

*Remembering Nick Winter (1948-2003)*

*By Peter A. Richardson, P.E., CFM*

While serving as Vice-Chair of the New England Floodplain and Stormwater Managers Association (NEFSMA), I'll always remember what our Chair, Nick Winter, would say at our board meetings while we were discussing flooding issues; "I don't even know what it is you people do (referring to the planners and engineers at the table). All I know is that when the water gets to a certain level, I turn the pumps on." Of course, when Nick would say this, we would be meeting at the Charles River Dam in Boston where he served as the Director of Flood Control for the Metropolitan District Commission. For years, Nick was the person who prevented the Charles River from overtopping its banks between Boston and Cambridge during flood events. Not only did he run the Charles River Dam, he was also in charge of the Amelia Earhart Dam (the Charles River Dam's baby sister located on the Mystic River), as well as the Mystic Lakes Dam and a number of MDC pump stations.

Most people living or working in Boston see the sailboats on the Charles during a nice day and have no idea why the river is always at a constant elevation, even though it drains to Boston Harbor. Most of them probably don't know where the Charles River Dam is (or that there even is a dam) and that it is equipped with six (6) 2,800 Hp diesel engine pumps that keep water flowing into Boston Harbor during the high tide cycle (and coastal storm events), keeping the Charles at a constant level and protecting the cities of Boston and Cambridge from tidal flooding. It was Nick Winter's responsibility to ensure that the pumps and gates always worked properly at this critical facility and at the Amelia Earhart Dam, as well.

In addition to controlling water levels in the Charles and Mystic Rivers, Nick was also in charge of the lock systems at both the Charles River and Amelia Earhart Dams. Nick would stay at the Charles River Dam on Fourth of July weekends, sleeping on a cot, in order to make sure that hundreds of boats passed safely through the dam into and out of Boston Harbor, as hundreds of boaters came to watch the fireworks along the Esplanade.

While some of us are *involved* in floodplain and stormwater management, Nick truly was a Floodplain Manager. As Director of Flood Control at the MDC, he was responsible for preventing untold millions of dollars of flood damage from occurring in Boston and Cambridge for nearly twenty years. On top of that, Nick donated many hours of his time to NEFSMA (as Chair for four years) and as an Officer of the Association of State Floodplain Managers (ASFPM) for a number of years.

It was under Nick's leadership that NEFSMA grew in professional stature as he spearheaded our efforts to become a federal non-profit organization. He made sure this was accomplished in record time. He also chaired NEFSMA during our two most successful, well-attended conferences ever. While Nick would have been sad to see NEFSMA eventually dissolve, he would have agreed that turning our assets over to ASFPM was the right thing to do.

In addition to his many professional accomplishments, Nick was also a devoted father and husband. He was active in his community and served as the Town Moderator for Bellingham, MA. Nick had also served his country in the military. He was a special person and was always fun to be with. He always made sure that we had a few laughs to go along with our hard work and showed us that true joy in life comes from serving others.