

FAREWELL ERNIE

By Steve Freeman

The North Country has lost another great Water Operations Specialist (WOS) to Retirement. The New York Rural Water Association wishes the best to a great friend and true industry professional, Ernie Prievo, Water Superintendent for the Village of Carthage and Chief Operator of the Carthage/West Carthage joint water filtration plant. Ernie retired on January 14th, 2022 after 26 years of service.

Prior to this position, Ernie was employed in the private sector. At the time of submitting his application, he was a member of the Carthage Village Board. Ernie promised the board that if he was hired, he would work tirelessly to continue to provide the same or better service to the customers of the water system that they had become accustomed to. Being a strong community-minded individual, Ernie has been a volunteer fireman for 25 years, serving 10 years as chief and 7 years on the fire district board of directors. He has served on the town housing authority board and has been active in coaching little league and baseball for 20 years.

I met Ernie about 25 years ago at the New York Rural Water Association Annual Conference and have remained friends ever since. I recently had the opportunity to meet with him and learn of the village's rich water history. Public drinking water has been a priority of Carthage since 1905 when they purchased 1500 acres and began construction of a 15-mile gravity fed transmission line from the headwaters of the Indian River to the village. A reservoir was constructed at the headwaters, along with three sedimentation ponds, screen house and a bypass so that the reservoir could be drained and cleaned. With intuition for public health, chlorine was introduced in the 1940's. In 1994 construction began on a 1-million gallon per-day slow sand filtration plant that is still in use today. Ernie was a member of the village board when the construction started. If you look closely, you can see his name on the plaque in the picture below. The plant went online in 1997.



Ernie has been instrumental in the development of many water system improvements over the years, the most significant being developing one water system for the needs of two communities (Carthage/West Carthage) and maintaining a reliable secondary back-up supply. The entire water distribution system has been mapped, including GPS locations for all curb stops, main valves, hydrants, water mains and transmission lines. The entire 13.5 miles of water shed boundary has also been mapped. Unaccounted water has been reduced from 25% in 1998 to less than 8% currently. The installation of a radio water meter reading system and the replacement of 97% of lead and galvanized water service lines to name a few.

Ernie's efforts have not gone unnoticed. In 2000, Ernie was named New York Rural Water Association's "Water Operator of the Year" and in 2010 Carthage/West Carthage earned the "Water System of the Year" Award. Congratulations!!

Ernie has turned over the water department operations to Tyler Pominville. Tyler has been working alongside Ernie for the past 3 years. In the picture below Ernie is handing over the shut-off wrench and keys to Tyler.



The above picture shows Tyler, long-time water department employee, current DPW Superintendent Mark Roberts and Ernie.

Ernie would like to thank his wife of 41 years and his 3 children for always supporting his efforts of community service, as well as his many co-workers throughout the years, especially retired Water Operations Specialist and partner in crime, Tim Turck, with the Village of West Carthage. A special thank you to his Village Board for hiring him in 1996, the New York Rural Water Association for all of the knowledge, assistance, and friendships gained over the years, and to all of his fellow water professionals.

Ernie plans to slow down a little, not much, spend some time traveling with his wife and visiting children/grandchildren in Florida and Pennsylvania. From September to December Ernie plans to live and hunt out of his canvas wall tent! Ernie will not be leaving public service completely; he plans to again gain a seat on the Village of Carthage Board and be involved with the many water projects that the future will bring.

I would like to personally thank Ernie for his friendship over the years, and for being the go-to guy for myself and many other north country water operations specialists when we had questions and needed answers. Here's wishing you a long, healthy and fun retirement. From all of us at NYRWA, THANK YOU ERNIE for being a true industry professional and helping us all to provide "Quality on Tap"!

Steve Freeman
Circuit Rider
freeman@nyruralwater.org

