



# CHANGE IS IN THE AIR

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When you enjoy what you do the days go by so fast. It seems like just yesterday I was wondering just what I was going to do. At 59 I was forced into an early retirement. I was the last operations specialist for the last water system in Monroe County, NY, that wasn't in one way or another purchasing water from the local authority. The Village of Webster, NY, had a ground water plant and distribution system designed to produce a maximum of 13 MGD. I flipped the switch to turn this system off for the final time. This plant originally went online in 1936. Here I am, old enough for the retirement system but not yet old enough to stop doing what I love. I would check the NYRWA website almost daily for job openings. My hopes were raised when I read a posting for an upcoming Circuit Rider position. I applied, interviews were set up in Bath with both then CEO Pat Scalera and Deputy Director Jamie Herman. I made the trek to Bath on a cold winter day in a pickup truck that decided to stop putting out heat. I was excited and depressed at the same time, in my mind I was saying who would hire a 59-year-old? I tried not to let that show in my interview, but I think a little of it slipped out.

A few days later I answered a call from Pat asking me if I would work for NYRWA, the only requirement was that I would commit to 6 years. I gave her a very emotional YES! I would train with Dan Tousley, he had to teach me everything he knew in a short 2 weeks. I soon became part of a family. Soon I will be saying so long to this family. My final official workday is September 30. It will be a huge change for me, 35 years in the drinking water field will be a hard transition. The transition with NYRWA has begun for me. Jonathon Barnes has taken over my Circuit Rider III position and I have moved to a Training Specialist role.

Every week I speak with Water Professionals that are edging closer to their retirement date, many systems do not yet have anyone in place to take over the position, they are not small shoes to fill. As a Municipal Water Operations Specialist, you are on call 24/7. I have, as well as many other operators, spent many a holiday, birthday, anniversary, weekend, even at times having children wait Christmas morning for Dad to get home from doing his job so that everyone can have safe water coming out of their tap. People take water for granted until they don't have it. Some praise you for what you are doing, some are mad at you for shutting the water off. The good people outweigh the bad in this case.

My job involves mandatory group training. Today started with a 4:00 AM alarm, Kevin Maine meeting me at my home, a drive to the Buffalo Airport to have a direct flight to Orlando for specialized training. As I type this part it is June 7, 2021, and I am on a Jet Blue flight from

Buffalo to Orlando. My travel partner, Kevin Maine sits across the aisle from me typing away on his computer. We are over South Carolina at 38,210' traveling at 528 MPH. Travel is lots of fun while dealing with COVID-19 restrictions. I always joke about flying faster because we are flying downhill. Kevin, the certified pilot rolls his eyes at me.

September 30 is coming up fast. I am finding that helping to train people is very fulfilling. I recently taught a class for the Southern Tier Water Works Conference about my experience of being buried alive and conducting a leak survey. I am also working with our Apprenticeship Program dealing with Emergency Response Plans and Vulnerability Assessments.

I have made many friends over the last 6+ years. Many of these friends will remain friends. I can't say I have had even one bad experience in my last 6+ years, well maybe there was the time that Kevin and I missed our connecting flight, not our fault. Sleeping in an airport isn't easy. Other than that, I can't complain. There were some days where I would drive 3 hours to help a system, be there for 5 hours then drive 3 hours home. Yes, the option to overnight was there but I have lived by, "There's No Place Like Home"! Occasionally there would be a middle of the night or Sunday afternoon emergency but much less than my previous 27 years, on call 24-7.

What will I do with my spare time? Work on our house, go fishing, tend the gardens, SLEEP IN TILL 7 AM! It has been a good ride even though Jamie never got me the Pink Yugo work vehicle he promised. Oh well. May our paths cross again! Quality On Tap! 💧💧

