



# It's All About Relationships

**A reflection of respect and appreciation**

**BY KAMERON MCCRARY, SR/WA, R/W-NAC**

In early March, I met the final requirement for my SR/WA certification. After completing the application, I promptly received an email confirming that I had been approved by IRWA as a Senior Right of Way Professional. I am pleased to have reached this milestone and encourage others to do the same. It will proudly hang framed upon my office wall and serve as a constant reminder of the effort, education, and relationships that have been formed in pursuit of this designation. IRWA offers many opportunities for members to educate themselves and become involved with their local chapters. Contact your current board members to see how you can make a difference.

It's often said in this industry, "It's all about relationships." Years have quickly passed, and this passage seems necessary to fully appreciate the gravity of this expression. One begins to understand the impact that each individual has had on their career, experience, and current understanding of their profession. I am no exception to this and have many specific people to be thankful for in my life and for their contributions made to both my individual and professional development. I suppose we all may have at least one person whom we are indebted to for this and can easily credit for where we are today. I've been fortunate enough to have had three of these individuals and would like to take a moment and reflect on their leadership, guidance, and some of the wisdom they imparted to me along the way.



To begin, there will never be another like the late, Dan McNickol, SR/WA. Dan was an original in many ways. It was easy to recognize his passion for the profession and extensive knowledge of the industry. More obvious though was Dan's contagious sense of humor and positive attitude that he brought to each project. I was blessed to receive my first opportunity to work as a right of way agent on a project located in Montana and managed by Dan. I had many questions and Dan was willing to answer them all.



While I enjoyed his jokes and quote them often, I'll forever appreciate the time and effort that Dan put forth in my early development. Dan often repeated the phrase, *"We stay ready, so we don't have to get ready."*

As right of way professionals, we are often informed late of specific work or changes made to a project. If we manage our work effectively, we will be best situated to respond quickly when these requests arise. We will already be ready, as Dan frequently reminded the team. I was encouraged by Dan to get involved with the Association in January 2018. I attended my first class alongside my good friend, mentor, and supervisor. Sadly, Dan passed away in early 2021. He left behind a lifetime of experience and a lasting impact on all those who had the pleasure of knowing and working with him.

As my career progressed, I was introduced to R. Wayne Carson, R/W-NAC. Wayne had previously worked in various pipeline related positions and found himself finishing the remainder of his career as a senior right of way advisor. I was assigned to Wayne's office to assist with right of way support for heavy seasonal workloads, including large brushing and clearing projects as well as other normal maintenance activities.

Wayne's approach to right of way was very detailed and organized. I admired how he kept neat files and thorough project notes that led to changes in how I kept those items myself. Wayne had a deep understanding of maintenance-related work and how the tasks were performed. Having spent his prior years working in the field, Wayne explained the details and needs of these activities more fully than I had previously heard. His approach was very academic, and he generously shared the lessons that were taught to him by others as he entered the profession.

Wayne possessed an extensive knowledge of company history as his father had also worked and retired from the same employer. While I learned many things from Wayne, there was one lesson that made a lasting impact. Wayne exemplified treating landowners with respect, offering transparency, and answering questions honestly. This included admitting when you simply didn't have the answer. When resolving damage claims, Wayne often quoted how it was explained to him by his former supervisor, Ronnie Acorn, SR/WA: *"The purpose of this payment is not to make you rich or to leave you with less, it's our responsibility to make you whole."* This response stuck with me as it clearly defined our purpose in right of way as being that connection between the company and the affected stakeholders. Wayne retired having spent more than 38 years in the pipeline industry. He remains a close friend and mentor.

Lastly, I'd be remiss if I did not recognize the significant influence of my father, Kevin W. McCrary. As a young man, I was inspired to pursue a career in right of way from the example that he set forth. He taught me the foundational knowledge that everything else was later built upon. His approach to leadership and his relentless pursuit of improvement, have inspired me in my own endeavors. He is never satisfied with not knowing why or how something works and pursues the answers to questions that many leave unexplored. This trait has naturally partnered with the adoption of new technology, tools and identifying the most efficient ways to perform important tasks.

Perhaps the greatest advice came from his own childhood lessons. He passed along the same value of meaningful effort that was instilled in him by his own father. It's likely best conveyed by a popular quote from Walt Disney, which reads, *"Whatever you do, do it well. Do it so well that when people see you do it, they will want to come back and see you do it again, and they will want to bring others and show them how well you do what you do."* It stresses the importance of giving your best effort towards anything you choose to try and do. My father continues to be an example of integrity, wisdom and an endless source of knowledge for me.

Remember, it's all about the relationships. While expansive, this industry often feels small, and we are likely to work with familiar faces again. Each of these individuals uniquely helped to form the foundation of my career and establish the passion that I have for the profession today. As I reflect on nearly a decade of experience and achieving a notable educational milestone, it's with great appreciation that I express my sincere gratitude to these gentlemen and thank them for all their time, effort and willingness to answer the many questions of a once aspiring right of way professional. 🌟



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