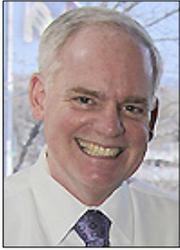




NEWSLETTER FOR EMPLOYEES AND FRIENDS OF ITD DISTRICT 6 | OCTOBER 2010 (VOLUME 10, ISSUE 2)

## Nation's best DOT



Being the best in the country.

Why not?

That's Director Brian W. Ness's goal for the Idaho Transportation Department.

It's just as well.

Aiming high is the right thing.

From his initial letter on March 19:

"...continually strive for improvement, with the goal of becoming the best transportation department in the country.

"It is an ambitious goal...but... within our reach....

"...create best practices for others to follow.

"...begin...steady improvement."

District 6 is on board.

## Dean, Dave leave

One never knows.

Dean Berggren suddenly retired.

And Dave Walrath left ITD to head Madison County General Services.

Two District 6 fixtures. Two great guys. They will be missed.

(See stories on pages 2 and 3.)



Dean Berggren



Dave Walrath



Ron Atchley, Troy Stone, Jeremy Johnson, Ed Osteraas and Jeremie Neville pose at the District 6 roadeo. Not pictured is Don Gilstrap, who won 2nd in the foreman category.

## Stone, Atchley take 'roadeo' honors

This year, the District 6 Truck Roadeo belonged to Troy Stone of Dubois maintenance, who earned 2,675 points.

In second place was Jeremy Johnson, of Mackay, with 2,635 points, and in third place was Ed Osteraas of the Shop, with 2,608 points. In fourth place was Jeremie Neville of Dubois maintenance, with 2,563 points.

In the foreman category, Ron Atchley (640) won first place with 2,723 points, and Don Gilstrap (690) won second place with 2,675 points.

Troy went on to place third in the state Truck Roadeo, garnering 2,833 points – just two points behind state runner-up Bruce Dial of District 5

## Butler new coordinator

Ron Butler is District 6's new EEO/Safety/Training coordinator, replacing Randy Drake, who was promoted to the second maintenance coordinator.



Ron previously was a transportation technician on the Rigby vegetation/maintenance crew, where he worked six years starting July 19, 2004. Last year, he earned a bachelor's degree in human resources training and development at Idaho State University.

and 32 points behind the state winner, Pete McGuire, of District 4.

Both events were held at the Idaho Falls maintenance yard, with the District 6 competition on June 10 and the state competition on June 15.

"Turnout for the District 6 competition was low," Roadeo Coordinator Derk Williams says. "But everyone who came had a good time."

McGuire and Dial represented ITD at the national truck roadeo in Estes Park, Colo., Sept. 21. The team placed fourth in tandem-axle truck driving.

## Environmental Evaluation

*This is the fourth in a series of articles on how to complete a highway project.*

You most assuredly can't complete a highway project without the necessary environmental permits.

You could disrupt an endangered plant or animal, or otherwise harm the environment.

Federal and state agencies don't take kindly to such things. It's the world we live in.

To the rescue, ride Environmental

*(continued on page 4)*



Dean stands by his restored 1959 Chevrolet Corvette. The black sports car features red interior and a 425-horsepower engine.

## Dean Berggren: Time to head out on the highway

Class act, Dean Berggren. Nicest guy.

On May 27, he quietly shook hands, hugged the ladies and said: “You showed me more kindness than I deserved.”

Then he left the Rigby office at 4:30 p.m., walked down the main sidewalk to his GMC sport utility vehicle and drove home to Idaho Falls.

“I woke up one morning and decided that since my wife was retiring after 30 years of teaching school, I would retire after 30 years of monitoring traffic.” He was 61.

Dean started service to Idaho in 1980 as a radio dispatcher for the Idaho State Police. Two years later, he switched to Port of Entry inspector, where he found his niche.

Dean supervised the District 6 Port of Entry Area for 18 years.

Next year, Dean plans to drive from Chicago to Los Angeles on Route 66, the famous two-lane road that inspired a television series in the early 1960s,

a popular weekly show named *Route 66* that many of us remember.

He anticipates touring this route in his restored 1959 Chevrolet Corvette – vintage *Route 66*.

The two young men in the dramatic series drove early '60s Corvette convertibles along the route and got involved in the lives of people in the communities they visited.

Route 66 is 2,448 miles long. Dean and Port of Entry Inspector Mike Akers, who retired June 17 (see story on page 3), plan to drive to the edge of Lake Michigan and then down the old highway to the Pacific Ocean, eating in diners along the way.

Please...take us with you!

The day before he retired, Dean sent this note to “Friends and Coworkers:

“Just a note of thanks to each of you – Tomorrow is my final day with ITD. As I slip off into what they refer to as retirement...I wanted to give you all a ‘heartfelt thank you’ for your help

with countless things over the years – but mainly your friendship.

“This is a great place to work. Life has been fantastic. In large measure, it has been because of you folks.

“We don’t get rich at these jobs. In fact, there are times when we have to shake the piggybank to pay the bills. But overall, it is a great place to work.

“If, in the years ahead, you are driving along an old two-lane highway and some smuck is standing beside his old broken-down car – that will be me ☺.

“...feel free to look me up. ...If you seek me at noontime, I may be standing in line at the Soup Kitchen...ha.

“Thanks for everything.

“We are friends forever.

“God bless!”

The Port of Entry lost a good supervisor, and the rest of us lost a good friend – a fine human being. Happy driving.

# Dave Walrath accepts position in Madison County

District 6 employees were stunned when word got out that Project Development Engineer Dave Walrath was leaving ITD.

He was a fixture, a long-time favorite.

Not only is he competent technically and managerially, but he is an all-around good guy, with a good personality and down-to-earth nature.

Assistant District 6 Engineer Karen Hiatt said in her announcement of his departure: “Dave has done an outstanding job for ITD the past 11 plus years. His experience, knowledge and relationship will be missed.”

Dave accepted the position of General Services Director for Madison County, where he will head Public Works, as well as Roads and Bridges. This should keep him busy.

An Idaho Falls resident, Dave now passes District 6 headquarters morning and evening. He likely thinks about District 6 each time he drives through the Menan-Lorenzo Interchange construction. All the best.



Photo courtesy of Karen Hiatt

## Mike Akers retires

Port of Entry Inspector Mike Akers retired June 17 with 22 years of service. He started as an inspector at the Cotterell Port of Entry on July 11, 1988. In 1989, he transferred to the Inkom Port of Entry in District 5. On Jan. 3, 1993, he transferred to Sage Junction Port of Entry, where he worked until his retirement this spring.

“I enjoyed being a rover,” Mike says. “It was a different job every day. I also enjoyed working for Dean (see opposite). He didn’t micromanage us.”

Retirement? “Every day’s Saturday,” Mike says. “A couple of weeks ago I fished the Columbia and caught a couple of Chinook salmon. This summer, we drove to the coast. We’ve also camped a lot. It’s been great.”



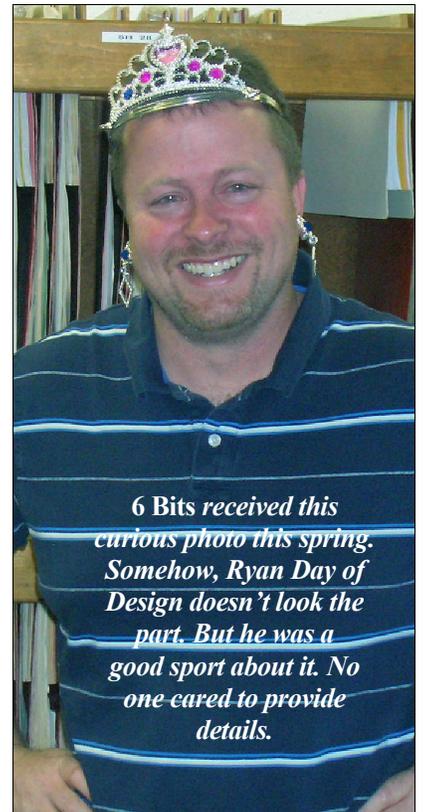
## Burke new PDE

Ben Burke was named Project Development engineer Sept. 3.



He fills the vacancy created when Dave Walrath (see above) left District 6 for Madison County. Ben brings training and skills to the managerial position. Before joining ITD in November 2006 as a staff engineer in Project Development, he worked for Tacoma Power on security products and services.

Prior to that he worked five years as a transportation engineer for Washington DOT. He was a design team lead, project engineer for the Tacoma Narrows Bridge and a professional with various other construction and materials duties.



*6 Bits received this curious photo this spring. Somehow, Ryan Day of Design doesn’t look the part. But he was a good sport about it. No one cared to provide details.*

# Planners analyze environmental effects, impacts;

Planners Tim Cramer and Mike Jones.

They are the roughriders who obtain the necessary permits for District 6.

Here's the process:

- Identify planned projects;
- Determine environmental impacts of each;
- Plan any needed mitigation;
- and Apply for required permits.

Tim and Mike work with the Planning and Project Management Section (2PM) of Bill Shaw, Eric Verner and Troy Williams (see "Phase 1. Planning" in November 2009 *6 Bits*) to identify upcoming projects.

They visit the site of proposed projects to analyze environmental impacts then weigh requirements of environmental laws to know if avoidance or mitigation is necessary.

We're talking the National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act, and National Historic Preservation Act.

"We deal with these laws every day," Tim says.

He and Mike anticipate concerns of federal and state agencies, which are charged with administering the federal and state environmental laws.

Key agencies include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Army Corps of Engineers, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries, Idaho Department of Water Resources, Idaho Department of Environmental Quality, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Bureau of Land Management, and U.S. Forest Service.

## Form 654

Complying with environmental laws and regulations starts with completing a detailed form.

Surprised?



*Environmental Planners Michael Jones and Tim Cramer analyze potential impacts.*

Form 654, "Environmental Evaluation," is required by ITD.

The 2PM team actually sends Tim and Mike a preliminary copy of this form, which lists 27 possible environmental impacts.

"We analyze all 27 issues for each project," Tim says, "including 'Noise Criteria,' 'Wildlife/Fish Resources/Habitat,' and 'Flood Plain Encroachment,' among others."

A favorite: "Visual Impacts."

Fortunately, most highway projects do not significantly impact the environment.

If a project does offend the environment, ITD "avoids, minimizes or, at a minimum, discusses [obtains concessions on] impacts with environmental officials."

"Sometimes, we show regulators we've done everything feasible to meet regulatory requirements," Tim says.

"If our ITD engineers say it isn't realistic to do something that an environmental agency requests, I

have to negotiate with agency officials," Tim says.

"You have to have a sense of humor," he laughs.

## Compliance Record

Form 654 launches the environmental compliance record prepared for each project.

This record, known as the "environmental evaluation," includes site-survey findings, avoidance or mitigation documentation, and agency approvals/permits, Tim says. The report is usually about 20 pages long.



*Sr. Environ. Planner Tim Cramer points out the destination of an irrigation ditch.*

# ensure District 6 protects area habitat, resources

The record must accompany the project plan, specification and estimate (PS&E) submitted by the Project Development Section to ITD Headquarters in Boise.

Once approved by Headquarters' officials, Tim and Mike save a copy of the environmental evaluation as proof they "jumped through all the regulatory hoops."

## On Impact

Impacts to the environment mostly involve endangered species, wetlands, or cultural (historic or archeological) sites, Tim says.

"We must obtain a cultural clearance for every project," Mike notes.

"We submit a form to State Highway Archeologist Marc Munch in Boise, certifying that the project will not impact cultural resources," he explains.

"We must also prepare some type of document on threatened and endangered species for almost every project," Tim says.

"Canals are considered 'waters of the U.S.,' like lakes and rivers," Tim mentions. "So any project impacting a canal also requires a permit."

## Somewhere in Time

Completing an environmental evaluation takes as little as two weeks for a simple project or as long as several years for a complex one.

Each federal-aid project requires a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) examination, Tim says.

"We deem most projects 'categorical exclusions,' which means they do not significantly impact the human environment," he says.

A project that will significantly impact the environment requires an environmental assessment or impact

statement, each of which is rigorous and expensive – and may take years.

## 'Permitters'

"We are "environmental permitters" more than "environmental planners," Tim declares.

Most Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) projects require environmental permits, while just a third of district maintenance projects do.

"We simply apply for the necessary permits and ensure that the necessary avoidance or mitigation is completed," Tim says.

"If a maintenance project requires an agency permit or approval, we obtain it so the project can proceed," Mike states.

"If a highway needs a new culvert, Tim or Mike obtains a Section 404 Permit from the Army Corps of Engineers and potentially writes a biological evaluation for threatened and endangered species," Tim adds.

And so on.

## In the end

Complying with environmental laws sometimes necessitates design changes.

When planning the proposed Thornton Interchange, District 6 studied three alternatives.

But Tim discovered Ute Ladies' Tresses, an endangered orchid, in the wetlands of one of the alternatives.

District 6 promptly dropped this alternative.

"Our job is to ensure that District 6 meets all environmental regulations," Tim concludes. "That means making adjustments when necessary."

It's part of completing a highway project. ■

Environmental Evaluation			
Program		Project Name	
Route Number		Beginning Mile	
State R/W	(Discuss the existing use of R/W to development plans, etc. on attached sheets)		
Avoidance <input type="checkbox"/> None	Public Interest Expected <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
Environment Area <input type="checkbox"/> CO <input type="checkbox"/> PM	Potential Alignment Change, Addition of a Through-Through		
Conditions (Enter Details on Reverse Side)			
Posted Speed	Design Year		DHV
	ADT	DHV	
Describes the <u>Primary</u> Reason for Proposing this Project			
Conditions	<input type="checkbox"/> Enhance Accessibility for the Disabled <input type="checkbox"/> Enhance Pedestrian Safety <input type="checkbox"/> Enhance Bicycle Safety and Traffic Composition Enhancement <input type="checkbox"/> Visual/Cultural Enhancement <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Enhancement <input type="checkbox"/> Economic Prudence (e.g., Rest Area Projects)		
Primary Avoidance, Minimization, or Discussion			
Yes	No		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	17. Threatened/Endangered Species <input type="checkbox"/> Listed <input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	18. Air Quality Impacts <input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	19. Inconsistent With <input type="checkbox"/> SIP <input type="checkbox"/> T	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	20. Stream Alteration <input type="checkbox"/> IWDR <input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	21. Flood Plain Encroachment <input type="checkbox"/> Longitudinal	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	22. Regulatory Floodplain <input type="checkbox"/> PE Cert.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	23. Navigable Waterway <input type="checkbox"/> CG (Section 401)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	24. Wetlands* <input type="checkbox"/> Jurisdictional	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	25. Sole Source Aquifer <input type="checkbox"/> Exempt From	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	26. Water Quality	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	27. NPDES-General <input type="checkbox"/> (If no, complete)	
Additional documentation are required (e.g., Relocation, Section 1006, Biological Assessment, etc.) required from the appropriate agency.			

Headquarters requires planners to complete Form 654, "Environmental Evaluation."



The glory days: "BA Smith" rides a bronc at a Senior Pro rodeo in Wickenburg, Ariz., during the 1988 NSPRA tour. YEEHAW!

## Love of rodeo dies hard for pro Bruce A. Smith

Most people don't look forward to retirement just so they can begin running 10 miles a day in preparation for re-entering the rodeo circuit.

But most people aren't Bruce A. Smith.

Bruce retired April 9 after 18 years of service on the Mackay maintenance crew and promptly made arrangements to resume bareback bronc riding. Never mind that he is 64.

### Senior Pro

A member of the National Senior Pro Rodeo Association (NSPRA), where he competed successfully before joining District 6, Bruce prepared to enter a competition in Calgary, Alberta.

He wanted to relive the glory days, when he qualified six times for the national finals. That means he was one of the top 15 Senior Pro riders in North America.

Senior Pro is for cowboys and cowgirls 40 and older.

The first year he competed in Senior

Pro in 1983, he qualified for the national finals in Amarillo, Texas.

"I went to 40 or 50 rodeos each year," he said. The rodeos were across the United States and Canada.

Bruce started in rodeo in 1966 after four years in the Navy that included six months in Vietnam on an attack cruiser (that's another story). Arenas, grandstands, crowds, horses, thrills... he was hooked.

### Livelihood

With his wife's job back home, Bruce made a living at it. But he decided it was time to "put the kids through college and build a house." He joined District 6 in 1991.

In 1982 and 1983, Bruce actually worked as a shop mechanic for ITD District 2 in Lewiston before moving to eastern Idaho, which is more central to the rodeo circuit.

During long days on the Mackay crew, he yearned to get back to bronc

riding. "Rodeo gets in your blood," he says.

Well, this spring, after 18 years behind the wheel of a yellow truck, with the kids graduated and the house built, it was time.

### Shape

A month before his retirement, he started running 10 miles a day to get in shape.

One year ago, this 5-foot-7-inch competitor weighed 250 pounds.

By April, he weighed 160.

He was soon ready for the rodeo in Canada.

"The horses aren't any different," he reasoned.

"But we'll see what happens when I get on that first one."

### Calgary

What happened was a jolt.

An impolite awakening.

“Let’s put it this way,” Bruce says, “I survived. The rigging was different in how it sat on the horse, and I was not making a good spur ride. When the horse turned back, we parted company.

“The arena was a lot harder than I remembered,” he says, “not to mention how I felt from the jerking of my arm and neck during the ride.”

The thoughts of retiring from rodeo are painful.

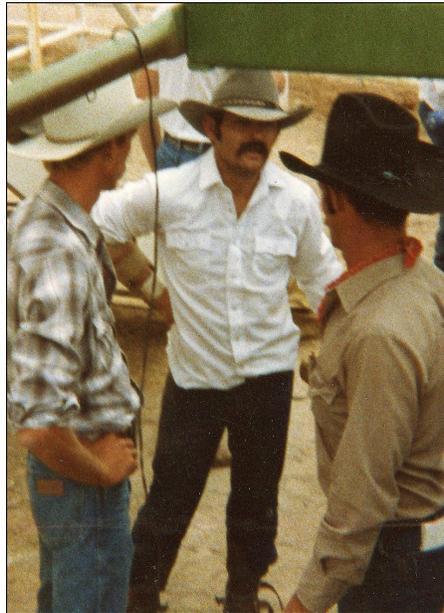
“I miss it something terrible,” Bruce laments – the competition, the environment, the action.

“Most of all, I miss the friends,” he says. “They were always there for me – no matter what. Maybe that’s what I was searching for. Most of them are gone now.”

**Future**

Realistically, it’s time to move on. Bruce concedes that his days on bucking broncos are over.

Fortunately, he has another passion: Jesse, his 6-foot-11-inch son.



*Bruce talks to friends behind the chutes.*

Jesse plays professional basketball in Europe.

**B-ball**

A star at Mackay High School in 2000 and Idaho State University from 2001 to 2005, Jesse thereafter played two years in the minor leagues of the

National Basketball Association in Nevada, Texas and South Dakota and then in the national leagues of Portugal, Finland, Germany and Switzerland.

He recently signed with the Leiden team of South Holland.

Where did his height come from?

“My wife is 5 feet 10 inches, and my brothers are over 6 feet tall,” Bruce says.

How much money does this talented athlete make?

Bruce says players in the NBA minor leagues make “zilch,” but players in European pro leagues make a little money – in fact considerably more than a TTS after 20 years at ITD.

“Sometimes I catch a game on the Internet,” Bruce says.

**New Life**

Bruce still runs 10 miles a day.

And dreams about rodeo.

He follows Jesse’s career as best he can.

Rodeo, basketball, rodeo. That’s still the order of things. ■



*Here, Bruce’s son Jesse plays for the Rio Grande Valley Vipers of the NBA Development League in 2007.*



*Bruce today.*

# Comings and Goings .....

New employees are Virginia “Jinny” Boozer, technical records specialist, Sage Junction Port of Entry; Robert “Bob” Shaffer, transportation technician apprentice (TTA), Mackay maintenance; Michael Jones, environmental planner, Rigby office; and Paul Bennett, transportation technician (TT) (transfer from District 4), Rigby maintenance. In addition, Gary Wirkus has returned to District 6 as electrician apprentice, working with electrician Alan Boyack, Rigby office.



Jinny



Bob



Mike



Paul



Gary

Promotions are Tyson Price to engineer manager 1, District 4; Jeremy Johnson to transportation technician senior (TTS), Mackay maintenance; Casey Messick to TTS Construction, Rigby office; Ron Butler to coordinator of EEO/Safety/Training, Rigby office, and Ben Burke to engineer manager 1 Project Development, Rigby office (see page 2).

Moving on are John Wergin, TT, Island Park; Tim Raymond, TT,

Driggs; Bert Breier, TT, Salmon; Dave Walrath, engineer manager 1 Project Development, Rigby office (see page 3); and Alec McClure, Design TTP.

Retirees are Dean Berggren, Port of Entry Area supervisor, Rigby office (see page 2), and Mike Akers, Port of Entry inspector, Sage Junction (see page 3).

### Growing Posterity

Utility Craftsman Stan Miller of the Bridge and Building crew has a new daughter, Macie. She was born on March 18, weighing 8 pounds, 2 ounces. Mother and daughter are doing fine.

TT Reagan Hansen of Rigby maintenance has a new daughter, Kallie. She was born on April 13, weighing 6 pounds, 15 ounces. Mother and daughter are doing fine.

TT Craig Stewart of Arco maintenance has three new grandchildren – triplets (see below). His daughter-in-law Jessica (Kelly’s wife) gave birth to two girls and one boy on April 6. Sarah weighed 3 pounds, 14 ounces; Niki weighed 2 pounds, 13 ounces; and Miles weighed 3 pounds, 15 ounces. Mom and infants are doing fine.

Incidentally, each of the triplets now weighs more than 12 pounds. Born two months early, the premature infants did not know how to suck or swallow. But each one was healthy and grew.

The biggest problem: Kelly and Jessica’s only other child, four-year-old Todd, wanted his parents to take

the babies back to the hospital, since he wanted his mom to be just his mother.

### Vacant Positions

Open positions in the district include two TTAs in Island Park maintenance and one each in Ashton, Driggs, Rigby and Salmon maintenance; a TTP in Project Development, and a staff engineer in Construction.

Given the hiring freeze, District 6 must appeal each position, which must be deemed essential for safety reasons.

### In Memoriam

Russ Bush, 44, died of a heart attack May 11. He worked on the sign crew two years.

Russ’s mother Marion Phillips worked for ITD several years. His aunt and uncle, R.G. and Linda Monk, and cousin Troy also worked or work for ITD.

Mabry Neville, 17, daughter of Jeremie Neville, Dubois Maintenance, died in an auto accident Aug. 29, along with her cousin Loren Johnson, 17. The one-vehicle crash occurred on Idaho 33 between Mud Lake and Rexburg.

Roy Brizzee, 70, died Sept. 22 after a long battle with cancer. He worked in the Rigby service station 15 years.

Jonathan Prahasto, 55, died in a truck accident Oct. 4. He worked in Island Park maintenance for 16 years.

The district expresses heartfelt condolences to all who mourn.



Sarah

Miles

Niki

Photo courtesy of Craig Stewart