

THE CUE SEE SEER



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I gave the first of a proposed seven two-hour talks on the history/roles, etc., of what is now Caltrans to District 11 employees in mid-May. This first presentation was titled, "Overview and History of California Ground Transportation, State Highways, and District 11." About 120 employees attended and heard my interpretation of the topic – stretching from early Spanish explorations to 1937. The 1937 date was chosen because the Division of Highways covering the system and its development up to that date produced an interesting half-hour color film. It is a film worth watching and is now on videotape in the Headquarters Library. If you are interested in this film, you may wish to read about it in the October 1936 issue of *California Highways and Public Works*.

The last part of this inaugural program covered a bit of District 11 history beginning with its formation in 1934 and the reasons I feel the District developed a "can do" attitude over the years. In this last topic Bill Dotson, Hank Kreft, and Larry Wherry joined me with their comments and anecdotes. I also had e-mail input from **Stu Harvey**. I would like to quote one of **Stu's** thoughts on three factors, which fostered the District's development in the 1960s-1970s.

- Professional maturity of staff at the Associate level and higher
- Management style of the District Director
- Immense pride in the organization

In my early days with the organization (beginning in 1958) the Associates, Seniors, and management level engineers all had years of experience in designing and maintaining state highways, and they were very good at it. The same thing was true of the clerical and personnel staff. It was all business and not much room for dead wood, whiners, and complainers. Entry level engineers who were being hired to produce the Interstate Highway System (like myself) looked up to the old timers – even the nonprofessionals – as role models in work ethics, taking pride in completed work and being able to communicate with precision of meaning. All of this inspired an eagerness to do the very best job possible, and to develop oneself professionally in order to be in line for working on the next big engineering challenge.

This first program proved to be much more difficult to organize than I expected. The major problem was how to compress my material into the allotted time – and I ended up frustrated and short-changing the audience question time.

My prime reason for presenting these programs is to expose the 600 or so new (two years or less with the District) Caltrans District 11 employees to the rich history of the organization and the District. The seventh program in the series is to be a panel of the five living ex-District Directors – their triumphs, problems, and (rare) failures. The five are: **Jake Dekema** [District Engineer 1955-1973, District Director 1973-1980]; **Russ Lightcap** [1980-1983]; **Bill Dotson** [1983-1988]; **Jesus Garcia** [1988-1993]; and **Gary Gallegos** [1993-2001]. This should prove to be an interesting panel.

I am somewhat disappointed in my quest to entice some willing person or persons from each District to take on the task of identifying the District Engineers/Directors for their respective Districts as described in the March 2002 (vol. 1) issue of the *Cue See Seer*. So far, as a result of a response from District 8 retiree **Taylor Smith**, I've talked to **Grace Vinzens**, who will develop the information for District 8. My sincere appreciation, **Grace**.

Are there any other volunteers out there?

**GEORGE GRAY, President
QUARTER CENTURY CLUB**

