



THE IMPACT OF A MENTOR

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Can you identify the people who have been the most influential in your professional development? Go back to the beginning – who brought you into the profession? Who introduced you to IRWA? Who instructed your first IRWA class? As my presidency begins, there is a great deal of self-reflection that comes with reaching this milestone in my career. How did I get here!?

My story is typical of what I hear from other members – I had no idea that the right of way profession existed until my sister-in-law (and future business partner), Jennifer Harrison got a new job working for the late W. Howard Armstrong, SR/WA. Jennifer suggested me for some temporary summer work during graduate school. Howard told me I had potential and offered to mentor me. I never went back to school.

Howard and Linda Kitchen Peck were the people who introduced me to IRWA. Linda was an officer of our local Chapter and quickly volunteered me to be the Chapter 33 newsletter editor. The responsibility provided me with a mechanism to connect with more experienced and knowledgeable local members. That connection gave me access to their war stories, lessons learned and best practices. Linda showed me how to be a chapter leader and ultimately introduced me to the International Relocation Assistance Committee.

Back then, we had a series of four courses that were the equivalent of the current Course 100. My first instructor was Cleo Grounds, SR/WA for the appraisal portion. The course had the reputation of being tough, and Cleo had the reputation of being tougher. I asked question after question, as it was my first exposure to the subject. After the class, Cleo pulled me aside and told me that I asked really good questions and should work toward my SR/WA Designation.

The members of the International Relocation Assistance Committee pushed me to get credentialed in relocation. The relationships between committee members were—and still are—both competitive and encouraging. The combination gave me the drive to develop expertise and a forum to stay current about issues regarding the Uniform Act. The knowledge gained and the impact of staying current has made me more competitive as a consultant in the industry.

After developing some course training materials together, Jim Finnegan, SR/WA encouraged me to take the Instructor's Clinic. I took his advice and the two of us traveled half the country teaching together. The skills I learned from him, I continue to use. The craziest thing about instructing IRWA classes is that I end up learning more from participants than I teach them.

Finally, I remember my first real encounter with LoAnn Weight, SR/WA, R/W-RAC, R/W-NAC. LoAnn had just won the Frank C. Balfour Professional of the Year Award, and I went to congratulate her and introduce myself. LoAnn grabbed my hand, looked me in the eyes and said that she had heard good things about me and that I had the potential to be President of the organization someday.

The above members have something in common - each took a moment to share their knowledge and mentor a new member, and they did it so naturally they probably had no idea of its impact. I am certain that I would not be in this leadership position without them and the hundreds of people like them who have encouraged me to be current, credentialed and connected.

If you believe a fellow right of way professional has potential, speak up. Bring them to a meeting and encourage them to take classes toward a certification or designation. Your voice may be the one that influences that person to become the next leader in this organization. Be that mentor, because the value of your involvement is immeasurable.

I am grateful for the opportunity to serve as your 2013-2014 International President. Our potential for growth is exciting. Our financial position is strong, and our momentum toward greater industry relevance is significant. We have the opportunity to accomplish some great things together!

