



President's Message

It's Hard To Say "Goodbye"

It is a time of transition at West Virginia Rural Water Association (WVRWA) and it's also time to express our gratitude and say goodbye to two fine gentlemen and good friends for their outstanding service to WVRWA. It was officially announced in June that one of the founders of the Association, Fred Stottlemeyer, would be retiring in August as general manager of the South Putnam Public Service District and as a member of the WVRWA Board of Directors. As that announcement was being made, we learned that Fred's replacement at South Putnam was to be WVRWA Executive Director Mike McNulty. Seldom is an organization faced with the task of saying goodbye to two such key figures as Fred and Mike. It's never easy to see friends leave, but we will always hold each of them dear in our hearts.

WVRWA came into existence in 1985 as a result of a vision held by Fred Stottlemeyer. Fred held on to that dream and the growth and success of this organization in the years that have followed have been phenomenal. Today, 280 member utilities serve nearly 1.1 million West Virginians. This Association now comprises a formidable political force that has earned the respect of our elected representatives. A commitment to service has always been at

the forefront of WVRWA. Numerous awards of excellence from the National Rural Water Association have followed over the past two decades, including the coveted "Association of the Year" award in 2001. WVRWA has earned a well-deserved place of national respect, but without effective leadership, these successes would not have been possible. For those of us who know Fred Stottlemeyer, no one would have expected anything less than tremendous success for an organization that he helped found and direct. This association has extended Fred's ideals and beliefs and the ascent to national prominence has been no accident. The first time I met Fred, my initial impression was of his beautiful curly hair and friendly smile, of course that was before his hair and my own turned white.

In 2000, Mike McNulty left the Public Service Commission to accept the position of executive director. He hit the ground running and made significant organizational changes. A training section was organized to meet the new continuing education requirement for operators. The success of this branch of the Association is very apparent. Annual class attendance for WVRWA training regularly exceeds 2,000 participants. Mike also threw himself into the challenges of lobbying for

WVRWA's legislative agendas each year. He has spearheaded numerous victories for the Association in Charleston and he has earned the respect and admiration of lawmakers and lobbyists alike. Not only that, his work has garnered the respect of his peers among NRWA. For the past two years, Mike McNulty has been responsible for WVRWA earning National Rural Water Association's "Award for Excellence in State Legislation." Winning this honor for two consecutive years is unprecedented. It also speaks volumes about Mike's determination to succeed and his unwavering commitment for excellence. Like many of you, I met Mike at a PSC hearing and of course he was the enemy (just kidding Mike). Mike has always conducted himself with the highest level of professionalism.

Change in an organization always brings some measure of anxiety but we are not left with the cupboard being bare at WVRWA. We have an outstanding staff that has benefited from daily examples of leadership. Distinguished service will continue to be the hallmark of WVRWA because of the vision and leadership of Fred Stottlemeyer and Mike McNulty. We are thankful for their service and their contributions to this great association. We wish them the best in their future endeavors and we know that many future successes await them both. ■

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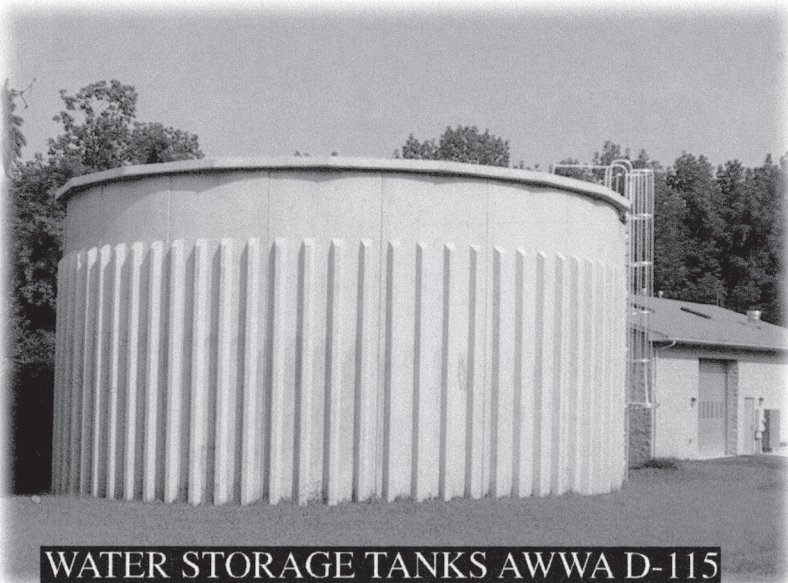
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