

Message from the President



by Florence Braunius,
NYRWA President

The warm days of summer have waned by the time you read this article. In Speculator, summer is our busy season. Our village population is 379 according to the 2000 census, but just the resort across the street from our treatment plant can house 1500 guests in the summer. I am sure this takes place in any of New York State's beautiful vacation locations, Lake George, the Finger Lakes, Lake Placid to name a few. But life should never be all work and no play and I hope some of you have taken the time to enjoy the summer barbecues and clambakes that take place in most areas. I had the opportunity to attend the Central NY Waterworks Clambake in August. It is always an opportunity for great food, and a time to catch up with everyone since the NYRWA conference.

Over the years, I have met so many people and have gained so much from the people you meet at events and through casual conversations. Many of these people are now reaching retirement age and moving on to other endeavors. Chet Canary, Jack Donahue, Chuck Smith, Karl Vebber, and the late Phil Perry all come to mind when I think of people who have made contributions to the water and wastewater industry with their time and efforts. Doug Connor from Ti-Sales is the newest member of the group to join the retirement club. Doug has been employed by the City of Schenectady, moved on to Clifton Park Water Authority, retired and went to work for Ti-Sales.

I took some time in August to talk with Doug regarding his careers in our industry. I asked Doug if he has a preference for public employment or private, and he has enjoyed both. Doug felt that answering to the public during his time with the City of Schenectady and Clifton Park was the biggest challenge. We can all relate to that. When we are in the grocery store or anywhere in public, people recognize us as the person who works for the water system or the "sewer plant". Who could miss us in the bright safety green NYRWA shirts?

I asked Doug if he has seen an influx of new operators to compensate for the population that is retiring. Just as we all thought, the younger people are not attracted to municipal employment. There does not appear a desire to take on the amount of responsibility connected to these jobs for the rate of pay for a newly hired employee. This is a dilemma that most small communities are facing, and

there does not seem to be a real solution on the horizon. Contract operations appeared to be getting a foot hold at one time, but as their focus trended toward the bottom line and not the quality of the product, as well as costly to the municipality, this option has not proved to be the ideal solution. Doug mentioned that communities need to realize that their people are their biggest asset. A dedicated employee, who wants to do what he or she can to keep the systems operating within their permit limits and produce a quality drinking water and an optimum effluent are a communities' most valuable resources. Those of us who work in this industry need to continue to carry this message to everyone we meet.

Doug's career has spanned over 30 years and I took the opportunity to ask him what changes he felt had made the biggest impact on the industry. His reply, in this order was: Regulations, VFD's and the advancement of SCADA systems. Regarding regulations, there is a need to keep the regulatory changes in perspective to the size of the system. The people "in ivory towers making rules" which are not necessary, or practical, is something Doug feels strongly about. Systems are being asked to meet regulations in 2008 with technology that was designed to meet the rules of 1978, and we all know how that goes! It will always be a challenge to make compliance affordable for our rural communities.

VFD's have helped control the costs and have changed the way our motors and pumps consume the energy. The advancement of SCADA systems has impacted our industry. Who could ever have imagined controlling a water or wastewater plant from an offsite location in 1978! We have come a long way in the last 30 years and I doubt if we will be standing still in the next thirty years.

For those of us still on the payroll, lets see what we can do to let people know about our industry, the impact we have on the community, and to share what we know with whoever the next generation will be.

Congratulations to Doug and thank you for all your years of service to the water and wastewater industry. All of us at New York Rural Water wish you the best. 💧