

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Some chapters are having difficulty finding their historical documents, such as the chapter charter.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

DICK AVAZIAN
PRESIDENT

GENE SCHMOLL
VICE PRESIDENT

RIGHT OF WAY ACQUISITION • SURVEYING •
TELEPHONE ENGINEERING • MINERALS LEASING •
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENTS •

NFS

NATIONAL FIELD SERVICE CORP
NATIONAL BLDG, 162 ORANGE AVE.
SUFFERN, N.Y. 10901 914-368-1600