



The Tulsa District resumed military work in 1981, assuming construction and facilities maintenance responsibilities throughout the region. Far left, Col. Patete joined dignitaries at dedication of a new building at Reese Air Force Base. Left, groundbreaking for the Advanced Composite Repair Facility at Tinker Air Force Base.

Chapter 4 **READY IN PEACE OR WAR**

In 1980,

CHANGE WAS IN THE WIND,

blown in with the landslide victory of Ronald Reagan over President Jimmy Carter. Change was coming to the Tulsa District, beyond perhaps what even the most far-seeing leader could envision.

After two decades — the 1960s and 1970s — of being caught up in a civil works construction blitz, Tulsa District leaders entered the 1980s talking about a future *operating* mode.

The net effect of the Vietnam War had been to reduce military spending; the effect of the Carter Administration had been to reduce new civil works construction starts. Then came the year of the worst inflation in 33 years — 1980 — which burst to life with the force of Mount St. Helens' eruption. A triumphant Reagan gained the White House and became further empowered with the first Republican-controlled Senate since 1954.

The Department of Defense began thawing plans for weapons systems that had been frozen during the Carter years.

The story is recounted in the 50-year history of the Corps' Southwestern Division:

"Because of the large number of military projects mandated by the Reagan administration, the Fort Worth District was being overwhelmed. In contrast, by 1981 the Tulsa District's large Engineering Division was facing a reduction in force. The Southwestern Division suggested to the Office, Chief of Engineers, that Tulsa be allowed to resume military responsibilities. The headquarters agreed, and the Tulsa District took over responsibility for the states of Oklahoma and Arkansas.

"The transfer began in mid-1981 (and) was completed on 1 May 1982."

In 1981, military construction responsibilities were returned to the Tulsa District. It turned into a mounting wave of work so massive that by 1987 Col. Frank Patete announced that 65 percent of the District resources — an amazing 94 percent of its construction resources — were devoted to military tasks.²