

PREFACE

They said it couldn't be done. And, as it turned out, they were right.

The full and complete 50-year story of the Tulsa District U.S. Army Corps of Engineers really can't be captured between the two covers of one book.

We have hinted herein of those stories in this golden anniversary scrapbook that preserves memories of this civil army of willing workers who took the Tulsa region by storm in 1939.

This book is dedicated to the esprit de corps: the spirit of the Corps, alive and well in the Tulsa District. It speaks of a remarkable devotion and commitment among the corpsmen and women to their mission, to their group, and to one another.

They call it the Corps family, without blushing, and indeed it is.

This scrapbook has been compiled and threaded together almost entirely from the work of others. The photos and stories are a fraction of those we wanted to include; each person shown or described stands for scores of others. It rests foursquare on the work of the late historian, Dr. William A. Settle, Jr., whose scholarly work documented the Tulsa District history. In fact, so much of the information contained herein comes from Dr. Settle's work that we here issue a blanket footnote crediting to him a debt that can never be repaid.

The great tragedy of this endeavor was that Dr. Settle died unexpectedly on the week our work began, leaving us immeasurably poorer and requiring us to proceed, as best we could, without his gentle guidance and wisdom.

Perhaps the greatest surprise of this project was that the Tulsa District staff gave us great editorial freedom. Col. Frank Patete set the ground rules when he authorized a commemorative book that he hoped would be alive with photos and lively with anecdotes.

The great delight was the Corps project manager, Beverly Leland, who was the hub and soul for all the work. When we learned that, in the name of economy, the Corps had destroyed 10,000 photos we had counted on, Beverly cheerily rolled up her sleeves and assumed the additional task of photo editor, collecting and perusing more than 20,000 photos and slides that she finally narrowed to those used here. This book would never have been completed without Bev, and we recommend that she be officially designated an Engineering saint.

Thanks are also due to the dozens of others who helped produce this book. The guiding editorial light was editorial manager Larry Silvey, who was ably assisted by production manager and typographer Mike Shelton, art director Rusty Johnson, associate art director Liz Mitchell, and technical editor Tom Warren. Special thanks go to the Corps' Ross Adkins, Barbara Cravens, Bob Freeman, Bill Gamel, Don Holden, Jerry Nash, and Cindy Richmond. Historians Danney Goble and Neal McNeill lent essential support, as did J.D. Metcalfe and Juanise Ableson. Many others helped; you know who you are and will recognize your contributions herein.

More than once someone at the District has apologized, with a little smile, that the Corps is "dull." But we never found it so. Rather, the stories of the Tulsa District bubbled up endlessly, stubbornly refusing to arrange themselves in smart military fashion into the cold black-and-white of type and page. Even as we try to close the covers, the stories still are bubbling up and, we trust, will continue to do so — like irrepressible springs, the essential esprit of the corps — over the next 50 years or so . . .

Ann Patton
Tulsa, Oklahoma
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