

IN MEMORIAM

Robert E. Harrington

We were saddened to learn that Bob Harrington passed away on November 4, 2016. His environmental health career spanned almost 40 years, making a positive difference in the communities and organizations he worked for and colleagues he worked with.

Harrington received his undergraduate and graduate degrees at Colorado State University and began his career in 1974 as a sanitarian at the El-Paso City-County Health Department in Colorado Springs. He moved up the ranks during his time there, leaving in 1980 as a senior supervisor. From there he worked for the Western Regional National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak) from 1980–1985, directing internal quality control sanitation programs for all Amtrak operations in 11 western states. From 1985–1997, Harrington served as the vice president of technical services for public health and safety for the National Restaurant Association (NRA). Through his work at NRA, he provided technical guidance on legislative and policy issues that impacted the foodservice industry.

Harrington's final career move brought to him to Wyoming in 1997, where he served as director for the City of Casper-Natrona County Health Department. He was responsible for all aspects of the department, including community public health nursing, disease prevention, and environmental health. He retired from the health department in 2013.

Along with his work in the field, Harrington was actively involved in numerous environmental public health organizations. He was a registered sanitarian through NEHA, as well as a long-time member. He was involved in NEHA's industry affiliate, serving as president from 1996–1997, and was a member of NEHA's Wyoming affiliate. He was also a diplomate of the American Academy of Sanitarians. Other associations he was involved in included the Wyoming Public Health Association, Western Association of Food and Drug Officials, Wyoming Governor's Food Safety Council, National Automatic Merchandising Association, and Conference for Food Protection.

Harrington is survived by his wife, two children, and one grandchild. His hobbies included horseback riding, model railroads, and a broad love of music. He was an extremely talented musician, being able to play the guitar, banjo, mountain dulcimer, mandolin, accordion, tin whistle, and Highland bagpipe.

While Harrington had a strong impact on the environmental health profession and the communities and organizations he served, he also made an equally strong impact on his colleagues. Chuck Higgins, retired captain from the U.S. Public Health Service, spoke of Harrington's impact on his career, "I met Bob early in my career and our paths seemed to cross at critical junctions. His seriousness about the profession had a great impact on me. In our private conversations he always emphasized the importance

of our obligation to the public. I used that advice to guide many decisions over my career."

Long-time friend Bob Powitz remembered the first time he met Harrington, "I met Bob Harrington at a NEHA conference. We hit it off immediately. We both enjoyed and were proud of what we were doing. We both blatantly identified ourselves as 'sanitarians,' and we were both committed to continuing education and innovations in our practice. In other words, we were cut out of the same bolt of cloth, or two identical dial thermometers in the tool bag." Powitz went on to say, "We called each other when we needed advice or a sounding board. We exchanged ideas, lit new fires, put out old ones, criticized everything we knew, and always came away with the answers we needed. Bob was a traditionalist, but with a twist. He always found a novel approach to some old and hackneyed environmental health concept or method. His approach to problems did much to change my way of thinking and his ideas changed the classic meme of our industry and profession. Damn, he is missed."

Michèle Samarya-Timm recalls that Harrington was "a true old-school sanitarian with a long-standing dedication to the field of environmental health. Bob was always armed with an informative and entertaining public health anecdote, usually accented with an infectious laugh. In addition to sharing, he was always willing to expand his expertise by exploring new ideas, topics, and innovations—and despite some theatrical protests, he even embraced the new-fangled world of computer literacy! Perhaps my favorite quote from Bob is, 'Environmental health is the voice of reason that can overcome the silliness of those who only think they're in the know.' We will certainly miss him and his dedication to our profession."

"I knew Bob for years. He was always the consummate professional and 'whip smart' about knowledge of the profession. He was also willing to share that knowledge with others," commented CAPT Gary Noonan. "I appreciated his rather quirky and dry sense of humor. He was always fun to be around and I will miss him a great deal. It is still hard to believe he is gone."

NEHA wishes to express its deepest sympathies to Harrington's family, friends, and colleagues. He was a memorable and outstanding figure in our profession, and he touched the hearts and minds of many of us. He will be greatly missed. 🐾🐾

Editor's Note: The *Journal* would like to thank Patricia Taliaferro for providing us with information about her father's career. We also appreciate the quote contributions from Harrington's friends and colleagues. If you would like to share information about the passing of an environmental health professional to be mentioned in a future In Memoriam, please contact Kristen Ruby-Cisneros at kruby@neha.org.