

## **I Don't Understand**

**By Steve Grimm**

**A small Village has no municipal water or sewer (yes, there are still a few of those out there). The septic systems are beginning to fail, sewage is popping up all over, and the wells are in danger of contamination. What's the first thing they do? They put in a water system! HELLO! The septic systems are still failing. Sewage is still everywhere. What a great breeding ground for mosquitoes and the West Nile virus. The kids are re-enacting the great naval battles of history in sewer ponds. But at least you can drink the water! I don't understand.**

**I don't understand why we are losing operators. This is such a great field to work in. Great pay. Flexible hours. Why then are so many considering early retirement packages? Why are the younger operators getting out of the business altogether? Why isn't the market flooded with qualified and certified individuals eager to work at the easiest job in the world? I don't understand.**

**I don't understand those baggy jeans. You know the ones where the crotch begins at the knees, and they have to wear two pair of underwear. I'm glad I don't have to do the laundry at their houses! What's with that?**

**Training is a touchy subject. We are often asked "why don't you have more training in my area?" Then when we stop by a plant and say there is a training session next week in the next town over, someone inevitably says, "Oh. I've already got all the hours I need." I don't get it. Aren't training sessions continuing education, designed to keep people up to date on new ideas, products, and procedures? One operator told me as we were leaving a training session, "It helped me remember what I forgot."**

**Many systems are being told they NEED to address their I&I problems. I spend a good portion of the summer helping systems smoke test their collection systems. A lot of time and effort goes into identifying the sources of their inflow and infiltration. How come it is easier to find money for a new bike path or another engineering report, than it is to find the money to replace and/or repair the system? I just don't understand.**

**I recently spent time in a community that is in the initial stages of considering a wastewater treatment plant. They have not been told they need to build one. They see the need and are being pro-active. I commend them for their efforts. Several times during our meeting, it was brought up that the job of running the plant wasn't a full time, eight hour a day job. I reminded them that there was much more to operating a plant than just doing testing. There is routine equipment maintenance to be performed, grass to cut, pump stations to maintain, and so on. Why can't the people hired to run the system decide how much time needs to be spent doing their jobs? Why does somebody else always know better? I don't get it.**