced organizers to cancel some events and to make other adjustments. "Four inches of rain will dampen any event," said Jean Nauss, National Coordinator of the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial for the

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, "but everyone made the best of it they could."

There were as many as forty Corps employees, primarily park rangers, from twelve Corps districts assisting with the various events, Nauss said. "The Corps has received a lot of kudos because we've been willing to help the organizers do whatever needed to be done."

Lewis & Clark Cont. page 3



### Commander's Perspective



**MAJ Joseph D. Tyron**

Two centuries ago this spring - in May of 1804 - a small contingent of mostly Army personnel under Captains Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, embarked to explore the recently acquired Louisiana Territory.

The expedition - officially named "The Corps of Volunteers of Northwest-ern Discovery" - was ordered by President Thomas Jefferson to explore the almost totally uncharted expanse of new American land extending to the Pacific Ocean. His dream was of a united country from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

That's the beginning of the "Lewis and Clark Expedition."

But what of the people who carried out this brave endeavor?

Imagine yourself in their places. Consider the uncertainty inherent in volunteering to follow two people you probably didn't know well, an unknown

distance to visit places your leadership had never even seen, on a journey of an indefinite and unknown duration. And remember, you would have no place to replenish supplies and you didn't know if the native peoples would welcome you or seek to exterminate you. Westward expansion had not heretofore been exactly popular with the Native American population.

You'd go in uniform. You'd be subject to all of the rules and regulations of the Army, including to discipline by court martial for any infractions.

These young men - and the Shoshone Indian woman Sacagawea, who would join the expedition in the Dakotas with her husband - almost literally stepped off of the edge of the earth into a vast unknown future, all in service to their nation.

Ratchet forward, two centuries.

At the May signature event in Hartford, some 30-plus young men and women took a similar giant step into the unknown. They raised their hands and swore oaths to the Constitution of the United States enlisting in today's Army.

They will receive rigorous training, as did Lewis and Clark's charges before them, and then many of them will go into their personal unknowns and uncertainties, to Iraq or Afghanistan to face a hostile environment and perhaps dangerous adversaries. Like their predecessors two centuries earlier, they will do this in service to their nation.

As you are well aware, members of our St. Louis District family are similarly on their own journeys into a potentially very challenging future, serving with the Corps of Engineers throughout the Middle East and indeed

throughout the world.

I commend to your attention, the unbroken chain of valor and willingness to serve that our nation has witnessed. It has enabled us all to grow and prosper under its protection and strength.

I urge you to support those who have chosen to serve, those who are serving now and to consider adding your name to the growing roster of modern day heroes who are doing truly wonderful work in far away lands. They are there to help whole nations of people gain the opportunities we hold so dearly here in America today.

A truly worthwhile career is not marked by the size of a bank account at retirement. It is not measured by the square footage of your grandest residence. Rather, it is characterized by the sum of your experiences and the people for whom you have made a positive difference.

Consider Lewis and Clark. Think of your colleagues serving as you read this. Then think about yourself. If you can find it in your heart and mind to serve - to make a difference - I hope you will do so. It will certainly make you a different person, and probably a better one too.

Essayons.



**US Army Corps of Engineers**  
St. Louis District®

ESPRIT is an unofficial publication authorized under the provisions of AR 360-1. It is published monthly, by contract, in 1450 copies, by the Public Affairs Office, US Army Engineer District, St. Louis. Views and opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Department of the Army.

Acting District Commander ----- MAJ Joseph D. Tyron

Chief, Public Affairs ----- Alan J. Dooley

Editor ----- Nicole M. Dalrymple

Address mail to: US Army Engineer District, St. Louis,  
ATTN: CEMVS-PA, 1222 Spruce, St. Louis, MO 63103-2833,  
Phone (314) 331-8095



The expanse of river looks much the same today as in 1804. A small but determined band commence a voyage of discovery to retrace the footsteps of their famous forefathers.

**In This Issue:**

Lewis and Clark ..... Cover Story  
 Commander’s Perspective  
 ..... Page 2  
 Journey to Uzbekistan  
 ..... Page 6  
 Hall of Fame Inductee:  
 Ron Dieckmann ..... Page 8  
 The Way I Remember . Page 10  
 Faces and Places, Volunteer  
 Meg LaPlante ..... Page 12  
 Corps Picnic Reminder Page 13  
 Corps Celebrates  
 Earth Day! ..... Page 14  
 Retiree’s Corner ..... Page 15  
 Cinco de Mayo, A Celebration  
 of Heritage ..... Back Cover

**Lewis & Clark Cont. from page 1**

A group of rangers were even working what they called the “swamp detail.” After Thursday’s heavy rains, they helped move vendors and exhibits out of the saturated grounds area around the Lewis and Clark Historic Site.

Corps personnel helped staff the inter-agency Corps of Discovery exhibit, provided support to the National Great Rivers Museum, conducted interpretive programs for local schools, and participated in the fort reenactment. The fort in Hartford was the most historic reenactment he’s been involved in so far, said Park Ranger Tim Bischoff, from Rend Lake. “If the Lewis and Clark Expedition did it during their encampment, so are we. We’re even cooking buffalo all week.”

Col. Kevin Williams, St. Louis District Engineer, was permitted a brief respite from his current temporary assignment with the Iraqi Reconstruction Office in Baghdad, Iraq, to participate in Lewis and Clark Signature events. Brig. Gen. Don T. Riley, Division Commander, also participated, offering remarks at the opening ceremonies, May 14.

“The Lewis and Clark expedition is a significant piece of our U.S. expansion west and our evolution as the United States,” Riley said. “The Corps of Engineers is proud to be a part of the educational efforts organized to celebrate the Soldiers of the expedition.”

The fact that Lewis and Clark’s journey of exploration was a military



**Mississippi Valley Division Commander, Brig. Gen. Don T. Riley.**



expedition has placed the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers out front telling the Army story. "The Corps is the most visible component of the U.S. Army along the route," Nauss said. "You look at the 5,000 miles Lewis and Clark traveled and 4,700 miles are river managed either directly or indirectly by the Corps."

"What Lewis and Clark did took real courage," said Park Ranger Charlie Deutsch, of the Riverlands Project Office. "They had no accurate maps and no idea what they were getting themselves into. They spent two winters on the trail and crossed the Rocky Mountains. It's really quite incredible."

While the expedition opened the western doors for the United States, the expedition also forever changed life for the Native Americans. A reverential emphasis is placed on never calling the bicentennial a "celebration" but a "commemoration." The Native American Indians were instrumental in ensuring the success of the expedition. Without the shelter, food and supplies they provided, as well as information about what lay ahead, the expedition surely would have failed.

The expedition was a success for the explorers and the United States, but it began a very troubled and bloody future for the Indians.

Although the 4-day event's kickoff ceremony the "Eve of Discovery" had to be canceled May 13 due to heavy rains, an abbreviated version did take place in front of hundreds of V.I.P. guests gathered under a protective shelter.



**The US Army band brightens spirits, under heavy rain.**

The U.S. Army Band played several numbers for the audience and the Oak Ridge Boys did an cappella version of Elvira.



**COL Kevin Williams, Commander of the St. Louis District, administers the Oath of Enlistment to the Honorary Lewis and Clark Company.**

Most notably the ceremonial swearing-in of thirty-one local recruits proceeded on schedule and was conducted by Col. Williams. He greeted the drenched recruits with the familiar Army phrase, "If it ain't raining, it ain't training," and then led them in their Oath of Enlistment.

Kristopher Muskopf, an 18-year-old recruit from Millstadt, Ill., said he was proud to be joining the U.S. Army. When asked about the Lewis and Clark Expedition he said, "Lewis and Clark didn't know what was out there and they went any way. We know what's out there and we still go."



**Twenty tribes represented the Native Americans who helped Lewis and Clark.**



Standing shoulder-to-shoulder with the new recruits was Staff Sgt. Robert L. Dannenberg Jr., an Operation Iraqi Freedom veteran and Illinois native. Dannenberg, currently serving as an infantry squad leader at Fort Riley, Kan., reaffirmed his commitment to service in the enlistment ceremony.

"Today I'm representing the noncommissioned officers, the backbone of the Army," Dannenberg explained.

Aside from Captains Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, the remaining forty members of the expedition were noncommissioned officers and civilians.

Despite having a father who was a Lewis and Clark enthusiast, Dannenberg said it wasn't until he was stationed at Fort Lewis, Wash., two years ago, that he learned the expedition was a military mission. Fort Lewis, located north of Fort Clatsop, Ore., has a museum dedicated to its namesake, Capt. Meriwether Lewis.

"You look at all the scientific discoveries and geographic knowledge that came out of the expedition and you wonder where we'd be without it," Dannenberg said. "The expedition was a success because they had the discipline of being in the Army."

Values such as discipline, teamwork and courage were critical to the expedition's success, said Deutsch. "The values that made the expedition a success are the same things that make the U.S. Army a success today."

The Lewis and Clark Expedition departed Camp River Dubois May 14, 1804 around 4 p.m. "At Camp Dubois, time was spent preparing for the journey west," Col. Williams said. "The five months of organizational development, recruitment and training that took place at this first winter encampment transformed these men into a cohesive military unit. In many ways, the Corps of Discovery was the special forces of its time."

A reenactment group out of St. Charles, Mo., sailing a keelboat and two pirogues, left the banks of the Mississippi River May 14, 2004 at 4 p.m. More than 1,500 people cheered as cannons sounded and period drum and fife music played by the Army's Ceremonial Guard, from Washington, DC, provided a festive send-off as the boats journeyed across the Mississippi to the confluence of the Missouri River.

It will be over two years before the modern-day Lewis and Clark come back

to the region. Theirs is an adventure for the history books. "I encourage you all to rediscover the story of Lewis and Clark," Col. Williams said, "visit the lands that they crossed, the waters they navigated and the sites they touched. It is all part of our history."

A series of other Signature Events are scheduled during the coming two-plus years as re-enactors retrace the incredible journey of the Lewis and Clark expedition. But it all began here, in the St. Louis District two hundred years ago.



**Our nation is still represented by Old Glory, but with a considerable number of additional stars, many resulting from the expedition's exploration.**

### Wounded Soldier Honored



**2nd Lt. Stephen Rice meets Joe Bonsall of the Oak Ridge Boys**

As the St. Louis area honored the 200th anniversary of Lewis and Clark's historic expedition across America, Illinois Army National Guardsman 2nd Lt. Stephen Rice, of Alton, Ill., was

honored for his patriotism, sacrifice and service to the Global War on Terrorism in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Rice, an Operation Iraqi Freedom veteran, was an honored guest at the "Eve of Discovery" reception at the Gateway International Raceway on May 13 in Madison, Ill. Rice, a platoon leader with the 233rd Military Police Company of Springfield, Ill., received orders to active duty in February 2003 and was deployed to Iraq.

While serving on active duty, Rice performed a variety of security missions including the reestablishment of Iraqi police stations and implementing a special Iraqi police task force to combat gangs and terrorist cells.

On Dec. 27, 2003 he was injured by an improvised explosive device while responding to an assistance call during a

patrol in Baghdad. He was subsequently sent to Walter Reed Army Hospital in Washington, D.C. where they treated his severely injured lower leg and foot.

With periodic trips back to the hospital, he is now recuperating in his hometown of Alton and plans to return to duty with his unit, which redeployed to Springfield, Ill., in April.

Rice said the accident reinforced being a Soldier. "Being a Soldier means everything to me," Rice said. "I've never thought of doing anything else."

It's important that Americans continue to send support to the troops, Rice stressed. "Once things got started in Iraq everyone forgot about Afghanistan. We need to support our troops no matter where they are," he said.



The Amu Darya River serves as an 85 mile border between Uzbekistan and Afghanistan. The remoteness of the region makes it necessary to use boats to patrol the area. This is the site of one of the Army's proposed facilities.

## Journey to Uzbekistan

By Nicole Dalrymple

Where would you go on your first trip outside the United States?

Would you travel to the sun drenched beaches of coastal France or Australia, on safari in Africa, or maybe you'd visit the pyramids in Egypt or the Great Wall of China?

Faced with a world of choices, it's probably pretty safe to assume that a little known country, one of only two doubly landlocked countries in the world and a former Soviet Union Republic, would not be one of your first choices.

The country, Uzbekistan, which is slightly larger than California and is bordered by Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, did become the first international destination for Dave Gordon, a District hydraulic engineer.

The St. Louis District's river engineering expertise was requested for a two-week trip to Uzbekistan March 23 - April 4, by a team from the Corps' Transatlantic Programs Center. The District's initial participation was in a conference call, but when a volunteer was requested, Dave's hand went up.

Admittedly, Dave was a bit apprehensive about saying "yes." "I didn't know anything about the country and there were unknown security risks too," he said. Preparations for the trip included a security briefing and immunizations at Scott A.F.B.

The four-man team arrived in Uzbekistan's capital city Tashkent, via Frankfurt, Germany, the evening of March 25. "I was very hesitant when I

first got on the ground," Dave remembered. "We landed at night so I couldn't see anything. Plus I was tired from traveling for 20 hours."

The team had two missions to accomplish while in country. The first was to inspect and evaluate a building in Tashkent that the Uzbek's Special Investigative Unit had selected for rehab and use as their new headquarters.

The second mission was to inspect four sites along the Amu Darya River where the Uzbek Army was proposing new docking facilities.

The army provides border patrol and protection along the 85-mile length of the Amu Darya River, which serves as the border between Uzbekistan and Afghanistan.

Currently the army only has one docking facility in the middle of the border at Termiz. Given the width and length of the river, only having one facility makes it difficult for the army to do an efficient job, Dave explained. The new facilities would provide additional locations to take on fuel, food and change crews if necessary, he added.

After four days in Tashkent, the team drove eight hours to Termiz over some of the worst roads you could image, Dave recalled. "You had to have your seatbelt on just to stay in your seat," he said. "My neck hurt for days."

The Uzbek countryside near Tashkent looked a lot like Illinois, he said. Flat land gave way to a mountainous region near Jizzax and Samargand, and then,



Dave Gordon (second from left, back row) pictured with the Corps' TAC team and three Uzbek Army officers. In the distance, is Afghanistan, which the Americans were not permitted to visit.



**St. Louis' Dave Gordon is shown here on the Friendship Bridge over the Amu Darya River on the Uzbekistan-Afghanistan border.**

what Dave described as a “desert with rice patties,” greeted the travelers at Termiz. “It was a beautiful drive.”

Rice patties are probably the last things you’d expect to see in the desert. “The land near the Amu Darya is heavily irrigated,” Dave explained, “but there’s a lot of water wasted because the system is old and deteriorated.”

In fact so much water is siphoned out of the Amu Darya by countries bordering its course from the Himalayas to its outlet in the Aral Sea that the Aral Sea is shrinking at an alarming rate. “The sea is now half the size it used to be because the tributaries hardly bring in any water,” Dave said.

Still hundreds of miles from the Aral Sea, near Termiz, the river is surprisingly large but shallow. The river is wide, wider in spots than the Mississippi River, Dave said. The river is constantly changing and has lots of islands, sandbars and channels. “The river is what we call a braided river,” he said.

An Uzbek hydrologist from Tashkent met with the TAC team in Termiz. Three officers from the army and members of the U.S. Embassy, who sponsored the Corps’ trip, also joined the team.

Because the country’s predominate languages are Uzbek and Russian, Dave worked with an interpreter. “At AREC [the Applied River Engineering Center] we have representatives from foreign

countries come in all the time so it wasn’t difficult.”

“I had to ask a lot of questions in order to determine the behavior of the river,” he said.

“I had to ask the right questions to get the right answers.”

Dave’s questions included how much does the river change, how does it vary, do particular areas flood? River data and technology we take for granted in America were not available in Uzbekistan.

The Amu Darya only has one river gage in Uzbekistan, but the records were not available during the team’s visit. There is also no data on the river’s bed. “The army’s boats have no depth finders,” Dave said. “There are no channel markers and the boat crews navigate by feel.”

“We had basic survey instruments such as a GPS unit, a tape measure, compass and protractor, in order to get rudimentary data,” Dave said. “We were also looking at the surrounding geology and taking lots of pictures.”

Ultimately Dave concurred on three of the four proposed site locations, although the third site was moved upstream 200 yards.

“I was able to tell by the river’s configuration that the proposed site was shallow and because of siltation, constant dredging would be required.”

After conferring with the hydrologist and making the recommendation to the army, the decision was made to move upstream.

All parties agreed on scrapping the proposed fourth site because the additional construction of a barracks building and other amenities made it unfeasible. “The other sites will basically be a dock with a revetted bankline,” Dave said.

“The revetments will be very important in helping keep the facilities in place, keep water depths deep, prevent sand bars from developing and keep additional erosion to a minimum,” Dave said. Erosion is a big problem along the treeless shoreline.

Because of the scarce data, the Corps will provide a framework for the project and a local contractor will do the design and construction. “My portion of the report was due May 15, and the contract has to be awarded by September 2004,” Dave said.

Overall it was a good experience, and although it is unlikely it would be required, Dave said he would go back.

“The Uzbek’s were very glad to have us there,” Dave said. “Right now they are so poor and happy to get any help we can provide. The people were very friendly and hospitable.”

While in Uzbekistan Dave did pick up a few courtesies such as saying “Thank You” in Russian, but he said the most important phrase was “cold,” especially when ordering a drink. Despite his stress on “cold” Dave considered himself lucky if he got “slightly chilled.” “I was never so glad to get back to the States and have a cold drink,” he said.

As the father of a 3-year-old and 1-year-old twins, Dave said he would not volunteer for a 120-day rotation in Iraq, but this opportunity provided a chance to contribute without being away from his family too long.

“Working on something like this makes you feel good,” he said. “The Uzbek’s listened to advice and were very appreciative of the U.S. support.”



## Hall of Fame Inductee: Ron Dieckmann

By: Nicole Dalrymple

The Greater St. Louis Amateur Baseball Hall of Fame isn't found in an actual building. It is found within the hearts of its more than 550 inductees. For 31 years the organization has been recognizing and honoring the area's outstanding amateur baseball players, umpires and coaches.

St. Louis District's very own Ron Dieckmann, a senior hydraulic engineer, was one among eight players inducted into the 2004 Hall of Fame at a St. Louis ceremony April 3.

Dieckmann says he's been playing baseball since he could walk and inherited the love of the game from his dad Andy, who played fast-pitch softball for 25 years and is a member of the St. Louis Softball Hall of Fame.

The 2004 Hall of Fame honorees were announced in the March 19 issue of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. Thirty-six years prior in 1968, Dieckmann, then a senior at Augustinian Academy, was named to the "All Metro Team" by the Post-Dispatch, which annually recognizes the area's best local high school baseball players.

Dieckmann, who played outfield in high school and college, said he was known for his speed, his penchant for stealing a lot of bases and his ability to move around the field quickly.

A baseball scholarship from St. Louis University had Dieckmann playing in his hometown for two years, but when the university canceled its engineering program he was forced to find another school.

Earning a college degree was a priority for Dieckmann. He explained that unless a player had a lot of scout interest coming out of high school it was unlikely he'd play professional ball. "I wanted to make sure I had a degree," he said.

Dieckmann transferred to the University of Missouri at Columbia. The baseball team's assistant coach agreed to let him try out and Dieckmann was basically on the team after the first practice.



**He's a Hall of Fameer - the Greater St. Louis Amateur Baseball Hall of Fame. Ron Dieckmann (L) accepts his certificate and ring honoring him, from Henry Greifzu, Jr. Hall of Fame vice chairman.**

"Ordinarily when you transfer schools they make you sit out a year," Dieckmann explained. "But since my transfer was involuntary, I wrote a letter to the NCAA and they voted to let me start playing immediately."

Dieckmann spent his junior and senior year playing for the Mizzou Tigers. Because he was a new player, as a junior he didn't always get to play, but his senior year was a "good year." "I had 'Most at Bats' and 'Most Triples' for the season," he said. Remembering a game between the Mizzou Tigers and the Iowa State Cyclones on April 29, 1972 brings back good memories for Dieckmann, who had a five-for-five day, and helped the Tigers win 13-2.

After graduation, Dieckmann came to work for the St. Louis District through the Junior Engineer Training program. As a JET he worked a rotational schedule where he gained practical work experience in all the engineering specialties. "When I completed the training program there were two openings, one in geotechnical and one in hydraulics," he recalled. "I chose the one in hydraulics."

Almost as quickly as he began his

career with the Corps, Dieckmann began playing for the District's softball team, the Corps Kings. Former Kings include Billy Arthur, Mel Baldus, Wayne Miller, Gerry Schwalbe, Dennis Seibel, Dennis Woodruff, as well as retirees Jim Brown and Wally Feld. The Corps Kings were one of the best industrial teams, Dieckmann remembered. Once the season began the team played weekly games on Wednesdays, as well as weekend tournaments.

In addition to playing for the Kings, Dieckmann was playing amateur baseball



**Here Ron Dieckmann, seen in his Corps Kings uniform, connects with a chest-high pitch.**



**This 1977 team photo of the Corps Kings shows some familiar faces. Who do you recognize? Back row (L to R): Wayne Miller, Kevin Milligan, Bob McDonald, Wally Feld, Gary Plummer, Ron Dieckmann, Billy Arthur and Jerry Schwalbe. Front row (L to R): Dennis Woodruff, Paul Olson, Jim Brown, Andy Maser, Tim Corbett, and Dennis Seibel.**

for the Economy Collegians, who won four St. Louis County league titles. The Collegians played games several nights a week plus weekends. So that meant, during the season, Dieckmann was playing at least five days a week, and he played on both leagues for five years. "I wasn't very popular at home," he remembered.

Dieckmann did become a bit more popular when he decided to hang up his baseball cleats once he and his wife Barb began their family. He did, however, continue playing softball with the Kings into the mid 80s. "Playing for the Kings allowed me to build relationships with people I worked with," he said.

Dieckmann, the father of three girls and one boy, was quick to pass on his love of baseball to his son Tim. "I started teaching him the game from the time he could lift a bat," Dieckmann said. Tim is now 22 and continues the family tradition by playing in several softball leagues.

It had been 20 years since Dieckmann swung at a baseball in league play when Bill Davis, a former Collegians coach,

asked him to play in a baseball tournament in Phoenix. Dieckmann turned down the invitation in 2002 but decided to take a chance in 2003. "He aggravated me so much I finally said yes," Dieckmann joked.

"My biggest concern was that I hadn't played in 20 years and I didn't want to embarrass myself," he said. Dieckmann spent the whole summer preparing. He followed a strict workout schedule, practiced with a junior college baseball team, ran track and went to a batting cage every day in October. All his hard work was worth it and came in very handy as the team played eight games in six days.

Over a hundred teams played during the weeklong tournament. There were two divisions and ten teams in the 48-and-over age bracket, in which Dieckmann played. His team did well, making it to the final playoff game, and Dieckmann was the 5th leading hitter in his age division.

Dieckmann said he would probably consider going again this year but the dates will be a deciding factor. Last year's tournament ran Oct. 27 to Nov. 1. "My

wife and I will celebrate our 30th anniversary on Oct. 26," he said. "She may not let me go."

Life without baseball is impossible to imagine as far as Dieckmann's concerned. He'll occasionally wander up to Oakville High School and watch the team play even though he knows none of the players. "Baseball is something I love to do," he stated. "I've made an awful lot of friends and social contacts over the past 30 years."

Love of the game is what amateur baseball is all about. Seven hundred people, including Dieckmann's wife, children, parents and in-laws, looked on as Dieckmann and three of his former Collegians teammates, Mike Austerman, Joe Muich, Michael Tysdal, and coach Bill Davis, along with seven other players, took their well-earned places in local amateur baseball history.

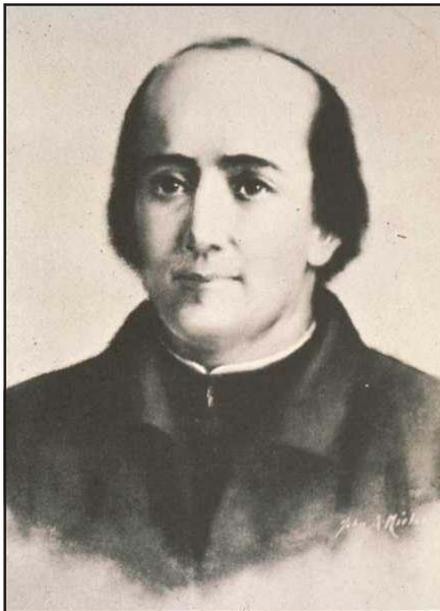
"It's about the love of the game," Dieckmann said. "We played for fun but we were all serious about it. Even though we were amateurs we were playing to win."



## The Way I Remember It



Recently there have been many articles written about the Lewis and Clark expedition. I have resisted participating in this effort; however, I was asked if I would discuss a topic that could be related to their adventure and I agreed. This article will discuss the confluence of the Missouri and the Mississippi Rivers.



Artist concept of Father Marquette

One of the earliest written descriptions of this reach of river was taken from the accounts of the Joliet-Marquette Expedition in 1673. As they were traveling down the Mississippi River from the North and were approaching the confluence of the Missouri River, they “heard the noise of a rapid” and before long they saw “an accumulation



A 1998 photo clearly shows what Father Membre meant in 1681 when he wrote, “... but it pours in so much mud, that from its mouth the water of the great river, whose bed is also slimy, is more like clear mud than river water . . .”

of large and entire trees, branches and floating islands issuing from the mouth of the river Pekistanoui (Missouri) - - so great was the agitation that the water was very muddy and could not become clear.” When they attempted to pass the mouth of the Missouri, its swift current swept them to the east bank of the Mississippi.

The next written account of this area was furnished by a narrative from Father Membre in 1681. He also was traveling down the Mississippi River from the North when he encountered the Missouri River coming from the West.

“It is full as large as the river Colbert (Mississippi) into which it empties troubling it so that from the mouth of the Osage (Missouri) the water is hardly drinkable.” He goes on further to say that “although this river is very large, the Colbert (Mississippi) does not seem augmented by it, but it pours in so

much mud, that from its mouth the water of the great river, whose bed is also slimy, is more like clear mud than river water . . .”

*Note: “The Mississippi carries an average of 436,000 tons of sediment each day. Over the course of a year, it moves an average of 159 million tons of sediment. Averages have ranged from 1,576,000 tons per day in 1951 to 219,000 in 1988.”*

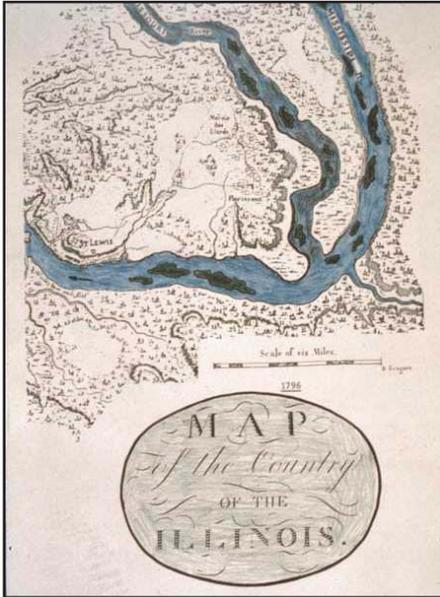
Many people can look at the same thing and each sees something differently. An example of this is the description of the confluence of these two great rivers by Pierre Francois Xavier de Charlevoix in the 1720s. “In my opinion this is the most beautiful meeting of streams in the world. Both rivers have approximately the same width, about half a mile. But the Missouri is by far the most rapid and seems to enter the Mississippi like a conqueror, hurling its white waves against the opposite bank



without mingling them.

In 1848, Henry Lewis visited this area and described what he saw as follows:

“Where it receives the Missouri, it (the Mississippi) is a mile and a half wide. The Missouri itself enters with a mouth not more than half a mile wide. The united streams below have thence, to the mouth of the Ohio a medial width of little more than three-quarters of a mile.



**This 1796 map of Illinois clearly shows the confluence of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers.**

This mighty tributary seems rather to diminish, than increase its (the Mississippi's) width; but it perceptibly alters its depth, its mass of waters, and what is to be regretted, wholly changes its character. It is no longer the gentle, placid stream with smooth shores and clean sandbars, but has a furious and boiling current, a turbid and dangerous mass of sweeping waters, jagged and dilapidated shores, and wherever its waters have receded, deposits of mud. It remains a sublime object of contemplation, but its character of calm magnificence that so delighted the eye above, is seen no more. The surface of the river is covered with huge boils or swells, which render it a matter of considerable difficulty in some places to navigate a boat. In its course, accidental circumstances shift the impetus of its current, and propel it upon the point of an island,

bend or sandbar. In these instances, it tears up the island, removes the sandbars and sweeps away the tender, alluvial soil of the bends, with all their trees, and deposits the spoils in another place. At the season of high water, nothing is more familiar to the ears of the people on the river than the deep crash of a landslip, in which larger or smaller masses of the soil on the banks, with all the trees, are plunged into the stream. Such is its character from the Missouri to the Balize (mouth of the Mississippi) - a wild, furious, whirling river, never navigated, except with great danger.”

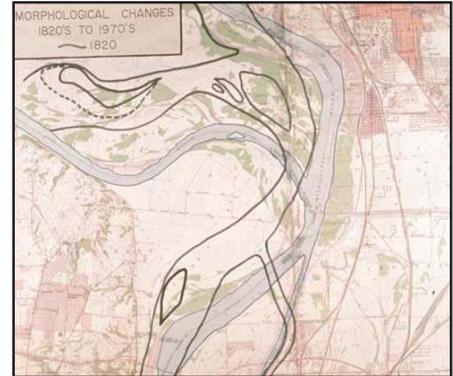
This description of the Middle Mississippi River (between the confluence of the Missouri and the Ohio Rivers) is similar to one written by Mark Twain in 1885.

“A torrent of yellow mud rushed furiously athwart the calm blue current of the Mississippi, boiling and surging and sweeping in its course logs, branches, and uprooted trees.” This was the mouth of the Missouri, “that savage river,” which “descending from its mad career through a vast unknown of barbarism, poured its turbid floods into the bosom of its gentle sister.”

He also noted the decreasing width of the river and the increasing depth as it flows towards the Gulf of Mexico. “It is a remarkable river in this: that instead of widening toward its mouth, it grows narrower; grows narrower and deeper. From the junction of the Ohio to a point halfway down to the sea, the width averages a mile in high water: thence to the sea the width steadily diminishes, until, at the Passes above the mouth, it is but little over half a mile. At the junction of the Ohio, the Mississippi's depth is eighty-seven feet, the depth increases gradually, reaching one hundred and twenty-nine just above the mouth.”

In geologic time the confluence has been almost anywhere the two rivers wanted to meet. I examined some old Corps of Engineer surveys from various time periods and compared the various locations of the confluence of these two great rivers. The mouth of the Missouri

River in 1829 was over two miles below the 1871 confluence. In 1880, the mouth of the Missouri was two miles south of the position held in 1870. The Corps first attempted to stabilize the confluence in the 1930s. Since then, there has been very little change in the position of the confluence.



**The confluence has moved since the days of the Lewis & Clark expedition**

I used a USGS quadrangle as a basis for comparison to show the difference in the confluence over the last 180 years (1820 to present). As you can easily see, the Lewis and Clark expedition began their journey on the Missouri River several miles upstream of the present day confluence location.

As Henry Lewis said in 1848 and as I agree in 2004, “It is surely not false to call this great river the father of waters, the king of rivers, the mighty Mississippi, for in no other stream do we find united so many elements of grandeur and beauty. “Century after century, era after era, have passed; wave upon wave has washed away the broad fields of the Old World; hundreds of generations have risen from their cradles, blossomed in their vigor, and sunk into the grave: and the Pharaohs and the Ptolemies, the Caesars and the caliphs have ruled the nations and stepped down; while here, in the midst of this dreadful wilderness in the dark majesty of solitude, power, and pride, these deep waters relentlessly followed their destiny! Who gave you your eternal life, your power, your haste, your rage, and your joy? - God? - May the streams reply thereto like the joyous cry of nations!”

*Claude Strauser*




**Faces & Places:  
Lake Wapapello**

In just over one year, Meg LaPlante has volunteered 1,032 service hours to the St. Louis District at Wappapello Lake, Mo. Just to put that in perspective, 1,040 hours would amount to working part-time, 20 hours a week, through the entire calendar year.

LaPlante has been given a lot of latitude at Wappapello Lake, said Cindy Jackson, assistant operations manager. "Meg gives tours, writes articles, helps at special events, makes Willie B. Safe buttons, and organizes our historical newspaper files," Jackson said. "Basically, she's willing to do anything and does."

LaPlante, a volunteer at Wappapello Lake since March 2003, not only donates a significant amount of her free time to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, she also dedicated 38 years to the Department of Defense.

Interestingly enough, LaPlante began her federal career with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Washington D.C., June 1, 1953. Enjoying retirement since 1991, LaPlante moved back to the Missouri Ozarks, place of her birth, and once again works for her first employer.

Growing up, LaPlante said she never saw far beyond the three-room log cabin she was raised in on a farm in the Ozarks' foothills. While attending Poplar Bluff High School, located 20 miles from Wappapello Lake, LaPlante had the growing desire to "go places and see things." One day LaPlante found herself at the Poplar Bluff Post Office reading the want ads posted on the bulletin board. One day she noticed an advertisement for the federal civil service test. "I read into the ad the possibility of exploring other worlds," LaPlante said.



**Acting District Commander, MAJ Joseph Tyron presents Meg LaPlante with a District Coin in recognition of her volunteer service to Lake Wappapello.**

The only catch to the testing procedure was she had to send in an application and furnish her own typewriter. Knowing this, LaPlante saved part of her lunch allowance in order to submit the application and rent a manual typewriter. On the day of the test, LaPlante remembers picking up the typewriter and carrying it four blocks to the post office where she took the test.

LaPlante says she was glad to pay the application fee and rental fee for the typewriter. "I remember my mother's first words to her girls, 'Get an education and leave because there are better more exciting places,'" LaPlante recalled. LaPlante's mother spoke from hard-earned experience. At the age of 25, she quit her teaching career in Alabama and moved to Missouri as a mail-order bride, marrying LaPlante's father.

Results from her test came back and LaPlante was offered a job as a clerk typist with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Washington D.C. LaPlante accepted the opportunity at an annual salary of \$2,950.

The end of the Korean War in 1953 brought staff reductions across the military. LaPlante says she was a victim of downsizing but was able to continue her federal employment with various positions as court-martial records clerk, procurement clerk and small purchase buyer.

She spent the last half of her career working as the editorial assistant in Public Information for the Department of Defense. This involved working in the Pentagon with assignments in many places throughout the Continental U.S. and overseas.

Through her career LaPlante met



wonderful people, traveled around the world and obtained higher education. Volunteering seems to be a natural progression, providing LaPlante the opportunity to stay involved and continue to give back.

Retirement is exciting, she said, and she is especially enjoying her volunteer hours with the staff at Wappapello Lake. "I am happy to spend my time doing whatever job needs to be done," she said.

"It's a blessing having someone like Meg around," Jackson said. "She's here because she wants to be and that's a great morale boost. When she walks in the door we know everything's going to be all right because Meg's here."

LaPlante, known for her colorful personality, jokes and stories, likes to tell current Corps employees about her starting salary in 1953 of \$2,950, and how now she has a salary of \$0. "When I'm late, the operations manager, Gary Stilts, teases that he may have to lower my salary," LaPlante laughs. "This is the good life."



While researching an article about Old Greenville, Meg takes field notes with Frank White. Her article was published in the October 2003 Esprit.

# CORPS PICNIC



## The fun starts July 1, 9 a.m.

Bring your family and friends to the Corps Picnic. This year, we return to the historic Forest Park World's Fair Pavilion. We'll have games for both adults and children. You take the golf challenge or visit the zoo. KC Masterpiece offers a catered luncheon. The boat house is now open and the Jefferson Memorial with it's World's Fair and Lewis & Clark exhibits are nearby. The memorial ferris wheel will be operating alongside HY 40.

Civilian Activities Council members Phyllis Thomas 331-8883 and Catherine Cummings 331-8060 are waiting for your call. Tickets are \$8.



## Corps Celebrates Earth Day!

More than 180 area citizens took advantage of an opportunity to meet on the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers, Friday, April 30 to celebrate the end of a week's Earth Day Activities in and around St. Louis.

The event, organized and dubbed by the St. Louis Earth Day Committee as the Earth Day Barge Trip, was hosted aboard the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Motor Vessel Pathfinder and a flat-decked barge.

Participants ranging from a Missouri State Representative, to state conservation officials, members of various non-governmental organizations and government groups, to citizens venturing out onto the rivers for their first times, met at the Corps' Service Base at the foot of Arsenal Street at 9 a.m.

From there they journeyed by busses chartered by the Earth Day Committee to the Columbia Bottoms located in St. Louis County, near the confluence of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers. There they had a short opportunity to tour the Lewis and Clark Clean Water Celebration that drew St. Louis area school children, as well as adults interested in the environment.

The celebration is a partnership between Missouri River Relief, Living Lands and Waters, Confluence Greenway, Missouri Department of Natural Resources and Missouri Department of Conservation.

Over 900 students from both Illinois and Missouri schools participated in the event. Everything went well, reported Steve Mellis, education coordinator of Missouri River Relief.

The event is organized for educational purposes and to help connect kids to the river, Mellis explained. Students participated in interactive educational presentations, enjoyed enviro-entertainment and participated in discussion groups surrounding environmental issues.

Mike Rodgers, river engineering, and Kevin Slattery, environmental quality, presented programs on "Missouri River



**Mike Rodgers, of the River Engineering branch, joins youngsters in a literal "hands on" experience of "The Mississippi River Model."**

Water Quality: You're Probably Drinking It" and "The Mississippi River Model."

Having visited the celebration, guests boarded the Corps of Engineers barge and vessel, received a mandatory safety brief by Corps Host Pat O'Donnell, and sailed briefly up the Missouri to view emerging parklands that will preserve wetlands in the area forever. They next turned and moved down the Missouri before reaching that river's meeting place with the Mississippi River.

Early in the journey they received several short briefings on environmental activities being carried out in the region. At noon, box lunches provided by the Earth Day Committee as part of the cost of the trip were handed out to the guests.

The next highlight following the

southward turn onto the Mississippi River and passage down the Chain of Rocks Canal was locking through the 50-year-old Chain of Rocks 600-foot chamber and being lowered 10 feet to the free-flowing section of the Mississippi River below that facility.

Exiting the lock onto the open river, the visitors observed wildlife, development, river commerce and the picturesque St. Louis skyline with the famous Arch Monument, as they sailed down river, past the Service Base, nearly to Jefferson Barracks.

Turning back northward, the entourage arrived back at the Service Base only minutes ahead of a healthy downpour that had the consideration to wait until the end of the exciting Earth Day of the Rivers.



## Retiree's Corner



The retirees had their monthly luncheon at the Salad Bowl on April 15. Everyone seemed to be in good spirits, despite it being Tax Day. Fortunately, most of the retirees had already had their tax accountants prepare and file their taxes.

We discussed the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Traveling Wall being at Mark Twain Lake June 10-13. The half-size replica of the Washington D.C. memorial will be available for viewing at the M.W. Boudreaux Visitor Center. It is made possible by the generous donation of thousands of dollars by the General Mills employees in Hannibal, Mo.

Wally Feld shared a new organizational chart for the Mississippi Valley Division and its Districts. It is nothing like what any of the retirees had ever seen. There are no longer functional "stove pipes" for interchanging information between the Division and the Districts. Divisions are considered "Business Centers," and under the new organization, the Districts have "Division Support Teams" that serve as the main point of contact. WOW!!! How things have changed and hopefully for the better. But only time will tell.

Some of the old-timer retirees wondered where the interaction with the Congressional Committees has gone? That used to be the lifeblood of the Corps, but the environment has definitely changed.

Wally Feld also mentioned that he receives information from Corps folks in

Iraq. He said the Corps is accomplishing great things that are making Iraq a more livable country for its citizens. Unfortunately, the media doesn't report these things, such as the rebuilding of schools, hospitals, medical facilities, road infrastructure, electrical, sewer and water lines. The recent article in the Post-Dispatch was just an indication of the good things that the Corps and others are doing for the people there, he said. There are indications that the people are very appreciative of what is being done, but again, there is virtually no media coverage of these actions.

Sandor Dombi, the retirees' unofficial photographer, brought DVD's with photos from past retiree luncheons. He said that if anyone else wants a copy to let him know at a subsequent luncheon.

Bob and Barb Lutz were in town and stopped by. They were sticking around until Friday so Bob could play in the Spring Golf Tournament. Hopefully he hit them long and straight. (Editor's Note: Bob Lutz and his teammate Brian Harcek, FUSRAP, came in 2nd place among the high handicap golfers.)



Speaking of golf, the course conditions at Clinton Hills were discussed. The course, where the golf league plays, has a rough that is really rough. If you land there you will be in grass high enough to hide the smallest of players. Unfortunately, weed-whackers are not allowed as part of the golfer's equipment. You just have to hack and hack

until you manage to get yourself out. Who says that golfers always have fun on the course?

The retirees' unofficial archivist has dug through his files and found the following items of interest:

### April 1969:

The Personnel Office was reorganized with Bill Richardson as Chief of Training and Development Branch, Don Wampler as Chief of the Management-Employee Relations Branch. Mr. C. Kruse will act as Chief of the Recruitment and Placement Branch and the Technical Services Branch.

The American Institute recognized Mr. Sandor Dombi for the Certification of Engineering Technicians.

Col. Decker participated in a panel discussion at the Engineer's Club meeting on the subject of "Implications of the Four-Year Bachelor of Engineering Technology."

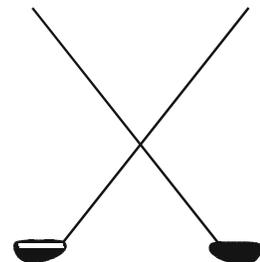
Lt. Col. Alch spoke on Channel 2 describing what preparations are made for impending flooding on the Mississippi River.

Outstanding Performance Ratings were earned by:

- Jim Baker
- Jim Petersen
- Kathy Handshy
- Bob Miles.

Vernon Drewes and Paul Lothar challenged any twosome to a best ball pre-season 18-hole match game. (Vernon probably did not promise to observe silence during the progress of the event).

**The next luncheon will be June 17th at 11 a.m. at the Salad Bowl. Hope to see you there.**



# Cinco de Mayo, A Celebration of Heritage

The festivities have moved north! With the large numbers of proud Hispanics living in American cities and towns, Cinco de Mayo has grown in importance with each passing year.

It's a time to celebrate heritage, but Hispanics aren't the only ones having fun. Mexican dancing, foods, and parades are popular everywhere.



The holiday celebrates the Mexican army's defeat of the French in 1862. But it has significance to all Americans because it marks the last time that any foreign power has been an aggressor in North America.

So welcome to the mariachi music, special foods, pinatas, and colorful decorations. It's time to celebrate. It's time to have a party.

