



President's Message

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Roger the Drain Cleaner

Have you even seen something or read something that put your mind off on a train of thought? No? Well maybe that is just me! Noodling around on the internet one lunch time an item caught my eye. It was on Wikipedia, that estimable source of surely accurate information. In the 'Did you know' section for 4/3/2012, '... that because of his escape from captivity in 1188 through a sewer, the medieval monk and future [Abbot of Evesham Roger Norreis](#) was nicknamed "Roger Cloacarius" or "Roger the Drain-Cleaner"?' It seems that ol' Rog got caught up in a dispute between a group of monks and the Archbishop of Canterbury, who had tried to appoint Roger to an important post over the monks' objection. The monks held Roger in custody but told others he was sick. At this point Roger made his daring escape.

This got me to thinking about all the old movies and TV shows I've seen over the years. You know, the ones with the hero chasing the villain though the large metropolitan sewer system. Generally these are though large brick lined passages with huge underground rooms. The good guy, usually dressed in a nice suit of clothes, gets his man without getting a bit mussed. Except for the one I saw a few years ago, where the meticulous, germophobic detective with OCD got a face-full of a nice slurry of brown water from a 12 or more incher that had no flow one second and a pipe full as soon as he stepped in front of it!

This was right around the time we did our refresher on the city confined space policy. So my mind moved on to the thought that of course in none of those shows was there any thought of safe entry, no four gas monitor, no safety harness and rescue line, no SCBA escape pack.

I'm writing this having just returned from my first road trip of the spring meeting round. It was a nice easy sub-two hour drive up US 41 to the Village of Winneconne. Only a

slight detour around the massive US 45 exit ramp project, and still got there before the welcome from the village president. Even got a diet cola to feed my caffeine addiction and a muffin top before settling in for the morning session. Alas, I recently started a diet, so rather than fall off the wagon too badly, I saved the rest of the muffin for the break. Still probably blew my snack budget for the next week!

The meeting was at the Fin and Feather, locate right on the banks of the Wolf River. Our meeting room had a super view out over the river. At least a dozen people were fishing off the bridge and another group in boats anchored just upstream. That made it a challenge to keep one's mind on the proceedings, but the hosts strategically set up to face away from the river to see the screen, then positioned the vendors so their displays helped screen the view.

Great job by Jeff Smudde, Aaron Patefield, and Bernie Hengels of Lake Michigan region and the Winneconne staff. Talks were about VFD basics, construction management tips, habitat changes on the area lakes, and an expanded DNR update from Jack Saltes that included information on the coming changes to the operator certification program and tips for filling out this year's CMAR.

We even had an extra unplanned bit of excitement. Following an excellent lunch (despite having to pass on the fried chicken, the pot roast, and the mashed potatoes and gravy - drat that diet!) a number of us went out on the deck over the river to enjoy the view and the wonderful weather. I noticed a large plume of black smoke billowing up a few hundred feet down stream. Some unfortunate soul had his fishing boat catch on fire. He made his way to a pier and jumped off. Only a moment later, the boat was fully engulfed in flames. My picture that accompanies this article was taken on the deck shortly after that. I thought about suggesting a caption to the effect of your president hard at work. Photography credit to Scott Thompson from GBMSD, just one of my many WWOA friends at the meeting that I get to see too little of. Also WWOA past president Jim Thalke from Sussex, just 7 miles north of us but I have to go to a meeting 100 miles away to see him.

I only had one other meeting to attend on WWOA business since my last message, but that was a biggie. The WWOA board of director's meeting in late April is always focused on finalizing the conference details. Following that, Technical Committee chair Kevin Freber has been hard at work getting the conference brochure print-ready. Highlights include pre-conference sessions on lab basics and a suite of topics involving SCADA; design, maintenance, and security.

Yours truly will open the conference proper Wednesday morning – if you think these messages are unintelligible, you probably can't wait for that! Thankfully, in a very short time, I'll give way to keynote speaker Mike McKinley. The title of his speech is “Working together to get better... You make the Difference”. A full slate of technical sessions will again include a significant dose of Phosphorus talks. If you are P'ed out, there will be plenty of other interesting topics. Blending, Collection Systems, Process Control, and Biosolids are just a few of the sessions on the schedule.

One item of big news is the return of the Operators Competition. As you are well aware if you have been reading my previous messages, the OC was dropped last year due to lack of team commitments. We needed a minimum of three teams to commit by the April board meeting to justify bringing it back. Thankfully, we did reach that minimum. Many thanks to Lake Michigan (two teams!) and North Central for stepping up to the plate. Now having gotten to that point, I would like to challenge the other four regions. We would love to see at least two more teams sign on. The organizers, judges, and supporting vendors put a lot of work into preparing for the events and the more participants we have, the more they feel their efforts were worthwhile. Of course this means Jeff Bratz will have to refocus his attention to setting this event up. Jeff is the board member in charge of this year's competition. Jeff is a veteran of OC participation, not only at past WWOA conferences, but also at WEF competitions. If Jeff calls asking for your help, please consider pitching in. Hopefully this will lead to many more years of successful competitions.

Jeff has been hard at work at his other assignment, which is spearheading the web committee. As I have mentioned before, Jeff and new webmaster Steve Meifert have been working on streamlining and troubleshooting the conference registration and setting up the membership application (both new and renewal). Much progress has been made.

Another highlight of the conference is the Awards Banquet and the entertainment following. This year will feature Dueling Pianos. Somehow I can't get the scene from 'Who Framed Roger Rabbit' with Donald and Daffy Duck out of my head. I doubt if cannon fire will be involved but you never know. Incidentally, awards banquet does mean we will be giving out awards, if we get nominations for them. Elsewhere in this issue should be an article by Wade Peterson and a nomination form. Otherwise a form and full description of all the awards and criteria is available on the web site. Please consider nominating a deserving person, we know there are plenty of them out there. The deadline is fast approaching – July 1 to the regional officers for Regional Operator of the Year nominations, and August 1 to Wade Peterson for the rest.

Another deadline approaching is for applications for the WWOA scholarships. These one-time \$1,000 awards are available to children and grandchildren of members who are enrolled in a two or four year wastewater related program at an accredited college or university. They must have already completed at least their first year and have at least one year remaining. Again, full details and application are on the web site. Sharon Thieszen is the scholarship chair.

Hopefully, you won't be spending any of your time chasing bad guys around your collection system. Until next time, work safely and let's be careful out there!