



US Army Corps
of Engineers

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Huntsville Center Bulletin

Program manager named Installation Support Employee of Year

**Corps of Engineers
presents award to
first ever recipient**

By Debra Valine
Public Affairs

Her claim to fame is that she starts new programs, gets them up and running and then hands them off. And she's very good at it. So good, in fact, that she has been named the first ever U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Installation Support Employee of the Year.

Sally Parsons, the Transformation/Base



Sally Parsons

Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Support Program Manager at the Huntsville Center, will receive the award from Lt. Gen. Carl A. Strock, USACE commander and chief of engineers, at a ceremony Aug. 10 in

Grapevine, Texas, near Dallas.

"I am quite humbled and honored that I was selected to receive this award," Parsons said. "I received a message on my BlackBerry while I was in a meeting that I needed to call Col. (John) Rivenburgh (Huntsville Center commander). My first thought was, 'what has blown up?' When he told me that I had been selected for this award, I breathed a big sigh of relief."

"Ms. Parsons' enlightened leadership and managerial skills, expertise and breadth of experience have resulted

in her being entrusted to lead the most urgent and important programs in the Installation Support Center of Expertise," said her supervisor Stephen Lewis, who nominated her for the award.

"She is the consummate professional, committed to mentoring her peers and many others, to providing quality, on-time support to the Army and DOD installation communities, resulting in improved working and living conditions for our Soldiers,

See Award on Page 7

Huntsville Center kicks off site inspections at Formerly Used Defense Sites

By Debra Valine
Public Affairs

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Huntsville Center Ordnance and Explosives (OE) Directorate, recently issued four task orders totaling nearly \$6.6 million to three companies who will perform site inspections at 60 Formerly Used Defense Sites (FUDS) to determine what, if any, future action is needed to clean up the sites.

More than 1,000 FUDS Military Munitions Response Program (MMRP) projects have been identified for site inspections in a clean-up program directed by Congress.

A kick-off meeting July 12 marked

the beginning of 18 months that companies – Parsons, Shaw and Alion – have to complete the initial site inspections. The Corps has to complete inspections of 817 sites identified in the 2004 Annual Report to Congress by 2010.

The Huntsville Center also will award all site inspection contracts for FY06, which will be worth approximately \$22 million.

"The site inspections are part of a nationwide process mandated by Congress to remediate (clean up) sites contaminated by former Defense Department use," said Jason Burcham, the technical adviser for the Military Munitions Center of Expertise (MMCX) Huntsville.

The site inspection is a preliminary step in the Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation Liability Act (CERCLA) process, which is used by DOD to address the formerly used defense sites. The site inspection is performed once an initial preliminary assessment of the site indicates that a potential threat exists and that further investigation is required.

The main objectives for performing the sites inspections include:

- Eliminate sites that pose no significant threat to human health or the environment.
- Determine potential need for further response action.

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Corps Chaplain pays pastoral visit to HNC



Commander's column

As I write this, it is hot! There is no other way to say it – it is just plain hot!

For children and their parents, summer is already coming to an end as we approach the start of school in early August.

I ask you all to remain alert and vigilant to avoid the safety pitfalls that we all can fall in – trying to do too much, too fast; failing to get enough rest; driving too fast; not using personal flotation devices; not using sunscreen.

With school getting ready to start up, remember to give yourselves a little extra time to come to work in the morning and please, watch out for our children.

The dog days of summer will also see an increase in operations tempo here in Huntsville Center. As everyone knows, the end of each fiscal year requires the efforts of all to close out the books and to work with our customers to meet the needs of Soldiers and their families

We can also expect an increase in workload, as the BRAC Commission completes the final list to send to the President. Installation Support and Engineering should be particularly busy.

Lt. Gen. Henry a. "Trey" Oberling, director, Missile Defense Agency, announced that there will be a third missile field built in Europe to protect against a Middle Eastern threat. We'll be right in the middle of this effort – both in Missile Defense and in Engineering. Stand by for more news on this one.



Col. John D. Rivenburgh

Our Coalition Munitions clearance mission continues. We continue to work to eliminate both excess ammunition and Unexploded Ordnance (UXO).

Our folds and our contractors bravely work in remote areas to execute this important mission. We'll be working the transition from demilling

ordnance to setting up ammunition depots for the new Iraqi Army and training them to operate and maintain those depots.

The Global War on Terror is not going away. We have several volunteers in theater who have extended their tours, and more are on their way.

Please continue to consider whether or not you can take the time to deploy to support and serve our nation and great service men and women. Please keep all of them in your thoughts and prayers as they go about the business of their business.

Thank you and ESSAYONS.

Women's Equality Day Luncheon and Awards Ceremony

11 a.m., Wed., Aug. 24, Redstone Officers and Civilians Club, Redstone Arsenal
Tickets are \$11.50 per person

For ticket information, call Ketra Rice, 895-1931, Quintessa Fuller, 895-1422, or Beverly Penaranda, 895-1253. Persons requiring special accommodations should contact Becky Miller, Garrison EEO Office, 876-8946.



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

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BULLETIN

Commander..... Col. John D. Rivenburgh
Chief, Public Affairs..... Kim Gillespie
Editor..... Debra Valine
Editorial Assistant Joan Burns

Language skills afford Army engineer unique opportunities

By Debra Valine
Public Affairs

Assignments in Russia and advanced schooling in Switzerland are not typical assignments for Army engineers, but because he grew up speaking German, and now speaks Russian, one engineer at the Huntsville Center is experiencing opportunities unique to Army officers.

Maj. Elias Ursitti, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Huntsville Center, recently returned from a one-year assignment in Russia where he provided oversight on the Russian Chemical Weapons Destruction Facility construction project.

For him it was the best of two worlds. Ursitti, a West Point Military Academy graduate with 12 years of Army service, learned to speak Russian to attend St. Petersburg State University in Russia. The Cape Coral, Fla., native attended the St. Petersburg University under the Olmsted Scholarship Program and earned a master's degree in international relations. The Olmsted Scholarship Program provides selected captains the opportunity to immerse themselves in a foreign culture of choice.

While stationed at the Kansas City District Corps of Engineers, he learned of the opportunity to go to Russia.

"I came to Huntsville for my introductory course and found out from Col. John Rivenburgh, the Huntsville Center commander, about the Russian Chemical Demilitarization Program," Ursitti said. "I was excited that I could put together my experience in Russia with my Corps of Engineers background."

"Maj. Ursitti bridged a huge gap between the U.S. Government and Russian Federation," said Col. John Rivenburgh, commander, Huntsville Center.

"His efforts moved us ahead in areas that had been troubled for quite some time. I only regret that it took me too long to get him moved from Kansas City District to Huntsville Center and on to Russia."

In September 2004, Ursitti was assigned to the Huntsville Center and within a few weeks he left for Shchuch'ye, Russia, located just beyond the Ural Mountains in Siberia.

"I came to the Huntsville Center specifically for the job in Russia," Ursitti said. "I only had a year before I was supposed to attend the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College. I wanted to have a chance to make a contribution using my Russian language skills and my engineering training. I was really happy that the Huntsville Center commander gave me that chance. It was a really good fit for the team.

"Knowing the language made a huge difference," Ursitti said. "I am thankful to Col. Rivenburgh for the opportunity. It has been my favorite assignment so far."

For the first six months, Ursitti was the deputy resident engineer on the Huntsville

'When I finish, I'd like to represent the Army on one of freedom's frontiers.'

— Maj. Elias Ursitti

contract oversight team. "There was a team of about five Corps folks and we provided construction and engineering oversight," Ursitti said. "The construction started in 2002 or 2003. The project has

been in the planning phases since 1992 when former president Bill Clinton and former Soviet leader Boris Yeltsin signed an agreement on the mutual destruction of chemical weapons."

According to Paul Wojciechowski, the project manager for Parsons, the integrating contractor, Ursitti is indeed a pretty unique Army officer and engineer.

"He was a great deal of help to me because he always put the team objectives first," Wojciechowski said. "His language skills helped a lot but the real value he added was being the guy who always

picked up the pieces and suggested a path forward. When there was credit to be taken he gave it to the team. When there was responsibility for failure he took it by himself."

The second six months, Ursitti was the chief of the Chemical Weapons Destruction Support Office (CWDSO) in Moscow, filling a Defense Threat Reduction Agency position (DTRA). "We interacted with the Russian agencies that are our partners in constructing these deconstructing facilities. They are our government partners in this project.

"We held low-level negotiations, implemented various program plans and managed the lower level program day-to-day issues.

"We had to do this in Moscow because that is where the Russian Federal Agencies for Industry has its offices, and we had to cooperate closely with them.

"The operations at the CWDSO are scaling down now as the project emphasis moves to the construction site, but while I was there, it was a very busy



Maj. Elias Ursitti

Language

office,” Ursitti said.

“We translated documents coming into and going out of the office. There was a technical staff and it holds frequent meetings with the Russians that I participated in as the government representative because the contractor, Parsons Global, could not conduct official communication. Official communications has to be government to government.”

Ursitti will only be in Huntsville a few weeks before he heads to Zurich, Switzerland, as part of the Exchange Officer Program to attend their Advanced Military Institute, which will give him credit for attending CGSC at Fort Leavenworth, Kan.

“I was selected for CGSC, but upon reviewing my records, the personnel officials recognized that I have German language skills, as well,” said Ursitti, who grew up as an “Army brat” in Ansbach, Germany, and learned to speak German to be able to play with the local children.

“Since the U.S. Army is required to fill a certain number of slots at the school in Switzerland, and being able to speak

German is a requirement, I was selected to go to the course in Switzerland instead.”

The class is mostly Swiss officers, taught in German, and includes a handful of foreign officers including

Ursitti, some German officers and a Korean officer.

“I was looking forward to going to Fort Leavenworth to reunite with my peers, but this experience in Switzerland will give me a chance to meet a whole new group of people,” Ursitti said.

Ursitti has held “regular” Army jobs as well. His first duty station was in Germany with the construction engineers



The staff in the Russian Chemical weapons Destruction Support Office in Moscow presents Maj. Elias Ursitti with a farewell gift.

and then he went to Fort Hood, Texas, with the Combat Mech Engineers.

Unique training opportunities aside, Ursitti said he is looking forward to returning to an Army assignment when he finishes training in Switzerland.

“When I finish, I’d like to represent the Army on one of freedom’s frontiers,” he said.

Huntsville Center contractor suffers fatality in Iraq

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. — A U.S. Army Engineering and Support Center Huntsville contractor employee died in a work-related fatality on July 3. The USA Environmental employee, Benjamin Keith Hodges, 52, of Niceville, Fla., suffered fatal injuries while conducting demolition of unwanted ammunition in Iraq.

“Our condolences go out to the family,” said Glenn Earhart, chief, International Operations, Ordnance and Explosives Directorate.

“Our personnel are highly trained and experienced, but it remains a dangerous mission. We have logged over 3 million man-hours doing ordnance and explosives remediation in Iraq, and this is our first fatality. Worker safety remains our top

priority,” emphasized Earhart.

A Department of the Army investigation is being conducted to determine the cause of the accident. Huntsville Center is a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ Center of Expertise for Ordnance and Explosives.

Huntsville Center’s Coalition Munitions Clearance Program is responsible for receiving, transporting, segregating and destroying captured or any other munitions posing a danger in Iraq. Storage and disposal of the ammunition is performed at several locations throughout Iraq.

To date, more than 273,000 tons of ammunition has been destroyed by the Huntsville Center program, significantly reducing risks to Iraqi citizens and U.S. personnel serving in Iraq.

HVAC design training course dates change

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ HVAC Design: Basic course originally scheduled for Oct. 24-28, has been rescheduled for March 6-10, 2006 in San Diego, Calif.

The date for the second session is June 5-9, 2006, in Virginia Beach, Va. is unchanged.

The course is designed for those just beginning to work with HVAC designs, and covers a broad range of subjects from types of equipment and systems to topics like indoor air quality and psychrometrics.

Reservations information for the course can be found at <http://pdsc.usace.army.mil/>.

2005 Tri-Service Cost Engineering Conference leverages change

By Kim Gillespie
Public Affairs Office

Cost engineering is a difficult, but critical function in the engineering and construction professions. Adjustments for variables such as inflation are made, but sometimes unexpected market demand or other uncontrollable events can drastically change costs.

Despite these types of difficulties, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers continues to find ways to better account for and make adjustments for these types of variables.

According to Dwight Beranek, deputy director of Military Programs, Corps Headquarters, the bi-annual Tri-Service Cost Engineering Workshop and Conference provides a timely opportunity for cost engineering professionals to learn from each other about the latest trends, industry standards and new information technology.

Beranek provided the keynote address for the conference which focused on cost engineers' forecasting.

Beranek made two suggestions for cost engineers: "Cost engineers need to stay involved throughout the project, and they need to be constantly aware of the various forces that drive construction costs," he emphasized.

Mark Shore, chief, Automated Systems Branch, Cost Engineering Division, Huntsville Center, echoed Beranek's sentiments.

"We've seen the price of steel rise 40 percent in just a few short years, while inflation costs for material, labor and equipment were only adjusted about two to three percent per year based on DoD guidance," Shore said.

Demand for concrete has caused a similar rise in its prices. "We've seen the price of concrete increase about 10 percent," Shore said.

Both Beranek and Shore agree that getting cost right and closely following market trends will help adjust for these types of changes.

The theme for this year's conference was "Levering Changes within the Cost Engineering Community."

Presentations ranged from "Army Transformation Process: MILCON vs. Industry Standards," to "Tsunami Relief Efforts," to "Formerly Used Defense Site (FUDS) Cost to Complete Overview."



Huntsville Center's deputy for programs and technical management, Dr. Michael Stovall, provided one of the Army Transformation briefings.

"Army Transformation and Modularity is probably one of the most important topics for Corps cost engineers right now," Shore said.

Another hot topic at the conference was cost estimating needs for Middle East construction. "Estimating projects there (Iraq and Afghanistan) requires different methods," Shore explained.

Raymond Lynn, chief of Cost Engineering, Corps of Engineers Headquarters, is working with Huntsville to provide the tools necessary to work virtually within the Corps and especially to support the Global War on Terrorism in the Middle East.

One of the most significant events of the conference was the release of MII, the Corps' newest cost estimating software. MII computer-based training demonstrations were also conducted at the conference.

Huntsville Center developed the data and database for the cost estimating software Tri-Service Automated Cost

Engineering System (TRACES), which supports Corps cost engineers, as well as the cost engineers at the Air Force and Navy, and the Programming Administration and Executing (PAX) DD Form 1391 Processor System used for submitting military construction/funding requirements.

Because of the Corps role in Tri-Service software development, Shore and his Corps counterparts take the lead in organizing the conference and workshop held every other year.

This year's conference was held in New Orleans June 28-30. "We had 122 participants, which is the largest attendance we've had for the conference," Shore said.

Shore estimated that about one-quarter of this year's participants were from the U.S. Navy, which also has a significant number of cost engineers.

"The Navy has its own cost estimating software, but the databases we use have the same information," Shore noted. About one-eighth of the attendees were from various other organizations.

Shore noted that a finalization of the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) will bring more cost estimating needs. "Construction modifications, new construction, even cleanups all increase with the changes resulting from a BRAC," Shore said.

In addition to the wide range of presentations and workshops, cost engineers can also take the cost engineering exam to receive their cost engineering certification. "This year four engineers took the test," Shore said. The certification exam is administered for the Tri-Service cost engineering community of practice and is available to test and certify cost engineers for the Army, Air Force and Navy.

"Cost engineering is a complicated skill," Beranek said. "DOD uses our forecasting to put together its requests for appropriations and funding from Congress, so we are being held accountable," he added.

Annual ethics training under way

For this calendar year the Secretary of the Army has directed that all Department of the Army military and civilian employees receive one hour of face-to-face standard of conduct training. Since training started at the Huntsville Center in June, 125 employees have participated. Training sessions continue through Nov. 15.

“This year’s topics include contractor support personnel limitations, support of private organizations and post-employment restrictions,” said Chris Wood, an ethics counselor with the Huntsville Center Office of Counsel. The training is intended to reaffirm the Army’s commitment to maintaining exemplary standards.

A part-time employee is defined as an individual who is retained, designated, appointed or employed to perform, with or without compensation, for a period not to exceed 130 days during any period of 365 consecutive days, temporary duties either on a full-time or intermittent basis.

The acquisition work force also is required to receive an additional one hour of acquisition ethics training that must be completed by the end of



Photo by Joan Burns

Chris Wood, Office of Counsel, instructs attendees at the annual ethics training session.

November.

“The Huntsville Center Office of Counsel is in the process of implementing this additional acquisition work force training requirement,” Wood said.

For employees located off-site (PDSC, CEHNC-OE, CEHNC-CD-RT, etc.) or deployed overseas, the Huntsville Center Office of Counsel is coordinating with directorate and office administrative assistance staff to establish alternative training dates, locations and means, Wood said.

For more information, call (256) 895-1105, or send an e-mail to christopher.j.wood@us.army.mil or chris.j.wood@hnd01.usace.army.mil.

CEHNC Annual Standards of Conduct Training

Listed below are the remaining scheduled sessions for this year’s annual standards of conduct training.

Date	Time	Location
• Aug. 11	11 a.m.- noon	Command Conference Room
• Aug. 18	1-2 p.m.	Command Conference Room
• Sept. 15	1-2 p.m.	Command Conference Room
• Sept. 22	11 a.m.- noon	Command Conference Room
• Oct. 6	11 a.m.- noon	Command Conference Room
• Oct. 18	1-2 p.m.	Command Conference Room
• Nov. 10	11 a.m.- noon	Command Conference Room
• Nov. 15	1-2 p.m.	Command Conference Room

For more information, contact Christopher J. Wood, Ethics Counselor, CEHNC-OC, (256) 895-1105 or christopher.j.wood@us.army.mil or chris.j.wood@hnd01.usace.army.mil.

Core Strength

Circuit exercise programs are popular today because a 30-minute workout works cardiovascular and muscle toning. Benefits of this type of workout are weight loss, strength gain and efficient use of time. It is important to start at your fitness level and build up. Below are three examples of a “circuit” type workout:
** Always warm up and do a light stretch before starting a workout.

Beginning level:

- 1) March in place-2 min.
- 2) Chest press (20 reps dumbbells or machine)
- 3) Bent-over rows (sitting in chair with dumbbells, pull elbows back)

** Walk or march 1 min.

- 1) Sissy squats (20 reps)
- 2) Bicep curls (20 reps) dumbbells
- 3) Kickbacks-triceps (20 reps dumbbells)

**Walk or march 1 min. Repeat.

Level 2:

- 1) Chest press-(25 reps machine or bench with dumbbells)
- 2) Wide grip lat pull down (25 reps pull to front)
- 3) Leg press (25 reps machine or squats)

**Cardio 1 min. 30 sec.

- 1) Incline chest press (25 reps incline bench and dumbbells)
- 2) Seated back rows (25 reps machine or dumbbells on bench)
- 3) Lunges or ball squats (25 reps each leg)

**Cardio 1 min. 30 sec.

- 1) Lying chest flies (25 reps flat bench-dumbbells)
- 2) Shoulder presses (25 reps dumbbells or machine)
- 3) Leg extensions (25 reps on machine)

Cardio 1 min. 30 sec.

- 1) Leg curls (25 reps machine or ball)
- 2) Bicep curls-dumbbells (25 reps)
- 3) Tricep kickbacks-(25 reps)

Cardio 1 min. 30 sec.

***Cardio can be treadmill, stepper, step ups on bench, jumping jacks, jog or brisk walk, etc.

**Move rapidly between exercises

**Abdominal crunches can be added to this work out—ball or mat

Level 3: Do all of Level 2 twice.

*Always check with your physician before starting an exercise program.**

If you have any questions call Marsha at 5-1108.

Award

Continued from Page 1

families and civilians.”

Parsons got her start at the Huntsville Center 13 years ago in the Engineering Division. “Most people in Huntsville Center have a construction background, but my background is in space station,” said Parsons, who has a bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering from the University of Alabama in Huntsville.

“I did hypervelocity impact analyses on space station shielding to prevent micrometeoroid penetrations.”

Before she started work at HNC, Parsons worked for a research and development contractor (Control Dynamics) doing work for NASA.

“It was nice to be able to continue working the space program with the Army,” she said.

Parsons now works in Installation Support. “I am the program manager who starts new programs,” she said.

“I started the Access Control Point

(ACP) Equipment Program and got it running. John Griggs came in and took over that program and he has been doing a super job.”

She developed and led a virtual worldwide team in planning, integrating, managing and implementing the \$300 million ACP-E Program to provide DA-approved ACP equipment to all Army installations worldwide, according to Lewis.

“The facts that the program is now being completed ahead of schedule and within budget are testaments to the superb planning, processes and discipline she instituted to this key Army program,” Lewis said.

“After just over a year in that program, I started the Army Facilities Reduction Program with Harold Merschman,” Parsons said.

The objective of that program is to reduce the maximum amount of excess facilities at Army installations through demolition and deconstruction of buildings and structures, for the best

value, in a reduced amount of time to produce clean sites consistent with environmental and safety requirements.

“Now I am working on the Army Transformation and BRAC programs,” Parsons said. “We are supporting USACE, ACSIM (Army Chief of Staff for Installation Management) and IMA (the Installation Management Agency) with facility planning, programming, acquisition planning and lease/buy analyses.

She is integrating the execution of more than 90 brigade level requirements analyses and planning charrettes as Army installations plan to receive more than \$40 billion in facilities over the next six years to support the Army Modular Force (AMF), Global Posturing Initiative (GPI) and BRAC 2005 stationing initiatives, Lewis said.

“Ms. Parsons’ career is marked by outstanding contributions to support installation public work activities,” Lewis said. “These are just a few examples of her work.”

Site

Continued from page 1

- Collect enough data for the EPA to determine a hazardous ranking score.

Other Huntsville Center team members working the Site Inspection Program include Julie Kaiser, HQ Liaison; Brad McCowan, the Site Inspection program manager; Deborah Walker, the technical adviser for Munitions Constituents (MC); Chris Cochrane, the OE Design Center regional project manager; Jean Allan, OE Design Center project management specialist; Becky Terry, the OE project chemist, and Frances Steel, contract specialist.

As part of the Site Inspection, the team may conduct historical research, meet with stakeholders, conduct reconnaissance of the sites, collect samples of environmental media, and perform limited geophysical surveys. Stakeholder involvement in this process is the key to success because many of the sites are on private property.



Photo by Joan Burns

Brad McCowan, right, Site Inspection program manager talks with Bob Zaruba, Omaha District project manager, and Frances Steel, Huntsville Center contract specialist.

The program is divided into four Installation Management Agency regions, each managed by its geographic design center. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has four design centers, and each will execute the SI work in its respective IMA region.

- The Huntsville Design Center is responsible for the Southeast and Pacific

IMA Regions.

- The Omaha Design Center is responsible for the Northwest IMA Region.
- South Pacific Division Range and Support Center is responsible for the Southwest IMA Region.
- The Baltimore Design Center is responsible for the Northeast IMA Region.

Twenty-two Corps Geographic Districts support the FUDS mission by providing overall project management, identifying stakeholders, conducting community relations, obtaining rights of entry as needed, and identifying the projects and the priority in which the Design Centers execute the SI.

Communications and cooperation between the contractors, the design centers, and the Corps districts is essential for the successful completion of the FUDS SI. The kickoff meeting was the initial bringing together of the different players.

Corps Chaplain pays pastoral visit to Huntsville Center

By Joan Burns
Public Affairs

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Chaplain, Col. Mark Fentress, likes Huntsville, Ala. He said he likes the strong values, the atmosphere and he especially likes the people at Huntsville Center. While visiting the Center recently, he did what he loves most – he ministered to those he refers to as “his flock.”



Photo by Joan Burns

Chaplain Mark Fentress congratulates Ron Taylor, Engineering Directorate, at Taylor's retirement ceremony July 21.

Ministering to a flock as widespread as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is a responsibility Fentress relishes. With Corps presence in 90 countries and all states, Fentress said he is “always on the go.” He comments on his instructions from Lt. Gen. Carl A. Strock, chief of Engineers, “Gen. Strock said, if

we take care of the people – love them, take care of them – the mission will be accomplished.”

Pastoral visits, such as the one to Huntsville Center, are an important part of Fentress’ ministry. He tries to visit all commands in the Corps regularly. The visits are purposeful, he said. His objective is to help build a sense of family so that positive morale and a healthy climate prevail throughout the Corps. “I believe the Corps is the national treasure of America,” Fentress said.

The Chaplain regularly receives requests for pastoral visits from Corps of Engineers commanders. “People will talk to a chaplain when they won’t talk to anyone else about a personal concern,” he said. He points to the challenge of change in the Corps structure as a source of stress for employees.

“There are a lot of hurting people,” he said.

Fentress responds to calls for assistance from people he has never met from all over the world. He receives letters expressing gratitude from people who have experienced crises in their lives to whom he has been a source of support.

Taking part in the festivities surrounding the retirement of one of Huntsville Center’s employees was a “serendipitous” experience, remarked



Col. Mark Fentress

Fentress. “The rituals of life add purpose and meaning. We should honor a person by observing the important moments as special times of God’s blessing.”

An assignment with 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) at Fort Campbell, Ky., was the beginning of Fentress’ career. He laughingly refers to himself as the “leapin’ deacon,” a label given by the men with whom he worked in his assignments with the 101st Airborne Division and with the 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, N.C.

But he believes God saved the best for last in his assignment with the Corps of Engineers. He considers it a “sacred honor to serve the Corps of Engineers family and to serve God.”

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. ENGINEERING AND SUPPORT CENTER, HUNTSVILLE
P.O. BOX 1600
HUNTSVILLE, AL 35807-4301

