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# The Quiet Revolution

## Advancing the Environmental Professional

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NEHA held its 57th annual educational conference this year in Orlando, Florida. The conference centered around the theme of "The Quiet Revolution" — which picked up on the developing interdependence that is occurring between disciplines within the environmental field on behalf of resolving the environmental challenges facing this nation and the world.

The conference was hosted by NEHA's Florida affiliate. Affiliate members volunteered countless hours of service to ensure that this large event ran smoothly.

The AEC is also the occasion when one NEHA presidential term is completed and another begun. Chris Wiant, NEHA's president for the past year, delivered a ringing keynote address that discussed the evolution of environmental problem solving in this nation and where it seems to be headed. He implored the environmental health profession to assume its crucial role within the overall effort being devoted to provide a healthful environment for all.

A complete copy of Chris' extraordinary speech is included within this section of the journal.

John Barry gave an equally moving presentation when he shared his vision for the coming year with AEC attendees. John emphasized that NEHA, like any successful operation in America today, needs to focus on its individual customer (i.e., member). He committed that the upcoming year would be targeted as never before on understanding NEHA's members' needs, and then responding to them in the best possible manner.

A complete copy of John's stirring presentation is also included in this section.

Beyond the more than 100 technical papers delivered, the educational exhibit event, and the myriad networking opportunities that the conference provided, NEHA carried out its business affairs and honored many of the profession's stars through the

various awards it bestows. Highlights of these AEC events can be summarized as follows.

### Board of Directors Highlights

- Preliminary approval, subject to negotiating an acceptable contract, was given for NEHA to pursue a partnership with ILI (Integrated Logistics International, Irvine, California) for the purpose of producing a computer based training course for the OSHA eight-hour refresher course.
- A resolution expressing appreciation to Dr. Trenton Davis for his long tenure as the Technical Editor for the *Journal of Environmental Health*, was adopted.
- It was announced the Dr. Franklin Carver would now serve in the capacity of Journal Technical Editor.
- It was determined, in view of the Council of Delegates new set-up, that staggered terms for delegates were unnecessary.
- Considerable discussion continued over the most appropriate and effective role that NEHA could play on behalf of students. It was agreed that this matter would continue to remain under advisement by the board as further consideration of the views of a special task force on this issue was given.
- An explicit set of policies to be used to govern all future NEHA elections was agreed to and adopted.
- A joint membership arrangement between the National Environmental Health Association and the Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors (CIPHI) was approved. In essence, any member of NEHA can now be a member of CIPHI for 25 percent off CIPHI's dues; and conversely, any member of CIPHI can now be a member of NEHA for 25 percent off NEHA's dues. This unique and unprecedented policy agreement represents an outgrowth of the joint AEC held between the two organiza-

tions last year and reflects the commitment of both professional societies to do all that they can do to promote networking, interaction, professional development and fellowship for their members.

- It was announced that Charles Hart, Environmental Safety Coordinator for the Ohio University Department of Environmental Health and Safety, Athens, Ohio was selected as the recipient of this year's NEHA-IEHO Sabbatical Exchange Ambassadorship, which is sponsored by NSF.
- The board agreed to put NEHA's stamp on the special report that had been prepared for the association on the future of environmental health. This report can now be distributed as an official NEHA document with the intent to stimulate discussion throughout the country on where this field is going and where it should be going.
- The contract has now been signed between NEHA and its Texas affiliate for the hosting of the 1994 AEC in Ft. Worth, Texas.

### Council of Delegates Highlights

The majority of the time spent in the council's meeting was devoted to a first-ever strategic planning exercise. The presidents from all of NEHA's affiliates, along with all 10 of NEHA's regional vice presidents and five national officers participated in an intense series of focus group meetings. The purpose of the nine different focus groups was to begin to establish a baseline of information having to do with the needs and concerns of individual practitioners in environmental health.

Some focus groups worked on issues facing professionals throughout their careers. Other groups concentrated on skill needs, emerging issues and even expectations in this line of work. Each group also addressed NEHA as an issue and how the association could become more responsive

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to its individual members.

The discussion generated considerable material that will be reviewed over the upcoming months. Out of that review will come a more individual based strategic plan for NEHA.

Other business highlights to the council's meeting can be summarized as follows.

- Positions were adopted on behalf of the association with regard to several environmental concerns associated with the pending North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).
- The council agreed to defer for one year further consideration of a resolution that would put NEHA on record as officially and exclusively endorsing the title of Environmental Health Specialist for professionals working in this field.
- A budget for next year of \$1.3 million was approved for the association.
- It was announced that NEHA had just received preliminary approval to carry out a \$75,000 grant from the EPA, having to do with training registered environmental health specialists in indoor air quality issues. This specialized training will enable those receiving it to return to their communities and serve as community experts on this topic. Moreover, these people will be trained to train others in this serious environmental concern.
- It was reported that over this past year, NEHA's membership had essentially remained stable and that the AEC itself would be the determinant of whether or not the association would conclude this fiscal year with a budget surplus or deficit.
- Thanks to the exceptional contributions from NEHA's affiliates and sustaining members, over \$3,200 was raised through the silent auction event.
- It was announced to the council that NEHA would soon be commencing with its new program of training opportunities. NEHA will soon (within perhaps as early as

one year) begin a new program of bringing national educational opportunities to professionals in the field. This program of technical workshops will aim at regions of the country. In a region, as many as three to five workshops would be held at different cities. These workshops would be priced at the lowest possible cost.

- The council approved for next year's spring mail ballot election the candidacies of William Iannucci and Art Bloom for the position of NEHA second vice president.
- The official results from this year's spring mail ballot election were announced to the council. Peter Thornton was elected as NEHA's second vice president. Elected to regional vice president positions were Stacey Madson, Region 1; Larry Gales, Region 5; Michael Moon, Region 7; and Bruce Chelikowsky, Region 10.

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### Awards and Recognition

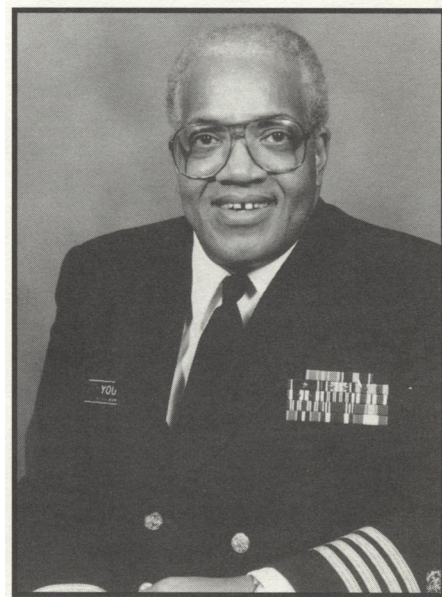
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#### Walter S. Mangold Award

The 1993 Walter S. Mangold Award was presented at the President's Banquet - the closing event of the 1993 Annual Educational Conference and Exhibit. Previous award winner Dr. Amer M. El-Ahraf presented to **Capt. Webster Young, Jr.** the individual plaque signifying NEHA's highest honor. In addition, Capt. Webster Young's name was inscribed on the permanent Mangold award plaque which will be displayed for the upcoming year at the Office of the Surgeon General.

Capt. Webster Young, Jr. began his career in environmental health 28 years ago. He has held a variety of positions during his extensive career, giving him a perspective that spans the local, national and international arenas.



*Capt. Webster Young, Jr.*

Born in Beaumont, Texas in 1939, Capt. Young moved with his family to Omaha, Nebraska when he was five years old. He received his secondary education at Creighton Preparatory High School in Omaha in 1957, and subsequently entered Creighton University. He graduated in 1961 with a Bachelor of Science degree. A three-year tour of duty in the U.S. Army followed, which concluded with a two year assignment in Germany.

In 1965, Capt. Young was hired by the Omaha-Douglas County Health department. Impressed with his work, the county supported his attendance at the University of Minnesota from 1967-68, where he earned a Master of Public Health degree. In recognition of his special skills as a progressive, people-oriented individual, his environmental health class honored him with the Herbert M. Bosch Award in Environmental Health.

Capt. Young accepted a commission in the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service (PHS) in 1969. His first assignment was as a field sanitarian

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with the Indian Health Service (IHS) in Ft. Defiance, Arizona. In this capacity, he provided a comprehensive range of environmental health services to approximately 15,000 Navajo Indians living in a 3,200 square mile area. The extreme remoteness of the communities served added to challenges presented by the diversity of the program. Nonetheless, Capt. Young successfully met this challenge. His technical administrative abilities along with his skill in working with others impressed his superiors, and in 1971 he was asked to serve as Assistant to the Chief Environmental Health Services Branch for the entire IHS Navajo Area.

Capt. Young's next assignment was as district sanitarian for the IHS from 1972-1975 in Bismarck, North Dakota. He was then tapped for a similar position in Albuquerque, New Mexico. In early 1980, he was detailed to Uganda in East Africa for one month where he served as environmental health consultant for a team which developed a primary health care program model to be used throughout the country. Because of his extensive background and sensitivities to remote communities, he was able to provide the necessary expertise to the team and the Uganda government for a realistic approach to environmental problems facing that nation.

Capt. Young was reassigned, in 1980, to IHS Headquarters in Rockville, Maryland. As a program analyst in the Office of Health Programs, he helped to oversee the operation of the entire IHS health program which included approximately 50 hospitals, 100 health clinics and a staff of more than 11,000 people. He became Chief of Commissioned Corps Management and Policy Staff for the Health Resources and Services Administration in March, 1989.

In September 1992, he was appointed Chief of Staff for the Office of the Surgeon General, United Public Health Service. By accepting this appointment, Young became the first sanitarian to hold this extremely influential and visible position which carries with it a flag rank. It is a demanding job, but Young brings to it a wide range of experiences and the unmatched skills of a sanitarian which enables him to address all

aspects of this position with confidence, diplomacy and efficiency.

As an active member of NEHA and several of its state affiliates, Young has been involved in NEHA's credentialing program and received the Past President's award in 1992. In addition, he has been the recipient of numerous other awards and recognition, including the Surgeon General's Exemplary Service Medal and the PHS Outstanding Service Medal. In 1990, he was honored as Distinguished Alumni Lecturer, University of Minnesota School of Public Health.

Capt. Young has served as a model for young sanitarians throughout his career. He has shown that job commitment, acceptance of responsibility and active involvement with professional organizations can and do make a difference in our ability to influence our destiny.

### *Presidential Citations*

Presidential citations were given at the awards luncheon by NEHA President Chris Wiant to **Trenton Davis, Kathy Delmont, Phil Kirkwood, Dr. Hugh Rohrer** and **Bruce Wilson**. Each recipient was awarded this honor for exemplary efforts and valuable contributions to NEHA in the last year.

### *Certificates of Merit*

Each NEHA affiliate is encouraged to submit the name of a candidate who deserves recognition for work on behalf of the profession.

Certificates of Merit were awarded this year to the following individuals, listed by affiliate:

Alabama - Barney Cheatwood  
Alaska - Stephan P. Wiener  
Arizona - A.J. Battistone  
California - Diane Eastman  
Connecticut - David Boone  
Florida - Walter Livingstone  
Illinois - Marlena G. Bordson  
Indiana - Rick Lopez  
Louisiana - Susan L. Welch  
Massachusetts - Paul McNulty

Minnesota - Steve Olson  
NCLEHA - John Tironi  
Nebraska - George Hanssen  
New Jersey - Mary Ann Orpello-Switz  
New Mexico - Curt Montman  
New York - Fred Einerman  
North Carolina - Larry A. Bunn  
Ohio - Tracy Buchanan  
Oregon - Eugene Regan  
South Carolina - Leroy C. Parker  
Wisconsin - Robert R. Nelson

Two special Certificates of Merit were also given to Tom Dunlop and Jay Walsh for being nominated for the Mangold Award.

### *Walter F. Synder Award*

The 1993 Walter F. Synder Award, sponsored jointly by the National Environmental Health Association and NSF International, was presented to **Dr. Amer M. El-Ahraf** at the NEHA Annual Educational Conference. George Kupfer of NSF International presented the award on behalf of Nina I. McClelland, NSF President and Chief Executive Officer.

Dr. Amer M. El-Ahraf was presented this award in recognition of respect by his peers and for outstanding accomplishments in the field of environmental health. Throughout his career, Dr. Amer El-Ahraf has been active in numerous international, national, state and local professional health and education groups. He served as president of both the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) and the California Environmental Health Association (CEHA), as well as founding chairman of both the International Forum of Environmental Health Faculty and the National Forum of Environmental Health Faculty. He currently is active in more than 20 professional groups. Dr. El-Ahraf is a pioneer and innovator in the education of environmental health professionals, has worked over his entire career in pursuit of improved standards and practices in the environmental health profession, and stands out in the field today as a dedicated professional who continues to make unique and lasting contributions to the field at

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local, state, national and international levels.

### *Crumbine Award*

The Food Service and Packaging Institute recognizes the outstanding food protection program in the country each year at the NEHA Annual Awards Luncheon. This year the prestigious Samuel J. Crumbine Consumer Protection Award was presented to **Gerald Barron**, on behalf of the **Allegheny County (Pennsylvania) Health Department**. As in past years, Charles Felix represented the institute and the Crumbine Jury in making the presentation of this award. Since 1954, this award has honored the memory of the public health pioneer who outlawed the common drinking cup in the state of Kansas, and eventually throughout the United States. It is fitting that Crumbine's substantive and symbolic act to eliminate a major source of disease transmission is remembered and recognized yearly.

### *Food Industry Sanitarian*

NEHA's Food Protection and Industry Affiliate jointly award a NEHA member the designation of Food Industry Sanitarian each year. To receive this honor, the professional must have made outstanding contributions to the field of food protection and sanitation. This year's recipient was **Marsha Robbins** of Marsha Robbins Consulting. Marsha Robbins is a consultant/program designer for foodservice and retail food store sanitation programs. Her projects include developing manuals, videotapes and training for International Chemical Company, National Restaurant Association and international food chains.

### *Other Honors*

Each year, past presidents of NEHA recognize an outstanding professional for long standing service and contributions to NEHA and to environmental health. The

1993 Past Presidents' Award was presented to **John Nussbaumer**.

- The 1993 Journal Editor's Award was presented by *Journal of Environmental Health* Technical Editor Dr. Trenton Davis. **Dr. Kevin Sherman** was selected to receive this recognition for his outstanding contributions as a reviewer for the journal.

- The 1993 Calvin Davis Wagner Award was given by the American Academy of Sanitarians to **C. Dee Clingman** of General Mills Restaurants.

- This year's Student NEHA (SNEHA) Chapter of the Year Award was presented to **Old Dominion University**, Norfolk, Virginia. A panel of distinguished judges including Phyllis Boucher, Bill Iannucci and Peter Thornton, selected the recipient based on a portfolio outlining projects and activities which benefited the university and the community. Congratulations to Old Dominion University for this outstanding effort.

- The Screening Committee for the NEHA/IEHO Sabbatical Exchange program announced its selection of **Charles Hart, M.A., C.I.H., C.S.P., R.S.** as this year's ambassador. Charles will be NEHA's third ambassador, as he will follow up on the exceptional experiences of previous Sabbatical Exchange representatives Enrico Baroga and Gary Coleman.

Charles currently works as the Environmental Safety Coordinator at Ohio University, Athens, Ohio. His responsibilities are widespread, though his focus is indoor air quality.

Congratulations to all these leaders in the environmental profession. Their contributions are creating solutions to environmental problems. Join NEHA and find out how NEHA is here to serve the individual member and "Take the Trail Toward Advancement" at the next Annual Educational Conference in June 1994 in Ft. Worth, Texas.

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The National  
Environmental Health  
Association  
invites you to

*Take the Trail  
Toward Advancement*

in Fort Worth, Texas

The 1994 Annual  
Educational  
Conference

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A Call for Papers  
has been announced

If you have a unique  
success story...

If you've used  
creative investigative  
techniques...

If you want to share  
your practical  
experiences...

Submit your abstract  
for consideration.

See page 37  
for full details.

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## *The Quiet Revolution Advancing the Environmental Professional*

### The Quiet Revolution — Will it lead to interdependence or failure?

...Chris J. Wiant

Immediate Past President

John Kennedy once said, "Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or the present are certain to miss the future." The story of environmental health in the last 20 years is one of change. There have been many milestones since the 1970s when we began to see revolutionary changes in how we managed issues of health and the environment. Some of these included the adoption of major environmental protection legislation; the development of technology for the assessment, control and remediation of health and environmental problems; the recognition of new threats to health and the environment that emerged; the centralization of policy making authority at the federal level of government and the emergence of environmental groups as a significant force in the formulation of environmental policy.

As we begin the decade of the 1990s we again find ourselves at a crossroads in environmental protection. Our choices of direction include continuation of what I would characterize as the fragmentation of environmental health and protection; the competition between federal, state and local government for resources and authority; the continued command and control philosophy of regulation and the parallel rather than intersecting tracks along which health and environmental protection programs travel. Or we could recognize that health and environmental issues do intersect and there is a need for interdependence in the public sector and among the public and private sectors. Our profession, and that includes the environmental health professionals and those trained in other disciplines that are contributing to the resolution of environmental health issues, must also consider its role in shaping a comprehensive and effective environmental health and protection strategy for the future.

I will begin this discussion by briefly describing the revolution that has taken place in environmental health and why we have a fragmented state of affairs. I will

then describe what occurred in our profession during that time and in relationships between governments at the federal, state and local levels. Finally, I will then offer a new direction to address the weaknesses in the system and, I think, to promote a more effective effort in environmental health and protection.

#### **The environmental revolution**

Since the early 20th century we have made great progress in the improvement of living conditions, protection from pathogens in food and water and the other acute risks to public health that were the causes of illness and premature death in the U.S. Although science and technology were stretched to identify problems and develop solutions, we were able to successfully intervene and reduce morbidity and mortality associated with these environmental hazards.

By the 1970s we began to recognize a new set of emerging environmental health problems. These included threats of exposure to chemical substances characterized by the chronic toxicity and for which the long latent period between exposure and disease would confound the efforts of researchers, regulators and the public to understand the etiology of these diseases. The profound differences between the acute effects of microbial pathogens of earlier years and the chronic effects of chemical toxins of the present became the catalyst that ignited a revolution that may be unrivaled in history, to date. There were several characteristics of these new environmental threats that promised a vigorous reaction from the public. These included:

- the association of these exposures to cancer, the most feared disease of the time;
- the prospect of mortality vs. morbidity;
- fear of the unknown — both when exposure occurred and what effects would result. It is not often possible to establish a clear cause/effect relationship between exposure and disease;

- the conflict between the demand for greater convenience through consumer products, the increasing use of synthetic organic chemicals and the corresponding fear of increased public exposure to those chemicals;
- the defensive posture of business at the beginning of this revolution, minimizing the risk of exposure to toxic chemicals and often presenting the appearance of sacrificing the public's health for economic prosperity;
- the growing public distrust of scientists and the government; and
- the emergence of environmental groups and their use of strong arm methods of encouraging conservative public policy often based on debatable interpretations of the science.

The public recognized a threat to health and the environment that was not well understood, but which had aroused considerable attention, concern and fear. The federal government was under pressure to take immediate action to address the problem of chemical exposure through environmental media and to clean up the transgressions of the past in order to protect the population and the environment in the future. The public policy response from Congress was the centralization of authority for the implementation of environmental protection programs at the federal level of government. The method of choice was that of "command and control" regulation along with an "end of the pipe treatment" to reduce future emissions, and a public works style clean up of past contamination.

Until the 1970s authority to formulate and implement environmental policy was vested in state and local government. In fact, previous efforts to confer greater responsibility on federal agencies had been explicitly rejected by Congress. Environmental protection was clearly a state's rights issue.

That picture changed with the enactment of the Clean Air Act of 1970. Subsequently,

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between 1970 and 1990, 26 preemptive environmental statutes have been enacted by Congress. While it appeared, through this legislation, that the nation's response to environmental threats had been consolidated resulting in a more effective and integrated process, there is evidence that it actually became more fragmented.

Recall that the centralization of environmental protection efforts was due to claims that state and local government didn't have the technical capabilities to address the problems; they were captured by industry and, therefore, less likely to regulate industry that was a significant part of the local economic base and they had been unresponsive to increasing public concern about the health effects associated with chemicals in the environment. Changes in the workforce also contributed to the widening gap between health and the environment, while also perpetuating the media-by-media segregation of programs that occurred.

Although the intent of the new environmental protection legislation was protection of health and the environment, the emphasis was placed on remediation and reduced emissions and, in the process, the relationship between human health and environmental protection was lost. What resulted was: 1) fragmentation of the structure and the process of formulating and implementing environmental policy; 2) the creation of a new environmental workforce; and 3) reduced credibility of government in the eyes of the public due to the absence of or ineffectiveness of dialogue among them.

### **The fragmentation of environmental protection efforts**

In spite of efforts to consolidate programs and create uniformity in the management of environmental issues just the opposite has happened. For example:

- Efforts to consolidate environmental protection programs within a single agency

resulted in greater fragmentation because the health component of these programs was left behind. The traditional environmental health programs were left unaccounted for and forgotten as resources were shifted to the new environmental protection programs.

- Programs were consolidated within a single agency, yet the lack of program integration through continuation of a media-by-media approach to environmental protection regulation created cross media issues that were difficult to resolve.

- State and local agencies became agents of the federal government, not partners, in the implementation of the new environmental laws. This resulted in the loss of flexibility in state and local programs, underfunded federal mandates (i.e., SARA and SDWA) and through much of the 1980s a decline in resources to the states accompanied by an increase in responsibilities.

### **Rebuilding the workforce**

Until the 1970s the dominant member of the environmental health workforce was the sanitarian, who had a clearly defined role relative to the traditional programs such as food protection, vector control, solid waste, water hygiene, wastewater and others. The sanitarian was respected in the community as the protector of public health and safety.

As the demands began to change and new environmental health issues emerged, three things happened. First, it was politically correct to demonstrate the new commitment to environmental protection by the creation of the new federal EPA. Many states then followed suit. Second, the more traditionally-focused sanitarian and his or her agency didn't react quickly enough to make the transition to incorporate responsibility for emerging environmental health issues into state and local health programs. We didn't recognize that the emphasis on visible evidence of environmental degradation and clean-up would lead to a de-

emphasis of the often unknown potential health impact. One of our distinguished NEHA leaders, Dr. Amer El-Ahraf, brought the response of our profession to our attention in 1974 when he said:

*"Therefore, while the local environmental health programs have always hesitated to assume a broader environmental quality role, they find themselves, in most cases, now in a defensive and uncomfortable position...trying to re-establish their legitimate, broad environmental functions."*

Third, was the need for new expertise in environmental health and protection programs. There emerged a great need for specialists such as toxicologists, geologists, chemical engineers and others. Before we could resolve the contemporary environmental health problems we had to understand them and develop the technology necessary to remediate them. These contemporary problems required the development of new science and technology as opposed to the mere application of what we already knew.

Many of these new entrants into the field of environmental protection came from other disciplines and were generally not trained in public health. They approached a problem within the context of the discipline in which they were trained. In contrast, public health training was oriented toward a holistic approach of interaction with communities to solve problems. That community interaction includes communication, for example, and that's where the new wave of professionals in environmental health initially failed. We approached the problem from a treatment perspective. Only more recently have we considered the long term effectiveness of prevention, the concept that resulted in such success in the traditional environmental health programs.

Instead of retraining the existing environmental health workforce and expanding the scope of public health prevention to assume responsibility for these contemporary programs, we created a new

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workforce of environmental health specialists. It is clear, to me, that the new skills that the specialists brought were needed to resolve the monumental problems identified. But, instead of integrating them into the existing system that had proven its effectiveness in community public health protection, they replaced the workforce and in many cases even disavowed any prior relationship with the public health agency that may have been split to create a new environmental protection agency.

### **The decline of the sanitarian**

Those changes led to a rapid decline in the credibility of the sanitarian. This was not altogether unpredictable. There are many signs that our profession was not responsive to the need for change. Consider the following things which inhibited us during this critical time.

- We couldn't respond to the community's fears about toxic chemical exposure.
- State and local health agencies had little regulatory authority and therefore no mandate that resources be expended to expand responsibility and improve technical skills.
- We had a credibility problem due to the absence of uniform standards for certification of skills, continuing education or entry level training and experience. The sunset of many states' sanitarian registration acts was evidence of our poor visibility and marginal credibility. The name "Sanitarian" had lost its meaning and we were reluctant to change that job title. What's unfortunate is that decision makers really didn't understand the importance or the capability of the sanitarian.
- Since we lived on the fringes of the communication loop for new environmental issues, we were forced into a reactive mode—making us appear less responsive.

As a result, government perpetuated the fragmented response to environmental concerns. We have rebuilt the environmental workforce with one whose credibility has suffered, in the eyes of the untrusting and fearful public. Elected officials, sympathetic to the messages of outrage from the public, vulnerable to the

intense pressure from activist environmental groups, and responsive to media-generated hysteria changed the driving forces for environmental policy.

### **Cooperative to coercive intergovernmental relations**

As public concern about the emerging environmental issues grew, so did the demand for action. These demands were specifically targeted to Congress and the federal agencies. This was largely due to claims that state and local governments were not responsive to the public's concerns. It was further alleged that state and local government lacked the expertise and resources to manage an effective response to these environmental threats.

Finally, activist environmental groups had emerged and, in the process, had developed a strategy to assert their influence at the federal level. The alternative was to mobilize efforts in each of the 50 states and fight environmental battles one state at a time. In retrospect, the decision of these groups to focus on Washington was, in many ways, responsible for the ultimate centralization of environmental policy making authority. The emerging importance of environmental groups had enormous influence on how environmental programs are managed today.

Beginning with the Clean Air Act of 1970, each time new environmental protection legislation was enacted Congress asserted more federal direction and oversight of state programs. For example, contrast the provisions of the Clean Air Act of 1970 in which states are responsible for developing the interventions that would result in clean air, with CERCLA in the 1980s in which the states originally had virtually no authority.

The concepts of "program authorization" and "primacy" served as vehicles to exert further federal control over state and local programs. The theory of cooperative federalism, characterized by intergovernmental cooperation and sharing of responsibility and decision making, had been replaced by preemptive and coercive federalism in which the states were obligated to perform as prescribed by federal law and

administrative guidance or risk losing all program authority. Furthermore, the federal government imposed the threat of sanctions such as the loss of highway construction funds or funding for state and local compliance and enforcement efforts that accompanied primary delegation.

Both Presidents Nixon and Reagan acknowledged that there was a need to shift the balance of authority and responsibility back to state and local government. Both called this concept the New Federalism. Unfortunately, both also had motives other than truly returning authority to state and local government. President Reagan, for example, was primarily interested in reducing the regulatory burden on business. In claiming to return power to the states that administration actually didn't relax the requirements for primacy or authorization but did reduce the funding to states to implement the various federal environmental laws, effectively tying their hands unless replacement funds were found within the state.

The centralization of environmental policy by the federal government was not, in and of itself, a bad strategy. The key questions are: did it result in improved protection of public health and the environment; and does it result in the effective use of public resources? It would be intuitively logical that a comprehensive environmental health and protection program that had elements of grass roots local input and sharing of responsibility and resources among the three levels of government would ultimately be the most efficient and effective approach.

What we have now is:

- A top-down system of policy making and implementation that needs to better account for bottom-up issues and concerns;
- Billions of dollars in response, remediation and treatment costs for business resulting in some questionable reductions in risk to the public;
- Federal mandates for which implementing rules have become hostages of the political process;
- The over-reaction to public perception without the careful consideration of science;
- The continued force of unfunded

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mandates to drain state and local resources and the inflexibility of those mandates to enable local priority setting; and

- The drain of resources and diversion of attention from traditional environmental health programs, reducing the margin of safety and resulting in increased complacency of the public.

In view of all of this — can the federal government consistently achieve its environmental health and protection objectives through top-down control? Is the system broken and does it need to be fixed? You have to be the judge.

### Independence or interdependence?

The relationship between human health and the environment is not one of independence but interdependence. In her 1962 classic *Silent Spring*, Rachel Carson said it simply: "We are dealing with ecology, the interrelationships and interdependence of man and the environment." It is difficult to envision health and environmental issues as independent while still claiming to be responsive to the problems we face. This suggests a strategy that would integrate and coordinate the response of all agencies with an obligation to environmental health and protection.

Professor Joseph Zimmerman of the SUNY-Albany has proposed a concept of cooperative federalism reflecting the reliance of each entity (in this case federal-state and local government) on others for the performance of certain functions and the investment of funds to achieve national goals. He argues that Congress should exercise great care when employing its powers of preemption to ensure that impediments are not created that impose restrictions on the ability of states to develop and implement regulatory programs. How do we achieve this in environmental health and protection?

- Link health and environment again—achieve a balance between the two in our consideration of risk reduction strategies and in justifying the associated economic impact of that risk reduction.
- Use limited resources effectively:
  - a. Establish requirements for science-based/risk-based regulation;

- b. Establish risk-based priorities for expenditures of public and private funds;

- c. Evaluate all environmental health issues in those priority-setting discussions — including traditional environmental health programs.

- Work within the current top-down structure to shape implementation based on bottom-up input — identify the needs, resources, capability and concerns of state/local agencies.

- Establish a partnership — A recent document distributed for comment by EPA illustrates how the current concept of partnership must change. The document, *General Strategy for Enhancing Partnerships with Local Government In Environmental Enforcement*, stated the following:

*"Participation by local governments is not a goal or priority in and of itself."*

A partnership will not be enhanced by concern only for accomplishment of federal priorities. It will be enhanced through the establishment of effective federal-state and local efforts to meet federal-state and local objectives.

- We must consider who is best suited for a task—federal, state, local government or industry—and how resources should be allocated among them to accomplish the task.

- Training is also top-down when it should be bottom-up. Federal agencies must understand communities and the interaction between government business, media, environmental groups and academia.

This is partnership or interdependence — sharing with and relying on each other to accomplish objectives. Without it we have ineffective use of resources; inter-governmental conflict; and public distrust.

Our profession and our association have important roles to play in the transition to a more effective system. We who work at the intersection of health and environment need to lead the effort to balance consideration of both in establishing sound, protective policy. We need to be present at the policy table to ensure that the issues concerning health protection are considered. This requires taking a holistic look at the community—not a fragmented look at isolated problems.

We need to have vision and assume a leadership role in addressing emerging environmental health issues by integrating them with our overall response to the current priorities, including traditional environmental health concerns.

The reality is that there is presently little in the way of a driving force to change the course we are on. Within our profession we are not full partners in environmental health and protection. It is our effort that will change the structure and process of environmental policy making and implementation. In order to channel that energy toward productive change we must be credible, capable and visionary.

We are at a crossroads. We can continue the present course because it's easier, or we can look for a new paradigm that relies on new partnerships and interdependence.

It is time for another revolution in environmental health. A quiet revolution — lead by environmental health professionals. We need to position ourselves on the front line, protecting the public health and the environment as we have for nearly 100 years. The future of our profession and public health and safety depends on the commitment of *each* of us as individuals and collectively through our professional association, NEHA.

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**NEHA is calling for papers for the 1994 Annual Educational Conference in Fort Worth, Texas. Your experience and your expertise can help others in the field.**

**See page 37 for details.**

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## *The Quiet Revolution* *Advancing the Environmental Professional*

### Nothing Just Happens

...John M. Barry, Ph.D., President

I am delighted to be here, and I am equally delighted to see so many of my colleagues and their families here to show their support and commitment toward advancing the environmental professional.

Let me tell you a little about my background. I spent much of my childhood in the piedmont of South Carolina, on a farm just outside of Spartanburg. As a young boy, I can remember going swimming in the pool at the bottom of a small waterfall, and I can remember my friends and myself riding our horses bareback down through the water of the bottomlands of the North Tyger River when the river flooded its banks. I can now look back and say that I also remember indiscriminate use and disposal of solid waste, herbicides, fertilizers and other materials that could eventually contaminate the clean water of our favorite streams. I can also remember how the river would turn blue, then purple and develop a stench from dead fish killed by dyes dumped by mills upstream.

In the mid-1960s I did research on South Carolina coastal vegetation and its relationship to soil types and water. Researchers are now seeing changes in this type of vegetation in densely populated areas. Additionally we know now that the withdrawal of high quantities of groundwater in Florida has allowed intrusion of salt water into freshwater aquifers.

We are experiencing *worldwide* climatic changes, massive starvation and global economic and environmental stresses — and many of these are related to anthropogenic environmental degradation and its effect on human health. But we are also seeing a regional and global awareness unsurpassed in the history of the earth.

It goes without saying that the practice of environmental health and environmental protection is evolving at a tremendous rate as new technology is developed — and we as practitioners must respond to this environmental change or we will find ourselves, and our profession, becoming an endangered species.

We as individuals, and collectively as an Association, must recognize environmental stresses and change our methods of operation in much the same way that a species and its gene pool evolves. We must broaden our gene pool by inviting other disciplines with appropriate information

bases and visions to join with us.

The mission statement for NEHA reads “To enhance the environmental health and protection professional for the purpose of providing a healthful environment for all.” NEHA is in the business to serve the individual member, not self-serving groups or grandiose blue sky ideals. On the other hand, if NEHA is successful in equipping the individual member with training, support and motivation, that individual member will be better trained to accomplish the broader goals of protecting the health of the people and the environment. The key point here is that it is the responsibility of the individual to set his or her own personal goals, be able to recognize opportunities when they present themselves and have the commitment and conviction to take advantage of these opportunities.

NEHA as an organization must be customer based. It must be market driven and know what a business needs to do to be successful. At the Board of Directors’ meeting in Winnipeg almost a year ago, affiliates were asked to participate in the formulation of a new strategic plan for NEHA. Additionally, the *Future of Environmental Health* report was completed by a committee chaired by Larry Gordon of the University of New Mexico. Reports and processes like these are only the beginning of an integrated process of defining exactly what the individual customer wants from his association and what the association needs to do to satisfy the customer.

The last decade has produced hard economic times. According to the Census Bureau, 13.1 percent of the nation’s population is below the poverty line of \$12,675 a year income for a family of four. Local governments and private industries have had to tighten their belts, re-examine their mission and revise their methods of addressing customer concerns. As members of the general public, we have continually asked for more service with no increase in tax responsibility. You and I both know this is hard to do. We as members of the public are asking that more be done with less, but as professionals, we must remember that we have a commitment to ourselves as individual and to the profession. We must learn to prioritize, but we must also learn to request additional resources, regardless of the political atmosphere, when

the need arises. Frankly, if we begin to compromise our ideals and our profession, we may find ourselves in such a position that we may never recover.

During the coming year I want to visit as many affiliates as possible, and in the process meet with as many members and non-members as possible on a one-to-one basis. I want to hear from the customers — what their perceptions and concerns are as individuals, what they want from their association, what we are doing right, and also what we are doing wrong. In addition, I am requesting that the Regional Vice Presidents also make an effort to learn from individual members and relay this information to me. Through this process, we will be able to better design your association to meet your needs.

As I said before, we have seen some hard economic times — but even so, I would like to see in the next year an increase in our membership base — and our pool of expertise — larger than any we have seen in the past. To do that, we will all need to be active in the recruitment process. As in any complex process, the rate of advance is dependent on the slowest moving part. Nothing just happens — good things are a response to efforts put forth — and I would like to see us all make the commitment to double NEHA’s membership base and its expertise base. I can’t promise you a tax break — I can’t promise you an increase in your salary — but I can offer you an incentive to recruit new members. Therefore, I am announcing a one year plan which will give you a credit towards your individual membership dues of \$10 for each member you recruit who has not been a member of NEHA since 1991. The offer begins July 1, 1993 and ends June 30, 1994. Help yourself, help the Association and help me to be able to report a tremendous growth in NEHA by the time we meet in Ft. Worth.

I intend for this to be an exciting year. But for it to be a successful year and perceived as being a successful year, you — the individual member and customer of NEHA — must make the commitment. The real strength of this Association is in its members. By working together as a team and having a true commitment to excellence, we *can* be successful.