

IN MEMORIAM

James Dingman

The National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) was saddened to learn that James (Jim) Dingman passed away January 12, 2022. His passion for and career in environmental health spanned more than four decades and he was a respected and recognized leader in the profession. Beyond the professional impact, however, was the personal impact that he made in many people's lives—bringing joy, humor, friendship, compassion, and big bear hugs to those fortunate enough to have known him.

Dingman was born on February 1, 1954, in Longmont, Colorado. He developed a passion for nature early in life with the dream of becoming a park ranger. That dream led Dingman to attend Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colorado, where he graduated with a bachelor of science degree in wildlife biology in 1976. He went on to attend graduate school at the University of Denver and earned his master of science degree in biological sciences in 1980. He also married his wife Cheryl in 1980 and they celebrated 41 years together before she passed away in October 2021.

Dingman began his environmental health career in 1982 at Tri-County Health Department in Colorado. He remained there for over 16 years. At the time of his departure, he was an education and enforcement coordinator who was responsible for enforcement actions and hearings against noncompliant establishments, as well as providing educational opportunities for his fellow environmental health staff and employees of facilities regulated by the health department. In 1998, the Dingman family moved from Colorado to Illinois so that he could accept an employment offer from Underwriters Laboratories (UL), Inc. Dingman coordinated regulatory activities for UL's environmental and public health programs, including drinking water additives and system components, food safety, and swimming pool equipment. He also served as the administrator of UL's International Environmental and Public Health Council. Dingman worked at UL for 16 years, departing in 2014 and embarking on a new position in a new state in 2015. The new state was Texas and the new position was environmental health manager at the City of Plano Environmental Health and Sustainability Department, a position Dingman held until his passing. For over 7 years, he was responsible for managing the programs, projects, and staff of the Environmental Health Division.

The scope and span of Dingman's career is impressive, as was the time he found to volunteer for numerous state, professional, and national organizations. His involvement in NEHA began as a member in 1984. He earned his Registered Environmental Health Specialist/Registered Sanitarian credential from NEHA in 1985 and it was in 1994 that he began his service on the NEHA Board of Directors as Region 3 vice-president (from 1994–1998). Dingman was elected and served as a national officer of NEHA from 1999–2004, holding the position of NEHA president from 2002–2003. He then went on to be the NEHA Region 6 vice-president from 2004–2010. In total, he served over 16 years on the NEHA Board of Directors. He also was a peer reviewer for the *Journal of Envi-*



Jim Dingman (right) gets into the Western spirit with Keith Krinn (left) at the NEHA 2006 Annual Educational Conference (AEC) & Exhibition held in San Antonio, Texas.

ronmental Health (JEH) and sat on numerous NEHA committees over the years.

In his first presidential column in the July/August 2002 *JEH*, Dingman acknowledged several colleagues who urged him to become active in NEHA early in his career. He would take up that mantle of his colleagues and become an advocate for involvement in NEHA throughout his career. He was also very wise in acknowledging the “unwavering support and encouragement throughout my years of involvement with NEHA” from Cheryl, his wife. In his final column in the June 2003 *JEH*, Dingman stated, “I can truthfully say that this opportunity to serve the association, the membership, and the profession has been the high point of my career.”

Service was central in Dingman's life and he gave freely of his time, energy, knowledge, and passion. In addition to his service with NEHA, Dingman served in leadership roles for the Colorado, Illinois, and Texas Environmental Health Associations, as well as the NEHA Past Presidents Affiliate. More recently, Dingman served as a board member for several different organizations—the Council for the Model Aquatic Health Code (CMAHC), American Academy of Sanitarians (AAS), and National Environmental Health Science and Protection Accreditation Council. He also was the presiding officer for the Texas Registered Sanitarian Advisory Board. In a memorial email, CMAHC leadership called Dingman a “force in the environmental health and aquatics industries.”

Dingman received several honors during his career. In 2003 he was awarded the A. Harry Bliss Editor's Award for contributions that advanced the cause and interests of NEHA and the environmental health profession through the *JEH*. He became the fifth person to be awarded Diplomate Laureate status from AAS. Dingman was also awarded the Colorado Environmental Health Association's highest honor, the Milton M. Miller Award,

IN MEMORIAM



Jim Dingman (right) shares his expertise with an attendee during the exhibition at the NEHA 2012 AEC held in San Diego, California.



Always bringing laughter to those around him, Jim Dingman is caught striking a pose after a long NEHA Board of Directors meeting held at the NEHA 2006 AEC.

and received the P.W. Jacoe Memorial Award from the Colorado Public Health Association.

The following quotes from colleagues and friends showcase Dingman's contributions and dedication to environmental health, as well as his spirit and the lasting impact he had on many individuals.

"Jim was one of the greats, a true giant in environmental health. He was such a nice guy, always willing to help. When I first became a member of NEHA and attended my first AEC, I could not believe how much time he spent with me learning my story and sharing his incredible journey so modestly," Dr. D. Gary Brown, NEHA president-elect.

"We lost a good friend, a wonderful colleague, and a great environmental health professional. I enjoyed working with Jim at different levels in the best interest of the profession. We always looked forward to seeing him during our visits to the NEHA AECs where his genuine collegiality, warm friendship, and broad smile were always enjoyed," Dr. Amer El-Ahraf, NEHA past president.

"Jim had a passion beyond measure for the environmental health profession and our fellow practitioners. He especially loved spreading the good word by being an invaluable resource to state affiliates and aspiring professionals. Connecting with Jim at a conference, meeting, or by phone meant reuniting with a friend. He was personable, professional, and giving of his time and expertise. Jim had a magnificent and surefire, yet humble, presence. Over the years, it was a delight to receive updates about his wife Cheryl and adventuresome tales about his grandson. Jim was an environmental health champion and will be dearly missed," Alicia Enriquez Collins, NEHA past president.

"We are saddened with the untimely passing of Jim Dingman, one of our dedicated sanitarians and leaders, especially after the passing of his wife just a couple of months earlier. We have known

and loved Jim for so many years. He always was the consummate professional and possessed a great sense of humor. We will miss that. He always led by example and did what he promised he would do," Harry Grenawitzke, NEHA past president.

"I knew Jim long before I worked with him. As a professional, Jim had an enthusiasm for environmental health that was compelling and his presentations were memorable. On a personal level, I will always remember the sparkle in his eyes for cherry pie," Sandra Long, NEHA immediate past-president.

"Jim was dedicated to the environmental health profession. Even in his last years before he was going to retire, he worked hard and with passion. He was a mentor and became a friend to me. He always put others before himself and was always willing to help. I worked under him for almost two years and he cared about me as a person. I miss him daily," Amber Potts, NEHA staff member and former City of Plano employee.

At his request, Dingman's family asks that in lieu of gifts or flowers, donations can be made to the NEHA/AAS Scholarship Fund at www.neha.org/donate.

NEHA extends its deepest sympathies to the family, friends, and colleagues of Jim Dingman. He had a profound impact on the environmental health profession and the people around him. His knowledge and wisdom, willingness to serve the profession, and passion for environmental health will be greatly missed. 🙏

Editor's Note: If you would like to share information about the passing of an environmental health professional to be mentioned in a future In Memoriam, please contact Kristen Ruby-Cisneros at kruby@neha.org. The *Journal* will publish the In Memoriam section twice a year in the June and December issues, or in other issues as determined appropriate.