

INDIANA'S CHAPTER 10 CELEBRATES

65 YEARS

BY YASMIN L. STUMP, ESQ.



The year is 1955, and for those over 65 years of age, the time conjures nostalgic memories of a simpler and gentler period. Dwight Eisenhower was the U.S. president. Rock and roll was in its infancy, with the music of Elvis Presley, Chuck Berry and Fats Domino on teenagers' transistor radios across the nation. The iconic Indiana native, James Dean, was on the silver screen in two of the three movies in which he starred — “Rebel Without a Cause” and “East of Eden.” Later that year, he was killed tragically in a car accident. Disneyland opened in Anaheim, California, and The Mickey Mouse Club debuted on ABC. Speaking of television, it was a relatively new invention in 1955, but many homes had black-and-white Hallicrafters television sets in their living rooms. Also in 1955, Coca-Cola was first offered in cans rather than bottles, and Ray Kroc opened the first McDonald's fast-food restaurant. In that same year, technology geniuses Steve Jobs and Bill Gates were born.

1955 also boasts another significant event — the inception of Chapter 10, Crossroads of America Chapter, of the then-American Right of Way Association (ARWA). The ARWA would later become the International Right of Way Association (IRWA) in 1979. The 39 Chapter 10 charter members consisted of 37 individuals from Indiana, one from Ohio and one from Kentucky. They may have appeared homogenous in their black-and-white photograph in 1955, but legend has it that they were diverse group brought together by their allegiance to the right of way industry.



Over the years, Chapter 10 established strong traditions, including its legendary annual golf outing and Christmas party. The Chapter even had a tradition with its music at events, with the Willie Baker Band performing at the Chapter installations and Christmas parties for over 30 years. Chapter 10 became known for its meaningful educational programs and high-quality newsletter. Since 1955, Chapter 10 members have demonstrated their commitment to the right of way industry through their involvement at the regional and international levels of IRWA and have been recognized with awards for their contributions at those levels.

Three times, in 2008, 2014 and 2018, Chapter 10 was awarded the Newsletter of the Year Award. In 2013, an Indiana Department of Transportation project, the Ohio River Bridges Project, was awarded IRWA Project of the Year — many who were part of the award-winning project team were Chapter 10 members. In 2009, Chapter 10 hosted the IRWA International Conference, and in 2019, the Chapter hosted the Region 5 Spring Forum.

Fast-forward to the present — Chapter 10 has grown to an impressive 179 members, including associate members. Photographs of its members at Chapter events are no longer in black and white, but in color. While the faces of its members have changed, Chapter 10's commitment to the right of way industry remains as strong as ever. The Chapter has become more diverse in terms of ethnicity, gender and age since it was established in 1955. A few years ago, Chapter 10 established a Young Professionals Committee; this committee supports members who are under 35 years and/or are recently embarking on a career in the right of way industry.

In 2020, when Chapter 10 turned 65, the year was marred by the COVID-19 virus. 2020 was unprecedented, and in many ways, turbulent. Despite the challenges presented in 2020, Chapter 10 boldly but safely continued to embrace its traditions, including the annual installation ceremony and golf outing. Along with its traditional events, in October 2020, the first hybrid in-person/virtual education program was held jointly with the Appraisal Institute Hoosier Chapter. Indiana Lieutenant Governor Suzanne Crouch was the keynote speaker at the program, and it was a resounding success with approximately 120 participants. Last year, the Chapter also had its disappointments due to the COVID-19 pandemic; the plan had been to celebrate the Chapter's 65th anniversary at the annual Christmas party scheduled in December. Unfortunately, shortly before the annual Christmas party, the number of COVID-19 virus cases spiked and in the interests of the health and safety of the Chapter's members, the Chapter 10 Executive Board cancelled the event.

The Greek philosopher Heraclitus once said, "The only constant in life is change." Such a saying could not be truer today. As the dawn of a new year has arrived, Chapter 10 is working diligently to find a way to celebrate the Chapter's momentous anniversary sometime this year.

Undoubtedly continuing forward, Chapter 10 will uphold its traditions, perhaps in new ways, and not only adapt, but celebrate changes in positive ways for its members. Happy 65th anniversary, Chapter 10! 🌟



Yasmin L. Stump is IRWA Chapter 10 president. She is the president and founder of Yasmin L. Stump Law Group, PC in Indiana and has practiced in real estate transactions and litigation, as well as been a member of the right of way industry, for more than 30 years.