



## ***From The Desk Of ~ Jeff Banning . . .***



You know I get the question all of the time, "What does a Civil Engineer do? What type of work do they perform?" That is a pretty standard question from a lot of different people and it is a question that isn't really that easy to answer but here it goes.

First a little history about me. Sorry to make this a personal thing starting out in my definition/explanation but I believe this is pertinent to explain what a Civil Engineer does and what type of tasks they perform. There are many tasks that they get involved with and it is a quite diverse and exciting opportunity & career.

As many of you know, I grew up in Centerville, Indiana in Wayne County where the county seat is Richmond (got to make that comment since I am wandering to all of the county seats for the bicentennial, see that article). As a child and into my high school years I really enjoyed geography and in particular I enjoyed drawing maps. This was back in the day when drawing was done by hand. We didn't use CAD or a computer. Actual free hand drawing! I thought I wanted to be a [Cartographer](#) – a map maker. Rand McNally would be calling and I would draw maps. It so happened that my next door neighbor was a financial aid coordinator at Earlham College in Richmond. That was a good stroke of luck or as I like to call it, a God Thing! Anyway he not only helped me and my parents figure out our financial aid for college, he also helped direct me on a path that I will forever be grateful for. His father was a Cartographer (another God thing). What are the odds that your next door neighbor, first of all even knew what a Cartographer really was, but that his father was one. Well, as you can imagine, Cartography probably isn't one of those majors at most colleges, so his father got a degree in, you guessed it, Civil Engineering. And the rest is history for me. I did pursue Cartography briefly when I moved to Indianapolis, actually [Photogrammetry](#), but it wasn't a career that was as fulfilling as I would have liked and since Rand McNally wasn't calling me to work for them, I fell back on that college degree I received and became a Civil Engineer.



**Civil Engineer:** "an engineer whose training or occupation is in the design and construction especially of public works (as roads or harbors)" Merriam-Webster Dictionary. I talk to many people about Civil Engineering. A lot of times it is talking with kids in schools. I love doing that! Anyway, my standard answer is that Civil Engineer's do the things no one notices until there is a problem. Have you ever thought about that? What happens when there is a traffic jam? What about a flood? Have you ever not been able to flush the toilet because it was clogged or take a shower and there was enough pressure to wash off the soap suds and shampoo? Well those are Civil Engineering "things". We typically design those things that we all take for granted! We tend to do the things that aren't noticed until a problem arises. That isn't always true ~ look at all of the parks we have worked on, the planning & zoning projects we have gotten approved, or for those structural engineers that design the infrastructure for buildings or bridges that are very noticeable. It is the Civil Engineer's job to take care of those issues and those items that most people really don't care about, aren't really concerned about or that just don't pique the interest of anyone.

With the newsletter, read the article regarding water and wastewater and see what that facet of Civil Engineering is all about. It is a art and a science. It is a field that has to manage many disciplines and many other types of work. We get involved with electrical and mechanical engineers. We get involved with attorneys and planners and other engineers. We have to be communicative enough to talk with the Mayor of a city as well as talk to the wastewater treatment plant operator that is head over heels in you know what. Civil Engineers are what has made this great nation what it is. I have to also give a plug to the Surveyors of the world also, because it used to be that the two professions were pretty much one and the same but that art is slowly being lost.

The next time you are out and about and you see construction commencing, you see traffic flowing at rush hour, you are in the middle of a storm and your yard & house aren't flooding, the building you are in during an earthquake is still standing, or you take a really long hot shower after sled riding with your kids, well that is what Civil Engineering is all about. It is a very broad career that can be a part of anything really specific/detailed or it can become whatever you want it to become, even if it is a Cartographer's heart falling back on a degree earned for the "just in case". Here's to the Civil Engineers of the world. It's like you could say about many people, careers, friends, spouses, etc. – Civil Engineers, you can't live with them and you can't live without them, so therefore, they must really be needed.

*~ Jeff Banning*