



CELEBRATING
55 YEARS

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Public works director is essential to Quonset's success

August 08, 2013 - Rhode Island

There's no single component that explains the recent success of Quonset Business Park as an engine of economic development for our state. With more than 175 companies, 9,100 jobs - and the Port of Davisville recognized as one of the top ten auto importers on the continent - it is clear our progress is the result of many members of a team all working together.

This month, I want to take an opportunity to introduce you to one of our team members whose role here is critically important. It cuts to the heart of maintaining our infrastructure, which is one of the leading elements of our success.

Jack Sprengel is director of public works for the Quonset Development Corporation (QDC). He is affectionately known as the "last guy to shut off the lights," since he was stationed here when Davisville shut down as a Navy base in 1994. Jack retired after serving 20 years active duty with the U.S. Navy Seabees and Navy Civil Engineer Corp as a decorated chief warrant officer.

Soon after closing the Naval Construction Battalion Center, Jack began a new career with the Rhode Island Port Authority (RIPA) in the fall of 1994. Because of his experience in the Navy, he was quickly moved to the operations department and assigned work with the RIPA and the U.S. Navy to manage caretaker maintenance responsibilities for the now closed Naval Construction Battalion Center.

The contract was successfully negotiated and awarded for a five-year period at a cost of \$5 million for RIPA to perform various facility maintenance activities on the former base for the Navy. Following that, Jack remained in the operations department writing policies and procedures, and working on various small maintenance contracts. He also worked as one of the two Harbor Masters docking vessels at the Port of Davisville. With the downsizing of RIPA, he was asked to supervise the maintenance department along with his operations department duties. The maintenance work included some 80-plus buildings, 16 miles of roadway, and supporting preparation for the Quonset Air Show every year.

With the establishment of the Quonset Development Corporation in 2005, Jack returned to the role of public works director. He now maintains more than 2 million square feet of buildings for the QDC, oversees operations for the 26 miles of road maintenance and snow plowing, all grounds maintenance along roads and open areas - to which we have added more than 100 acres, with access to three public access beaches and a 2.4 mile multi-use path.

Perhaps more than anyone, Jack has seen remarkable changes to both the former Quonset Naval Air Station and Naval Construction Battalion Center over the past 19 years. Some 200 buildings and 2.5 million s/f of structures have been demolished, while old water towers have been replaced with new ones. Vehicle and vessel traffic has increased substantially. Also, new highways have been built into the business park along with the rebuilding and realigning of several interior roads.

Jack and his crew in the public works department have never been busier - and the place has never looked better.

As Jack said recently, in reflecting on his experiences: "Never did I think twenty years ago that I would be so directly involved with the transformation of the base I helped close. It is a world class business park that continues to evolve!"

In 20 years of active duty service, Jack and his family moved 10 times and served at nine different bases. But we are certainly fortunate that he found his way to this one.

In closing, it is fitting that I also recognize Pete Holmander, one of Jack's colleagues in the Public Works Department. Pete retired this July, after working here for more than 23 years. Pete started in a position that was mainly responsible for helping with the maintenance and upkeep of the old Navy buildings on site to become assistant superintendent of maintenance for the QDC. We wish Pete health and happiness in his well-deserved retirement and thank Pete for his role on the team that keeps Quonset looking its very best and keeping our infrastructure "world class" - an enormous key to our success.

Steven King, PE, is the managing director of the Quonset Development Corp., North Kingstown.

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