

## NEWS RELEASE

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Mississippi Valley Division

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# Mississippi Valley Division Awards Day

VICKSBURG, Miss., June 21, 2007 -- The Mississippi Valley Division, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, held its annual awards ceremony today. The following awards were presented:

## GALLERY OF DISTINGUISHED CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES



Mrs. Gwen Jones Edris was inducted into the Gallery of Distinguished Civilian Employees.

A special ceremony was held following the Engineer Day Awards ceremony, where a plaque with an engraved portrait of Mrs. Edris was placed on a gallery board displaying plaques of previously selected members.

The Gallery of Distinguished Civilian Employees was established in 1970 as a means of recognizing outstanding retired civilian employees of the Mississippi Valley Division.

Mrs. Edris is the 52<sup>nd</sup> inductee to the gallery since its inception.

Mrs. Edris retired in January 2003 with over 35 years of government service, the majority of which were spent at the Mississippi Valley Division.

Mrs. Edris began her career with the Corps in February 1966 as a clerk-stenographer in the division's Administrative Services Office. She worked for a brief period at the Corps' Waterways Experiment Station then returned to the Mississippi Valley Division in 1977 as secretary for Engineering Division.

In 1980, she was selected as administrative assistant, and served the remainder of her career in that position, progressing to operations assistant before becoming the first woman to be promoted to administrative officer in that position.

Mrs. Edris served as a point of contact for coordination with the White House and congressional, federal, state and local interests in the Mississippi River valley.

She planned and coordinated extremely complex events, ceremonies and Sunshine Act proceedings for over 23 years with acute attention to detail and thorough coordination with numerous diverse interests.

While employed at the division and also during her retirement, Mrs. Edris has served the Vicksburg and Warren County community. She is a member of the Corps' Chapter of the Chamber of Commerce, Lions Club, Vicksburg Convention Center Advisory Board, Salvation Army Women's Auxiliary, Riverfront Murals Committee and First Presbyterian Church, among other volunteer activities.

Mrs. Edris received numerous awards during her career with the Corps including: the Blankenship Technical/Administrative Award, the Commander's Award for Civilian Service, the Achievement Medal for Civilian Service, Defense Reconstruction Assistance Office Award for service in Kuwait, Woman of the Year and numerous other special act and performance awards.

Mrs. Edris was committed to excellence, displayed extremely high initiative and always exhibited a high level of responsibility. She was an exemplary ambassador for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

## **ERNEST P. BLANKENSHIP AWARDS**

The Blankenship awards are among the highest honorary awards presented to Mississippi Valley Division employees by the local commander. The awards cover three categories: engineer/scientist, professional and technical/administrative. Established in 1987, they memorialize the commitment, dedication and knowledge of the long-time Mississippi Valley Division Executive Assistant who died in 1973.

### **Engineer/Scientist Award**



Mrs. Susan Smith was the recipient of the Ernest P. Blankenship Engineer/Scientist Award. Mrs. Smith is a civil engineer and serves as deputy for the Planning Functional Group.

Mrs. Smith was instrumental in identifying and implementing strategic planning initiatives, best practices, lessons learned and management controls. Through her efforts in the development, interpretation and implementation of policies, procedures and quality objectives, improvements were made to the group's project and program execution process.

She was an active leader in initiatives to mentor, develop and train individuals to ensure that technical planning skills were enhanced.

For the last several years, Mrs. Smith served as a lead instructor in the Planner Core Curriculum Hydraulic and Hydrology Considerations in Planning Course. She was also an active promoter and teacher in the Planning Associates Program -- an intensive, annual long-term planner training program.

She was heavily involved in the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Study that is evaluating a comprehensive hurricane protection analysis and design to develop a full range of flood control, coastal restoration and hurricane protection measures. Mrs. Smith also provided support and planning advice for many complex and large-scale multi-district and regional projects and programs within the Mississippi Valley

Division.

## Professional Award



Ms. Janet Clark received the Ernest P. Blankenship Professional Award. Ms. Clark is a program analyst in the Civil Works Integration Division.

During the past year, Ms. Clark provided insightful and professional support to the Chief of Civil Works Integration Division in the analysis, development and submission of the annual Mississippi River and Tributaries civil works program. She was instrumental in the successful execution of the overall Mississippi River and Tributaries project, including providing expert support for information needed in the two supplemental appropriations associated with the recovery efforts in south Louisiana. She worked with the district support teams and the districts to improve program performance, maintained working relationships and also provided guidance on program development, costs, workloads and schedules.

In order to position the division for transition to a new financial computer program, Ms. Clark assumed the role of “Train the Trainer.” Her thorough understanding of civil works execution and budgeting enabled her to provide quality training to division employees.

Additionally, Ms. Clark participated on the Corps’ Headquarters Appropriation Annex Update Team to develop a project management plan to update the Fiscal Year 2009 Program Development Guidance Engineering Circular. Her extensive knowledge of the Mississippi River and Tributaries civil works program was invaluable in improving the circular, ensuring the FY09 civil works program meets the President’s Management Agenda and Program Assessment Rating Tool process.

## Administrative Award



Mrs. Maureen Ott received the Ernest P. Blankenship Technical/Administrative Award. Mrs. Ott is the senior administrative specialist for the St. Louis, Rock Island and St. Paul Districts’ Support Team and the Real Estate Community of Practice.

During the recent funding short fall, Mrs. Ott redoubled her efforts to ensure the district support team presented accurate funding requirements while staying within the budget.

In addition, she ensured travel orders and vouchers were accurate and prepared promptly, made travel arrangements for the Real Estate Community of Practice and District Support Team staff, tracked and scheduled training, and planned and budgeted for the acquisition of equipment.

Mrs. Ott drafted routine, non-technical correspondence and finalized weekly staff notes, thereby reducing the demands on the staff. During the absence of administrative support within other offices, Mrs. Ott selflessly assisted those team members by providing support in the areas of correspondence, travel and other

requirements.

In addition, Mrs. Ott assisted her supervisor in his new duties as the division's Transition Manager for the National Security Personnel System. These additional duties involved a great deal of travel as well as numerous meetings and conference calls.

## **WOMAN OF THE YEAR AWARD**



Ms. Glenda Jackson received the Mississippi Valley Division Woman of the Year Award. She is the Lead Program Analyst in the Civil Works Integration Division.

Ms. Jackson continuously demonstrated expertise and exceptional competence, dedication and teamwork in the performance of her duties. Her proficiency, dedication and ability to work with others contributed greatly to the success of the annual civil works program. Her attitude, professional knowledge and dedication to mission accomplishment resulted in a seamless implementation of the Programs and Project Management Business Process within the Mississippi Valley Division.

Ms. Jackson serves on the Youth Committee, the Finance Committee and the Steering Committee for the Bovina Baptist Church. She is also currently serving as secretary for the Sunday school. She gives willingly of her time and talents for other activities in the community, including the Salvation Army Women's Auxiliary and the Vicksburg/Warren County Humane Society.

Ms. Jackson advanced from a clerical position to her current position during her 30-year federal career, serving as a role model for other female employees and as a mentor for other program analysts.

## **COMMANDER'S AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY**



Mr. Rayford Wilbanks, Chief of the Planning Functional Group and Team Leader for the New Orleans District Support Team, was the recipient of the Commander's Award for Outstanding Achievement in Equal Employment Opportunity.

During the past year, Mr. Wilbanks displayed outstanding leadership abilities through implementation of effective recruitment strategies which led to improvement in the Mississippi Valley Division EEO Program.

His support for employing and developing minorities and women stimulated and maintained a high level of respect and confidence throughout the organization, as well as contributed to the diversity in the Programs Directorate. Mr. Wilbanks continually searched for opportunities to improve and enhance development, growth and career advancements among the workforce.

His contributions to the EEO program resulted in increased productivity which greatly enhanced the accomplishments of the recovery efforts associated with Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Mr. Wilbanks also

provided support to the division's Planning Mentoring Program.

Significant achievements include:

- Provided developmental assignments for a minority male.
- Hired and promoted a minority female.
- Hired and promoted a female.
- Provided developmental assignments for two females.
- Provided opportunity for developmental assignment of a male and female in another directorate/district.
- Provided opportunity for a male employee to develop new skills, enabling him to compete for other job opportunities.

## **AWARDS FOR CIVILIAN SERVICE**

One Achievement Medal for Civil Service and two Commander's Awards for Civilian Service were presented.

Mrs. Mary Burrow, Emergency Operations Specialist, was presented the Achievement Medal for Civilian Service for her outstanding service to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers during the period January 2006 through December 2006.

Mrs. Burrow coordinated Corps-wide deployments in support of Hurricane Katrina as well as Mississippi Valley Division support to the Global War on Terror. She also served as the primary point of contact for coordination and filling of critical taskers for the Corps' Task Force Hope, Hurricane Protection Office, Protection Restoration Office, New Orleans District and Louisiana Recovery Field Office.

Mrs. Burrow's dedication to resolving problems and attention to detail enabled deployed personnel to concentrate solely on their missions. Her reliability in preparing and providing timely and accurate deployment reports to senior leaders enabled them to make critical decisions regarding staffing levels, thereby ensuring proper mission resourcing.

Mrs. Kathy Garrick, Administrative Assistant to the Director of Regional Business, was presented the Commander's Award for Civilian Service for her outstanding support and service to the Mississippi Valley Division and the Regional Business Directorate during the period August 2005 to May 2007.

In August 2005, Hurricane Katrina devastated the city of New Orleans. The Director of Regional Business was detailed immediately to oversee hurricane recovery efforts for the Mississippi Valley Division. From that time until the director's retirement in March 2007, Mrs. Garrick not only performed her routine duties, she was also on call and performed duties for her supervisor while he was in New Orleans. This required tremendous coordination of travel for the director as well as being a point of contact for him. She helped coordinate the temporary hiring and travel of numerous Corps and non-Corps employees who were deployed to New Orleans as well as rehired annuitants for the Mississippi Valley Division Headquarters.

Through all the turmoil of four changes of leadership, Mrs. Garrick never failed to perform in an outstanding and professional manner. She maintained continuity of the directorate through the entire period, often performing duties well beyond that expected of her position.

Dr. David Vigh, Environmental Team Leader, was presented the Commander's Award for Civilian Service for his role as Chairman of the 2<sup>nd</sup> National Conference on Ecosystem Restoration (2007) and for his commitment to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Mr. Vigh's efforts were exemplary, reflected the highest level of professionalism, and went beyond the usual call of duty for his current position.

He provided outstanding support for the conference and set a tremendous example for partnering and coordination by Corps personnel.

Mr. Vigh's efforts provided partnering opportunities between federal, state, and local governments, and non-governmental organizations in support of ecosystem restoration.

## **LENGTH OF SERVICE**

Nineteen employees, representing 355 years of federal service, received length of service certificates, ranging from 10 to 35 years of service.