

'CIRCUIT RIDER' ?

By, Dan Tousley

Since beginning my employment with New York Rural Water Association, I find I am frequently asked, "What *is* a Circuit Rider?" I must admit I am learning more about the job almost everyday myself!

I have heard some very bizarre interpretations of what the job title is assumed to represent, many of which are not fit to print here in this article. Besides, you people know who you are!

Basically, the job involves a great deal of travel.

"CIRCUIT". One of the six definitions for CIRCUIT in my dictionary is: A regular or accustomed course from place to place, as that of a salesperson. A round. The area or district thus covered, especially the territory under the jurisdiction of a judge, in which he or she holds periodic court sessions.

"CIRCUIT RIDER". This also is a term listed in my dictionary. Naturally, it's a noun. A member of the clergy who travels from church to church in a district, especially a rural district.

Hmmm...raises some interesting thoughts. While I would be happy to share the Gospel with you, the idea here, is an employee of New York Rural Water Association who travels from water system to water system in a district, especially a rural district. While traveling, they provide the "good news" of free, on-site technical assistance for local governments and their system personnel, as they strive to comply with complex regulations, and to protect the public health.

A few of the many ways this is accomplished are:

- Establishing Operation and Maintenance Programs
- Regulation updates
- Main / Service line and valve location
- Rate studies
- Leak detection
- Assistance with Consumer Confidence Reports/Annual Water Quality Reports
- Treatment plant troubleshooting
- Board member training

This being a sample of the many services we provide, you can see that one thing we do *not* do is to get bored! The job includes many perks as well. I think the greatest of them is the people we get to meet and interact with. I would like to cite a personal example. A short distance west of Newark, New York, on State Route 31, is the small hamlet of Port Gibson. Port Gibson has a rural water system with about 140 service connections. Recently, I had the great pleasure of meeting Mr. Franzle LeRoy, who basically 'is' the Port Gibson Water Department! Franzle came to Port Gibson at the age of three. As a youngster he served as a 'water boy' on the Route 31 construction project, carrying water to the workers from various wells in the area. He was the "most active" part of the original committee, which traveled to Albany about 50 years ago to get a water system established. A few years later he assumed responsibility for the water system and has been Port Gibson's 'water boy' for the last 45 years, "or so" he says. When visiting with Franzle, in his home office, one cannot help but notice the many accolades and

recognitions of lengthy public service to his community hanging on his walls. Today, where many folks would have turned in their 'root books', Franzle is still reading meters, handling collections, doing turn ons and offs, and at past times – even written the bills! He tells me: "This is not a job, never has been, these folks are family to me." "If they get back from Florida on a Saturday, they call me and I go turn the water on. I'm not making them wait until Monday!" His service is 24/365! He is justly proud of his deep roots and of literally being a part of Port Gibson. While as a child he enjoyed listening to the old sages, today he says: "They tell me, I are one!"

Franzle even took the time during our 'on-site' visit to try to teach this circuit rider how to use divining wires to locate lines underground. Note: I'm a-workin' on it!

I wanted to cite this example because Franzle, and his attitude of selfless service, are so exemplary of the general class of people we encounter on our circuits. Where would we be without such folk? Sadly, there are exceptions to the above generalization, but you people know who you are!

There are three of us fellows working as Circuit Riders to provide service to all of New York State. John Hraska, Circuit Rider I, lives in Eastern New York; therefore his primary service area is Eastern New York. Doug Smorol, Circuit Rider II, lives in Central New York, serving primarily the central part of the state. Lastly, and I hope not least, is yours truly: Dan Tousley. I live in Western New York and serve primarily the Western part of New York. I use the word 'primarily' because while each of us strives to respond promptly to service requests and provide more extensive coverage in our immediate areas, we are each required under contract to geographically cover the entire State of New York. How does this help you? Well, should your particular Circuit Rider be unavailable for some reason, there are still two people available to respond to your request for assistance, as well as, to have an idea who and where you are.

Hopefully, we have a better understanding of what a Circuit Rider is, and does, and some of the more bizarre ideas will be put to rest. What do you think, too much to hope for?

When your Circuit Rider stops by your Village Office, or the Shop, or the Treatment Plant, he or she is not there to 'sell' you anything or in any way to add to your workload. Rather, they have a sincere desire to assist you, however they can. I hope you will take the time to discuss your concerns with the Circuit Rider and see how the New York Rural Water Association program can benefit you and your system.

Encourage your neighbors to join if they are not already a member, even the 'strange' ones...remember, they know who they are!

Note:

Since drafting this article, John Hraska has retired. We wish John well in his retirement, while thanking him for his years of dedicated service.