

Larry Hamilton Had a Dream

by

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From 1972 until 1984, Paul Rigtrup transformed BLM's Lands and Minerals School into the Phoenix Training Center, and the curriculum and quality of courses flourished under his thoughtful relaxed leadership. During most of his tenure, classes were held in a cramped facility on West Clarendon in Phoenix, but when the opportunity for better space presented itself in the early 1980s, Paul led the way and ~~at about the time of his retirement~~ ~~by the time he retired~~ in 1984, space ~~was had been~~ acquired in an office building near Camelback and 19th Avenue.

~~After Paul retired, he~~ continued to teach public land history courses ~~after he retired~~, and his heart remained close to the training center he had nurtured from almost its beginning.

With Paul's retirement, BLM looked to Larry Hamilton as the perfect successor ~~and as someone with the right personality and background who could~~ build upon Rigtrup's foundation and ~~with the knowledge and skills~~ to move the Phoenix Training Center ~~to into embrace~~ the full scope of modern training techniques.

From ~~the time Hamilton took over in 1984, day one, [WHEN? What year?] of his directorship~~ ~~Larry, he~~ began ~~talking about working toward his dream of a an idea he had that someday BLM might have a state-of-the-art training facility of its own for the BLM.~~ ~~In short order he~~ ~~In 1986, he~~ asked his administrative officer, Donna Lance, to work with Allarie Dunn from the Arizona State Office on a ~~space~~ proposal. ~~They worked hard in describing and justifying what they believed was needed,~~ Hamilton submitted ~~the it request~~ to the General Services Administration (GSA), and it was never heard from again.

~~Hamilton Larry didn't blink. He~~ continued to share his thoughts with anyone who would listen, ~~which which~~ included Chip Calamaio, ~~PTC's the training center's~~ video production specialist, and me.

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Commented [MSOffice1]: Consider adding an intro to set the stage – as in, "In the 1960s BLM's informal training program evolved into the more formalized Land and Minerals School, located in Phoenix. (I made this up)"

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~~The~~ ~~At that time, the~~ building ~~on Camelback~~ that ~~now~~ housed ~~PTC~~ ~~the Center~~ was also home to a smattering of attorneys, telemarketers, ~~and~~ accountants, and a retail jewelry store. Clusters of professional offices were converted into low-ceilinged classrooms; storage space was nearly non-existent, and video production was hampered by extraneous noises that were impossible to eliminate. In order to generate sufficient lighting for the video studio, heavy-duty extension cords ~~could be found running~~ ~~ran~~ the length of the hallways ~~during training events~~, tapping into whatever juice was not being used at the moment. Classroom lighting actually dimmed on occasion when the video studio was in use.

In 1989, Hamilton reorganized ~~PTC~~ ~~the training center~~ to ~~bring about~~ ~~increase~~ efficiencies with a rapidly growing staff. What had been a mere handful of employees in the early 1980s had grown to ~~over more than 50~~ ~~fifty~~ training coordinators, ~~and~~ administrative, and training support staff. The two large divisions became four, with Cliff Yardley heading the Division of Lands and Renewable Resources Training, Burrett Clay heading the Division of Minerals Training, Jim Stone heading the Division of Management and Support Services Training, and ~~myself~~ ~~Wayne Winterton~~ heading the Division of Administrative and Media Services.

Occasionally Hamilton would drop by ~~my~~ ~~Winterton's~~ office where he, ~~myself~~, ~~and~~ Chip Calamaio (~~PTC's media production specialist and resident futuristic thinker~~) ~~and~~ ~~Winterton~~ would discuss the need ~~and possibilities regarding~~ ~~for~~ a new training facility. ~~After~~ Hamilton ~~would~~ ~~often~~ ~~would get the ball rolling, he would move on and~~ leave ~~Calamaio~~ ~~chip~~ and ~~myself~~ ~~me~~ ~~Winterton~~ playing the “what if we were going to build a training center” game... ~~As in~~. ~~Chip might say, “If you were going to build a training center, how would you maximize classroom wall space?”~~ ~~And we would talk about wall space options.~~

~~The following day~~ ~~Chip might poke his head in my office and say, “Hey! About wall space! Well, I just read about a wall covering that is one side Velcro. If we covered our classroom walls with the stuff, the training coordinators could use~~ ~~One day, Calamaio poked his head~~ ~~in my~~ ~~into~~ ~~Winterton's office and said “Hey! About wall space! I just read about a wall covering that is like Velcro. If we covered our classroom walls with the stuff, the training coordinators could use~~ ~~Chip's idea~~ Velcro strips to hold up ~~their~~ flip

charts. ~~Think about it!~~Think about it!" And as fast as he had popped in, he would disappear into his world of video production.

In 1988, Hamilton gave Calamaiohip and myself me Winterton a copy of the 1986 proposal that Donna Lance and Allaire Dunn had prepared and asked us to do what we could to improve on their effort; that it be brought up to date, complete with a compelling reason why the BLM should have a new training facility. The pair were We were naive about building proposals, but we they improved on the original, made some changes, stuck in a thing here and another thing there and returned it to Hamilton, who .—He submitted our effort; to GSA and waited. Again...nNothing!

~~Hamilton's submission had once again ended up a bottomless bucket of unapproved projects.~~

When the attempt failed to result in success, our second attempt flopped, Hamilton didn't waste any time. He called Winterton and Calamaio us back into his office with instructions to pull out all the stops on a begin immediately on a third attempt. The pair left Hamilton's office looking at each other, and then set about producing exactly what Hamilton wanted. When we walked out of his office, Calamaiohip and I looked at each other and in unison, said, "Can you believe that guy?" Hamilton's refusal to let this thing die, we decided, was his way of punishing us for putting an approvable submission together the first time.

~~WBut we burrowed in.~~

The finished proposal was The first thing we did was to eliminate all ten dollar words, replacing them with fifty cent words if necessary. We wanted worked toward a the document that was concise, to the point, and readable. We didn't know how well the folks at GSA could read, but we wanted them to understand every word in every sentence. We agonized for days over document's organization, and in the end we We They spelled out each space complete with suggested square footages, power requirements, ceiling heights, storage needs, and the relationship of each space to the whole of the facility, etc. We spent every available minute over the next six months on the project. During the process Hamilton authorized our We They traveled from one end of the country to the other, visiting travel around the country to visited other training facilities, government and private, gaining a and we gained a wealth of ideas and

information ~~that they in, which we incorporated~~ into the proposal, spending over six months on the drafting of a proposal that produce a training center that would be the envy of government, and as good as (or better than) centers available in the private sector. ~~into our design. With Hamilton's investment in us, we didn't like the idea of coming up short a third time. We spent six months on the project.~~

We ~~They~~ included spaces we ~~they were~~ were sure GSA would never allow, such as a physical fitness center, a private room for trainees that become ill, and a room for trainee luggage that was easily accessible by taxi cabs and airport shuttles. Chip and I would pause and look at each other and Chip would offer, "So what's the worst thing they can do?"

~~"They can throw the space out," I would reply.~~

~~Our thinking was that if we stuck some spaces in the proposal that GSA could throw out without destroying the critical training spaces we would be ahead of the game. But it would be up to GSA to do the discarding. W~~ They worked on the theory that if ~~they~~ we didn't ask, ~~we they~~ wouldn't receive, and we they also reasoned that the extras would give GSA something to throw out. (Without getting too far ahead of the story, surprisingly, GSA didn't delete a single space or ~~a single~~ function from ~~the our~~ proposal.)

It was ~~now~~ 1990 and Hamilton submitted the third proposal. Success! ~~Our work had paid off.~~ The proposal had made GSA's list of approved projects; but ~~our the high excitement~~ was short-lived.

In less than a month ~~from the date of the initial approval,~~ Hamilton received word that ~~our the~~ training facility had been replaced by a higher priority construction project. ~~— the Alaska Fire Center. When Hamilton received the word, he came to my office and shared the news with Chip and me. The three of us sat there for a very long time. At that moment, I don't think Hamilton had the stomach to go through the process one more time. I didn't! And I don't think Chip did either.~~

~~Hamilton went back to running PTC, Chip went back to making videos, and I put my feet on the window sill and stared at the palm trees for the rest of the day. Hamilton and Chip were better workers than me. I prided myself in palm tree watching at times like this.~~

Six months later ~~my Winterton's~~ phone rang. It was Hamilton. "Go grab Chip," ~~he barked into the phone,~~ "and get yourselves up here," he was told. "I've got this guy from GSA in my office and you're not going to believe what he has just told finished telling me!"

The guy from GSA was Frank Bedard. He told the group that the ~~said our new training center proposal~~ ~~dead proposal had been~~ had been resurrected; that someone in Washington ~~with the power to do such things,~~ had breathed new life into it. He told the three that he had arrived ~~For some reason, Hamilton had never received word of the miracle.~~ Bedard Frank was in Phoenix to conduct a market review to determine Federal office space availability. A solicitation for interest had already been published in the Phoenix newspapers and he showed the group a ~~he had arrived with a fist full of~~ appointments with real estate types.

The rest is history, interesting history, but way too long for this brief tale. Ground was broken in 1995 and ~~We broke ground in 19XX~~ and BLM's new National Training Center opened in 19XX96, and it was everything that Hamilton had believed it would be. If not the premier federal training center in the country, certainly one of the top three, and all because Hamilton had had a dream. ~~But,~~ the next time you're in Phoenix, enjoying the amenities and environment of BLM's National Training Center, you will know a little of what it took to bring it to life.

Commented [MSOffice4]: Is this referring to the site, the piece of real estate?

Commented [dh5]: I think this comment will answer Liz's comment above. Dave.

Commented [MSOffice6]: I think some of this should be mentioned. This is a history, after all. When ground broke, when the building opened – where it is located... the dream realized.