



Illinois Rural Water Association

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IRWA'S MISSION STATEMENT

“Protecting and preserving the water and wastewater resources of Rural Illinois through education, representation and on-site technical assistance”



Your Opinion Counts By: Don Craig, Deputy Director

Since I began working within the Rural Water Association, back in April of 1985; there has always been one aspect of making contacts in the field, which was just as important as providing technical assistance. That was getting some kind of critical response from the system and personnel about the help I was providing, or was going to provide. This is still true to this day, and will continue to be on into the future.

What I'm referring to, is personal letters addressed to IRWA, from the system staff or administration that was assisted. As a utility membership organization, it is imperative that we receive feedback from those facilities that are provided assistance in one manner or another. And, we do understand, that such responses, may not always be positive... but, those type of letters, as few as they are, do provide us important information and direction to make our endeavor to help, even better. However, by far, the letters received over the years to IRWA, and directed to our field staff, office personnel, administrators, and Board members... have been very, very positive, and thankful in regard to all we have done or are doing.

Such letters are an important 'instrument' in helping to provide a better picture of what we do and what we are all about, when it comes to providing technical assistance and training to our hundreds of member utilities in the state of Illinois. Each one is a very useful representation tool that is reviewed and used by other systems, federal agencies and congressional personnel, to become even more informed and affirmed that the work we do in the

field, is genuine, appreciated, and more than that... needed.

Our staff and Board, (whether it be in the field, at training sessions or conferences, or out of the office), are dedicated to doing the best job they can to keep Illinois Rural Water Association at the forefront of "doing what we do". That is, to keep on providing the best assistance and training we can, for our core target of rural water and wastewater utilities throughout the state. And, the help comes with no strings attached, but moreover it just comes with diligence and commitment.

So, if our staff, Board, or the Association as a whole, has benefited your facility in one way or another... please do not hesitate to take a few

minutes to send a letter, and just let us know how IRWA has been an asset to you or your system. We want to do the best we can, within our means, for all the rural water and wastewater utilities in the state. Our ability to improve and to keep providing quality training and technical assistance is reliant upon system input. Also, our strength to continue as an organization of rural water and wastewater utilities is also directly reliant upon IRWA membership.

So, you see, your opinion does count..... in so many ways!

Such letters are an important 'instrument' in helping to provide a better picture





My Story

By: Mark Mitchell

"My Story"... Everyone here at the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago has a "funner" story than I, "hit by a vehicle while riding a scooter", "fell off a ladder while cleaning gutters", "shot in the spine in a drive by". The question turns to me.... "Oh I was taking a shower on a normal Monday morning, my legs collapsed under me and that was the last use of them I had"!

So some background... On Sunday April 8, my wife, Kim and I we're getting ready to go to an all-day special church meeting. As I was getting dressed I felt a squeezing sensation in my lower body. An immediate pain that almost doubled me over was the next thing I felt. I told Kim if that squeezing sensation were in my upper body, I would think "heart attack". I decided to go ahead to the special meeting. We then traveled to Spring Green, WI to visit and have supper with our son Trent and his wife Sarah. On arrival back home I learned that due to my low back pain, I could not sleep in any prone position. I ended up sleeping in my recliner and only by sitting there was I able to get comfortable. Monday morning I called my chiropractor and scheduled an appointment right away. That visit and another in the afternoon as well as Tuesday morning provided minimal relief. I felt clumsy on my feet and there was numbness in my legs. My chiropractor felt it was not a disc issue as I could get relief sitting and I did not have severe leg pain that would indicate a herniated disc. After my chiropractor appointment on Tuesday I traveled for work to help Wayne set up for a Source Water Protection Training session on Wednesday morning in Havana, IL. I spent two nights in a straight chair in a motel in Canton, did my training on Wednesday and worked my way home on Thursday. Thursday afternoon, Friday and Saturday mornings I was back to my chiropractor. He felt we were making progress. I thought so too, but with less confidence than he. I told him that I was thinking of visiting my primary care provider for some x-rays and to see if he would see fit to prescribe me some muscle relaxer that would allow my chiropractor adjustments more advantage if

the muscle spasms could be minimized. The x-rays of the low back (this is important to note because my actual condition now was caused by something much higher) showed a lot of arthritis and curvature of the spine and in fact when reviewed by chiropractor, he said he needed to completely change how he was adjusting me. The adjustment on Tuesday morning after his review of x-rays seemed to help and I traveled that day to Kankakee, IL for the second 4 hour training session on Source Water Protection. Tuesday night was spent sitting up sleeping on the hotel couch as I was still unable to lie flat without excruciating pain. I helped teach the class on Wednesday then made onsite visits to towns on Wednesday afternoon and especially Thursday morning as so many towns were dealing with flooding issues from heavy overnight rains. I got home and visited my chiropractor on Thursday afternoon and again on Friday. At my Friday appointment I told the chiropractic receptionist I wanted an appointment for every morning for the next week. I was going to be working at home that week and I wanted to "get it fixed". So Saturday I spent most of the day sitting on an ice pack in between getting some necessary things done at home. I was starting to get a bit depressed as no matter what we had planned my back was hurting and holding me back. On Sunday I didn't feel I could attend Sunday morning meeting so I stayed home and later that morning friends brought lunch and grilled out for us. We enjoyed our visit and at one point I said... "You know, I'm having a really good day... I think this thing is getting better. Also, later that evening Tyler brought our Monticello grandkids down to see us, since I had been unable to go there to see them on Saturday with Kim. We had an enjoyable evening and Milo and Peyton are so sweet wanting grandpa's back to get better.

On Monday morning after attempting to sleep in bed and could do so for only an hour and a half at the most, I got out of bed. As fortune would have it, this was Kim's every other Monday off. She went downstairs to work out on her elliptical

and I went to take a shower. As I stepped into the tub, I noticed that my back was suddenly hurting worse, and I had to support myself first with one arm, then with two to stay upright. I knew I was going to need to alert Kim, yet I was going to have to yell loud for her to hear me. After yelling three times she finally heard me and came running upstairs to pull back the shower curtain and see me collapse in a heap on top of my useless legs. She quickly called 911 and Monroe EMS had the monumental task of removing me from the tub. They didn't understand the paralysis issue and were going to sit me on the side of the tub. I never felt the tub or the rescue chair they put me in to get me out of the house and into the ambulance. I remember ever so vividly, that there was a clock in the back of the ambulance that read 8:24 as we left the front of our house headed to Monroe Hospital ER. In the ER, I was not a priority patient would be an understatement and finally after a couple examinations and a few hours an MRI of my lower back was conducted. There was nothing in it that matched my symptoms. The Monroe ER Doc wanted me transferred to UW Hospital in Madison, but the ER Doctor in Madison wouldn't accept me because nothing in my MRI was matching my symptoms. It was only after the ER Doctor in Monroe asked me if I needed to urinate, and I said no, that we got on the right track. They catheterized me and drained over 500 cc's of urine and I had felt no pressure whatsoever. When Monroe called Madison this time, they accepted the transfer. So I was in Monroe Hospital ER from approximately 8:30 am until around 5 pm. I was transferred via ambulance, to UW Hospital in Madison and arrived there at 6 pm to find our daughter in law Sarah there in the ER waiting on me to get there.

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It was decided after some time that I should undergo another MRI this time of my entire spine. What became evident after 3 hours in the most claustrophobic of situations is that my spinal cord had been impinged at the T9 and T10 vertebrae. I had developed spinal stenosis (narrowing of the spinal column, due to calcium build up (arthritis) in the lamina. The squeezing sensation I felt on April 8, was likely when the disk herniated between the T9 and T10 vertebrae. This would be like a tire going flat and it bulges out the side. This caused the spinal cord to be pinched in the already narrowed by stenosis spinal column. The surgeon said it gave my spinal cord a "heart attack". It was suggested that I undergo a surgery called a laminectomy to remove the pressure from the spinal cord. At 4:30 am I finally got admitted and out of that ER. Remember we arrived at that ER at 6pm. So we pretty well used up all our ER time for a few years, I think. My surgery was scheduled for 11:00 am on Tuesday and I actually went to surgery at 2:30 pm on Tuesday. It was about a two and a half hour surgery and very painful upon waking up afterwards. The surgeon said when the pressure was relieved, the cord turned back nice and pink, and refilled with fluid. There is a chance that mobility will return, since the cord was pinched, not severed. We

were told that I was going to need intense therapy and rehabilitation. UW Hospital specializes in many areas, but spinal cord injuries and rehab are not one of them. A co-worker of mine, who actually does the exact same job I do, but for the Indiana Affiliate of our National Organization has been in a wheel chair since age 18. I called him and told him my condition, and to say the least he was shocked. He suggested I go to Craig Hospital in Denver, CO. They are a spinal cord injury rehabilitation specialty hospital. Through research and asking questions at UW Hospital another option was brought up and that was Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago (RIC).

I would have less of a bone jarring transfer via ambulance and spinal cord injury rehab is long at its best, so I would be in Denver with no family support or minimal at least. My family has rallied around me in ways I cannot tell you. Kim has been my Rock, staying by my side and making sure the care I get is up to her high standards and filling in where they do not. Our IRWA Executive Director, Frank Dunmire walked in on Thursday afternoon and I could hardly believe it was really him. He visited with us all afternoon while Kim's parents were there as well. Frank came back for a while on Friday morning. It

was good to discuss work stuff as that has been a large part of my life for the past 18 years (As of April 17) and my long term goal is to be back out there working hard for the community water supplies of IL to protect their potable water sources. So Saturday morning became the transfer time for the trip to the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago (RIC). I was loaded in the bumpiest ambulance they could find (I'm sure this is not true, but it sure felt like it) and the I90 Toll Way in to Chicago has plenty of construction it felt like. We arrived here at RIC around noon on Saturday, April 27, 2013. As I type this on May 20, 2013, I have completed 3 full and intense weeks of Physical and Occupational Therapy and am getting rather good at getting around in my wheel chair. The Doctors are encouraged by my progress to date and we are hoping for a full recovery, but trying to be prepared for whatever comes our way. One way or another, I plan to be back out on the road assisting the PWS's of Illinois to reduce the risk of contamination in their water supplies! I am working hard, I am determined to regain whatever I can and around me here, I see how I could be so much worse off! To all my friends and IRWA family members, keep me in your thoughts and prayers and watch for me to show up in your town.

DALE HANNER

JEFF TOMIATI

GREG BATES

BILL DOWELL

JOHN BELL

GALE MOORE

JAY BELL

STEVE FLETCHER

FROM IRWA BOARD & STAFF!!

GET WELL SOON MARK

HEATHER MCLEOD

FRANK DUNMIRE

WAYNE NELSON

PHIL DONELSON

DON CRAIG

PERRY MUSGRAVE

CHUCK WOODWORTH

WAYNE DIXON

JACQUE FLESE

DEUSE BURKE

JEFF MCCREADY
PAT GAMMILL





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STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
SPRINGFIELD, IL
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QUALITY ON TAP

Mark Your Calendars!



10th Annual IRWA Golf Outing
Friday, August 23, 2013
10:00 a.m. shotgun start

Piper Glen Golf Club
Springfield, Illinois

Please look online at www.ilrwa.org or in your mailbox in the next few weeks for more details. We look forward to seeing you there!!