



# EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

## Cheyenne Dashnaw, PE

### Senior Engineer



#### **Q. How did you become employed at ATL?**

**A.** I was a junior at Clarkson University, planning to go to Texas and work for the City of Dalhart as I had done the prior 2 summers. My college roommate landed a summer internship with ATL in the Plattsburgh office and told me they may have additional openings, so I reached out and had an interview in Canton. I didn't hear anything back and figured I was Texas bound. During the last day of class with Spencer Thew, he mentioned ATL still had openings if anyone was interested. I chatted with Spencer about it after class and soon after received an offer for a summer position. That turned into continuing to work on and off during my senior year and returning full time when I graduated.

#### **Q. Who were your mentors at ATL when you started out?**

**A.** I started out in the CMET and Geotech services. Troy Remington and Judy Ames taught me the ropes for CMET and I worked with Adam Schneider, Brian Barnes, and Spencer Thew on Geotech. I even had the pleasure early in my career to work with Jim Kuhn on direct shear and shear interface testing. I then started to become involved with environmental services and worked closely with Jen Reymond, Marijean Remington, and Tom Hunter. I also had the good fortune to work with Jim Scancarello on projects related to structural engineering. I definitely had a great mix of mentors who I hold in high regard. The same goes for many others who I've worked with later in my career.

#### **Q. What technical skills did you acquire that helped make you an expert in your position?**

**A.** For starters, I considered it essential to learn and know about the services provided by ATL, the industry and market we work in, and the clients who we work with. I also find it beneficial to assess situations from different perspectives and understand how everything works together to improve the chances for a successful outcome. Knowing requirements and implementing correct procedures is only half the battle. Understanding and managing a client's expectations is the other half of the battle, which can be the more complex and daunting piece of the puzzle. If the client can't see a path forward to reach their end goals with the information you are providing, it will be difficult to continue working with that client. These are soft skills that I definitely had to learn and acquire through my career at ATL. They didn't teach that sort of stuff in school.

#### **Q. Did you make decisions that helped you move forward in your ATL career?**

**A.** As a retrospective assessment, it is evident that there have been decisions I've made to help progress and advance my career, but I'd say the end results were not always clear in the moments of those decisions. With that said, and at the risk of sounding trite, my most impactful decisions have been those that focus on benefits to the organization and our clients. Decisions that impact the organization and clients in a positive manner tend to provide the greatest dividends on multiple levels. Additionally, an overarching choice I've leaned into throughout my career is to be open to take on new things and face challenges head-on. A career path isn't paved in gold or sprinkled with pixie dust – sometimes you have to push through treacherous terrain to get a good view.

#### **Q. What project that you worked on is the most memorable, and why?**

**A.** Good memorable – ATL had a term contract with NHDOT for bridge deck corrosion surveys. I was offered the opportunity early in my career to take the lead on this contract. During my first trip out, Marijean was there and brought me up to speed with the process. The next time out, I was managing the project (with Tom Hunter by my side to keep me from getting into too much trouble). I was a young pup, miles from home, coordinating fast-paced work and traffic control conditions. I learned a lot in NH, and it was most memorable because of the personal and career growth I experienced. It was also empowering to see the trust that ATL put forth in me at that early stage of my career. Bad memorable – we'll skip that to keep the language at a PG level for the newsletter.

#### **Q. Do you have a memorable experience at ATL you would like to share?**

**A.** 20+ years in the business is sure to create many memorable experiences, ranging from a carpenter stealing

concrete cylinder molds after having to drop off equipment and park 3 blocks away from the project site, to Marijean having me reach into a nasty water hole to pull out a metal wire basket and later finding out it was used as a skunk drowning pit. On the better end of the stick for me, I remember being on a Geoprobe subsurface investigation project with Andy Ward and Tom Hunter on a below zero day in Massena, NY, where Tom and Andy had ice crystals forming on their face while I was stuck inside screening the soil, sweating because I wore my thermals and the facility had the heat cranked up. I also delight in some of the simplest things while being out and about on projects, such as an elementary student pestering me and Joe Grabowski with a hundred questions when we were digging surface soil samples near their playground, manually pounding a split spoon sampler to avoid rutting up a golf driving range and waving to Robbie Pryce as he drives by on an ATV rig within 30 feet of our sledge hammer operation, and wondering when I can cash in on those nickels for every time I heard someone ask if we found oil when out drilling. Sometimes it is the little things that make the lasting impressions.

**Q. What do you like the most about the path your ATL career has taken?**

**A.** I am appreciative of the strong sense of purpose garnered throughout my career at ATL. It isn't a punch your timecard in, punch your timecard out, see you tomorrow kind of obligation. Even in my early days in the field, testing concrete and soil or performing caisson installation monitoring, and being the sole ATL representative at a project site, there was a matter of pride and responsibility to represent ATL in a positive manner. After all, it's not like you can start looking around for fault if there are issues or grumblings regarding the performance of ATL at that particular project site. As my career has progressed into different roles, that sense of purpose has not been lost and I have been afforded ample opportunity to have a meaningful impact and influence at ATL.

**Q. What area of knowledge or experience are you looking to expand?**

**A.** As a Senior Engineer for our environmental services, I'm highly interested in exploring efficiency-focused alternatives and innovative approaches to provide our services and promote development within the organization to further expand our capabilities. While I still seek to expand knowledge and experience specific to technical subject matter, I've become more attuned in my current role to place a stronger emphasis on resources that will further the growth of ATL services.

**Q. Is there anything else you would like to add that would help others at ATL to get to the next level?**

**A.** Continually invest in yourself and continually invest in ATL. There is a symbiotic correlation between the success of a company and the success of its employees. Even if you don't think you are realizing tangible results for giving that extra effort, keep churning for positive outcomes and it will catch up to you. Also, one of the simplest ways to invest in yourself is preparation. Do what you can to prepare yourself for whatever challenge is in front of you. Preparation breeds confidence and confidence breeds success (I know there is a cliché or two in there, but it rings true more times than not).

**Q. What do you like to do outside of ATL?**

**A.** Aside from work, my family (wife, 3 kids, 3 dogs) keeps me plenty busy. The kids are nearing adulthood though, so I may need to find some new hobbies. We went on vacation to Hawaii in February, which was great not just for the paradise retreat, but also to reconnect with my teenagers. At the homestead, I have the typical endless to-do list. I just completed a full deck demo/replacement project and now have to get back to the routine maintenance and upkeep that I put off for the past 2 months. I'm also an avid football fan (go 49ers!) and have enjoyed coaching 3rd through 6th graders for the past 3 seasons.