

In the Spotlight

Highlighting Exceptional Employees

M.C. Russell

Senior Engineering Inspector

Joined Town: April 1986

He wears a pocket protector and likes concrete and bridges, but this engineer is no geek.

M.C. Russell is hard to miss, not because he is imposing at 6'3" in his usual attire - felt hat, gray ponytail tucked under, no-nonsense white cotton shirt, rolled up sleeves, Islamic pray beads. He drives a Jeep Cherokee (bumper sticker reads "Scots, the Friendly Race") with impatience. If his cell phone goes off, you will be "called to station" by the booming ring of a submarine horn. M.C. is hard to miss because he is not a quiet man.

His engineering acumen is respected in the industry and around Town Hall. The Town Design Manual (2004) is one of his best known works, as he designed the cover and illustrated technical guidelines for things like parking lot construction and tree protection.

Over 25 years of Town employment, he has inspected hundreds of construction projects. There are more than a few bridges in Chapel Hill, and he has inspected them all. And what he hasn't directly supervised, he has studied. M.C. has collected original blueprints from myriad construction projects, some of which date to the 1930s, like the Old Town Hall (1938), Ram's Plaza (1967), and a map of Chapel Hill (1932). He found many of the maps because they were left out for trash. After fuming over the careless disregard of historic materials, he painstakingly scanned each blueprint. Today he has thousands of pages stored in a digital image library.

"MC's value to the Town can't be measured," said Interim Town Engineer

Mike Taylor. "His thorough knowledge of construction, extensive field experience, and dedication to the Town are obvious to anyone who has worked with MC. His importance to the Town goes well beyond the duties normally expected of a Senior Engineering Inspector. When a standard design will not work on a project he does the necessary research and provides alternate designs for consideration and implementation. He is willing to take on any task and stays on it until completion."

On his days off, M.C. makes exquisite handcrafted leatherwork including satchels and belts. He inherited the talent from his father who had a leather and upholstery shop, and from his grandfather who worked on horse harnesses and appliances on a Randolph County, N.C. farm. He also paints in watercolor and oils, and works in wood, creating furniture including a red oak poster bed for his wife and small items such as walking canes, all with ornate carvings. On weekends, you might find him treasure hunting at PTA Thrift Store, in search of Italian leather.

Value in the Spotlight

Innovation

open-minded • courageous • learning
curious • flexible • change-oriented
idea development • risk taking



Catherine Lazorko photo

M.C., short for Michael Charles, is married to Barbara Stenross, and they recently celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary. Their son, Adam, is a surveyor and lives in Chatham County.

"MC is usually one of the first people in the office and often the last person to leave," Taylor said. "I don't know if you would call him a 'diamond in the rough,' but he was definitely a great find for the Town of Chapel Hill."

Senior Management Team Values

In November 2007, the Town's Senior Management Team adopted the following set of values to guide their behavior and decisions. These values are Ethics, Social Equity, Professionalism, Respect, Innovation



and Teamwork. It is the intent of the Town Manager and the Senior Management Team to strengthen the organization with a commonly held set of values that drive our mission and objectives.