

The Newscastle

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U.S. Army Corps
of Engineers
Los Angeles District



*What disability?
Intern hears Corps' message*

Opening a bridge to the world

by Ann Ngo

How did I spend my summer vacation?

What comes to mind is a line from one of my favorite movies, *Strictly Ballroom*: "A life lived in fear is a life half-lived." The protagonist, an aspiring dancer and a waitress, dreamt of living her life as a dancer, not a waitress. I was reminded of this line throughout my summer. Thanks to the Americans with Disability Act and the Workforce Recruitment Program, Americans with disabilities, including me, can work and live their lives to the best of their abilities.

However, even with legal protection, all is not milk and honey. I am an example of a person with a disability (hearing impairment) who was frustrated with the job-market and the lack of opportunities. Like many college students with disabilities, I have had trouble finding employment due to the perceived physical challenges and the stereotype of being "disabled." Each year summer came around, and I'd apply to jobs with this gnawing fear of rejection and doubts about my abilities. I had participated in a summer job-training program several years ago in high school. But the lessons about resume writing and office skills were long forgotten and my interview skills quite rusty. I feared not being able to fulfill job responsibilities to the best of my abilities. I feared that I would never find summer jobs and opportunities to gain work experience. Most workplaces do not ac-

commodate students with disabilities as well as they should, according to law, so local high school and college students without disabilities took several jobs around where I live. I despaired at the prospect of spending my summer at home again. That is, until a representative from Workforce Recruitment Program for College Students with Disabilities (WRP) came to the Career Center at my school, the University of California, Irvine in early spring.

Encouraged by Dr. Karen Myers, the director of the Disability Services Center, I submitted my application to the WRP. Like any other candidate, I went through a process that included an in-person interview and submission of an application. WRP, Office of



By Pam Wills

Chief of Public Affairs Dr. Fred-Otto Egeler gives Ann Ngo some pointers on the layout and design of the district's command information bulletin, *The Newscastle*. (photo by Richard Jung)

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On the front cover: Ann Ngo, student worker with the Public Affairs Office. See the story on this page..



Disability Employment and the Department of Defense would then assist students all over the nation by marketing the program to prospective employers such as the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers. According to the WRP Web site, the program is designed: "...to identify qualified temporary and permanent employees from a variety of fields. Applicants are highly motivated postsecondary students and recent graduates eager to prove their abilities in the workforce..."

The program helped me find my position as an "administrative assistant" at the Los Angeles District. Getting a call from Dr. Fred-Otto Egeler and several e-mails was an exciting experience for me, and I was flattered that someone was giving me a chance. On the other end of line, I spoke to my future boss, Dr. Egeler, and several thoughts ran frantically through my mind like "What should I wear to work?" and "Am I going to have to use the phone?" But looking back at the whole process, I am glad that I chose to accept the job because I have found no other workplace that is as comfortable and accommodating as the Corps.

Over 1,500 highly skilled individuals joined this WRP program in 2002 because WRP has a track record of bringing highly qualified employees to employers for internships or permanent positions. WRP reports that hiring students through the WRP gives an employer the opportunity to reach a "virtually untapped workforce" with high-quality skills and a strong desire to be employed.

Receiving and accepting a job offer is one thing, but working at the workplace is altogether another. My experiences at the Public Affairs Office (PAO) have made a big impact on me. The Corps and PAO challenged my abilities and my hearing disability every day. They allowed me to contribute in the area of communications; under their supervision, I undertook several projects that had been postponed for lack of time and resources. For example, I helped edit the Newcastle publication, organized digital video files, and made calls to the media and new agencies. The projects that Public Affairs delegated to me forced me to face the challenges of my disability head-on. As a result, I gained more confidence in asking my colleagues and my peers to repeat what they were saying, on the phone and in person, if necessary to be sure that I understood. I learned about the media equipment that the PAO staff uses for their public relations, such as digital cameras, Nikon CoolScan, and I even got the opportunity to brush up my skills on Microsoft Excel and Adobe Photoshop.

I live about 40 miles away from Los Angeles, so I am always learning something new about the city that I am working in. At the Corps and Public Affairs Office, I met new people and gained more than friends - I gained a family. This big family worked together and supported one another to accomplish tasks. Each team member had a different personal-

ity and different opinions about how to improve infrastructures in the U.S. and throughout the world. It was interesting to listen and learn their different perspectives on how the Corps works, how it should work and how the Bush administration and DoD's policies affect the Corps and its projects. For me, this is what makes the Corps so interesting - its diversity. On each floor and behind each door, I could find a lawyer, an archeologist, an engineer or a public affairs specialist. People came and went and the hallways were often crowded by groups of high school students or businessmen.

With the WRP program, no one was a loser, and everyone became a winner. I commend those who participate in this program. The WRP and its participants opened the door and created opportunities for many of us. As for me, when opportunity knocked, I answered the door and I took this summer job, not knowing how much I would get out of working with the Corps. I got to see for myself just what the Corps does because I had no idea that the agency contributes much to preserving the environment and bringing sources of energy to people all over the nation. Many brave people from L.A. District even volunteered to assist in nation-building in Iraq or to take part in the peacekeeping task forces in Afghanistan.

There is one lesson that will always resonate in my heart: I learned that in order to finish a task, you should do it at once. It would be even better if you find more efficient ways to do the task. Inspired by the Corps, I am determined to finish school and aspire to what the Corps does everyday, that is, help improve my country and, if possible, even the world.



COL Richard G. Thompson presented Ann Ngo with a commander's coin on her last day at the District.



Checking tides and a weather chart Dalia Gomez stands outside the Los Angeles District's Rapid Response Vehicle. The RRV deployed to help the Coast Guard at the ports of Los Angeles/Long Beach.

Pier pressu

Use of unique District vehicle helps Coast Guard and other services coordinate material returning from war in Iraq.

By Mike Tharp

Carrying M-16s or wearing sidearms, marines, sailors, soldiers and Coast Guardsmen prowled the pier at the Port of L.A./Long Beach's Terminal 125-127. Hazy sunshine backlit lit the gun-gray *Sisler*, a 950-foot-long, nearly 70,000-ton U.S. Navy ship just docked from the war in Iraq.

Matching the variety of military uniforms was the array of wheeled and tracked machines being off-loaded from the vessel. Humvees, amphibious assault vehicles, light armored vehicles, 5- and 10-ton trucks, bulldozers—all queued to be driven onto civilian flatbed and stepdeck trucks. Along with hundreds of massive freight boxes, the rigs were headed for Marine and Army bases at Camp Pendleton, 29 Palms, Barstow and Yuma, Ariz.

And sitting like a white beacon amid the desert- and jungle-camo-colored conflation was the District's Rapid Response Vehicle (RRV), tactically sited beneath the red castle flag to help bring gear home from the war. "We provided the RRV to the Coast Guard and other military people as an operations center," said Dalia Gomez, a student worker

for the Emergency Operations Branch on duty inside the RRV. "It's a great opportunity for the Corps to let people know what we have, what we're capable of and how we can help—not just the Corps but the community, state and nation itself."

One of the least-known phases of war consists of getting "beans and bullets"—metaphors for the huge amount of supplies an army needs to fight—back from the battlefield. More than 95 percent of all military supplies and equipment needed to fight a war moves via the sea. After Gulf War I, when it took six months to transport warriors and their equipment to the Arabian desert, the Pentagon realized it needed a faster sea-borne system. The result was the LMSR program—Large Medium Speed Roll-on/Roll-off ships overseen by the Pentagon's Military Sealift Command. The heavy-keeled vessels can carry 58 tanks and 48 other tracked vehicles, plus more than 900 trucks and other wheeled vehicles, and have a cargo capacity roughly the equivalent of eight football fields. Their own ramps and cranes help speed up the loading or unloading process.

Nearly all of them are named for Medal of Honor winners (one is named for Bob Hope). From the beginning of this year, these ships carried America's military materiel to the Mideast, and now they're returning some of the equipment till it's needed the next time, somewhere else.

When Navigation Section's Jim Fields heard that the ships were bound for L.A./Long Beach, he saw an opportunity for the Corps. He contacted Emer-

gency Ops and got those team members signed on, then volunteered the District's help to the Coast Guard. Emergency Ops Branch staffers drove their emergency command-and-control center to the port to serve as a communications ganglion.

The RRV is an International Harvester chassis and engine with a custom-built 36-foot-long body which can accommodate a staff of seven or more, according to a 1999 article in *Engineer Update*. Its equipment includes laptop computers, office software, a global positioning system, digital cameras, phone and intercom system, satellite communications, cellular phone, radios (HF, VHF and CB), drafting and mapping software and wireless capability to network laptops within 200 feet of the RRV.



One of the huge vehicles being unloaded with help from the District's Rapid Response Vehicle. (Photo by Steve Weiss)

L.A. District got its RRV—one of only six nationwide—in April 1998. Designed to serve as a field operating center during earthquakes, fires and floods, the RRV was made available to the Coast Guard when people and equipment began steaming back from the Persian Gulf. “It’s been great,” said Coast Guard LT Cristian Munoz, looking up from his laptop at one of the vehicle’s work counters. “It’s been really, really helpful to have everything we need since the first day we were here. It’s definitely the best setup we’ve had.”

Added Navy LT Ryan Halversen: “It’s providing a mobile headquarters for the Coast Guard, and the Coast Guard is providing our 24-hour watertight security for the ship. The Corps of Engineers trailer provides them with everything they could possibly

need to communicate with their home station or their boats on the water. It’s much improved from what they had.”

With port protection a priority for the Dept. of Homeland Security, offloading the *Sisler* and other LMSRs required a high state of alert for the Coast Guard. “We are confronting the demands of securing America and fighting the global war on terrorism while successfully fulfilling all of our mission areas,” said Adm. Thomas Collins, Coast Guard commandant, in a statement on the service’s 213th birthday in August. “The Coast Guard is committed to securing America from all maritime threats.”

While not classified secret, the West Coast unloading operation, which included several other vessels after the *Sisler*, received no mainstream press coverage. No unauthorized persons were allowed within a 500-yard radius of the dock or from the surface to the floor of harbor waters. The ship was the third to be unloaded in August. And while the Marines were finally off duty after their Iraqi mission, other military services couldn’t drop their guard while the massive transport ships were potentially vulnerable. “The Coast Guard provides security for the ship at pier from the time it arrives till when it leaves,” said LT Halversen.

Gomez and other District team members manned the RRV around the clock during the four to five days it took to unload each ship. Other District workers who pulled daytime, midnight and graveyard shifts were Keith Ayers, Monique DeZiaueto, Eddie Duran, Fields, Megan Hamilton, Alex Hernandez, Jason Lambert, Santiago Munoz, Gerry Salas, Kris Savage and Steve Weiss.

For Gomez, who has worked at the District three and a half years, it was all part of her continuing education at the Corps. “I observe and make sure everything runs smoothly,” the Cal State L.A. grad said. Currently, she’s working on her teaching credential after getting her bachelor’s in child development. She someday hopes to obtain a doctorate in the field and teach at a university.

Meantime, she was clearly proud of the Corps’ role at this far end of Operation Iraqi Freedom. “The Coast Guard is pleased and we’re pleased that they’re pleased,” she said. “Here is an exercise where we can go out and say, This is who we are and this is what we can do for you.”

Oh, say, can you VTC?

Story and photo by Pam Wills
Information Management Office
Correspondent

Dan Desmet and Wayne Ballance are hurrying out of Visual Information. "Sorry, we can't talk right now. We're on our way to a VTC." This is a regular event for this busy team of the Information Management Office. VTC stands for Video TeleConference, where individuals or groups can have meetings at their own locations with video and voice equipment. These are becoming more common because they are more economical than the travel expenses from sending people on temporary duty.

A VTC can be conducted within the building or across several countries. It can be between two individuals or can involve many groups. The L.A. District's Polycom VTC unit has a monitor and the encoder/decoder that sends the audio and video over the VTC line. The District also has secure VTC equipment available that encrypts the signal for classified VTCs.

Some notable District VTCs have included one with 25 other sites and Corps Headquarters in Washington D.C., one with Corps employees from Los Angeles, Alaska, Hawaii, Japan and South Korea and one between the vice president at the White House and a local congressman.



A District group participates in a video teleconference.

HOW TO REQUEST A VIDEO TELECONFERENCE

- Contact the IMO Helpdesk to request the VTC. Your request should include the date, time and location of the place you want to hold the VTC. Make sure you reserve a VTC-capable conference room. VTCs are not conducted in private offices.
- Get the name and phone numbers of whoever will be participating in the VTC. If you are hosting the VTC, get the dial-in number of the unit to connect to. If the VTC is a multi-point (where more than two sites are involved), get the numbers of all the units.
- Make sure you inform all the people attending the VTC of the date, time and location both here and at the other sites. There have been occasions when some people didn't show up for their VTC and the VI folks had to call to remind them.
- Allow at least 72 hours for the necessary arrangements. If there are more than three other sites involved, more time is needed to arrange an MCI Bridge so that all the sites dial into one number.



Dan Desmet does a last-minute equipment check before a video teleconference begins.

Old Mule put out to pasture

By Mike Tharp

The tanks, trucks and guns at the George S. Patton Memorial Museum are getting a kick out of a mule.

Not just any ol' donkey—a 1963 olive drab M-274 Mechanical Mule donated by the L.A. District to the Chiriaco Summit, Calif., facility built in the desert to honor one of America's most famous generals.

Romano Caturegli, property book officer in the Logistics Management Office, says the District used the mule until three or four years ago, mainly to survey sites at the Ports of L.A. and Long Beach. He and Glynn Alsup, a project manager, decided they could find a better use for the vehicle than to turn it over to the Defense Reutilization Marketing Office, which would probably have just scrapped the mule. They contacted the Patton people, who were delighted to pick up the donation in early September.

“We think it's wonderful,” said Jacque Schindewolf, the museum's conservator. “It's something we didn't have, so we're very pleased, very happy.” Just in case, she has removed the battery “so nobody drives it away.”

The museum, which last year hosted 30,000 visitors, is located off I-10 about 30 miles east of Indio, near the entrance to Camp Young. During World War II, the camp was the command post for the Desert Training Center ordered up by Gen. Patton as he prepared to fight Field Marshal Rommel in North Africa. Currently, there are Sherman, Stuart, Pershing and, of course, Patton tanks on display, as well as a variety of trucks, a Japanese gun and memorabilia from Patton's life and career.

Designed by Willys for the Army in the early '50s, the Mechanical Mule is a four-wheel, half-ton vehicle with a four-foot-by-eight-foot platform mounted on two axles. Grunts quickly adopted the ungainly looking rig because it could carry 1,000 pounds of gear and didn't go faster than 25 miles an hour.

According to its eponymous Web site, the mule was used widely during the Vietnam War to carry ammo, cargo, weapons and soldiers. Some were mounted with 106-mm. recoilless rifles with missiles. “It was designed to be a very rugged vehicle which could land on its wheels or even upside down



Gee-Haw: Romano Caturegli rides a Mechanical Mule donated by the District to the George S. Patton Memorial Museum.

when dropped, and still be able to be driven away,” the site says.

Patton died in 1945, so he obviously never used the mule. But his links to the Corps were strong. According to the L.A. District history, Patton was ordered to recon the California and Arizona deserts to find a training center suitable for desert warfare. After his survey, “Patton in his characteristic flamboyant style informed LTC Edwin C. Kelton, District Engineer, Los Angeles District, that he would return with his division and its support personnel, consisting of approximately 60,000 soldiers, in 40 days, by which time he expected facilities ready for quartering and messing these men.”

That was in the first week of March 1942. Troops started arriving in mid-April, and by November they were fighting in the North African Campaign which led to the defeat of Rommel, “the Desert Fox.”

One reason Patton picked the 18,000-square-mile spot in the California desert was because the Corps had already built valuable infrastructure in the area. In the 1920s, L.A. District engineers helped build the metropolitan water aqueduct which now runs behind the Patton museum. “That gave him access to get water for his troops,” Schindewolf said.

With its plain but stubborn durability, the Mechanical Mule now shown at his museum would have been well-suited for one of Patton's famous 10 commandments:

Always go forward.

Momentarily down, but not out

Susan Tianen is unharmed and Ghassen Khosrownia (Sacramento District) is recovering from wounds after an explosion in the area they were traveling through in Iraq on Tuesday.

Just after a meeting they were in was interrupted, Susan took the picture at the left of Ghassen.

Moments later while they were traveling down a road, an explosion caused the Humvee Susan was in to swerve. Ghassen was in a different vehicle that was closer to the explosion. He suffered shrapnel injuries to his shoulder and eye. As of Sept. 19, he is scheduled for surgery at Walter Reed Army Hospital in Washington D.C.

Susan Tianen



Susan Tianen took this picture of Ghassen Khosrownia of Sacramento District shortly before the Humvee he was in was hit by shrapnel from an explosion in Iraq. Ghassen was injured by some of the shrapnel.

Planning Division mourns loss of Paul Rose

Paul Rose, Chief of Environmental Resources Branch for the past two years, died on Sept. 18 at the age of 54 of a pulmonary embolism at Simi Valley Hospital in Simi Valley. He had been recuperating at home since Tuesday from pneumonia and a partially collapsed lung. Paul graduated from the University of Colorado with a B.A. in Geology and Physical Geography and from Oregon State University with an M.S. in Physical Geography and Recreation Resources Management.



Paul came to the District with abundant, diverse experience in natural resources and hydrology with the Bureau of Reclamation in Yuma; the National Park Service in Denver, the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, the Everglades, Crater Lake, and Glacier Bay, Alaska. He was also a lecturer at the California State Polytechnic University at Pomona. He is survived by his wife, Miriam and a son. A young daughter predeceased him. Paul will be remembered for his kind and caring nature, his enthusiasm for all matters environmental, and his upbeat and ever-jovial manner. He seemed to have a smile and a friendly word for everyone, every day. He will be missed.

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