



Veterans to Infrastructure

RMC Research & Education Foundation Selects CPI Alcatraz Alumnus as highlight in 2015

Background

Henry Freimuth, a US Navy veteran and CPI alumnus, was chosen from among students at four universities nation-wide by the RMC Research & Education Foundation as the highlight of their 2015 year-end newsletter. Henry participated as a CPI Field School team member during the spring 2015 session at Alcatraz Island, where he learned and worked on preservation projects for the National Park Service and developed the direction for his future career. Having completed his two-year Associate degree before entering the military, Henry decided that his path included completing his bachelor's degree. With the guidance of CPI staff, Henry was accepted to California State University, Chico, and began his studies upon completion of the Alcatraz program. He is currently majoring in Concrete Industry Management (a Bachelor of Science degree program that combines concrete technology with a minor in business administration offered at four universities across the US, see concretedegree.com) and has numerous companies interested in hiring him when he graduates.

Veteran Discovers Concrete Industry Management Program Through Work With the Concrete Preservation Institute

From the RMC Research & Education Foundation 2015 Year-End Newsletter

Henry J. Freimuth spent most of his eight-year naval career in munitions and as a military policeman, while also serving two tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. A post-military career in the concrete industry was not something that had occurred to him. At least, not until he met Tanya Wattenburg Komars at a local veterans meeting. It was there that Henry learned of the Concrete Preservation Institute (CPI) and the work taking place at Alcatraz. Dr. Komars, who is both the executive director of the CPI, and also an associate professor at California State University-Chico in the Concrete Industry Management (CIM) program, was recruiting for the CPI Field School, and it was a meeting that would change the course of Henry's life.

After having become ill while in the Navy and then requiring several surgeries later, he was no longer able to serve as a prison guard, his initial post-service occupation, and was looking for a new career. Like many veterans, Henry was interested in a career change that would allow him to utilize skills honed in the Navy. That is where some of the appeal of the CIM program came from. He noted, "While my military years never directly contributed to concrete or construction, I believe it equipped me with skills necessary for becoming a leader in the concrete industry. These skills include front-line and middle management experience, diligence, perseverance and discipline."

The CPI program at Alcatraz was particularly appealing to Henry given the scope of the work combined with the military and prison history of the location, especially after having been a prison guard himself. Once he

gained some experience in the Field School, he knew concrete was the industry for him. Henry attributes the exposure to so many elements of the concrete industry as part of his Field School work, and then within the CIM program, to stoking the flames of interest in pursuing his career in concrete. “At the end of the day, it comes down to problem solving, preservation, and being able to upgrade our historic public lands while learning from trusted industry experts,” says Henry noting that both programs offer a unique and valuable experience. Another appeal of the concrete industry for Henry is all of the options and flexibility. He appreciates all of the different areas open to him. Although he has not yet decided what area of the concrete industry in which he will ultimately like to work, he leans toward ready mix design, new construction project management, and the repair arena. “CIM exposes you to various aspects of the concrete industry,” says Henry, adding, “It serves as a guiding light for each person to take the path that would be most beneficial to them and the industry as a whole. Many degree platforms in college pigeonhole you immediately. In CIM, you get to explore many options and experiences.” Similarly, the various opportunities the industry offers are appealing in their flexibility given that Henry and his wife, Erica, have a young family, including eight-year-old Allison, five-year-old Sophia, and six-month-old Henry Jr. The strong concrete industry support for the CIM program is also something that has made an impression on Henry. He feels the industry truly recognizes, as he puts it, that “making, molding, and steering future concrete leaders will create a better product,” adding that the industry has benefitted so much from the program because CIM graduates “enter the industry unhindered and ready to go. I cannot think of any other college program so hands-on and truly invested in the success of all the college students in the CIM programs nationwide.”

Henry’s experience is one that the leadership of CPI hopes will be replicated with many other veterans. Says Tanya Wattenburg Komar “Henry is a great example of someone who would not have known to look at our industry if it weren’t for the Alcatraz program. I can’t wait to see the line of companies trying to hire him well ahead of his graduation date a year and a half from now.” Like so many CIM students and graduates before him, Henry looks forward to an exciting career ahead of him and he could not be more motivated: “I am very much looking forward to facing the challenges and problem solving in the industry moving forward.”