What NALMS Means to Me

Reflections from Members

Doug Ball
Los Angeles Department of Water and Power

I attended my first NALMS Symposium at Orlando in 1994 and was blown away by the energy and the attitudes of the other delegates. I was treated like an old friend even though I was meeting everyone for the first time. That experience has been reinforced from that time on and now, many of those that I met for the first time over 15 years ago really are “old friends.” Well, maybe I should say “long-time friends.”

There are many wonderful reasons that I have continued to participate in NALMS. Not the least of these is the access that members have to a wide range of marvelous expertise in our field – not only through the highly acclaimed publications, LakeLine and the journal Lake and Reservoir Management, but the people themselves. All of the NALMS people that I know, including researchers, textbook authors, practitioners, and many others have always been so willing to share their knowledge and experiences. I always come away from the symposia with new ideas and renewed enthusiasm. (I find the discussions that are spawned by controversial presentations particularly fascinating.)

Another thing I like about NALMS is the goal of bringing applied science to bear on the many issues that affect lakes and reservoirs and our collective use and enjoyment of them.

Larry Butler
Reston Association

As a young resource manager not long out of school I had the job of researching triploid grass carp as a possible aquatic vegetation management tool for the community of Reston where I worked (and still do!). As there was no Internet in the early to mid-1980s, I relied on various newsletters and phone conversations from which I could glean any tidbit about these fish. I came across a notice for a NALMS conference and saw that two of the preeminent researchers on the topic, Drs. Dennis Cooke and Dan Canfield, were giving several talks on the matter in McAfee, New Jersey – at an old Playboy resort. As it was driving distance from northern Virginia I decided to take on two firsts on one trip – my first professional conference away and a (one-time) Playboy resort!

I went to the sessions on the grass carp and was immediately impressed with the knowledge of the speaker. I gathered as much information as my young brain possibly could and called it a day. Later that evening, while strolling around the resort, someone, and I wish I could remember who it was and thank them, asked if I was going to the hospitality suite. I asked what that was and he said it is where everyone goes to talk – oh, and have a couple of drinks. He said he was going and I willingly followed. In the suite I saw many of the faces who had spoken that day, including Denny and Dan. I gathered some courage to approach these two stalwarts of grass carp fame, and I guess a beer helped. What followed was at least an hour-long discussion about the use of grass carp in my specific situation! It was fabulous. I could not believe these two distinguished gentlemen would take the time to have such an in-depth conversation with an obvious rookie.

Needless to say I was hooked, like grass carp on a hydrla-rolled dough ball. I joined NALMS, participated at many levels, got over my fear of presenting to crowds, learned a whole lot about lake and watershed management, visited many great cities and places at NALMS
conferences (Banff anyone?), made many life-long friends and now rely on those many connections to help not only Reston’s lakes, but also many others through the vast referral network that NALMS is. The willingness of NALMS members to share information, and not just in a hospitality suite, is one of the greatest assets of the Society.

Thanks, Happy Birthday, and here’s to another 30 years of keeping lakes in the forefront!

Jane Dauffenbach
Aquarius Systems
I have so many wonderful memories of NALMS that it’s hard to single out the best ones. Of course it is a serious organization of leading professionals – one might even say overachievers. The level of intelligence, dedication, and talent to be found there is truly humbling. I feel privileged to call these people friends, and lucky to have the chance to hang out with them from time to time.

I was just a sweet young thing in 1985 at my first conference in Lake Geneva, terrified of what to expect, not knowing if I’d be welcomed or ignored. By the time of the banquet I had lunches and meetings and drinks with several members who made it a point to be inclusive. It was impossible not to catch the enthusiasm of the lake lovers in attendance.

While belonging to NALMS and attending the annual conference provides an excellent education and networking opportunity, it is the free time that I remember best. Silly little vignettes play in my memory . . .

~ Stuffing the exhibit hall balloon arch into the elevator in Cincinnati for the purpose of delivering it to the hospitality room. The poor souls squished in the corners with their hair standing up from static put us into fits of giggles!

~ Frank Browne politely asking sweet young thing Gina her name at her first NALMS conference in Denver. Her reply: “Your worst nightmare!”

~ The All American Fly-In in the Houston hotel lobby as we launched paper airplanes from the top floor in a race to the bottom.

~ Jim Flynn and his ginourmous heart, always picking up the check at a group dinner.

~ Sledding on an old piece of plastic, in falling snow, in Banff, in the middle of the night, with a bunch of other big kids.

~ The hospital ship in Miami that doubled as a dinner / gambling cruise. Swaying on the top deck gasping for fresh air, but inhaling toilet exhaust instead!

~ Ducks trotting out of the elevator and across the lobby at the Peabody-Orlando.

~ Freezing outside on the bow of the boat in Seattle heading to an island for dinner and mistaking Captain Karl’s name over the loudspeaker as “Cap’n Hurl;” for which he will be always remembered. Shocking a nice lady later that evening after declaring that the cultural dancing we had witnessed after dinner could not be likened to Chipendales (okay, sorry – but it still cracks me up!).

~ A cold misty autumn evening spent at Sturbridge Village in Massachusetts. And huge sneakered at the basketball hall of fame!

~ The hospital ship in Miami that doubled as a dinner / gambling cruise. Swaying on the top deck gasping for fresh air, but inhaling toilet exhaust instead!

NALMS means meeting other people interested in lakes, who enjoy working together to advance lake and watershed science and help others protect lakes for future generations.

Steve Heiskary
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
I have been a NALMS member since 1983. Little did I know when I attended my first NALMS symposium in Knoxville that I would begin to establish a career-long relationship with the organization. The relationship started slowly at first by attending the annual symposia, presenting papers, and meeting some people. The more meetings attended and people met – the more I wanted to get involved. At first I served on committees. Involvement in committees meant meeting more people from other states, federal government, and other countries – another bonus. People like Bob Johnson convinced me I should chair a committee on lake standards. If Bob thought I should – that was good enough for me and it helped me advance an issue I needed to address at my job as well. After attending numerous symposia it was then time to help host a meeting in Minneapolis, in the cold of November, with several other Minnesota NALMS members.

A while later I was invited to join the Board. Again, this was a chance to get to know more people and an opportunity to influence lake management. Soon my term was done, but Jeff Schloss came calling – suggesting I should run for resident; nothing I thought of doing on my own – but as with Bob’s suggestion – if Jeff thought it was a good idea, that was good enough for me. After completing that tour on the Board, and hopefully helping advance the Society, I thought my work was done. Not so – Jim LaBounty came calling – saying he needed another associate editor for the Journal – I didn’t think I was editor material, but again, if Jim thought it was a good idea, that was good enough for me.

So what does NALMS mean to me? NALMS means meeting other people interested in lakes, who enjoy working together to advance lake and watershed science and help others protect lakes for future generations. And in this process it means making friends – friends that can last a career and beyond.

Spencer Peterson
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
I have not attended a NALMS meeting for several years now, but for the first 15 years of NALMS Harry Gibbons and I had not missed a meeting. We were in Portland, Maine for the pre-NALMS
I wish for all new members the same experience that I have had: intellectually stimulating interactions that lead to professional development, all rolled into a darn good time with friends.

Robert Thorsen
University of Connecticut

Joining NALMS a few years ago helped me appreciate three things I hadn’t thought much about before. First is the critical role the organization plays in preventing recreational lakes from falling into the abyss of intractable recovery. Second, I learned how tricky lake politics can be, given the limited political clout of small lakes, the island-like behavior of lake communities, built-in conflicts regarding taxation-representation, and the overlapping jurisdictions and mandates of government agencies. Without the objectivity of NALMS, many lakes would not get the treatment they need. Finally, joining NALMS helped me appreciate the people who volunteer their time to run it. I plan to maintain my membership and encourage others to join, if only to support our collective mission to protect this freshwater resource.

Ken Wagner
Water Resource Services LLC

I have grown up professionally with NALMS. The meetings that led to the formation of NALMS occurred during my first two years of post-college employment with the NJDEP. I attended the inaugural NALMS meeting in Portland, ME and was excited by the 800+ people who were just names on papers to me before then. I met my first consultant firm employers at that meeting, although it wasn’t until after graduate school that I went to work for them. I had a drink with Richard Vollenweider and another with Bob Carlson, both people with real stature in the field. I met Denny Cooke (in the first ever Clean Lakes Classic!), Gene Welch, Bob Johnson, and others who would become the backbone of NALMS in the early days. I recall the excitement of NALMS being put forward as an idea and its broad acceptance as a melting pot of lake interests. It was a pivotal event in my early career, and the willingness of so many eminent scientists and accomplished practitioners to discuss lake management with “upstarts” was impressive; that openness has become one of the core values of NALMS over the years.

From there, I became an ardent NALMS supporter, and feel that NALMS has supported me throughout my career. The network that has developed over 30 years is truly amazing, and the professional benefits are very real. I have progressed from member to committee member to committee chair to treasurer to president in our Society and from author to reviewer to associate editor to editor-in-chief for our journal. I have learned a lot about applied limnology from my colleagues, who continue to be willing to share experience and lessons freely – and I endeavor to do the same.

Yet as instrumental as the professional side has been to my career, the social side has been equally important. I count many NALMS members as my personal friends, and enjoy spending time with them as much or more than any other friends. We have laughed, cried, learned, grown, and aged together. We have reached a point in NALMS where our founders are mostly retired, but I am impressed at how involved and vibrant they remain – I hope to do the same.

Gene Welch
University of Washington

Here are my thoughts on NALMS highlights - just personal impressions that are not very equally distributed.

A. Jim LaBounty
   b. Saving LakeLine and $60,000 on another magazine risk – 1992.
   c. Converting to four issues of Lake and Reservoir Management per year – 1997.
   d. Persisting to secure Lake and Reservoir Management in “Current Contents.”

B. The Minnesota quintet:
   a. Bruce Wilson, Steve Colvin, Steve Heiskary, and Dick Osgood as Presidents and steady, long-term support and hard work for the Society.
   b. Joe Shapiro research.

C. The Florida contingent:
   a. Presidents Dan Canfield and Mark Hoyer.
   b. Leader of the SE conference – an important $5 contributor.
   c. Leader in volunteer monitoring programs.
   d. Roger Bachmann and Claire Schelske – provocative lake management research issues.

D. Generous conscientious efforts of the many (TNTC) faithful to keep the Society going.
“A NALMS Love Story”
Doug Larson
Portland, OR

If you don’t know where you are going, any road will take you there.
~ Lewis Carroll, Alice in Wonderland

In November 1985, I was scheduled to give two papers at the NALMS symposium in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin. The symposium was being held in a hotel that was formerly a Playboy club – Playboy as in the glossy, risqué magazine with the eye-popping foldouts.

My plane from Portland (Oregon) to Chicago’s O’Hare airport had been delayed due to bad weather. As we approached O’Hare, the lights of Chicago’s suburbs were barely visible through the clouds of blowing snow. By the time we landed and had taxied over to a passenger off-loading dock, my watch indicated that we were nearly two hours late.

Weeks before, when I had received the symposium’s information brochure, I read that a van would be at the airport to transport symposium attendees to Lake Geneva. But when I arrived inside the terminal, no one from the symposium was there to meet me. I called one of the symposium organizers at the hotel to determine the whereabouts of the van. I was told that I had missed the van because of my delayed flight. The van driver, probably concerned that the highways were becoming impassable due to the snowstorm, had waited as long as he could before deciding to return to Lake Geneva.

“So what should I do?” I asked patiently. “Stay here overnight and wait for a van tomorrow morning?”

“I’m sorry about all this,” replied the person on the other end of the line. “But there’s a bus that departs O’Hare periodically, bound for Milwaukee.”

“Does it go to Lake Geneva on the way to Milwaukee?” I asked.

“No,” he replied. “You have to tell the driver when you board the bus that you’re going to Lake Geneva. He’ll stop and let you out at a crossroads gas station along the highway about 50 miles north of Chicago.”

“How far is the gas station from Lake Geneva?” I asked, this time trying to keep from yelling an expletive into the phone.

“It’s about 30 miles straight east of Lake Geneva,” he said, his voice now raised considerably to block out the noise of a clamorous “ice-breaker” social event going on in the background.

“How do I get from there to Lake Geneva?” I yelled back into the phone, this time ending the sentence with a muffled expletive.

“Again, I’m sorry, sir,” he replied. “When you get to the gas station, call here and we’ll send someone to pick you up.”

He ended with a more ominous remark: “We may try to get the van there to meet you in case the gas station is closed and there’s no phone available.” (Ah, yes… the days before cell phones.)

I responded with another expletive, this time fortissimo.

After saying good-bye and apologizing for my two profane utterances, I hung up the phone and headed to the baggage-claims section to retrieve my luggage. “Great,” I thought, “now find the bus.”

As I made my way to the terminal where out-of-town buses picked up airline passengers, I checked my watch. “Damn!” I said. It was getting very late: The big hand had just passed the number 12 and the little hand was pointing at the number 9.

At the bus terminal, I bought my ticket and was told that the bus for Milwaukee would be departing shortly. Luck was with me here, at least. The bus would not be crowded tonight, I observed. Only a handful of passengers were waiting.

Two of the passengers, who were sitting apart from each other, appeared to be the kind of people who would attend a NALMS symposium: They were young, probably in their mid- to late-20s, and they were both shuffling through some papers that they had pulled from their briefcases. Neither one of the two apparently knew the other.

We sat, waiting for the bus, occasionally looking at one another and smiling. Finally, I asked the young man if he, by chance, was heading to the NALMS symposium in Lake Geneva. He said yes, expressing frustration that he had missed the NALMS van.

The winter issue of LakeLine will feature “Northwest Lakes.” You will learn how these lakes are different from those in other regions and we’ll highlight a variety of lake management issues and success stories. This issue will also include a summary of the 2010 NALMS Symposium, election results, and award winners.

The young woman, sitting nearby, apparently overheard us mentioning NALMS. She introduced herself and said that she too was heading to the NALMS symposium. Her flight from the East Coast had also been delayed, forcing her to catch a bus.

The bus soon pulled up in front of the terminal and we climbed aboard, taking seats near one another. En route to our destination, we chatted about our personal lives and our professional work. (I believe the young woman indicated that she worked somewhere in Massachussets and the young man in New York.) Outside, the weather was cold and windy. And it was very dark, like the inside of a closet in Prudhoe Bay, Alaska, in the winter.

Eventually, as we proceeded northward through blowing snow, a tight cluster of lights began to appear up ahead through the bus’ windshield, indicating some kind of settlement in an area that I correctly assumed was the boondocks. The bus began to decelerate as the driver pulled off the highway and onto a dusty gravel road leading to a mixed assortment
of small buildings, one of which was a gas station that was still open for business.

The three of us grabbed our luggage and disembarked. The bus driver waved farewell, closed the doors, and steered the bus back onto the highway. The bus’ tail-lights soon disappeared in the darkness while the roar of the engine faded out in the distance. Only the sounds of a few cars passing by broke the silence. We were now alone. The promised NALMS van was nowhere in sight.

We entered the gas station and I asked the attendant if I could use his phone to call Lake Geneva. He motioned toward the phone and said to use it. I called the hotel. After several rings, someone finally answered. It was not the person I had been talking to earlier. This person identified himself as a night clerk with no affiliation with NALMS. I asked about the van. “Sorry,” he replied, “I don’t know anything about a van.”

By now, the little hand on my watch had moved passed the number 11 and was heading for number 12. And we were stranded in an isolated gas station that would soon be closing for the night.

I looked at my two plainly worried friends, thinking “What now?”

The gas station attendant had apparently overheard my phone conversation. He called us over and asked where we needed to go. “Lake Geneva,” I replied. He asked if we would be willing to pay someone to take us there. “Sure!” we exclaimed in unison, our voices tinged with growing desperation.

The attendant said that he had a friend, a local farmer, who could deliver us to Lake Geneva. About 20 minutes after the attendant had called his friend, a beat-up pickup truck pulled up in front of the gas station. He introduced himself (I have since forgotten his name) and, motioning toward the truck’s cab, said “I think we can all fit in.” Then, with a laugh, he added: “Someone may have to sit on someone else’s lap.”

We managed to squeeze ourselves in a single file, stretching from door to door, with our bodies compressed shoulder to shoulder, hip to hip, thigh to thigh.

With its engine revved up, the pickup suddenly lurched forward, its rear wheels spinning to gain traction on packed snow while sailing across the highway and onto a country road leading to Lake Geneva. As the old truck worked its way through gusty winds and drifting snow, we chatted with the driver about our personal selves and why we were attending a convention of scientists at an old Playboy club on the shores of a frozen lake in the middle of harvested cornfields. Thinking about how my trip to the symposium had gone so far, I began to ask myself that question.

Then, without any fanfare, lights of the hotel came into view. Our driver dropped us off at the front door, we paid him our fees, he thanked us, gave us a wave, and then drove away. Lugging our baggage, we struggled up some stairs and into the hotel’s lobby. The clerk at the front desk checked us in and issued room keys. I went up to my room, as did each of my traveling companions, opened the door and dumped my luggage in a corner. While sprawled on the bed, I checked my watch: The little hand was on the number 1 – or was it the number 2? I wasn’t sure. It didn’t matter. I woke up a few hours later, still sprawled on the bed and still fully clothed. I thought it would be nice to just stay in bed until it was time to go home.

During the symposium, I occasionally ran into my two young companions who had braved the unknown with me a couple of days earlier. I began to notice that they were usually together, often laughing and obviously enjoying each other’s company. While attending various talks and workshops, I’d see the two of them sitting together. There they were at meals, the two of them, standing in line together and then sitting together while they dined. Were they romantically linked, I asked myself, curious that such a relationship could bloom so quickly. After all, they had been perfect strangers when the three of us first met while waiting for the bus to Milwaukee. I never found out – not then anyway. When the symposium ended, I bid my two young friends farewell, boarded a bus that returned me to O’Hare, and caught my flight back to Portland.

Postscript

A year later, in November 1986, NALMS held its sixth annual symposium at Portland, Oregon. During an “ice-breaker” social gathering, I ran into my two friends. They were together, hand in hand. “How are you,” I casually inquired. “We’re married,” replied the two of them, cheerfully and in unison. And if they’re still married, they’ll be celebrating their silver wedding anniversary a few months from now. I think it was the pickup ride that sparked their romance. They sat side by side while I sat between the driver and his dog.

We'd like to hear from you!

Tell us what you think of LakeLine.

We welcome your comments about specific articles and about the magazine in general.

What would you like to see in LakeLine?

Send comments by letter or e-mail to editor Bill Jones (see page 3 for contact information).