



IRWA Chapter 41 Commemorates 50 Years

Iowans give tribute to founding fathers

Chapter Presidents past and present. Standing from left are Bernard Banker, SR/WA; Rita Rasmussen, SR/WA; Susan Albright, William Lounsbury, Jr., Tim Bunkers, SR/WA; Don Corrigan, SR/WA and Joe Anderson, SR/WA. Seated from left are Robert North, L. Robert Dahlgren, SR/WA; , James Diemer, SR/WA; Donald Shirley, SR/WA and Gerald Kennedy.

BY JOE ANDERSON, SR/WA, R/W-AC

Iowa Chapter 41 proudly celebrated its 50th Anniversary as part of Region 3’s Spring Forum held at Prairie Meadows Conference Center in Altoona. For a chapter that had some rough beginnings, the event attracted 75 attendees, including 11 former Chapter Presidents who came to share their fond memories of the early years. A presentation of Course 104, Standards of Practice for the Right of Way Professional was followed by a social hour and a grand banquet. More than \$1,300 was raised at the event for the Right of Way International Education Foundation.

A Rocky Evolution

The initial movement to form this new chapter of the American Right of Way Association began in June 1961 when Frank Balfour sent a letter to Emil John at the Iowa State Highway Commission. The following May, the Association’s Board of Directors authorized Iowa-Nebraska Chapter 41 at the Annual National Seminar in Minneapolis. Some 200 letters were sent to prospective members, inviting them to join the new chapter.

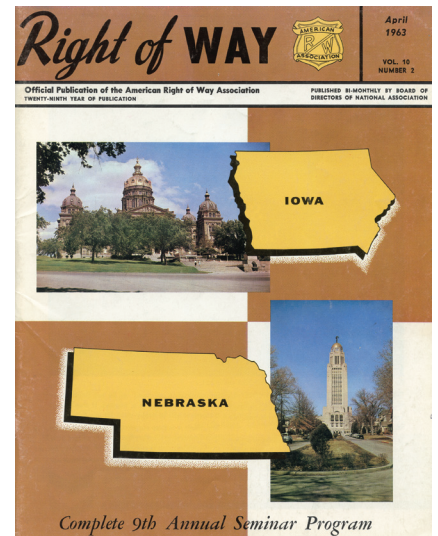
However, according to a letter from November 1962, Iowa Power & Light Company’s Guy Gilchrist wrote to D.H. McArthur of Northern Natural Gas Company, the response to the membership invitations did not seem encouraging. More than a year after Frank Balfour’s letter ignited the movement, only 18 membership

applications had been received. That fell far short of the level of commitment needed to get the chapter off the ground. A feverish effort to recruit members and commitments from several members of Chapter 5 to transfer to the new chapter finally pushed Chapter 41 over the hump. The celebration was on!

On February 15, 1963, Iowa-Nebraska Chapter 41 commemorated its official admittance to the Association with a charter presentation dinner. Several “pilgrims” from Chapters 1, 5, 20, and 33 were among the 134 attendees at the gala, held at the Hotel Kirkwood in downtown Des Moines. The Association’s Founder, Frank Balfour, presented the charter certificate. Gene L. Land, President of Universal Field Services and Region 3 Chair swore in Emil John as Chapter 41’s first President. The joyous evening was the reward of an uphill journey spanning nearly two years, led by some of the Association’s most esteemed pioneers.

Participation is the Key

Momentum propelled membership to 120 members in 1964. In 1975, Chapter 41 reached its all-time peak of 126 members. Historical documents reveal that the vast majority of charter members were Iowans. However, the chapter’s decision to alternate early chapter meetings between Omaha and Des Moines helped grow interest among right of way professionals in Nebraska. In



1992, Platte River Chapter 78 was awarded its own charter and Chapter 41 became known as the Iowa Chapter.

As noted in the Chapter’s first newsletter, “...Iowa-Nebraska Chapter 41 will not function properly unless YOU as a member participate. It is with this thought that a listing of the various chapter committees will be distributed to all members so that you might indicate the committee which would benefit the most from your assistances. Let’s all be on the membership committee.” 🍷



Joe is a Right of Way Agent at the Iowa Department of Transportation.