

## **Times Change (But Not for the Better):**

### ***A Spotlight on Past and Present Bridge Managers of the Golden Gate Bridge***

The Bridge Manager position on the Golden Gate Bridge is one of the most sought after jobs in the world among top engineers in the field of bridge maintenance and management. There have been some impressive individuals who have served in this prestigious position in the past and have elevated the reputation associated with the position through their exemplary performance. Sadly, the current Bridge Manager, Kary Witt, has besmirched the reputation of this highly coveted position.

Kary Witt has a Bachelor of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering and comes primarily from the geothermal energy industry. Witt does not have a master's degree in engineering, but does have a "Professional Certificate" in Management and Supervision. Witt was the Manager of Environmental Health and Safety on the Bridge prior to becoming the Bridge Manager, which is ironic considering the amount of [environmental contamination](#) that has occurred on the Bridge throughout his employment.

In sharp contrast to Witt's experience is Harry Reilich, Bridge Manager and then Chief Engineer of the Bridge from 1972 to 1981. Reilich achieved an AA degree from LA City College, and then went on to earn a Bachelors of Engineering degree, graduating Cum Laude, from the University of Southern California. After spending five years with distinguished service in the U.S. Army Air Corps, Reilich embarked on a long and distinguished career with the State of California. He designed many bridges, from simple roadway overcrossings to more complicated design projects. He became Resident Engineer on the San Mateo-Hayward Bridge in the mid 60's<sup>1</sup>. Later he moved to San Diego where he accomplished the engineering marvel that is the beautiful San Diego-Coronado Bridge, followed by becoming the maintenance Engineer on the Oakland-San Francisco Bay Bridge.

Looking for further advancement, Reilich was offered the newly created job of Bridge Manager for the new Golden Gate Bridge Highway & Transportation District in September 1972<sup>2</sup>. Reilich went on to become the Chief Engineer of the Golden Gate Bridge Highway & Transportation District from January 4, 1974 to December 30, 1981.<sup>2</sup> Reilich got the Ferry facilities built, established the Bus Transit facilities, and oversaw all the maintenance of the Bridge, including modernizing the Toll Plaza, replacing all the suspender cables and getting the deck and roadways updated. Reilich's proudest accomplishment was that every project he was ever in charge of came in on time, under budget and with no contractors' claims, as well as mentoring all the new up and coming engineers.<sup>1</sup>

Witt, on the other hand, has been the Bridge Manager of the Golden Gate Bridge for the past 13 years and, in that time, has raised numerous questions about his abilities. During Witt's tenure, wasteful practices and shameful outcomes have become the norm. Thus far in our ongoing investigation, [Golden Gate Waste](#) has uncovered:

- [Economically wasteful practices and unconscionable behavior by Golden Gate Bridge Painters,](#)
- [Millions of dollars spent cleaning up lead contamination,](#)
- [Inadequately trained painters,](#)
- [Ongoing lead contamination,](#)
- [Golden Gate Bridge tolls increased by 100% over a ten year period](#) and
- [The Bridge District paying out tens of thousands of dollars for Witt's travel expenses.](#)

Things have declined on the Bridge to the extent that the Bridge District was recently considering the installation of donation boxes so that visitors can contribute to the overall short fall.<sup>4</sup>

The Bridge Manager position on the Golden Gate Bridge should be filled by an individual with vast experience in bridge engineering, transportation and workforce management. In the past, we had a Bridge Manager accomplished in bridge building and all aspects of engineering and workforce management. We now have Witt who has proven that he is ineffective as a Bridge Manager. Witt appears so insecure in his skill set as Bridge Manager that he resorts to boasting about his black belt in karate in the Golden Gate Bridge Highway & Transportation District handbook.<sup>3</sup>

It is hard to imagine that the Golden Gate Bridge Highway & Transportation District would stand behind Witt's abysmal performance as Bridge Manager of the world famous Golden Gate Bridge; she deserves better.

***Remember, come back to [GoldenGateWaste.org](http://GoldenGateWaste.org) each week for a new article exposing waste and mismanagement on the Golden Gate Bridge.***

<sup>1</sup> The Press Democrat / Obituaries Guestbook online edition, November 6, 2010, <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/pressdemocrat/obituary.aspx?n=harry-d-reilich&pid=146416556>

<sup>2</sup> Golden Gate Bridge Website / About Us / June 5, 2012 <http://goldengate.org/organization/leadership.php>

<sup>3</sup> Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District Employee Handbook

<sup>4</sup> ABC News Online Edition June 6, 2012, "Donation Boxes Coming at Golden Gate Bridge" [http://abcnews.go.com/WNT/story?id=129970&page=1#.T865RMX\\_KSp](http://abcnews.go.com/WNT/story?id=129970&page=1#.T865RMX_KSp)