

At the 1999 Annual Conference, Bernie (center) is shown appreciation from the late Howard Armstrong, SR/WA and Connie Williford.



A LIFETIME OF REASONS

I just read the excellent article in the July/August issue of the Right of Way Magazine by International President Lisa Harrison, SR/WA on “The Impact of a Mentor.” She really captured the essence of what IRWA can offer to those members who elect to work with a mentor. While mentoring is an important benefit of belonging to the Association, there are many reasons why I am so hooked on IRWA.

The first Annual Conference I attended was in Denver in 1990. I was in awe at the friendship, communication, and respect that was shown to one and all. That attitude has continued at every event I have attended since then, forming valuable contacts with professionals that I later worked with on right of way projects. Even among the competitors who exhibit their products and services, I have seen strong friendships form. We know they compete with each other in the real world, but while they are at the conference, I’ve seen them show a united front while enjoying each other’s company.

The opportunity to help someone else presents itself often. I remember when the Seattle Chapter bid to be the conference host. They lost to another chapter. When I overheard them discussing how disappointed they were, I asked them why they couldn’t try again the following year. Suddenly, the loss was forgotten and they went on to enjoy themselves. Another time, I was asked if I could help prepare food for the incoming president’s reception. The event was a big success, and I formed friendships that I still treasure today. And anyone from Region 7 can remember the work that went into getting the conference to Anchorage, Alaska. No one knows exactly

how many blenders were burned out by making “Polar Bears,” but there were several.

Having served on several committees at the international level, I have enjoyed the experience of working with very talented individuals. I believe we work well together because of our shared purpose and mutual respect. We are willing to listen to each other’s opinions, and even when we disagree, we are able to move forward and get the job done.

For the last 10 years, I have been a member of the Right of Way International Education Foundation. This has been a very satisfying experience because of our success in generating funds for IRWA course development and updates. The individuals on this committee are totally committed to their task. We do what needs to be done and no one worries about who gets the credit. That’s because we understand the importance of the designations and certifications offered by IRWA. I firmly believe that, if two persons apply for the same right of way position, the one with the SR/WA designation or other certification will probably be the one that gets hired. Why? Because employers know that continuing education is a choice, and they give credit to those who have pursued it.

There are so many reasons to belong to IRWA. The friendships we make can last a lifetime, and the opportunity to see old friends is invaluable.

Bernard W. Lea, SR/WA

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