

Louisiana Wildlife Agents Association Bids Farewell to Retiring Agents

Lt. Col. Charlie Clark Retires After Stellar Career

by Maj. Sandy Dares

The retirement of a colleague is always bittersweet. We are happy to see them reach the goal of retirement and enjoy the rewards they've earned over a long career, but we are saddened that we will not be with them each day to receive their guidance, use their experience and enjoy their company.

Such is the case with the retirement of Lt. Col. Charlie Clark in October. Lt. Col. Clark—Charlie, to his friends and many acquaintances—had an outstanding career, and his record of achievements will be difficult, if not impossible, to match.

Lt. Col. Clark has excelled in many areas over a long period of time. He has more

than 29 years of service with the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, and has been lieutenant colonel of the Enforcement Division since 1988.

Although he is an expert on all areas of wildlife and fisheries law, his area of special expertise has been boating. His numerous accomplishments will benefit Louisiana boaters for many years to come, and are a legacy that few in state employment can match.

Lt. Col. Clark began working for DWF as an enforcement agent in 1975. He had served in the U.S. Navy, and quickly became a top performer at DWF. He worked his way through the ranks, serving as captain of the New Orleans region, and as a major at Headquarters in

Baton Rouge. He was promoted to lieutenant colonel in 1988, and has served in that rank ever since.

As the lieutenant colonel of the Enforcement Division, he was closely involved in preparing the budget, working on legislation, dealing with personnel issues and interpreting laws. He served as liaison to numerous other agencies, and lately was highly involved in counter-terrorism and homeland security issues. He was always on duty, and always willing to tackle any problem.

Clark had served as the boating law administrator for Louisiana since 1988. In this capacity, he carried the tremendous responsibility for Louisiana's recreational boating program. He secured millions of dollars in recurring federal funds for boating enforcement and education, not just for Louisiana but also for all states. He also secured countless hours of training for DWF enforcement agents in boating accident investigation and reconstruction, DWI enforcement and marine patrol officers

boarding and enforcement techniques.

The lieutenant colonel is nationally recognized as an expert in recreational boating, boating safety, boating law enforcement and boating accident investigation. He has served as the president of both the Southern States Boating Law Administrators and the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators. He routinely advises and serves the state attorney general's office as an expert in civil litigation involving boating accidents and issues, and also testifies in criminal boating cases as an expert witness. He has also served, and currently serves, on various national technical committees for boating issues.

Throughout his career, Lt. Col. Clark worked to upgrade boating safety on both the state and national level by working for the passage of better laws and more funding for boating programs. Through his efforts, in September 2003, Louisiana became one of the first states to be recognized for accomplishing the National Transportation Safety Board's "Big 3" recommendations. Louisiana was among the first to pass legislation

1. requiring mandatory PFD-wear by persons under 13 years of age while in a boat under way
2. establishing a presumed intoxication level for blood alcohol content of .08 g% or higher
3. mandating boater education program.

Another major accomplishment under Clark's leadership was the passage of Rules of the Road for

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Louisiana boaters. This is an important tool both in promoting safety, by giving boat operators standard rules to follow, and in determining fault when investigating boating accidents. Agents are applying these rules to many dangerous boating practices and situations, and this is heightening awareness among boaters of the dangers inherent in boating, and the safe operating practices that can reduce those dangers.

His other legislative successes in 2004 include establishing a state wake zone within 300 feet of any public boat launch or docking facility, further restrictions of the operation of jet skis by young boaters and legislative

authorization of ex-officio notary's authority to accept DWI cases.

Lt. Col. Clark is well known for his speaking talents, and has addressed numerous meetings, outdoors organizations and legislative committees and has given media interviews. His professional representation of DWF was instrumental in upgrading the perception of the wildlife enforcement agent. He formulated ideas for job qualifications and training, testified before the Civil Service Commission in numerous courts and in the legislature, and was the major catalyst in developing support from the various clients of our department.

No other person has had

the positive impact on boating safety that Lt. Col. Clark has. His persistence in pursuing a safe boating agenda, his compelling testimony before legislative committees, his work with user groups and media to garner support for these laws, and his dynamic presence on the boating scene have truly made Louisiana, and actually all states, safer places to enjoy boating, thereby saving numerous lives.

Lt. Col. Clark has many unique ideas and observations about our department, about conservation, about boating safety, about wildlife law enforcement and about life in general. He left his mark on the Enforcement Division and the entire

Lt. Col. Charlie Clark (left) receives a Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators, presented by NASBLA President Paul Donheffner in 2002.

department, and hence on our hunting, fishing and boating public.

As a field agent, he was a top performer and leader. He was successful in catching poachers, and received recognition for his efforts. He was the second link in a chain of highly productive agents in the Jefferson/Plaquemines area, and he trained successors who continued to achieve at a high level under his supervision.

As an administrator, he excelled in carrying forward the programs of the Enforcement Division. He played a significant role

over a long period of time in promoting professionalism and a strong work ethic in the division. He also contributed to the achievement of numerous department goals, and has been an influence on many employees from other divisions.

In every aspect of the Enforcement Division, he had a role in promoting professionalism. He worked tirelessly in the legislature to close loopholes and pass more effective laws. He had an intimate knowledge of the laws and their application, and was the “go-to” guy for the Enforcement Division for

legal interpretations. His ability to analyze situations and distill them to the core issues made him invaluable in any controversy. His excellent decision-making skills and his numerous contacts allowed him to get things done, often in unbelievably short time frames.

Lt. Col. Clark has served as a mentor to many Enforcement Division agents and employees, imparting his wisdom and knowledge freely. He remains a brother to his law enforcement allies, a friend to all and an asset to Louisiana who can never be replaced.

Something he said recently sums up his attitude as a state employee: “As long as I’ve been here, I’ve always tried to make a difference. Whether it was making an extra effort to catch a poacher, being persistent in trying to pass better laws or working to improve one of our programs, I look at each day as a chance to make something better.”

Now Lt. Col. Clark, who lives in Abita Springs with his wife, Terry, and children, Darren, Dawn and Derek, will have more time to enjoy hunting, fishing, woodworking and gardening. 🐾

Gone But Not Forgotten: Lt. Larry Breaux Goes 10-7 by Sgt. Remy Broussard

Halloween 2004 will be a day long remembered by anyone associated with the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Enforcement Division, and especially those from Region 5. Not because of the normal Halloween shenanigans or the occasion to make an unusual party even more unusual. This past Halloween, we bade farewell to an extremely dedicated enforcement lieutenant. District 5-B Lt. Larry Breaux went 10-7 for the last time as the curtain came down on a long and illustrious career.

Breaux began his career in law enforcement as a patrolman for the J.G. Gray

Estate in Lake Charles. Just out of the military, Breaux found the marshes of southwest Louisiana not that different from the Southeast Asian habitat from which he had just returned. The move from his home area of Gueydan gave Breaux the opportunity to become familiar with the area around Lake Charles and the rest of Calcasieu and Cameron parishes. Little did he know at the time that one day he would be responsible for the conservation law enforcement program for both parishes.

The chance at becoming a wildlife agent came at a time when there was plenty to

keep a young agent busy. Breaux still enjoys telling the “war stories” of people, times and places that our newest agents can only read about on the worn pages of some long-ago filed offense report.

Many agents have cut their teeth working beside Breaux in the humid summer heat of the Cameron waterways and the blustery winter nights of watching for the errant spotlight. Whatever the situation, agents could rest assured that there was an officer presence not far from wherever they were.

Coming up through the ranks, Breaux worked with some of the legends of

southwest Louisiana, the likes of which included James Nunez, Hubert Babineaux and a host of other long-lived agents.

Breaux became the sergeant of Calcasieu Parish and was working in a state of sheer delight. No one could have been more excited over the prospect of making a great case and putting a habitual outlaw out of business. If learning from example is indeed paramount to success, every agent to ever work alongside Breaux should have been successful.

Even after becoming supervisor for District 5-B, Breaux didn’t allow the extra workload to slow down his enthusiasm for the job. His dedication oftentimes served as a catalyst for other agents to manage to stay just ahead of his growing caseload. To this day I still remember the captain telling Breaux to “super-

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wise those boys; you don't have to do it all yourself." It wasn't a job to the lieutenant; it was a way of life.

When Capt. Malcolm Hebert retired, Lt. Breaux was detailed to the captain's position for several months. The office was often the site of informal sessions where advice was given to agents who hadn't yet encountered some given situation. You could be sure that the lieutenant had probably "been there and done that."

It is impossible to measure the success of a game warden, but we know for sure that Lt. Breaux's efforts resulted in tremendous benefits to our natural resources. Throughout his career, he never slacked off, and always represented the department professionally and with a smile on his face.

All citizens owe him a debt for the many days and nights he spent patrolling in their interest to protect the fish and game of our state.

As 2004 draws to a close, it is a time of reawakening for Lt. Breaux. As of this writing there isn't a deer around that can say it is truly safe as the lieutenant hits the woods in pursuit of his other love. When the weather gets warm and the bass begin to move into shallow water, you can bet that Lt. Breaux won't be far from there either. It is a comfort to those of us still protecting our game and fish that the lieutenant is a law-abiding person. Otherwise we would surely have our work cut out for us!

We will miss the war stories and the advice, but we're also certain that nei-

ther will be more than a phone call away. Let's hope that his wife, Edna, doesn't keep him too busy when he's not in the field. We will also miss Lt. Breaux's happy and positive personality, his willingness to share his knowledge and experience and his mature guidance. He has been an excellent agent, a fine supervisor and a good friend.

We can thank Lt. Breaux for his unique brand of enforcement and the many hours that we have had to glean his secrets. Though, we suspect that he has not divulged information on *all* of his secret spots.

We all wish Lt. Breaux a long and healthy retirement and offer our continued support in whatever endeavors await him in the future. 🐾



Lt. Larry Breaux in his element—on a boat patrol in District 5-B

Secret Agent Man Retires by Maj. Sandy Dares

Longtime covert officer Capt. Larry Matherne retired Oct. 31. During his 29 years, Matherne developed quite a reputation as an effective undercover officer. It is a tribute to his skills that few know who he is or what he has done for the preservation of our wildlife and fish resources.

Throughout the years, Matherne blanketed the state, purchasing tons of illegal fish and game. He played an instrumental role in major operations such as Operation Gold Key, Operation Silver Hook and Operation Red Hook. These undercover operations revealed a startling trade in illegal fish, and led to indictments and convictions

in state and federal courts.

In addition to these major initiatives, Matherne kept quite busy with the small buys—a few squirrels or rabbits here, a deer or two there, some red drum or the occasional speckled trout. It was a target-rich environment, and Matherne excelled at infiltrating bands of outlaws, gaining their confidence and making buys. And in many ways, those small buys, when taken cumulatively, deal as much harm to our fish and wildlife as the activities revealed by the major sting operations.

Matherne assures us that he has trained several capable agents in undercover operations, and that they will

continue the important mission of our covert section. So while the captain will be missed, his work will live on.

A career in covert operations requires a certain secretiveness, and Matherne is not about to abandon what has become his nature. So don't look for a photo, a

mention of his family or reference to his future plans! He may be retired, but Matherne assures us that he is still keeping his eyes and ears open, and outlaws should be wary to whom they are bragging or negotiating with—it may be our own "Secret Agent Man." 🐾

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