



A disciple of
dowsing, Steve
Herbert is leading
many third world
villagers to the
water they need
for health and
survival.

Water

for Humanity

By Jean West Rudnicki

In the distance, Peace Corp volunteer Steve Herbert could hear the steady “clink, clink, clink” of the village men hammering and chiseling away at the underground rock. Seven months earlier he had stood on that spot, the L-shaped dowsing rods pointing outward, when he spoke with confidence, “Here.” Twenty three meters (almost seventy-five-and-a-half feet) below he predicted they would find good quality, fresh water, with a yield of as much as four barrels a day. Five men began the task of digging, first with shovels and then resorting to hammer and chisel when they encountered rock. For seven months they dug, hammered and hauled rock out with bucket and rope, and now at the twenty-three meter mark saw no evidence of the promised treasure.

Herbert saw the unspoken doubt and concern etched in their faces as he approached, slowly disappearing down into the excavation site. The forty-year-old geologist and anthropologist had begun dowsing seven years earlier after becoming intrigued with the ancient art of “water witching” when covering the annual Dowser Convention back in 1985 on assignment for *Earthstar* magazine. He knew from personal experience to trust the information he received, but he also knew that on occasion readings could be misinterpreted by unrecognized energy fields such as those caused by lightning strikes. In view of the men’s backbreaking labor, not to mention the villagers’ excited anticipation, Herbert hoped this was not one of those cases. His heart lightened when he finally reached

the bottom. There, at his feet, glistened the tiniest hint of a water puddle. He urged the group to continue.

One meter farther down, one of the men dislodged a rock, and water began gushing forth. They worked frantically trying to make the hole larger, but the water flooded in too quickly. Jubilant, they scrambled to the top. The yield proved to be roughly four barrels a day of good quality water. Herbert’s prediction, though off by about a meter, had been dead on with regards to site, water quality and yield.

That was in the early nineties; today Herbert works as a construction materials inspector in New Hampshire, and serves as Secretary for the Water for Humanity Fund (WFH), a nonprofit organization sponsored by the American Society of Dowsers (ASD). As a dedicated Peace Corps volunteer, he was among the first recipients of WFH funding for water well development. Now he annually takes a sabbatical from work, traveling to developing countries around the world to assess areas in dire need of water resource development and funding. Since its start in 1991, WFH has funded projects in dozens of countries including Asia, Africa, Central America, South America, and

even the United States – wherever the need is critical.

For those of us city-reared, who believe in a seemingly endless supply of tap water available at the turn of a faucet, it’s difficult to appreciate the precious value of this most cherished resource. The U.S. ranks as one

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(Left: Steve Herbert (l) helps a village man try his luck at dowsing. Below from left: A village family in Central America; environmentally friendly washer and rope pump; a hand dug well; men practicing with Y sticks.



of the most water-wealthy nations; most of the rest of the world is not so fortunate. U.S. citizens make up the majority of the twenty percent of the global population with potable water flowing from taps and flush toilets in their homes. In contrast, between 1.2 and 1.5 billion people lack access to even a minimally adequate supply of clean drinking water and at least twice as many do not have access to adequate sanitation facilities. Consequently, literally millions of people die each year of water-related diseases. Among them, approximately 9,500 children die each day of water-borne diseases or water-starvation, accounting for nearly four million deaths a year.

Availability and potability are critical, but equally so is accessibility, explains Herbert. The average African woman must walk more than three-and-a-half miles a day, carrying a jug weighing nearly forty-five pounds and spending as many as six hours hauling water for her family and home, leaving little time and energy for other domestic duties and child-rearing. When the task is delegated to the children, as often happens, the children can't attend school. "In my experience," Herbert says, "I've seen some of the worst cases, where they (women) had to walk long distances, and wait in line for a meager amount of water – water that was pretty foul."

What makes WFH different from other organizations performing water resource development is that these volunteers introduce the element of dowsing. "We not only help them increase their water resources, but add the element of dowsing – that is, being more efficient at finding it, and at the same time learning a very empowering art that can be applied to many aspects of life." In addition to water,

skilled dowsers can also find oil, gas, and minerals. They dowse for informational data as well, such as soil conditions, the best times to plant, expected weather conditions, ideal placement of compost piles – the list goes on and on.

This ability to find underground water is innate in all humans, Herbert believes. It is a sense that evolved for survival. Animals are natural dowsers; their ability to detect water is also closely related to their capacity to sense the electromagnetic fields of the earth, which they use for orientation or migration.

Humans have dowsed throughout history. Herbert cites examples of cave drawings in Africa dating back eight thousand years that could be interpreted as someone holding a forked branch. Depictions on tomb walls, coins, pottery and figurines are found everywhere including Egypt, the Mediterranean, Mesopotamia and even China. Dowsers are quick to cite multiple biblical references they believe support the practice including repeated references to the "rod." The practice was brought to America by our European ancestors.

Once a highly respected skill, today it is often met with skepticism. In fact, one of the main purposes of WFH is to show the practicality of dowsing and to increase its credibility. Bias against the practice usually comes in one of two forms, either scientific or religious. "It's more a problem in the U.S. than anywhere," he adds. "I think mainly because in developing countries the people I work with are more rural people, more connected with the land, more likely to be indigenous people and more connected to their indigenous roots, more spiritual. They have neither a scientific nor religious bias."

As far as the scientific assertion that dowsing does not hold up under scientific testing, Herbert won't dispute the fact, but cites the limitations of the scientific method itself. Dowsing is not a phenomenon that can be studied in a laboratory setting, he explains. It works best where there is a need and does not work for ego aggrandizement or for greed, noting that no one has yet correctly dowsed lottery numbers.

To the skeptics' claim that anyone will find water if they drill long enough and deep enough, Herbert counters that dowsers not only identify the site, but also the depth, yield and quality. They have to be correct or very close on all four parameters to be considered accurate.

According to Herbert, dowsing is accomplished by tapping into a higher and omniscient level of mind and spirit, and it requires the proper attitude of faith, trust, respect, sincere motivation and true need. Ethics must be maintained so that it is not abused for greed or selfishness, or to intrude on another's privacy or free will, he explains.

Reflected in the goals and philosophy of dowsing and WFH is respect for the earth, its resources and the environment. Only proposed projects proven to be environmentally sustainable, technologically appropriate and culturally sensitive and respectful are considered for grants. For example, WFH favors hand pumps over electrical pumps. Such mechanical technology is simple, easily maintainable, and replacement parts are usually readily accessible. The beneficiaries themselves can maintain and repair the pumps rather than having to rely on outside help. In addition, hand pumps are considered

environmentally sustainable because they are less likely to encourage over consumption, as might be the case with an electrical pump. "We feel this is a model for not becoming the Ugly American. We are very conscious about that, which is another thing that sets WFH apart."

The ASD held its first WFH raffle in 1991 at its annual convention, raising three hundred dollars to help Brother James Kimpton, a Catholic priest and dowsing, working in India and heading up a program called "Reaching the Unreachable." The raffle continues to be a featured attraction at the group's annual convention (scheduled July 29 through August 6 this year), but today ASD raises between fifteen and twenty thousand dollars annually – the majority from donations by its more than four thousand members. The group is seeking additional contributions from the general public, corporations and foundations to expand their global efforts.

Current WFH projects include: supplying portable drilling equipment in El Salvador; pump installation to hand-dug and hand-bored wells in several villages in Nepal; assistance to help restore water resources to tsunami victims in several Indian coastal fishing villages; assistance for sustainable agricultural training in Guatemala; as well as projects for reservations in Arizona, New York and Ontario.

To learn more visit www.dowsers.org or www.dowsers.org/Wfh.htm. 



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