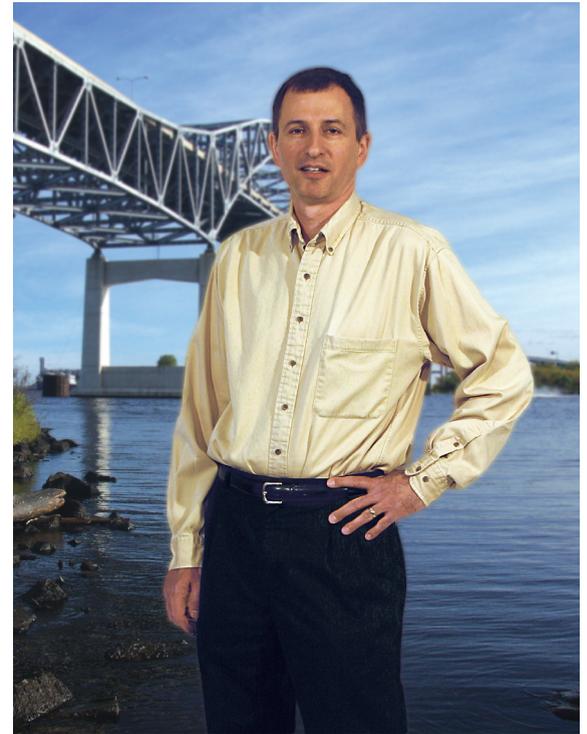


President's Comments

By Al Parrella

On my first day on the job 1979 in I had to clean off the tomato plants that were growing on the walls in the head-works area. You see, not all of the bugs had been worked out in the process equipment of the era. Thankfully, there have been many changes in our industry in the last 40-odd years since the Clean Water Act was passed. There was one computer at our plant (a mainframe) that was used for data logging and reporting. Only a few of the staff had access to it or needed it. Index cards were used to keep track of maintenance records for vehicles and more than 4,000 other pieces of equipment. Did you need to get a message to someone right away? Many a short note was jotted down on "speed memos". I still don't get how those were supposed to work. No email. No texting. No computerized calendars, reminding you not to be late for a meeting. No smart phones! How could it be?



Safety has made major strides. The gas monitoring equipment that we take for granted today was not always around. The first portable meter I saw was only good for combustible gas. It had a rechargeable Ni-Cad battery that needed to live on the charger. There were no cordless tools. Imagine using an electric drill in many of the wet locations of a treatment plant or pump station. Yes, there were air operated drill motors, but these were cumbersome and compressed air is not always available. Cordless tools have greatly contributed to our ability to work safely in many unfavorable environments.

Years ago, one of the things I lamented the most was the difficulty in finding supplies and equipment that were designed for the wastewater collection and treatment industries. Lots of equipment was available for the distribution and treatment of potable water (an older industry than wastewater collection and treatment) and much of this was borrowed for use with wastewater. As anyone in the business knows, wastewater is a totally different animal than water, and the same equipment doesn't always work in a different application. Today, thankfully, there are companies that have catalogues filled with equipment and supplies for our industry.

Things are always improving. Better methods, better materials, better equipment, better information. I think it's also possible to have better operators. How so? Training, training, training. The MWOA is an organization dedicated to training and sharing job knowledge. There can be no better way to learn than from the experiences of others. I hope to see you at the Annual Conference and various workshops and section meetings sponsored by our organization, where you can learn from your peers and from industry experts. I have watched the MWOA grow and become ever more professional, and am proud and honored to have served as your president for the last year.

Thank you all for caring for the waters of this great state and for working hard to protect them. I hope that you will join with me in welcoming our incoming president Kay Curtin. Have a great summer!