

IRWA Turns 60

by Wayne F. Kennedy, SR/WA
IRWA Historian

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the Association and, to my knowledge, the closest thing we have ever had to a comprehensive written history was the April 1984 issue of *Right of Way*. Whether the dedication of that issue to the history and accomplishments of the Association was the idea of then-International President W. A. Thomasson, SR/WA, Executive Vice President Charles M. Fornaci, SR/WA, or some other farsighted person, it was a memorable accomplishment. Ten years later, I find myself responsible for maintaining a history of the International Right of Way Association and, naturally, am using the April 1984 issue of *Right of Way* as my initial resource of historical data.

I consider it a great honor to serve as the Association's first international historian, and I am excited about the task ahead of me. I will be spending a great deal of time reviewing all issues of *Right of Way* in order to discover and assemble data on the Association's beginnings, development and attainment of international recognition not included in the April 1984 issue. Although I have already begun the task of compiling a comprehensive history of our association and have devoted many hours to the task, I have found it surprisingly difficult to find information as basic as the date a chapter was chartered. Some chapter presidents know this, because I have called them seeking the information. I also intend to list all recipients of the several IRWA awards.

Some chapters are having difficulty finding their historical documents, such as the chapter charter. I suggest that a good way to avoid the loss of important chapter documents and records is to include on the agenda for your annual installation of officers meeting an item titled, "Transfer of Records and Documents to New Officers." The agenda, as a part of the chapter minutes, would help in tracing the location of such documents. All members of the chapter executive board, committee chairs, as well as officers, should have something to pass on to their successors.

I want to thank Don Bender, Chapter 1's immediate past president, who has been very helpful with information on our association's origins and is still attempting to verify the site where it all began.

A great way to ensure that historical information is not lost or forgotten would be for each chapter to have its own historian. A very few chapters already have one. I strongly urge every chapter president to appoint a chapter historian, as soon as possible. The sooner this is done the easier it will be to develop a complete and accurate chapter history. For recently chartered chapters, it should be a rather simple task. Although it will be a more difficult job for those chapters which were chartered many years ago, the sooner you get started the easier it will be.

My next request is that each chapter historian keep the international historian posted with a copy of the chapter's updated history. An

appropriate date for submitting the current history of each chapter would be the date of the chapter's installation of officers.

In the meantime, I have an immediate need for some historical information, on the following chapters:

Garden State Chapter 15
Tri-City Chapter 20
Connecticut Chapter 23
Alabama Chapter 24
Aloha Chapter 30
Dallas/Ft. Worth Chapter 36
Gateway Chapter 37
Santa Barbara Chapter 47
Little Rock Chapter 51
Delaware Chapter 56
Juneau Chapter 59
Ottawa Chapter 63
Winnipeg Chapter 66
Cascade Chapter 68
Victoria Chapter 69
Fairbanks Chapter 71
Austin Chapter 74
Shreveport Chapter 75
Seventy-Sixers Chapter 76
Suwannee River Chapter 77
North Platte Chapter 78

Be sure to include significant information, such as when, where and who attended your first meeting and presented your charter. If you hosted an annual seminar, when and where it was held and who was the seminar chair. How many of your members made significant contributions to the Association? Did any of them become an international officer, regional officer, international committee chair, vice chair or member? What awards

has the chapter (or its members) won?

Although I joined the then-American Right of Way Association in 1957 (San Francisco Chapter 2) and have been fairly active as a member, especially for the period of time 1968 to present, there is much that I do not know about our association. I can use all the help you are willing to give me, so please send me any information you think I need and, please, do not hesitate to let me know if you believe I am in error on the facts. If you have documentation to back it up, I would greatly appreciate having a copy.

The following is my version of the article titled, "The First Twenty-Five Years," which was published in the April 1984 issue of *Right of Way*. A comprehensive history, chronologically replete with dates and details, is being prepared.

An Edited Version of Our First Twenty-Five Years

Our founder, Frank Balfour, was hired by the California Division of Highways as a right-of-way agent in 1931. He soon discovered that the majority of right-of-way men working for government agencies held their positions through political patronage, or were junior engineers who only worked part-time in right of way. Within private companies, many of the agents were "engineers" who found their niche by skill, luck or favor in the company's right-of-way department.

Frank Balfour thought right-of-way work could be upgraded into a profession. He spent many long hours of discussion with Spencer V. Cortelyou, District Engineer in charge of the Los Angeles office of the California Division of Highways. They discussed what could be done to improve right-of-way and land acquisition techniques, procedures and the status of right-of-way employees. Cortelyou encouraged Frank Balfour to do something to bring right-of-way workers together for the mutual benefit of all concerned.

He arranged for 14 men to meet on Oct. 16, 1934 to organize an association.

They met a second time. Frank Balfour was elected its first president. [According to records held in the headquarters office, the precise date the "Southern California Right of Way Agent's Association" was organized and its officers elected is noted, by then

meetings, a six-month extension course in condemnation appraisal procedures that met once a week. The chapter also sponsored a right-of-way and land acquisition program for the 7th Annual Institute on Government.

Flush with success, the Association

The Association changed its name to reflect the hopes and aspirations of a national organization.

Secretary Ralph F. Beegan, as "Wed. Nov. 7/1934".]

In its first year of operation, the Association instituted policies that exist today. The first issue of *Right of Way News*, a four-page monthly newsletter, was published March 20, 1935. This was the forerunner of *Right of Way* magazine.

A major education effort was initiated. It included monthly

changed its name to American Right of Way Association to reflect the hopes and aspirations of a national organization.

The Association continued to grow in its second year. In 1936, the official emblem, the R/W shield was designed. The proceedings from the 8th Annual Institute on Government were printed by the Association. Additionally, a second extension course on land titles

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was offered. Eighty-three attended the 12-week course.

With membership growing to 190 by October 1936, the Executive Board set a constitutional limit of 200 members who could belong to the Association. In January, 1937, a committee for national expansion was established. [The limit was repealed.] One action taken was to mail the 1938 edition of *Right of Way Procedure and Land Acquisition*, published by the Association, to every state highway right-of-way department. As a consequence, San Francisco Chapter 2 was chartered on April 18, 1939.

The policy of expansion was one of soft-sell. A chapter would be chartered only if the local agents wanted to organize a chapter within the Association umbrella. It would be up to the other agencies and industries to investigate what the Association meant to Los Angeles and San Francisco to be able to decide whether forming a local entity would help them.

In 1941, a *Code of Ethics* was written by a committee chaired by Harold Throckmorton. Another 41 years would pass before the Association would develop a mission statement.

Five years later, on April 5, 1946, the Association was incorporated as a nonprofit educational organization. On December 18, 1946, the first Board of Directors meeting was held.

The formation of the Oregon and

Seattle chapters was a direct result of both J.M. Devers, Chief Counsel for the Oregon State Highway Commission, and Frank Stocking, Chief Right of Way Agent for the Washington State Department of Highways, attending seminars sponsored by Chapters 1 and 2. They saw the Association working and went home to organize chapters. Oregon Chapter 3 was chartered on Oct. 27, 1950, and Seattle Chapter 4 was chartered on Feb. 6, 1952. In the interim, the Board of Directors had met, with a final treasurer's report stating that the Association had no liabilities and a plus balance of \$140.22. Disbursements for the year totaled \$142.60.

In the early fifties, extension courses and one-day seminars still proved popular. Also, the "Case of the Month" was instituted by Chapter 1 at luncheon meetings and has remained a feature ever since.

In October, 1952, the first inter-city chapter meeting took place, involving all four chapters. This showed that the Association was not a local organization, and that increased educational benefits do accrue the broader the spectrum of participants.

Soon after, Heart of America Chapter 5, in Kansas City, Kan., was chartered. With its formation, one of the lovable right-of-way characters, "Rip" Flanagan made his appearance as president.

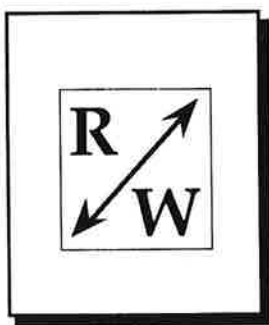
At the 1953 annual meeting, three major rules were developed. They were: expulsion of members for cause, termination of membership and formation of club affiliates.

Also, during that summer, the California Supreme Court passed a decision on the famous California condemnation case, *People v. Riccardi*. This decision established new concepts and many requirements, both in the valuation of right of way to be acquired, the legal procedure involved in determining fair market value, and what constitutes damage.

Chapter 6 and Michigan Chapter 7 were chartered on March 6 and 9, 1954, respectively. After attending a Chapter 5 meeting, Richard Taylor was determined to form a chapter in Michigan. He succeeded in his efforts and went on to become atlantic coast area regional chairman, national chairman and National Liaison Committee chairman.

On Sept. 23, 1954, the first Club Affiliate was formed in San Diego. It was attached to Los Angeles Chapter 1. Expansion of the Association continued, with 30 chapters formed by the end of the decade. In December of that year, five all-day seminars were held in different locations. Local education programs were the backbone of the Association.

On June 23-24, 1955, Association history was made when the first



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National Educational Seminar was held. There were 603 registrants with more than 150 public and private organizations represented at the seminar. Nine different subject areas were addressed with the "Relationship of the Right-of-Way Agent, Negotiator, Appraiser, Engineer and Attorney in Condemnation Proceedings" presented in the form of a pre-trial conference attracting the largest audience. Tom Mason was the seminar chairman.

At the seminar, the Board of Directors addressed new problems of growth—the transfer of members from one chapter to another—framework and budgeting requirements for an annual seminar, each chapter limited to two directors. A national salary survey was published in cooperation with AASHTO and the National Highway Research Board.

By the close of 1956, the ideals of professionalism in the right of way were becoming a reality. Frank Balfour is quoted as follows: "Right-of-way acquisition work must be supported by sound, fair and equitable appraisals, and that 'horse trading' in negotiations could lead only to poor public relations and future detrimental effects upon our principals, be they stockholders or taxpayers."

At the 1956 seminar, held in Houston, new policies instituted included the establishment of regional seminars and the establishment of the position of Executive Vice Chairman, responsible for running the day-to-day operations of the Association. Today, that position is known as Executive Vice President and is held by Arthur D. Aston, Jr.

The 1957 National Educational Seminar was held in Chicago. The interstate highway program was in full progress and Betram Tallamy, FHWA, addressed the assembly. Today, with the interstate highway program virtually complete, right-of-way professionals can look back and feel proud of the ideals upheld and the work accomplished.

Actions taken at the meeting included investing the national chairman with the power to appoint

members to three national committees—Highway, Pipeline and Utility. Also, a land economic study program was instituted to implement appraisal and negotiation data with factual material in the area of damages and special benefits.

The first Regional Educational Seminar was held February 7-8, 1958 in what is now Region 4. Chapters 9, 14, 15, 16 and 18 sponsored the program in Atlantic City, New Jersey. More than 300 members attended. It was considered by some to be the finest educational event ever held, up to that time, in the Association. It was the beginning of the Association's on-going educational program.

At the 4th Annual National Seminar, held in San Francisco, the Board of Directors authorized individual chapters to issue membership certificates. Also, a full half-day was taken to discuss chapter and regional seminars within the overall nationwide education program. A permanent

national Liaison Committee was also established.

The Association had grown from 14 to 7,000 members in the first 25 years. This rapid expansion and selfless service by dedicated members is the foundation on which the Association builds today. The greatest tribute of dedication that could possibly be paid to this group of volunteer members is that there was not one paid employee in the entire 25 years. All activities were carried out by volunteers, and while members did encourage and assist the creation of new chapters, no promotional campaign was ever established. □

International Historian Wayne Kennedy, SR/WA, has served IRWA in numerous offices, including president of three chapters, chairs of regional and international committees, and as Executive Vice President in charge of staff from 1992 to 1993. Three times a chapter "Professional of the Year" and a 1990 Balfour Finalist, he received the 1991 Y.T. Lum award for his contribution to right-of-way education.

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