

'Through Thick and Thin!'

If you check Google, it will yield a definition of the origin of the phrase 'through thick and thin'. It alludes to travel through dense forest, so if someone were to stay with you 'through thick and thin', he or she would accompany you in both thick patches of wilderness as well as sparse vegetation.

The phrase or expression 'through thick and thin' is a common phrase. It is one that my late mother, Doris Hartman, used many times through her life while lecturing me or one of my brothers or sisters, but generally me. She gave me a lecture many, many times while growing up in Sabetha. Of course, my mother was generally talking about family and or my choice of friends, good or bad, when she was using this phrase. Those lectures still resonate in my mind to this day.

'Through thick and thin'. During this COVID-19 pandemic the front-line workers – health professionals, EMS personnel,

police personnel, etc. who are in danger every day and in harm's way just doing their jobs should be thanked over and over again for what they do in the fight against the COVID-19.

'Through thick and thin'. In my opinion there is another set of front-line workers so to speak. These are the employees of the water and wastewater systems in Kansas. The list includes operators, clerks, administration, board members, and council members. The list goes on and on. During the State shut down this phrase could not be more applicable than to the municipal and rural water district

employees. They still have to continue the daily operations of the municipality or RWD to ensure good services. The water must be treated and sent to the distribution system and ultimately to the customers. Wastewater still must be treated and discharged, meeting all requirements. There will still be maintenance and repairs needed on

They still have to continue the daily operations of the municipality or RWD to ensure good services.

the water distribution systems, wastewater collection systems, parks and streets, etc. Utility bills still must be calculated and sent out; city commissions and RWD boards still need to meet in whatever means it takes to govern. With some exceptions, cities and RWDs cannot be shut down and allow employees to work from home; they have to be onsite to conduct the daily business. The employees of the systems are invaluable in normal situations but even more so during the pandemic. **Hats off to them!**

‘Through thick and thin’. As everyone is aware the Kansas Rural Water Association 2020 annual conference and exhibition was cancelled which left many operators in the state scrambling to learn where and when they might take the certification exams as well as an opportunity for certified operators to maintain their water and wastewater licenses by obtaining credit hours at the conference. Elmer has been working with the staff to develop online training that would allow certification credit hours. This is a work in progress and the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) will have to sign off on it but it appears this may happen in some form. It will be a great opportunity to learn from presenters and also receive credit hours and still maintain the social distancing that is being required of us all. All entities are working as a team to develop alternatives to meeting in person. Things may change or may they not as we all settle on a new normal whatever – that is, as the pandemic continues.

‘Through thick and thin’. KRWA has also working with modified procedures with the National Rural Water Association. The NRWA-funded Circuit Riders are still managing to meet the requirements and assist systems with whatever problems that may arise. KRWA technical assistants have been working with revised stipulations from KDHE and the Kansas Water Office to meet the requirements of those contracts as well. The National Rural Water Association, Kansas Department of Health and Environment and the KRWA staff have been working in unison to keep operators and systems operating.

Also due to the cancellation of the Kansas Rural Water conference there wasn’t a chance to hold the business meeting always held on the last day of the conference. Instead the Association adopted a mail ballot provision. The nominations for a three-year term on the Association’s were Carl Chalfant, Allan Soertart and myself. The results are in and all three of us were elected to another three-year term. Also, on May 12, the KRWA Board held a meeting via conference call for the ‘reorganization’ of the Board which would have also been held on Thursday morning of the conference, to elect the officers. I was elected President; Mike Fulkerson, Leavenworth Consolidated RWD No. 1 located in Basehor, was elected Vice-President; Allan Soertart, Johnson Co RWD No. 7 located in Gardner, will serve as Treasurer, and Pat Shaffer, Butler Co. RWD 5 located in Benton, will continue as Secretary. Paul Froelich,

KRWA is the only organization in Kansas to offer on-site technical assistance from our 20 employees who specialize in not only the day-to-day operations of systems but also in expert areas including water rights, GPS mapping, source water protection not to mention the daily operational issues of water and wastewater systems.

city of Enterprise, has served as President the last four years. Paul has done a wonderful job as President. Paul has an arsenal of one-liners and is fun to listen to when he speaks. I want to thank him for the time he served as President and for having such a quick wit about him; it is always a hoot to talk to Paul. The remainder of the KRWA Board members are Carl Chalfant, city of Washington, and Scott Robertson, city of Hesston. It is an honor to serve as President of the best Rural Water Association in the United States.

‘Through thick and thin’. Your Association, KRWA, has stood strong and will continue to do so. KRWA will continue to offer the best training and what can be the most accessible for operators, clerks, board members and city officials in Kansas. KRWA is the only organization in Kansas to offer on-site technical assistance by our 20 employees who specialize in not only the day-to-day operations of systems but also in expert areas including water rights, GPS mapping, source water protection and the daily operational issues of water and wastewater systems. KRWA staff have more than 500 years of direct experience with water and wastewater utilities. If your water or wastewater system has a need – whether it’s a question concerning regulations or an imbalance in electrical current, give KRWA a call. KRWA is ready, willing and is certainly able to be of help.

Bill Shroyer is Assistant City Administrator at the City of Sabetha. Bill worked for KRWA from 1994 to 1999 as KRWA’s first Wastewater Circuit Rider.

He was elected to KRWA’s Board of Directors in 2014 and to the National Rural Water Association Board of Directors in 2016. He holds Class III water operator certification and Class IV wastewater operator certification in Kansas.

