

# Out With The “Old” In With The New



by Richard Winters,  
*Circuit Rider 1*

For the most part, I think we would all agree that the concept of out with the old and in with the new would generally be considered a good thing. Things like that old car with 150,000 miles on it and rust holes in the floor, that old shirt with those chlorine created holes, those boots with the toes curled up, and you get the idea. That kind of thinking, for the most part, in our industry would be something to look forward to. I mean, we would have Community leaders allowing us to purchase all the latest equipment and keep up with all the technological advances of our time. After all, this would make our jobs easier and possibly more productive. Sounds like a win win situation right? SURE.

My answer to the above question would also be sure, with the exception of a truly underestimated value, possibly one of the greatest assets of our business. I'm referring to the “old” or more correctly stated, “Experienced Professional Operators”, in both the water and wastewater systems throughout our state. As I travel across the state working with, and learning from, these “old” system operators, I learn to appreciate more and more each and every day what these folks have to offer. No amount of schooling and/or training will ever be able to teach any of us the things these “old” operators can hand down to us if we give them the chance.

I would like to mention a few of the “old” friends that inspired me to write this story.

*William “Bill Bode” – Arkville, NY* - Thanks for the tricks of the trade you shared with me, and your dedication to your water system to the end. You will be forever missed.

*John Jankiewicz – Town of Lloyd - Highland, NY* - Thanks for your complete dedication and commitment to your system and for constantly challenging your workers to become the best operators possible. Although you have moved on to your final resting place in 2007, I can attest that as of March 2008, your inspiration and legacy live on at the plant. You too, will be forever missed.

*George Slater – Sharon Springs, NY* - Thanks for the years of selfless dedication to your system and community. Enjoy your retirement.

*Gary Bonds – Amenia, NY* - Thanks for restoring my faith in knowing that there are still operators out there

that take pride in keeping their facilities as neat and clean as you have. Enjoy your well deserved retirement.

The point I'm trying to make here is that a lot of very valuable information can sometimes be lost if we overlook or underestimate the value of what our “old” operators have to offer. So if you are looking to make a clean sweep in your system and start over with a fresh new shiny “educated” workforce, I would like to forewarn you that you might just get what you ask for. And that may equate to a great loss to the very core of what your intentions to accomplish were in the first place. These people may have a lot more to offer than you think. Please give them the respect they deserve. And remember new isn't necessarily by default better. ♦

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