

# The Waning of the Age of the Aquarius

By David Branham, OAWU Wastewater Technician

For us baby boomers that ushered in the Age of Aquarius, the time is getting close at hand for the coming of a new age. I have written, and speak often, about the aging work force. There was a time in my life when retirement seemed to be very far off, but now alas, the time seems to be drawing closer and as I stated; the time is nearing to pass the wand off to the next generation.

One of the keynote speakers this year at the annual conference at Sunriver, was Dr. Skinner, a powerful and gifted speaker. The theme and main thrust of his presentation was education. As I sat and listened to him, I couldn't help but be in total agreement as to what he was saying. He echoed many of the things that I have said; in this day and age one must educate oneself.

My father grew up during the Great Depression era. At that time in American history, it was not uncommon for men as young as fourteen to leave home and go to work. My father was no exception to this, and one of his favorite sayings was. "By God, I was out skidding cat at the age of fourteen." Would this have worked for me? No, because by the 1960s there were labor laws that would have prevented such a thing. I knew in my heart that I must get at least a high school education when it was my turn to enter the work force.

Is a high school education good enough in this day and age? No, in my opinion probably not. Today, in the age of outsourcing, the job market looks pretty bleak for many workers. For many of the people who chose to work in the high tech industry, their jobs are gone and are not coming back. But you, my friends have a golden opportunity lying at your feet.

And what do you suppose old Dave means by that? Well, I'll tell you. If you are working in the water/wastewater industry, and I assume you are if you are reading this article, the opportunities are boundless. Most entry level positions in the water/wastewater industry require only a high

school diploma, and I have seen many starting positions that begin at a very good living wage.

Yea right, I've been working at this job forever and it hardly pays enough to make the car payment, you may be saying to yourself. But wait! I implore you: Step back and take a look at what you have in your hands. Are you certified? If so, who paid for it? Did the municipality or entity you work for foot the bill? That certification you hold is your ticket to a better job. If you possess the state water or wastewater certification it is the equivalent to having a college education in most other occupations, and remember all CEUs you earn can be used as college credits.

If your desire is to improve your situation, don't be afraid to take additional college courses, perhaps at the local community college. A math class or writing course will fit in nicely with your occupation and often times your employer will help by picking up, if not all, part of the tab.

Your skills and certification as an operator are in great demand, and thus demand good wages. Your job will not be outsourced and sent overseas. If you choose to move up the ladder, so to speak, additional education can and will expose you to many jobs that pay in the upper income level. It's all up to you; the jobs and money are available for the taking. Can you meet the challenge? I think you can and I have every faith in you and your abilities. See ya down the road. Dave