

**REMARKS BY
MAJ. GEN. (RET) ROBERT GRIFFIN
CEREMONY HONORING THE FUTURE
"DONALD G. WALDON LOCK & DAM"
ABERDEEN, MS
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 2015**

Honored Guests:

It is an honor to be with you today. Although technically a “pre-naming event”, all would heartily agree that no one is more deserving of this recognition than Don Waldon.

I am actually here in three capacities:

1. As a senior advisor representing Bob Dawson and Dawson & Associates.
2. As a former Mobile District Commander from 1992–1995, during the time of the Coffeerville Lock Stop Log Failure.
3. As a friend and admirer of Don, although less so since the Auburn – Mississippi State football game a few weeks back.

While Don’s contributions are known to all of us here today – as an observer of many successful leadership styles in my 35 year Army career – what sets Don apart is not so much what he did for our Nation but the way he did it.

He is what can be described as a Level 5 leader who is both technically competent and humble. Because of his background working for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Office of Management & Budget and Department of Interior, Don truly understands how things work in Washington and he has applied this very effectively in the fight for resources for the Tenn–Tom Waterway.

He is also one of the few who stayed in Washington 10 years and broke gravity to return home!

Don’s leadership style was well captured by Gen. Sherman in a letter to Gen. Grant during the Battle of Vicksburg when he said “These Southerners are most curious people -- they will be uncommonly polite in the morning and shoot you dead in a duel in the afternoon.”

Don has a very effective disarming style but he gets results and makes everyone feel good about it.

I never truly appreciated the Corps Civil Works mission nor the Corps' close relationship with the navigation industry until my last year of District command. In July 1994, a stop log failed during the renovation of the Coffeeville Lock. When the flood waters rushed back into the lock, the lock gates were damaged as they slammed backwards with the water flow.

By the way, I keep a piece of that stop log on my desk as a reminder that if everything seems to be going well in command (and life) — just wait, things can change fast.

I quickly learned that the Navigation industry was large, influential and vocal – as they demanded to know how long it would take to get the lock operational.

I also clearly recall that Don Waldon proved to be a true partner as he gave us the cover and time to accurately predict how long emergency repairs would take before the waterway was back in use.

The “Iron Triangle” of Civil Works Water Resource Development is the local sponsor, Congress and the Corps. But the “glue” is people like Don who know how to make these pieces work together.

This is especially true in today's environment of “No earmarks”!

In preparing remarks for today, I reached out to a friend and mentor, Fred Caver, a former Director of Civil Works and Chairman of the National Waterways Conference for his perspective on Don. His thoughts to me were:

- First and foremost, Don always conducts himself with calm, professional dignity. In fact, he is typically a calming influence even in situations where others are agitated thus leading to better, more thoughtful solutions to seemingly intractable problems.
- Very few understand the nation's water resources challenges better than Don. The combination of his OMB and Tenn-Tom experience simply isn't replicated anymore. I wish there were a hundred like him across the country.
- We in this country desperately need a comprehensive, coast-to-coast advocate for reasonable water resources policies in an era in which far too many of us don't understand what life would be like without the infrastructure so many sacrificed to put in place.

Don was instrumental in saving the National Waterways Conference from a demise that would have left all of us vulnerable to multiple competing single-interest groups.

I learned at the US Army War College that they do not teach war. It is really focused more on economic development and accomplishing our national military strategy. There are plenty of nations with great natural resources but lack the infrastructure to become a great economic power.

Certainly Don Waldon has done more than most in a number of different roles to promote our economic development and to help keep America strong.

To Don and his family, we are proud to be part of this ceremony which truly honors a Great American who has done more for all us than we will ever truly know.

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