

PROFILING

Chairman Emeritus Phil Hall



Phil Hall

Phil Hall stepped down as CH2M HILL chairman at the end of last year and as southwest regional manager in March. He's

now spending more time with family but also is working part-time for the firm and remains on the board of directors.

In a conversation with Unlimited, Hall looked back over his shoulder at an impressive career and shared his views on management style, corporate culture, employee-ownership and politics.

When asked about his most memorable time at CH2M HILL to date, Phil Hall didn't hesitate as he described working in the then new, struggling San Francisco office some 30 years ago.

The office employed 12 and had but one project, which was for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Among his duties, Hall was the manager and sole employee of the water/wastewater department—which had no work on the table.

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Hall said that when he and fellow CH2M colleagues attended meetings with a Bay area water industry association, they were booed and perceived as “carpetbaggers” from Corvallis, Ore., in town to rob work from locals.

“It toughened our resolve to kick their butts,” Hall said with a wide smile, eyes sparkling. “It was the best job I ever had.”

And kick they did.

Setting the course, developing a management style

Shortly after receiving his bachelor's in civil engineering from the University of Michigan, Hall spent much of his time suffering from amebic dysentery while working for the Peace Corps in Ecuador. This post-college school of hard knocks—where he learned how poor water quality can have a debilitating effect on the health of a society as well as its economy—was the catalyst that thrust him into the water business.

Hall joined CH2M HILL in 1966 when the firm had 185 employees and gross revenues of \$3.7 million. Its core business was water and wastewater treatment—a good fit for this young engineer who was quickly developing his supportive approach as a manager. Four years later, Hall opened the San Francisco office. He later served as the southwest district manager, overseeing work in California, Nevada and Arizona.

“He's the only boss I have never been afraid to take a call from,” quipped Jim Hartley, Sacramento, Calif., office manager.

An employee should never be in fear of a conversation with a manager.

“It's a huge risk to the firm if there is fear or intimidation from a supervisor,” Hall said. “Managers need to hear the good and bad news.”

Managers as coaches, yes, but Hall certainly does not equate people in supervisory positions to quarterbacks or ball carriers. Rather, they should play “guard so employees can make touch downs.”

“Help people in ways they can't help themselves,” he said.

Hall recognizes that meeting day-to-day demands in the workplace can sometimes seem overwhelming. But he also is intimately aware that family comes first and employees must have a healthy balance between work and personal responsibilities.

Company culture

Under the tutelage of the CH2M founders, Hall learned well the firm's unique culture and continues to treasure many aspects of it, but he has seen the need for change.

Until the firm began to diversify and expand internationally, “we were sort of wedded to the down home Corvallis roots,” he said.

He sees changes, such as the new employee-ownership program and greater diversity in the workforce, as



Former Southwest reg congratulates Tom Dai CH2M HILL's Denver r

NEW FACES

Southwest Region welcomes Admiral Tom Dames aboard



Thomas A. Dames,
Ph.D., P.E.

A new “commander,” Tom Dames, has taken the helm of the Southwest Region (U.S.) as regional manager.

He retired from the U.S. Navy two years ago as a Rear Admiral and joined CH2M HILL to lead our Transportation Business Group’s global operations.

Dames enjoyed an illustrious and distinguished career with the Navy. When he retired he commanded the Pacific Division of the Naval Facilities Engineering Command and the Pacific Seabees in Honolulu, Hawaii.

“The Southwest Region is one of the great economic and performance engines of the firm,” Dames said. “Our superb employees throughout the business units continue to enhance the values of our firm and its founders...outstanding client service, impeccable personal ethics and continuous professional growth.”

Dames is a graduate of the Naval Academy, Harvard Business School’s Program for Management Development, and Purdue University, where he earned his Ph.D. in civil engineering.

enrichments to our corporate culture and critically necessary to meet the needs of our employees and clients and to ensure the long-term success of the firm.

Government relations

With a long history of providing top-quality infrastructure projects, CH2M HILL for decades held a comfortable position in procuring government work. There was no

need to provide widespread financial support for political candidates. But when the firm became embroiled in a well-publicized congressional investigation on government fraud in the early 1990s—where long-time political friends turned their backs to the firm, which was eventually fully exonerated—the need for a different tack became vividly apparent.

“We resolved to build better relations” with

elected officials, Hall said.

Hall has been a long-time supporter of CH2M HILL’s Political Action Committee and has been heavily involved in government relations. His most recent efforts include the strong support of Proposition 35 in California, which passed in November and allows state and local agencies to contract for engineering services.



Regional manager Phil Hall is recently in regional office.

The proposition opens up a wealth of opportunities that otherwise would have been left to a limited number of government employees and would have continued to slow the development of much-needed infrastructure projects statewide.

Ain’t that a kick

When you’re the new kid in town, going up against well-established competitors is a tough task. But Hall in the early 1970s established long-term relations with major Bay area clients—including the City and County of San Francisco and the City of San Jose. CH2M HILL continues

today to provide services to these clients and many others who opened their doors to Hall nearly three decades ago.



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