



Chapter 1 DAMMED IF WE DO

*" . . . I am too long away from water.
I have a need of water near."*

— Edna St. Vincent Millay



Col. Morris

Below, Col. Pinkey stakes out a claim for wildlife preservation.

Right, record 1986 rainstorms pressed Keystone Dam flood gates into full-tilt operation.

The story of the Tulsa District's big dam program, with its companion smaller civil works projects, would fill a bookshelf and here can be traced only in silhouette.

A storyteller might well begin the tale of the lakes in the middle, the middle 1960s, at the time of the Tulsa District's 25th birthday.

The Tulsa District's civil works construction program was at its zenith. It was, in fact, number one in the nation, as attested by 1,400 employees working on 101 projects. These ranged in scope from a \$1000 study to the \$1.2-billion navigation project, the largest civil works project in Corps' history. The \$100-million workload in 1964 ranged in stages from planning through construction to operations.¹

"A new era is dawning in the Southwest as its water resources are being developed," said Col. John W. Morris, Tulsa District Engineer, on the District's silver anniversary, July 1, 1964.

From that center point, Morris looked backward, then forward.

In its first 25 years (disregarding for the moment its military work), the Tulsa District had completed a dozen multipurpose reservoirs — providing flood control, water supply, hydropower, and recreation for millions. Eleven more impounded lakes were under construction; a dozen more were under design, along with four locks and dams. Comprehensive river basin studies and smaller projects were also underway.

Indeed, as great as was the workload on the waterway, the District's other civil works outdistanced it, and the benefits were mounting. Sixteen million people visited the reservoirs that year. And already the projects had prevented an estimated \$132 million in flood damages.

Over the coming 25 years, even more profound changes would occur that would reshape the economy of the region and touch the lives of all its citizens. "The Corps of Engineers stands ready, anxious, and a bit impatient, to get on with the tasks at hand," Morris said.

As he looked into the future, he recalled Robert Browning's words:

*"Grow old along with me,
The best is yet to be . . ."*²

