

## A Short History

December 4, 1990

Composed on the occasion of the Tenth Anniversary of the Founding of the Rhode Island Water Works Association.

When Maurice asked me a few weeks ago to present a history, of the Rhode Island Water Works Association at the annual meeting in December, I almost automatically said "Sure " The Association has been one of the brighter stars in my memory. After I hung up, reaction set in. What did an engineer know about writing history'. I needed a definition, something to build on. Reaching down my Merriam-Webster (I don't own a Funk & Wagnal) and opening to page 392, second column, between the words HISTORIGRAPHER, -which I have become by virtue of writing this, and the word HISTRIONIC- which I shall endeavor not to become while delivering this, I found the word HISTORY, defined as 1) a narrative of events; 2) record of facts about something; 3) a systematic account of events. After some consideration, I decided "Can do" ~ , except for the systematic part. The facts and figures presented here are drawn from the printed records of the Association and from the memory of this "historian". Any similarity between what is printed here and systematic presentation of the subject is purely coincidental. So, here is an engineer's history of the Rhode Island Water Works Association, 1980-1990.

In the beginning, there was Water, and then there were Water Works, and then Water Works Employees, and we all belonged to the New England Water Works Association, and we said to each other, "We never had it so good!" Then Robert Blauvelt came from Virginia and said, "We had our own state water association where I came from, shouldn't Rhode Island have its own association too?" And we said, "By golly you're right." And so Robert Blauvelt from Virginia gathered the faithful beside still waters (The Cranston Hilton Pool) and said, "Let there be a Water Works Association"! -- and Holy Smoke! Here we are ten years later --For Real! the Rhode Island Water Works Association! It could only happen in America! Thanks Bob! We couldn't have done it without you! The Eighteen attendees, representing fifteen water companies, present at that first meeting in April 1980 were solidly behind Bob's idea. We knew we needed a voice on Capitol Hill, and more recognition of the general public.

An organizing committee was formed consisting of Owen Devine, Water Superintendent, East Providence; Russell Horne, Water Superintendent, Woonsocket; Stan Knox, Manager, Wakefield Water; Russell Knibb, Pawtucket Water Supply; Maurice Trudeau, Superintendent, Lincoln Water; Hedley Patterson, Woonsocket Department of Public Works; and Robert Blauvelt. In addition, a nominating committee was set up including George Allaire, Narragansett; the immortal Norman St. Sauveur, Superintendent, Kent County Water; Russell Horne, and Hedley Patterson. being the Annual Meeting. Since the yearly Golf meetings started in 1982, the Association has never had fewer than five meetings per year, golf, of course, being an informal meeting.

In the next few months, and after considering such exotic names as Association of Rhode Island Water Works and/or Water Works Association of Rhode Island, the organizing committee chose to call us

simply, Rhode Island Water Works Association. They adopted our present Logo, the letters R-I-W-W-A floating serenely over Rhode Island waters. For by-laws, the committee studied both those of the Massachusetts Water Works Association and those of the Association of Maine Water Utilities - in the end opting for almost a Chinese copy of the Massachusetts by-laws.

The nominating committee chose Robert Blauvelt as President, Owen Devine, Vice President, Robert Ammam, Manager of Bristol Water, Secretary, and Stan Knox, Treasurer. All accepted the nomination.

With this accomplished, your fledgling organization filed its articles of incorporation as a non-profit organization -- non-profit only as far as money goes --(in ten years we all have profited) with the Rhode Island Secretary of State. We were legally off and running.

The by-laws provided for then, and still provide for \$10.00 annual dues from participating members, and \$15.00 per year for affiliate members - those concerns supplying services to the water industry. This was the biggest bargain of the decade! An even bigger bargain is extended to retirees now - \$0 per year.

According to the by-laws, we were to hold not less than three formal meetings per year with the December meeting being the Annual meeting. Since the yearly Golf meetings started in 1982, the Association has never had fewer than 5 meetings per year – golf, of course, being an informal meeting. Incidentally, Peter Calise and Bill Falcone were two of the first prize winners at our first golf meeting.

Membership was the first order of business when the association got down to the day to day business of representing water in Rhode Island. RIWWA wanted to sign up as many water works people from the rank of foreman and above and members of state regulatory and environmental departments as possible in the initial sweep. They were considered the “sine qua non” if we were to thrive. Once this backbone of water professionals was in place, the Association turned to material suppliers and engineering firms serving our members. Let it be stated here that no application for membership was turned down regardless of when made. The Association also considered including members of the waste water profession in our ranks but discarded the idea as probably too complicating.

Our defacto slate of officers served until December 1980 when they were duly and unanimously officially elected by the members. During our early years, the officers, handled a great part of the business themselves. Committees were mostly one-man affairs, reporting to one of our officers - informal, but it worked.

In December 1981, Owen Devine was elected President, Wiley Archer, Providence Water Supply Board, became secretary, with Mr. Knox holding, as Treasurer. During 1982, in its continuing effort for public visibility, the Association contracted for caps and T-shirts with our Logo on them. Robert Amman followed as President in 1982. Hedley Patterson became Secretary, Mr. Knox remained as Treasurer. During 1983, Bob Blauvelt was named 'Young Engineer of the Year' by The Rhode Island Society of Professional Engineers. This is another honor awarded yearly to an engineer under the age of 35 who has exhibited outstanding service and leadership.

In 1983, Wiley Archer became President, with Maurice Trudeau becoming Secretary, Mr. Knox again remaining Treasurer at his request. By the end of Mr. Archer's one year term, it became apparent that one year was too short a period for the officers to be effective. The public, legislators, and news media just got to know who's who when we played musical chairs and they had to learn the pecking order all over again. The by-laws were amended allowing an incumbent president to serve a second term, providing both he and the Association approved. Mr. Archer became our first two-term president.

During the second term of his presidency, Mr. Archer inaugurated the annual legislative reception (the first of 4). Held at the Marriott, between 5 and 7pm on an afternoon when the Hill was generally quiet. Members of the Rhode Island Water Works Association met with 40 to 60 members of the legislature each year and discussed water, things pertaining to water, and generally became acquainted with one another. For the record, water was not the libation served at these affairs, but would have been made available if anyone had asked – wouldn't you agree, Maurice? – Let the record show that Maurice agreed.

Mr. Patterson followed as President in 1985. Norman St. Sauveur became Secretary and David Golibiewski, Bob Blauvelt's replacement at Pawtucket, became Treasurer. Mr. Knox had expressed the wish to step down. The Association is grateful for his years of financial service. In May of 1986, Mr. Patterson was the lead-off witness before the state Water Study Commission. Others of the Association followed.

In 1987, Maurice Trudeau was elected President, with Ms. Nancy Barnes, Bristol County Water Executive Director, elected Vice President, and William Falcone as Secretary when Mr. St. Sauveur retired. Mr. Golibiewski held as Treasurer. By this time, Mr. Falcone had become unofficially our official PR man. Mr. News Release, in person!

During his terms in office, Mr. Trudeau inaugurated the annual tapping contest, involving for the first time Rhode Island Water Works personnel below the rank of foreman. The contests were held at the Lincoln garage, at which time our vendor members took the opportunity to show off their latest products. The Rhode Island Water Works Association sponsored the winning team (ie: least time to tap as per American Water Works Association rules, to a trip to the New England Regional Finals.) No winners for the Rhode Island Water Works Association yet! , By the way, Maurice has asked me to announce that he still has a few lengths of perforated water pipe available that he'd be willing to part with.

As an aftermath to the earthquake in San Francisco, in 1989, Mr. Trudeau offered his counterparts in California a crew of skilled Rhode Island Water Works men to assist in the,repair. The offer was declined with thanks, but now the Rhode Island Water Works Association is known coast to coast!

In 1989 Ms. Nancy Barnes became President, with Mr. Golibiewski becoming Secretary and Hans Bergey, long time Association stalwart and number two man at the Providence Water Supply Board as Treasurer. When Mr. Golibiewski severed his relationship with Pawtucket, in favor of Portland, Maine, Bill McGlenn, Portsmouth Water, was named Secretary, as provided in the by-laws.

Moving back now in time, and shortly after incorporation, President Blauvelt, acting as liaison with the Department of Health, had occasion to speak to them about the certification of our plant operators. He was told that "Rhode Island is a small state. We know all the operators, and we trust them." Jack Keaney, then of C.E. Maguire, and lately President of the New England Water Works Association, took the chairmanship of the committee to have legislation enacted mandating the certification. Legislation to this effect has been defeated twice in spite of the Governor's backing. We're betting that Jack will win out in the end.

The Program Committee has been very successful in presenting speakers and quarterly programs well designed to keep our members up to date on local water department happenings, and up-dates on regional and national happenings and legislation affecting our industry and its impact on the water industry.

Let me enumerate some of the fine programs we have had presented to us over the years.

In the early fall of 1980, Robert Russ, Director of the Water Resources Board, speaking at the Department of Health auditorium, told us, and not for the last time, his hopes for and the state's need of additional water supply for development purposes; water that could be gotten through the Big River Project. He encouraged the Rhode Island Water Works Association to work hard for its approval and implementation.

Ms. Nancy Barnes presented a fascinating picture of the metamorphosis of Bristol Water from private to public ownership. Ms. Barnes and her people gave us a blow by blow description at a memorable meeting at the Fore-n-Aft.

Camp, Dresser, & McKee presented a program at the Civic Center explaining the design and construction of a 16" water line bringing Scituate water to Lincoln

Metcalf & Eddy and Mr. Roy Anderson outlined the Newport project of upgrading the city's water pumping station and treatment facilities. This was one of our four meetings at Christie's, Christie's, by the way was/is a favorite meeting place of the Rhode Island Water Works hosting four meetings. The Dutch Inn and Vermettes have each hosted three meetings. So much for trivia.

In 1985, Woonsocket's long-term former mayor, Kevin Coleman, then the state's Director of Personnel, spoke, to us at Vermette's about the human side of hiring.

Also in the mid 1980's at the Lighthouse Inn in Narragansett, or in Narragansett Bay as the conditions existed, a distinguished, panel consisting of John Collins, dean of State Chemists, Mr. John Hagopian from the Department of Health, Thomas Wright, also from the State and Ms. Ellen Greiner, doctoral

candidate and President of the League of Women's Voters, spoke on the water supply and water shed protection problems facing us all. One trouble maker in the audience asked Mr. Collins whether acid rain was the cause of baldness in American men. John handled the case with his usual aplomb. If looks could have killed - I wouldn't be here today.

We toured the Kennedy hydraulic lab at Grinnell.

As recently as last September, two of our very own members, Bill McGlenn of Portsmouth Water and Tim Brown, filling the immortal St. Sauveur halo at Kent County told of the differences they had encountered in transferring their working base from private to public service.

The Association had two Joint meetings of particular note. In April of 1986 with Bill Mahoney serving as chairman of the New England section of the American Water Works Association's Board of Trustees, we were associated with perhaps the grandest meeting held during the last ten years.

Running from the 20<sup>th</sup> to the 22<sup>nd</sup> at the Marriott, the program read: New England Section American Water Works Association joint meeting with the participation of Rhode Island Water Works Association. The Environmental Protection Agency dominated the program, but at least we enjoyed! The festivities were topped off by Bill Mahoney's International Theme reception. Everyone who attended agreed that it was first class Mahoney -- and that's very good!

Our joint meeting with the Audubon Society of Rhode Island at their new facility was also outstanding. The Governor spoke. Dan Varin, State Wide Planning spoke as did members of Audubon and Rhode Island Water Works Association. At lunch, Washington-based environmentalists gave a too brief overview of the work environment, touching particularly on the South American Rain forest. We all agreed that it was a very good meeting and expressed the same. This was not to be. While the courts ruled in favor of the Providence Water Supply Board in the case of the Audubon Society of R.I. vs. Mksk, it has become all too apparent that we are marching to different drum beats.

Your Association has always backed the legislation that it favored with a speaking-appearance at all hearings. The Association representatives spoke at as many legislative hearings in the state house as they could squeeze into. Some hearing rooms were so small, and the interest so avid that even the hardiest sardine would have had difficulty finding accommodation. Time is too short here to do anything but touch on some of the more interesting meetings.

Do you remember CUB, the Citizen's Utility Board? CUB was made up of young turks and old turks, retreated from consumer groups. CUB wanted to insert an additional layer of bureaucracy between the water user and the water vendor – as if the eagle eye of the local and state elected officials, plus the PUC, weren't enough already. CUB proposed to hold public hearings and to stuff water department bill envelopes with information on how the water user, was being mistreated. All this was to be paid for by the water utilities and handled by their personnel. The utilities were to collect the money for them and perhaps pay interest? The idea was supposed to be going great guns in Wisconsin. The Association made common cause with the Providence Chamber and the other utilities on this one and spoke at the

public hearing at the state house. CUB's proposals were judged illegal and the matter died. Mistrs Trudeau, Falcone and Patterson spoke in favor of the Big River project at a Corps of Engineers hearing at Exeter. All pushed for it, but not recommending that it be covered to prevent sabotage as did one speaker. But, as you know, Big River is a dead issue.

The Association has worked with various departments for the common good of the water users of the state. First the Board of Directors worked with Andrew Nevins of the P.U.C. Also with Dan Varin, on the governor's State Wide Water Use Study, attending all public hearings on the study, and working with him in between. In the end we stood up at the final public hearing and backed this plan.

Later we worked with Dr. Combs of the Department of Health on water testing, violation notification, testing lab certification etc. and with Ms. Swallow and Mr. Klazer of back flow prevention legislation.

Over the years, your Association has put its money where its mouth was.... We took a half page ad in the New England Water Works Journal congratulating them on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their founding. Later, we contributed to the fund for the building of thier new home in Milford when they left Dedham. The recognition certificate I hereby return to the organization's filing.

In 1986 the election saw a Water Supply Bond issue on the ballot. The \$13.6 million bond called for the Water Facilities Assistance Program and two phases of Big River.

RIWWA had through, Mr. Falcone, handbills supporting the legislation designed and distributed, and the two Wednesdays before the election, took an ad in the Providence Journal urging passage. We did essentially the same thing later on ballot referendum #6 – providing \$10 million in matching funds for water shed protection.

In 1988, the Association hired Wiley Archer, now with Cataudella Associates, to devise a presentation for the public whereby all our water company members could, with one large shared-expense ad, instead of 30-odd individual ones, tell the public the status of their lead elimination program as required by the federal government. This ad, which met all governmental requirements, ran in the Journal during June, July and August. The savings in cost to the water utilities was appreciable.

So here we are, about to start a new decade of accomplishment. The Rhode Island Water Works Association is well established now and well known. If I have forgotten anything in my attempt at history, (Gibbon isn't turning over in his grave) and I'm sure I have, please remember that art is long, but memory is short. Put down on paper your own recollections so that by our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary this history may be complete. Thank you for listening. It has been an experience to relive 10 professionally wonderful years.