

The Ultimate in Efficiency

Art Wong

In his time of need, Art Wong's cycling coworkers ran to the rescue armed with weed whackers.

On May 1, 2001, I was out on the usual noon ride with the Cycletrons. Conditions were perfect and everyone was in a good mood. I was riding near the back of the group enjoying the day and company. Then I saw riders hitting the ground in front of me. There was no way to escape the crash without endangering other riders around me. I braked, but could not avoid hitting the bike in front of me.

The impact of the fall fractured my hip socket. After surgery, I was told that I had to keep weight off the injured hip and leg for at least 3 months followed by more months of physical therapy. Now, this is not a story about my injury, but rather the way in which members of the Cycletrons responded to my injury.

Almost as soon as I was admitted to the hospital, members of the "Trons" came by to visit. It seemed that every time I started feeling down, I'd get a call or visit from one or more of the Trons. When I was able to come home, I found that the lawn was knee high, the yard was full of weeds, and my dogs had reverted

to a wild state. Within days, however, I learned that members of the Trons had organized a list of people who had volunteered to help maintain my yard and walk my dogs.

Behind our house is a fairly large hill that was overgrown with dried grasses and wildflowers. A group of Trons, known now as the "Yardbirds," said they would take care of it. Early one weekend morning, several Trons arrived at my door carrying weedwackers and other power tools. They're all Labbies who approach mowing lawns or pulling weeds the same way they do their work here at the Lab. They're very detail oriented and exacting, so they proceeded very "engineering-like" and quite efficiently.

They sat down and plotted their strategy: "Okay. We'll divide the hill into sectors. The first person takes sector one; that ought to take about this amount of time. The second person takes sector two; that ought to take that amount of time." And so on.

In unison, they cranked on their weedwackers and attacked the hill. The noise and cloud of dust they generated had my neighbors ducking for cover. I had scientists and engineers dividing my yard into grids and arguing over who had the most efficient power tools. Luckily,

we also had some tech types available who did the work once the scientists and engineers had finished arguing about the best approach. But within an hour or so, these guys had cleared everything on that hill. It was an amazing sight.

But then one engineer came down from the hill with a handful of little black tubes.

"Hey Art," he asked. "What are these things?"

They were part of my drip irrigation system.

"I don't know. Probably nothing," I said. "Don't worry about it. We'll figure it out later."

When I am asked why I have decided to spend my career at the Lab (22 years), my answer is because of the people who work here. Although the culture and mission of the Lab have changed throughout the years, the one thing that has remained constant for me is the sense of family among Lab employees.

Those Cycletrons, who probably wouldn't wait for me if I had a flat tire in order to beat me back from our lunchtime rides, were really there when I needed help. When the time ever comes, I will do the same for any one of them as well. It's what makes the Lab such a great place to work.



Art Wong.



Left: Bill Vance and Matisse.



Right: Rich and Chris Hunt and Justin.

Below: Anita March and Gentle.

Guiding Puppies Toward Service

Bill Vance, an assurance manager in Defense and Nuclear Technologies, raises guide-dog puppies and on occasion brings them to work for the day. According to Bill, bringing a guide puppy on site serves two purposes. “First of all, it helps to socialize the dog because the dog may end up going to a blind person who works in an office environment. Second, it teaches people that it’s okay to have a dog in the work environment—a trained, well-behaved dog. This paves the way for people with sight disabilities to get into the work environment and function independently.

“When I first wanted to bring the dogs in,” remembers Bill, “I wasn’t sure how supportive our management would be. But I talked to Mike Anastasio, my associate director at the time, and he was very responsive. When I asked him to write a letter, I got an instant response. My badge (stating I may be accompanied by a canine) was ready the next day.”

Rich and Chris Hunt also raise guide-dog puppies. In the past 4 years, Rich and Chris have raised four Labrador retrievers, each dog training with them for about a year. The dogs come on site an

average of two or three times a week and split their days between the Hunts’ two offices, both in the Technical Information Department. “Everyone wants them as a pet,” says Rich. “They ask me to let them know if the puppy decides on a career change.”

Just one employee uses a guide-dog on site—Anita March of Human Resources. Anita is on her second guide dog, a 2-year-old female yellow Labrador named Gentle. Many Lab employees remember her previous dog, Hollister, who was the first guide-dog on site for a visually impaired person. He accompanied Anita from 1991 until almost 2 years ago when Gentle took over. Hollister is now enjoying retired life with Anita and his “blond girlfriend.” Anita says having a guide-dog has made a huge difference in her life. And she’s grateful to people like Bill Vance and the Hunts who raise the puppies. “Guide dogs are definitely a gift of love. The guide dog raisers use their time so that others and I can have a guide and love from a companion. So I can’t say thank you enough to the guide-dog raisers. I don’t think guide-dogs would exist without the puppy raisers who spend the thousands of hours training them.”

