

**THE AMERICAN VETERAN  
AUGUST 2007 EDITION**

**SEGMENT TITLE: WILSON BRIDGE PROJECT**

**DANIELA MARCHUS, HOST:** MAKING USE OF SKILLS LEARNED IN THE MILITARY CAN BE CRUCIAL TO TRANSITIONING TO CIVILIAN LIFE. SCOTT WALLACE HAS THE STORY ON HOW ONE OFFICER PUT HIS EXTRAORDINARY CAREER IN THE MILITARY TO WORK IN THE CIVILIAN SECTOR FOLLOWING HIS RETIREMENT FROM THE ARMY.

**RUSS FUHRMAN, LTG US ARMY (RETIRED) POTOMAC CROSSING CONSULTANTS:** THEY'RE LIFTING THEM OUT WITH THE BACKHOE RIGHT ON TO THE BARGE. OKAY, THEY'RE LIFTING IT WITH THE CRANE.

**SCOTT WALLACE, REPORTER:** RUSS FUHRMAN IS IN CHARGE OF THE THIRD-LARGEST TRANSPORTATION CONSTRUCTION PROJECT IN AMERICA.

**FUHRMAN:** IT IS ALWAYS A CHALLENGE GETTING THAT FALSE WORK OUT FROM UNDERTHERE.

**WALLACE:** IT'S THE \$2.5-BILLION WOODROW WILSON BRIDGE LINKING MARYLAND AND VIRGINIA ACROSS THE POTOMOC RIVER JUST SOUTH OF THE NATION'S CAPITAL.

**FUHRMAN:** I HAVEN'T BEEN THERE IN A WHILE BUT I SEE WHERE THE CAMERAS HAVE BEEN MOUNTED FOR THE FIRST TIME.

**WALLACE:** IT'S A COLOSSAL PROJECT INVOLVING TWIN SPANS WITH SIX LANES OF TRAFFIC IN EITHER DIRECTION, A DRAW BRIDGE, AND FOUR HIGHWAY INTERCHANGES ALONG A 7.5-MILE STRETCH OF ROAD.

**FUHRMAN:** ULTIMATELY, THIS IS ALL WHITE. YOU CAN SEE THE STEEL BEAMS PAINTED WHITE TOO. AT THE END OF THE DAY, ALL THE ARCHES GET A PROXY WHITE PAINT ON THEM.

**WALLACE:** FUHRMAN CALLS IT A 'SIGNATURE' BRIDGE,' UNIQUE IN DESIGN, THAT IS BOTH FUNCTIONAL AND PLEASING TO THE EYE.

**FUHRMAN:** IT'S GOING TO BE THE 8<sup>TH</sup> WONDER OF THE WORLD.

**WALLACE:** WHEN COMPLETED NEXT YEAR, THE WILSON BRIDGE WILL HANDLE SOME 300,000 VEHICLES A DAY AT WHAT'S BECOME A NOTORIOUSLY CONGESTED BOTTLENECK.

**WALLACE:** FUHRMAN AIMS TO SOLVE THAT, BRINGING A HIGHLY SPECIALIZED SKILL SET TO THE JOB... FORGED DURING 32 YEARS IN THE ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, BEGINNING IN VIETNAM IN 1969 AS A LIEUTENANT FRESH OUT OF WEST POINT.

**FUHRMAN:** JUST A GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR A YOUNG 24-YEAR-OLD TO GET OUT AND LEAD A 350-MAN ORGANIZATION AND REALLY BUILD A LOT OF THINGS... WE HAVE BUILT FIREBASES, WE BUILT ROADS. WE BUILT AIRFIELDS, FORWARD AIRFIELDS, SO THE AIR FORCE COULD RE-SUPPLY.

**WALLACE:** HE EVENTUALLY REACHED THE RANK OF MAJOR GENERAL, THE DEPUTY COMMANDER OF THE CORPS OF ENGINEERS. WHEN IT CAME TIME TO RETIRE IN 2001, FUHRMAN FOUND HIS MILITARY TRAINING HAD GROOMED HIM PERFECTLY FOR HIS CURRENT POSITION.

**FUHRMAN:** I LOOKED AROUND AND HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO GET INVOLVED IN THE TRANSPORTATION SIDE BECAUSE THEY HAVE BIG PROJECTS JUST LIKE WE HAD IN THE CORPS OF ENGINEERS. AND THIS MACHINE LEVELS IT OUT AND SCREEDS IT OUT AND THEY DO A LITTLE HAND FINISHING TO GET IT TO LOOK LIKE THAT. ONE'S MILITARY EXPERIENCE, AT MY LEVEL, PREPARES ONE VERY WELL FOR THIS. IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR IT'S JUST LIKE THE MILITARY IN THAT MOST MAJOR OPERATIONS ARE NOT DONE ALONE BY ANY ONE ENTITY. THEY'RE JOINT OPERATIONS.

**WALLACE:** THIS JOINT OPERATION INVOLVES THE STATES OF VIRGINIA AND MARYLAND, THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND SOME THREE DOZEN PRIVATE CONTRACTORS.

**FUHRMAN:** HEY, HOW Y'ALL DOING TODAY? SMOKEY? JAMES?

**WALLACE:** FUHRMAN SAYS SKILLS LEARNED IN THE MILITARY ARE HIGHLY PRIZED AT ALL LEVELS OF THE CONSTRUCTION BUSINESS.

**FUHRMAN:** WHAT I'M LOOKING FOR MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE ARE QUALITY SUPERVISORS, QUALITY FOREMEN, THAT CAN LEAD A WORK CREW OF SAY 10 PEOPLE TO ACCOMPLISH A JOB. AND THE MILITARY PREPARES PEOPLE EXTREMELY WELL FOR THAT. IT TEACHES THEM WHAT LEADERSHIP IS.

**WALLACE:** GETTING OUT HERE ON THE JOB IS WHAT FUHRMAN FINDS MOST REWARDING. THAT AND KNOWING HE'S PART OF SOMETHING MUCH LARGER THAN HIMSELF.

**FUHRMAN:** IT'S A PIECE OF INFRASTRUCTURE THAT'S GOING TO SERVE THIS NATION FOR 100 YEARS AND I ADDED SOME VALUE TO IT IN ONE FORM OR FASHION. SO YEAH, EXHILARATION I GUESS IS A GOOD WORD FOR IT.

**MARCHUS:** IF YOU'RE A VETERAN OR ACTIVE DUTY AND SOON-TO-BE-DISCHARGED, REMEMBER THAT YOUR MILITARY TRAINING IS VERY VALUBABLE TO POTENTIAL EMPLOYERS. YOU CAN GET ON-TARGET CAREER COUNSELING AT YOUR BASE TRANSITION CENTER OR YOUR LOCAL VET CENTER.

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