

Optical Engineering

SPIDigitalLibrary.org/oe

Entrepreneur

Ronald G. Driggers



Entrepreneur

It is an exciting time for me. I just left the U.S. federal government after 17 years of service with the Army and the Navy. I am off to start my own small business in the area of infrared systems. The name of the new company is St. John's Optical Systems.

My 17 years with the government was great. I had left a large aerospace company to go to work for the Army. In the large corporation, I was relegated to the measurement of modulation transfer function, or MTF, on a targeting pod of a fighter aircraft. No more, no less. When I wanted to do other things and help out in other areas of electro-optics, I was told to "get back to work," as is the case with many huge programs. When I went to work for the Army, I was told to do whatever I wanted as long as I completed my required assignments. I flourished in such an open environment with a great deal of interesting projects underway. I worked hard, learned a lot, and aligned myself with those who were making a

difference. I was lucky to have a good number of giants in the field as mentors.

With the Army, I worked mostly with ground systems and some aviation systems. I worked on soldier systems to include rifle sights and helmet-mounted goggles. Other projects included tank sights, scout sights, helicopter sensors, and unmanned aerial vehicle imaging systems. Work for the Navy included ship and submarine sensors as well as aviation (fighter and patrol craft) electro-optical systems. The Navy even included space-borne imaging systems. All together, the military labs and warfare centers provided an outstanding training ground and way to learn a variety of different electro-optical systems.

My new company, St. John's Optical Systems, is named after the river that flows just above Orlando, Florida. It is a beautiful river where I have spent many unbelievable days on it in a boat, swimming, and exploring. I was even married on a boat on the river and the marriage was a happy 18 years and produced three fantastic triplets (I call them the Driglets). It is a wonderful river of hope. When I expressed my concerns about starting a new business, one of my partners stated, "The world belongs to those who are willing to take risks, and today the world is mine!" If I were to add that "hope is not a good business strategy," then I am excited and onboard for this new adventure.

I want to thank all of those who have wished me well on this new journey. My e-mail inbox is full of best wishes, and it makes me excited to start the path. The spirit of entrepreneurship is contagious and I guess I have caught the bug.

Ronald G. Driggers
Editor