

## FOCUS ON

# THE INTERNATIONAL SURVEYING COMMITTEE



From left, Chair of the International Surveying Committee, Jeffrey Evans, with Past President, Gordon E. MacNair, SR/WA, at the 2005 Annual International Education Conference in Toronto, ON.

As our history demonstrates, IRWA's success can be directly attributed to the dedicated volunteers who comprise IRWA's Industry Committees. As they monitor and communicate key issues impacting the right of way profession, we acknowledge and applaud their efforts in advancing the Association's core mission and goals.

"I have learned a tremendous amount about the right of way industry and have gained enormous respect for the Association and services available to members. I've met so many amazing individuals, and I'm privileged to call many of them my friends."

For the last five years, strategic planning has served as the foundation for the International Surveying Committee's projects and activities. Each year, the committee members meet to review their accomplishments from the previous year and establish their strategic plan for the upcoming year. Their mission is clear: to educate, inspire and promote the Association on all levels.

You can sense Jeff's pride when he describes the diverse talents and skills of his committee members. With a good cross-section of professionals from the public and private sectors, he acknowledges the active role they each play within their respective surveying committees. Jeff notes, "I'm proud to say that we have great future leaders on our committee."

**BY BARBARA BILLITZER**



Committee Members from left: Jeffrey Evans; Murray LeGris; John Alexander, SR/WA; Daryl Wells; and R. Shane Harris, SR/WA

### What are the main responsibilities of your committee?

**Jeff:** Everything we do centers on our commitment to education and the benefits of joining the International Right of Way Association (IRWA). Our responsibility is actually two-fold:

- 1) To educate and inform the IRWA about the surveying industry
- 2) To educate and inform the surveying industry about the IRWA

### How would you describe IRWA's awareness level within the surveying industry?

**Jeff:** When I joined the IRWA about eight years ago, awareness of IRWA was minimal. During the last four to five years, I think we've come a long way in terms of educating the surveying industry about the Association. We have created strong relationships with affiliate organizations, such as the American Congress of Surveying and Mapping (ACSM), which allows us to promote the benefits of IRWA membership to their members.

### What are some ways you partner with affiliate organizations?

**Jeff:** Every year, we set up a booth and exhibit at the ACSM national conference. Their conference attracts between 1,000 and 1,200 attendees, many of whom are unaware of our Association and what we have to offer. In April 2006, they're expecting 1,500 professionals to attend, giving us an enormous opportunity to create awareness and gain new members.

We have a great relationship with Kurt Sumner, the executive director of ACSM and he even attends our committee meetings. It's amazing how much support and publicity ACSM gives to IRWA and our committee. They donate booth space to IRWA, and we provide them with exhibit space at our annual conference. They've participated in our event for the past few years and have found it an ideal venue to promote the ACSM.

### How do you attract attendees to the IRWA booth?

**Jeff:** That's easy – we have a GPS giveaway each year!

Actually, the professionals that visit our booth seem to be intrigued by the IRWA, because if you look at the surveying industry as a whole, we're involved with right of way projects every day. It's just that most people don't realize it.

Our committee members, who are employed in both private development and in the municipalities, are all working directly in or adjacent to the right of way. Whether the project includes road plans or calling the local municipality, the right of way process is very intriguing to the surveying professional. I think they have a thirst for knowledge about our profession – where they almost seek us out at that event. We're always very pleased with the response, as we have hundreds of people stop by our booth to ask questions and share diverse various project challenges.

### Is it true that you sponsor an annual competition?

**Jeff:** Yes, For the last three years, we have sponsored an Annual Right of Way Mapping Competition in conjunction with our ACSM participation. April 2006 will mark our fourth year. The competition is open to all IRWA members who are employed by city, county, state or federal agencies, private consultants, or the utility/pipeline/telecommunications industry. We have several different categories and anyone in IRWA can sponsor a map and submit them. This year we'll be awarding cash prizes and encourage as many entries as possible.

### What is your one of your greatest accomplishments?

**Jeff:** In addition to the partnership with ACSM and attending their conference each year to increase IRWA membership — as well as the mapping competition — I'm proud to say that it's the Surveying Committee's Strategic Plan. We understand the importance of strategic planning and how it helps keep us focused on our goals. We developed the initial plan about five years ago — and we follow it and update it every year at our June meeting. The key is to establish realistic goals and refine them as priorities change.



From left: Gary Kent; Mark Keller, SR/WA; Wendy Lathrop; and John Roberts

### How do your strategic planning efforts compare to those of other committees?

**Jeff:** I believe all the committees use various forms of strategic planning to focus their time and efforts. For those who would like to put into practice some proven techniques, I've developed a PowerPoint presentation on strategic planning and business development. This "canned" presentation can be used at the chapter or region level and is available to anyone interested in strengthening their strategic planning efforts.

In fact, the success of my firm is a direct result of our strategic planning. We're a 100 year-old firm, and our management acknowledges the role that strategic planning has played in the company's growth. In the last 15 years, we have grown from 30 people in one office to 425 people in eight offices within four states, all based on strategic planning.

### What are some major obstacles you face?

**Jeff:** Our biggest challenge is always going to be our membership participation – trying to attract members to join our committee. While many of our fellow surveying professionals would like to be involved, they just don't have the time to serve as a committee member or region representative. We're a bit envious of the Pipeline Committee in that regard. Last April, I was invited by the Pipeline Committee Chair, Val Hatley, to attend one of their meetings. I was amazed to see about 50 people in attendance – and that was only about half their committee members! They're a very impressive committee and very active. I give them a lot of credit, as they are very well run. They set lofty goals and then they accomplish them.

### What made you originally decide to join this committee?

**Jeff:** I had always heard great things about the IRWA. Bob Phelps,

who is actually retired now from Atwell-Hicks, was a mentor to me and responsible for getting me involved in the committee. In our firm, we are involved in land development, utility and right of way work. Bob went to a local chapter meeting, fell in love with it and immediately got me involved. That was a number of years ago, and I've never looked back. I initially joined for the networking and the contacts; however, the more I became involved in the IRWA, the more my mission changed. It didn't take long until I saw the value of education and found myself wanting to spend more time helping others.

### What have you gained from your participation?

**Jeff:** Over the last four to five years, I have learned a tremendous amount about the right of way industry and have gained enormous respect for the Association and the services available to members. I've also gained valuable exposure for myself and my firm, Atwell-Hicks. Most importantly, I've met so many amazing individuals. I'm privileged to call many of them my friends.

### How does your employer feel about your IRWA involvement?

**Jeff:** I'm fortunate in that regard. They see the benefit of belonging to IRWA and fully support my participation. The company has funded my membership and other fees associated with my professional development.

### What would you say is your committee's greatest strength?

**Jeff:** I'm proud to say that we have great future leaders on our committee. When I step down as committee Chair in June and Murray LeGris takes over, I'm confident that the committee will be in great hands. Under Murray's strong leadership, the committee will continue the momentum we've generated. In addition, we have an exceptional group of committee members ready to take charge of the committee in the years to come.



From left: Dan Shiflett, SR/WA, R/W-NAC; Nickolas Fusco; and George Griffith  
 Not pictured: Robert Phelps, Albert Sharp, and Michael Rubner

### What goals do you have for the immediate future?

**Jeff:** Our immediate goal is to increase surveying representation at the chapter level. We currently have 15 committee members and we hope to grow that number in the upcoming months. Recently, a number of IRWA members have shown interest in joining, and I know some of them will make great region reps in the future. I see only great things for the committee's future.

### How often do you meet?

**Jeff:** We typically meet twice a year— once in June at the annual conference and then again in April, at the ACSM conference, where we oversee the IRWA booth and the mapping competition that we sponsor.

## International Surveying Committee Members:

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