

IRWA'S NEW



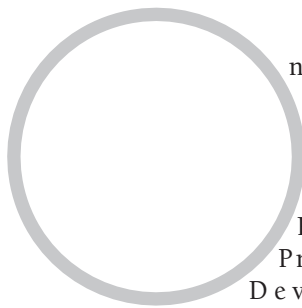
Pipeline Course



Innovative Educational Course Takes Shape

Pilot Presentation of the IRWA's New Pipeline Course is a Resounding Success

By David W. Sinclair, SRIWA, International Pipeline Committee Chair



n December 3rd and 4th 1997 the pilot presentation of the Pipeline Right of Way Professional's Development

Program, informally known as "The Pipeline Course," was presented in Houston. This presentation was the culmination of efforts of many individuals within the IRWA Pipeline Committee that felt that the educational format for the IRWA needed revamping to help our association move forward.

In January of 1996, several members of the Pipeline Committee began to debate issues regarding the IRWA as to what was good about it, what wasn't and what needed to change. The discussions always seemed to focus on membership and education. At that time, the IRWA was facing a financial crisis in terms of declining membership and reduced income from educational courses.

Issues surrounding membership in the pipeline industry centered on declining corporate support of long

time members and the fact that many of the individuals in the service sector of the right-of-way business were not members of the IRWA. Informal surveys conducted by several members of the Pipeline Committee yielded two primary reasons why most independent agents were not members of the IRWA.

Reason #1) "I don't have time to take IRWA courses because my boss/client/company will not allow the time off and will not compensate me for that lost time" and Reason #2) "I can't go to chapter meetings because I'm always on the road." In almost every case, the conversations with non-members ended with the question "So what does the IRWA have to offer me?"

Those of us that have been members for several years already understand the overall benefits of being a member of the IRWA. Regardless of how we felt about the IRWA, if we were to change the mind set of independent agents, we had to find a way to address serious questions posed by those in the service sector of the industry. There was not much that could be done regarding chapter meetings as the often transient

nature of the business frequently places individuals in project locations away from their home chapters. However, there did seem to be opportunities in the educational arena.

Since most of the information regarding the service sector came from individuals supporting pipeline projects around the country, a "what if" approach to the concerns was considered. What if the IRWA had a course targeted to the right-of-way agent in the field and what if the IRWA could make it available in a multi-media format that could be accessed from a remote project location. Most individuals responded that they would react positively if courses were available either on weekends or in a format that could be accessed remotely.

After spending a few months talking about how great it could be to create a new "how to" course and not doing anything to move the idea forward, the Pipeline Committee decided to appoint an educational sub-committee to aggressively begin the process of putting together a course outline that would serve as the blueprint for taking a pipeline project from start to finish. This course



would include the perspectives of the client, service company and field agent. Pipeline Committee member, Michael Lee was appointed the responsibility of leading this sub-committee.

By mid 1996, the sub-committee had assigned its members the responsibility of drafting an outline of what this course should include. The breadth and scope of the draft exceeded the expectations of even the members of the sub-committee. They knew they had an excellent product, but needed to take it to the next level. The outline was presented at the September 1996 meeting of the Pipeline Committee to obtain comments from the committee at large. Once the comments were compiled, the draft was finalized in early December 1996.

The Pipeline Committee now needed to get the attention of the International Professional Resources and Development Committee (IPRC) to let them know that we had a course that merited consideration for further development. Initial inquiries did not yield encouragement as it was deemed unlikely that a course could be developed this quickly and

moved into the mainstream of courses for the IRWA. Traditional association bureaucracy would slow the approval process to a crawl. The only way to find out where we stood with the course was to meet with the IPRC at their January 1997 meeting in Galveston. A copy of the course outline was forwarded to Rick Wurtz, IPRC Chairman, for preliminary review and time on the meeting agenda was scheduled.

Then Pipeline Committee Chairman and Vice Chairman Haskel Rogers and David Sinclair, along with Michael Lee and Connie Williford appeared before the IPRC to address questions and enlist their support for further course development to attempt to get the course funded, written, edited and piloted in a traditional classroom format by the end of 1997. This was outlined as the short-range goal of the Pipeline Committee. The long-range goal would be to produce a course that could not only be presented in a traditional classroom format, but multimedia format as well.

The IPRC responded with resounding



David W. Sinclair, Haskel Rogers, Michael Lee, and Rick Wurtz

support by listing the development of the traditional format of this course as its priority of educational needs for the IRWA in 1997. The IPRC was pleased with regard to the excitement of the Pipeline Committee, but indicated their belief that even under the best of conditions, getting this course to the point targeted by the Pipeline Committee in 1997 would nearly be impossible.

A similar positive response was received from the International Executive Committee (IEC) that same day as this initiative fit with then President Susan Solberg and Assistant Secretary/ Treasurer Alan Wurtz's ongoing appeals to the committees of the IRWA to be the sources for new course development. Along with the IPRC, they believed that the timeline and schedule proposed would be tough to attain.

By early February 1997 the IPRC was presenting its educational funding wish list to the Right of Way



Rick Wurtz, Steve Hartmann, Lori Keeter, and Ron Olsen work through materials in the course manual.



Bill Bauer at reception on the first day of the course.

International Educational Foundation (RWIEF). The RWIEF affirmatively responded by supporting this effort with the necessary funding. The IPRC then appointed Howard Armstrong to act as the liaison to the Pipeline Committee's Educational Sub-Committee to assist in monitoring this fast track effort.

With "buy in" at all levels within the IRWA organization the ball was now back in the court of the Pipeline Committee to get the process started, as throughout the entire approval process the Pipeline Committee insisted upon maintaining some measure of control in the writing of the course. By April 1997 several prospective writers had been contacted, but the Pipeline Committee felt that only one individual was competent and aggressive enough to meet the schedule.

William E. (Bill) Bauer, writer of several books in the right-of-way and oil and gas industry, was selected

as the committee's primary candidate to write the course material and attended the April meeting of the Pipeline Committee. The budget and schedule presented by him at that meeting was aggressive even by private industry standards.

Upon committing to the massive undertaking, Bill immediately began writing the course material and submitting it for review to the Pipeline Committee's Educational Sub-Committee. The members involved in the review process actually had trouble trying to keep up with the amount of material Bill was submitting. By the end of July, final reviews were conducted and the instructor's manual was being written. All course material was finalized and submitted to IRWA headquarters on schedule and within budget by September 1, 1997.

The only remaining item required was the pilot presentation of the course. The Pipeline Committee even asked that headquarters allow a departure from the customary fashion in which pilot courses are presented. This included

allowing the Pipeline Committee to market the course to a target audience selected by the committee.

The target group would be made up of selected industry leaders from energy companies and service providers from across the United States and Canada. Additionally, these leaders would be asked to bring someone from within their organization that knew little or nothing about the pipeline right-of-way industry. Further, as an incentive to attend and provide valuable feedback, each participant would receive IRWA education credit and the course would be provided at no cost.

The Pipeline Committee assured the IRWA that it would reimburse the association actual expenditures associated with this endeavor. The only sacrifice the IRWA would be asked to make would be in the profits generated by the course pilot. The return on this investment would be in the feedback to help the Pipeline Committee provide a high quality educational product to the IRWA and to reach those individuals within energy and service companies that



Bill Bauer in a friendly exchange with Ron Olsen, Wilbanks Corporation during pilot course presentation.

PIPELINE COURSE

have control over educational funds for their employees.

The additional hope is that individuals who are not currently members of the IRWA but actively working in the profession will find value in the IRWA and consider membership in the only professional organization that represents their vocational interests. The Pipeline Committee also hopes to rekindle the level of excitement of the industry leadership to the point that these leaders along with the companies that support them will be able to realize the higher level of value their employees can bring from active participation and involvement in the IRWA.

The pilot presentation met everyone's expectations. Approximately 50 individuals attended the pilot presentation. The mix of individuals attending the course included industry and service provider management, individuals with little or no experience, IRWA members, non members, IPRC, IEC and RWIEF representation, IRWA headquarters staff, Department of Interior Bureau of Land Management representation and a consultant reviewing the course for multi-media applications. One of the unique qualities that many of the par-

ticipants observed during this course presentation, was its ease of adaptability to the power, communications and transportation industries of this association.

Much work remains ahead as the IRWA and the Pipeline Committee reviews the comments provided by the participants to finalize this product. In addition to minor editing, administrative details regarding pricing, instructors and course credit remain to be finalized. It is hoped that by the second quarter of 1998, that this course will be available for scheduling as a part of the IRWA's educational curriculum.

As we pursue closure on the traditional format of this course, the Pipeline Committee wants to emphasize that this is only the first step in accomplishing the overall vision of helping to bring the IRWA to a point where this course can be presented in a multi-media format. We solicit your help and encourage you to financially support the RWIEF to help the IRWA achieve this vision.

In conclusion, the Pipeline Committee wishes to thank Bill Bauer for his dedication, knowledge and writing skills as well the members of its committee and particularly those of the Educational Sub-Committee who

helped bring the first step of this effort to fruition. Also, special thanks is directed to those members of the Pipeline Committee that financially supported this effort by helping the committee cover the costs associated with the innovative marketing of this course.

Additionally, the Pipeline Committee would like to express its thanks to those members of the IPRC, IEC, RWIEF and International Headquarters whose willingness to set aside traditional methods and procedures helped catapult this effort forward. The efforts detailed are a prime example of how professionals in this industry and association can come together, overcome bureaucracy and eliminate obstacles to provide the IRWA membership with the educational opportunities necessary to help keep this association as the recognized leader of educational opportunities for the right-of-way profession. ■

David Sinclair is Director of Right of Way for Enron Gas Pipeline Group, Houston; 1997 President of IRWA Gulf States Chapter 8, Houston; Chairman of the IRWA Pipeline Committee; and a Trustee of the Right of Way International Education Foundation.



Pipeline Committee

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