

Western ReUnion 2016

Contributed by Rick Luebbers (rluebber@hotmail.com)

The CH2M Alumni Western ReUnion 2016 was jointly hosted by Northwest and Southwest Alumni Chapters. The “Western ReUnion” was named in recognition of personal relationships that go back to the early days of the firm.



Pam and Pat Klampe helping with the registration of Susie Gaare and Mary Koblitiz. Meredith and Bob Chapman, Lee Eick in background.

This was the first formal CH2M reunion under the new program for regional reunions, but it was open to all CH2M retirees and alumni. More than 100 people, from across the United States, registered for the 3-day event.

Following a successful 2015 pilot event in the Tri-Cities area of Washington state (see last year’s January issue), the Western

ReUnion was held September 21–23, 2016, in Vancouver, Washington, at the Hilton Hotel and Convention Center.

At the welcoming lunch, Pat Jollata, a local historian, spoke about the long and storied history of the Vancouver area. A tour of historic Fort Vancouver and the Pearson Air Museum followed in the afternoon. The site of Fort Vancouver was established as a Hudson’s Bay Company trading post in 1824. The tour included reproductions of the fort walls, barracks, and service buildings. Pearson Air Museum describes aviation history dating back to the early days of the 20th century. Many thanks to Bob Chapman for scheduling Pat Jollata and arranging for the Fort and Museum tour.



Alumni at Fort Vancouver

More than 130 retirees, alumni, and guests attended the Wednesday evening program, which began with a welcome by David Knowles, manager of CH2M’s Portland office. Dave Simmons followed by describing with “Who We Are Now,” an overview of people, technology, clients, and projects associated with the Corvallis and Portland offices. For many of the alumni whose careers began in Oregon, it was interesting to see how far CH2M has come on its home turf.



David Knowles



Dave Simmons



Jerry Geist



Jacque Hinman

Jerry Geist, a long-time CH2M Outside Board Director who is now retiring, took a moment to review some of the interesting highlights of his time on the Board.

The highlight of the evening was a presentation by Jacque Hinman, CH2M's CEO. She reviewed the firm's recent operations (good and bad) and provided a vision for CH2M's future. She graciously fielded many questions from retirees who truly have a personal stake in CH2M's long-term success. Jacque's participation was greatly appreciated; thanks goes to John Lee for his coordination efforts.

For Thursday breakfast, Howard Thomas invited Kristen Stallmann, an Oregon Department of Transportation historian, to make a presentation about the history of the Columbia River Gorge Highway.

Constructed from 1913 to 1922, the 74-mile highway originally extended from the Sandy River near Troutdale to The Dalles through the scenic, but challenging, gorge



Off to Columbia River Gorge Highway



Mary Boyle and Joan Marske at Crown Point Vista House overlooking Columbia River Gorge

cliffs. A new state trail is being constructed on the route of the old highway, with CH2M providing some of the design services.



Multnomah Falls

The group continued to the Western Antique Aeroplane and Automobile Museum in Hood River, which has one of the largest collections of still-flying antique aeroplanes and still-driving antique automobiles in the country.

Following the presentation, a busload of alumni toured portions of the Columbia River Highway and visited Crown Point Vista House and Multnomah Falls.



Rick Luebbers, Brian Brownsell, and Dave Bennion at the Western Antique Aeroplane and Automobile Museum



Herman the Sturgeon

A stop at the Bonneville fish hatchery to view Herman the Sturgeon completed the trip. Thanks goes to Jory Abrams for a great trip plan!

The group continued to Red Ridge Farms Winery and Olive Oil Facility, which is owned and operated by CH2M retiree, Ken Durant and his family. There, the group enjoyed a buffet lunch along with a sampling of Durant Vineyards wines and a tour of the winery and olive oil mill. Thanks goes to Jim Schwing for leading this tour.

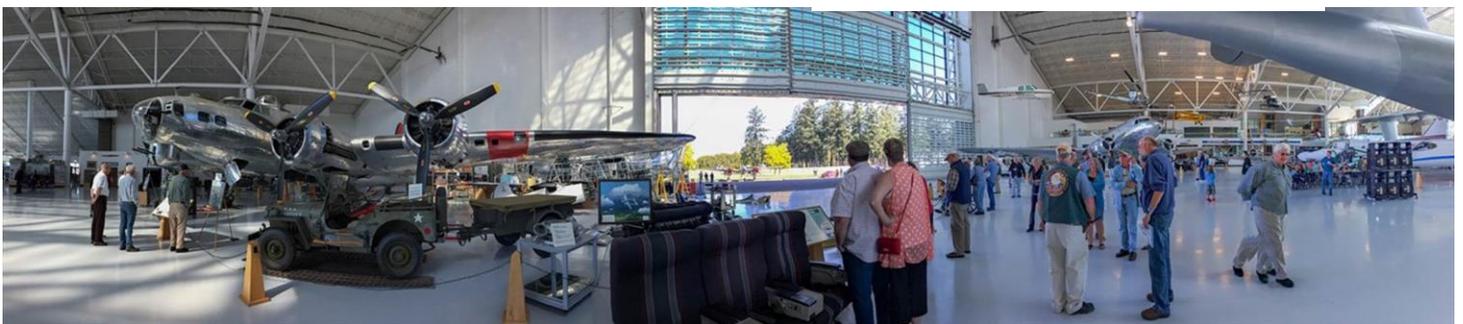


Group lunch at the Durant Vineyards

Also during the day, a second busload of eager alumni toured the Evergreen Aviation and Space Museum in McMinnville. The museum is a remarkable modern campus with a wide variety of exhibits, including Howard Hughes' world's largest flying boat, The Spruce Goose; a B17 Flying Fortress; a Titan II Missile; and an SR 71 Blackbird.



Evergreen Aviation and Space Museum



The highlight of the Thursday evening program was a panel discussion by legacy spouses – the real reason for the early success of CH2M. The panel, organized by Bob Chapman and hosted by Brian O’Halloran, consisted of Babs Suhr, Mary Koblitz, Meredith Chapman, and Mary Schwing. It was a delight to hear the ladies’ responses to Brian’s questions about the best of times and the worst of times.



Meredith, Mary S, Babs, Mary K, and Brian O’Halloran (mcee)



John Willis, Ted Johnson, and Brad Phelps

The evening was completed with a Jeopardy game of “bet-you-didn’t-know” facts about projects delivered by CH2M’s Northwest offices. John Willis and Ted Johnson, from the Portland office, kept the game fun and fast moving. Many alumni in the audience participated, some even with correct answers; and fortunately everyone tied for first place at the end of the game.

Friday morning saw one alumni group visit the Vancouver Water Reclamation Facility and Water Resource Center to view the facilities and to hear first-hand from Victor Erlich, Vancouver's former utilities manager and CH2M client, about their development. The group ended its tour at the Marine Park Natural Resources Area. CH2M continues to operate the city's wastewater facilities. Bob Chapman and Michelle Girts organized and hosted this activity.



Vancouver Water Reclamation Facility and Water Resource Center tour group



Michelle Girts (right) describes the Marine Park Natural Resources Area

At the same time, another alumni group visited several projects near the Portland office. A walking tour, led by John Willis and Steve Litchfield (both current Portland staff), visited several transportation projects in which CH2M was involved, including a Light Rail Line, the Tillicum Bridge, and the Aerial Tram.



Light rail and bridges tour near CH2M's Portland office, with Steve Litchfield speaking to the group



Part of the river boat tour of Portland bridges group



Ready to cast off for the river boat tour

Friday activities were completed with a river boat tour of the Portland bridges across the Willamette River. CH2M has been involved in the rehabilitation of several of the bridges and is currently the program manager for replacement of the Sellwood Bridge with a new multimodal structure. Thanks goes to Frank Jenes for organizing this activity.

A special thanks goes to Pat Klampe and Don Marske for diligently assembling and updating the Alumni contact list (the best we've ever have), and for working with the website hosting the invitation/registration process.

The Western ReUnion would not have happened without their undying commitment.

Jerry Boyle led the photography program for the ReUnion. His work is apparent in these [photos](#) and [videos](#).

Many attendees contributed almost 1,000 photos. Jerry selected about 270 of the best photos to post, representing the attendees and events. Thanks, Jerry!

Finally, no good deed goes unpunished. With the Western ReUnion successfully in the books, Jim Schwing agreed to begin planning for a 2018 reunion in the Southwest Region. We look forward to getting together with old friends to have a great time once again!