

**'It was a privilege to live in this beautiful part of the world whilst working on interesting and challenging projects'**



**Commercial Manager,  
USA**

**Rocky Mountains**

Having previous North America work experience (I was part of the Parkway Infrastructure Constructors team during procurement stage of the Rt Hon Herb Gray Parkway in Essex, Ontario in 2012) I was intrigued by an opportunity to work as Commercial Manager within the Northern Plains division of Willbros Construction, part of the Willbros group based in Houston, Texas.

The division turnover was approximately \$130m, operating from depots in Greeley, Colorado; Gillette, Wyoming; and Watford City, North Dakota.

The business was involved in the construction of oil and gas pipelines and facilities; most projects were self-delivered, regular out-sourcing being for specialist coatings on pipes and vacuum excavation.

A lot of my work was reviewing, revising and negotiating Master Service Agreements (for multiple services to be performed within a set term) and Construction Service Agreements (for single project) contracts with clients. Although standard construction contracts are published in USA, these are not widely used, and every client seems to issue a preferred set of terms (often drafted in the expectation of vendor resistance) which is the starting point for the negotiation of a project-specific agreement.

I became involved with two contract disputes; one regarding material supplies that I was eventually able to satisfactorily evidence and negotiate to close. The other concerned loss and expense flowing from our client not providing contracted access timeously. I prepared a claim; however, when it was reviewed by the board they decided to discuss it with their client informally at site level rather than escalate matters and risk upsetting relations!

A further challenge was to get field hands to procure materials through a new buying department located in Greeley rather than using their own credit cards!

I lived in Fort Collins, Colorado, which lies mid-way between Gillette and Greeley. The Rocky Mountains dominate the landscape here, and it was a pleasure to have them as the backdrop for my commute. Fort Collins is a university town which has a lively arts scene and is home to around 40 craft breweries. Old town Fort Collins hosts different arts festivals and shows every weekend in summertime.

Located along the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains, Fort Collins experiences a climate with four distinct seasons and low annual precipitation. The city experiences lots of sunshine, 300 days per year, whilst annual snowfall is around 1.5 metres.

## Mel Ross, Commercial Manager



Red Rocks Amphitheatre



Downtown Fort Collins



Hot Rods and Hogs, Loveland

During my time here I followed in the footsteps of John Muir [the Scottish-American naturalist, author and environmental philosopher] in the Rocky Mountains National Park, where I marvelled at the skill of wild goats in ascending to reach meagre greenery; I saw rutting elk invade a lakeside golf course in Estes Park; walked trails, dodging rattlesnakes and mountain lions and then attended open-air concerts at Red Rocks Amphitheater and a Colorado Rockies baseball game in Denver's Coors Field, known as the Mile High Stadium.

I went to a number of custom car and motorcycle shows including, Hot Rods and Hogs which was hosted by Thunder Mountain Harley-Davidson in Loveland, CO.

It was a privilege to live in this beautiful part of the world whilst working on interesting and challenging projects and I look forward to my next overseas adventure with Systech.

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