

# IRWA WELCOMES

# SOUTH AFRICA AS CHAPTER 83



**BY BARBARA BILLITZER**

With chapters throughout the United States and Canada, IRWA has recently expanded to a new continent. The Association's 83<sup>rd</sup> Chapter has been chartered in South Africa.

## ESCALATING NEED FOR EDUCATION

IRWA has enjoyed an affiliate relationship with the South African Right of Way Association (SARWA) for many years. It was just this past June when SARWA signed a partnership agreement with IRWA to become a region partner. In the months that followed, SARWA recognized that, with the increasing demands for new infrastructure projects in South Africa, their right of way professionals would benefit greatly from some advanced training. A meeting with IRWA's International Executive Committee led to an obvious conclusion. With some slight modifications to reflect South African law and culture, IRWA's existing courses would provide the precise level of curriculum they needed.

To facilitate the process of conducting IRWA courses in South Africa, making SARWA an IRWA Chapter was the next logical step. In September, International President Randy Williams, SR/WA, MAI, FRICS announced the chapter's formation with Ernest Grunewald, President of the South African Right of Way Association (SARWA) serving as Chapter 83 President.

Describing his country's unique infrastructure challenges, Ernest explained, "In addition to the 7,000 miles of transmission lines needed in South Africa, there are many major projects on the horizon. We are currently converting a massive amount of coal to petroleum, so the demand for new pipelines, roadways and railways is significant. And while our right of way professionals are very learned people, it is essential that we identify their existing core competencies so we can establish which IRWA courses will best supplement their knowledge and experience."



In 1998, SARWA delegates met with IRWA's International President Woody Pemberton Jr., SR/WA (pictured third from left) at the annual conference in Minneapolis.



Signing an affiliation agreement in June 2000 with IRWA's International President, Dwight Pattison, SR/WA were Bobby Richardson and Carl Visser.

## HOW IT ALL BEGAN

SARWA's history dates back to 1996, when staff from Eskom's Transmission Environmental department first discovered IRWA through an internet search. The right of way specialists in South Africa had determined that a higher standard of professionalism would be beneficial in facilitating property transactions in their country, and they wanted to see what other countries were doing. Intrigued by what he learned about IRWA online, Bobby Richardson of Eskom Transmission's Land and Rights section attended IRWA's 43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference in Anchorage, Alaska to learn more. Bobby was inspired by what he witnessed during the conference, and upon his return, he assembled a group of right of way practitioners to discuss the various disciplines associated with the acquisition of property rights in their country. Delegates representing Rand Water, Sasol, Eskom, Spoornet (now Transnet) and other companies were all in agreement – there was an essential need for education, training and networking between the many professionals associated with property negotiations.

In November 1997, a steering committee was assembled to facilitate the formation of a professional association in South Africa. Attendees traveled from all over the country, and represented a wide range of utilities and government departments including water, pipelines, roads, railways, telecommunications, municipalities, cellular phones and mining. A draft constitution was submitted to the delegates for approval, and in April 1998, SARWA was formally established. To keep focused on their long-term goals, they published three key objectives, which were to facilitate the networking of different practitioners and disciplines involved in and associated with the acquisition of property rights; promote the development of its members through education and training; and underwrite the fair, ethical, transparent and professional conduct of its members.

Soon after SARWA's formation, five delegates attended IRWA's 1998 Annual Conference in Minneapolis and met with IRWA's Executive Committee to discuss a potential affiliation.



In June, Ernest thanked attendees at IRWA's 2011 Annual Conference for the opportunity to embark on a shared mission to benefit right of way professionals in South Africa.

Representing the SARWA Executive Committee were Ampie Potgieter, Carl Visser, Suresh Joshi, Ernest Grunewald and Bobby Richardson. SARWA's goal of becoming an IRWA affiliate became a reality when a formal agreement was signed during IRWA's 2000 Annual Conference in Orlando. That was the beginning of a prolific and longstanding relationship, and SARWA representatives have attended every IRWA Annual Conference since.

## FACING THE FUTURE TOGETHER

International partnerships have far-reaching benefits. In addition to the demand for IRWA course curriculum, SARWA's desire for IRWA certification status is also high on their list of goals. The immense growth in South Africa, coupled with the demand for new infrastructure, has created an immediate need for seasoned and credentialed right of way professionals to assist in these endeavors.

IRWA and South Africa have taken their relationship to the next level – a move that is sure to be of great benefit for years to come.



In September, IRWA's International Governing Council convened in Los Angeles for a strategic planning session. As an invited guest, Ernest (bottom row) learned about upcoming initiatives for enhancing IRWA's courses and credentialing programs.