MEMBER SNAPSHOTS

Donald Shirley celebrates 50 years with the IRWA



Donald Shirley began his career with the Iowa State Highway Commission in 1952 as part of the preliminary survey crew. 10 years later, he transferred into the Ames Office as a Design Technician with the Office of Right of Way—a field in which he would continue to thrive for decades.

Early in 1963, a new Chapter was forming within the IRWA (then called the American Right of Way Association), which would eventually become Iowa-Nebraska Chapter 41 before ultimately splitting into two Chapters. Ray Callahan and Bill Davis represented Iowa and were instrumental in seeking out new members. They quickly noticed Don's interest in advancing his career and spoke to him about joining the Association. In turn, Don went to his supervisor for some advice on the matter, but was surprised when this idea was met with laughter. His supervisor not only called it a mistake, he also insisted it was only an excuse to be out of the office and to get a free meal. Fortunately, Don decided against this piece of advice and joined the Association anyway.



Soon after becoming a member, Don was elected as Assistant Secretary-Treasurer of Chapter 41. In those early years, meetings simply consisted of a guest speaker, lunch and general discussions. Unsurprisingly, finances were a constant struggle. But the wonderful thing about being part of something from its early days is the ability to witness major growth, which is exactly what Don experienced in his 50 years with the IRWA. In fact, Don can still recall the very first female member and has watched as women have grown to make up a giant share of active membership and hold significant leadership roles.

"I am extremely proud of our organization today [which is] under competent, fiscally sound leadership and provides educational opportunities which would otherwise not be possible," Don reflects. He proudly points out that the Association has grown "from a joke in some minds 50 years ago to a worldwide recognized leader in the right of way field."

As Chapter 41 continued to make its way toward financial stability, Don served and led many committees. In the late 1960s, the Association began holding educational meetings where members could gain credit for the SR/WA designation, and Don soon received his in 1970. In 1974, he was named "Man of the Year" by his Chapter. Don was honored with the Professional of the Year Award in 1984 after holding nearly all Chapter elective and appointive offices and after spending eight years on the International Special Awards Committee. Most recently, Don was presented with the Lifetime Professional Award in July of 2018. It is evident that Don has spent decades as a mentor and an inspiration to countless IRWA members.

"I still have my eyes on what I believe is a vibrant, healthy, growing organization," Don remarks. "Chapter 41 is in good capable hands and will continue to contribute toward what began as a "good 'ol boys club" to what today is a leader in the right of way field."

Don Shirley, SR/WA, was recently honored as the "Prolessional of the Year, 1984" by the International Right of Way Association, lowa-Nebraska Chapter 41. Shirley received recognition for his outstand. ing contributions to the right of way profession and to his Dapier. Currently Chief Fiscal and

his career with the DOT in 1952, He has been associated with an aenecte of the Right of Way office including R/W Title Agent, Office of Right of Inscareer with the DUT in 1952, He has been associated with nearly all aspects of the Right of Way office including R/W cheichner etaff annraicar amielition arrant condemnation bonk Way, lowa Department of nearly all aspects of the Kight of Way office including K/W designer, staff appraiser, aquisition agent, condemnation ker-ing officer and title and closing currentient Transportation, Shirley began ucsusure, stan appraise, aquisitor ascent Ing ouncer and use and closing supervisor. This past summer Shirley attended the 30th International discussion of contraction to astronomic This past summer Shirley attended the SULL International Educational Seminar held in Anaheim, California. In additional serving on the International Board as Chanter Director the algo

Educational Seminar field in Anaheim, California. In audition to serving on the International Board as Chapter Director, he also anneared on a namel precentation on the monitoring of local serving on the international Board as Unapter Director, he also appeared on a panel presentation on the monitoring of local multice extensions. Chivles: device a presentation on Devendures for appeared on a panel presentation on the monitoring of local Public agencies. Shirley gave a presentation on Procedures of Acquisition of Right of Way for Political Subdivisions of local Concerned with Federal Aid Funding for Road and Street Right Acquisition of Right of Way for Political Subdivisions of Iowa Concerned with Federal Aid Funding for Road and Street Right of Way Shirley spends considerable time assisting Iowa public Concerned with Federal Aid Funding for Road and Street Right of Way. Shirley spends considerable time assisting lowa bublic agencies to multify for federal biothway funds. of Way. Shirley spenas considerable time as agencies to qualify for federal highway funds. other a substance entire member of the Iniagencies to quality for leaderal highway funds. Shirley, a registered senior member of the International Right is the four for four for four sector classics and Shirley, a registered senior member of the international Right of Way Association, has held nearly all Chapter elective and annotative official in addition has base correct on the international Right on way Association, has need nearly all Chapter elective and appointive offices. In addition, he has served on the Internaappointive onces. In audition, the nas served of tional Special Awards committee for eight years.