



Looking Back and Moving Forward

Thank you for your support

BY JUDY JONES, SR/WA

“A true leader has the confidence to stand alone, the courage to make tough decisions and the compassion to listen to the needs of others. He does not set out to be a leader but becomes one by the equality of his actions and the integrity of his intent.” — Douglas MacArthur

I have served this Association for almost 20 years from the Chapter level to now as the highest elected office, International President. It is so hard to believe this final year is coming to an end.

When I took office, I promised to work hard for you every day. I have kept my promise in more ways than you know and continued to bring my genuine self in everything I have done for this Association. I hope I have been a positive influence in my service.

Our Code of Ethics calls for us to dedicate ourselves to a course of conduct which manifests respect, confidence and trust. In absence of this behavior, we cannot deliver IRWA's purpose. My goal has been to continue restoring confidence and trust within all levels of our organization. Each and every member should have the opportunity to have their voices heard and their concerns considered. My hope is that the days of serving at the highest level of leadership with just a title and little to no involvement with the Association's operations are over. True leaders have to be willing to do the hard work and ask tough questions.

I reflect back on the path that led me to where I am today, and boy, has it been a journey made up of small steps, big steps and great leaps of faith! But at the end of the day, I can proudly look up to my Father in Heaven knowing I did not lose focus of striving to do what is right. We must always stay true to ourselves. You see, when we do what is right, Godly and just, it's never wrong. Never cease to stay that course and do not waver to what is unjust.





There is no doubt that each member of this organization works daily to improve people’s quality of life. We don’t start our day consciously thinking about it — it’s just who we are and what we do. I have been privileged to work for the same company for 35 years. During this time, I have witnessed countless projects on paper come to life, struggle through the approval and permitting process, face challenges in acquiring necessary right of way and on into construction but ultimately make positive impacts on the communities in which they are located. We should all be proud of the industries we serve and may we never underestimate the value of our contributions.

I am sure many of you will agree that the International Right of Way Association has played an integral role in our careers. The opportunities to grow through educational offerings, the immeasurable value of the network that we can plug into for guidance and advice and the opportunities to lead are all facets of the organization that I love and respect. The Association has witnessed many changes since I first became a member, and I am excited about our future. We are in a transitional period, not only in our Association but also our society. Never before in our history have we witnessed the work force changing in the manner currently unfolding. Four different generations are intermingled in the work place, technology changes daily, if not faster, and despite a healthy economy, budgets seem to get tighter. Our work has always been challenging, and that will likely never change.



As a professional organization, IRWA is in a position to raise the bar for the right of way profession. With the buzz word “infrastructure,” we are in a great position to let the world know who we are and the importance of what we do for the betterment of society. Bringing back the Federal Agency Update this year is something I am extremely proud of, and I am looking forward to being a part of it in Denver at our annual education conference. We are the most highly trained professionals in the right of way industry, and I am confident these efforts will continue. We are always improving our education program of new course developments and course rewrites while continuing to move into the digital world by offering micro-trainings to meet the needs of our members, especially our agency and corporate member leadership.

Following in the footsteps of Past International President Jake Farrell, SR/WA, I had big shoes to fill (literally)! Thank you, Jake, for your passion, determination and continued encouragement on this journey. You are truly a great leader to follow but, more importantly, a great friend for life. My hope is that the changes we created in making leaders accountable and transparent, while expecting the same in return of our staff, will continue. It has been hard work bringing us back to a member-led association. The IEC is there to represent the members, and the development over the last five years must continue. We must carry on moving the Association forward while building upon this new foundation, all the while staying focused on our core values of ethics, education and fair treatment of all who are impacted by our work.



Thank you to my fellow IEC and IGC members for your unwavering support. When you serve at the international level, these individuals become your friends and family. With the continuous efforts of both the IGC and IEC, I am confident we will continue advancing the Association to new heights.

I have had the luxury of great leaders before me who continue to encourage me along my journey to becoming the International President of this Association. The loss of our matriarch, Carol Croft, SR/WA, my biggest supporter and mentor, has left a huge void in my life. However, she will forever remain in my heart, and I know she will always be with me. I will forever be grateful knowing she was there with us in Cleveland when I took the oath of office. Also, many thanks to my friend Donna Crosby, SR/WA, from my hometown, Montgomery, Alabama. In the early '90s, Donna had the courage to run for a position on the IEC when there were only men serving as officers. Becoming the first female president in 1994 helped pave the way for so many of us because she wasn't afraid to stand up and do the right thing. To Past International Presidents Faith Roland, SR/WA, and Pat Petitto, SR/WA, I appreciate you for always being there. You each came into my life for a purpose, and I am blessed that you did.

To the great staff of this Association, you are all incredible. Through the leadership of Tim Drennan, CAE, Jade Meador, CAE, CMP, and Rakhshan Mazarei, there is nothing we can't accomplish. I will not miss the time consumption this role has taken, but I will definitely miss working with each of you!

Alabama Chapter 24 and Region 6, I am forever grateful to you for entrusting me to be your leader at the Chapter and Region levels. Thank you for your continuous encouragement and support.



Many thanks to my employer, Goodwyn Mills & Cawood, LLC. Your support enabled me to lead an Association I love and has allowed me the time and expense to be away from the office for all of the various meetings and events. Without your support, I would not be where I am today serving as the International President of IRWA.

To each and every member of this Association, I thank you for this opportunity to serve during my tenure on the IEC. Our membership is made up of a fully diverse group of individuals who I have been honored to serve. With everything in life, we leave an impression in everything we do — my hope is that I have left a good one. I have worked hard to improve this Association, and I challenge you to always work for the greater good, stand up for what you believe in and ensure the leaders you elect to represent you, remain accountable and transparent.

Last, but definitely not least, thank you to my children and grandchildren. The sacrifices have been many, and the time spent away from you can never be given back. However, I look forward to spending much more time together very soon! I love each of you very much!

It has been said that great leadership comes from the heart, and big-hearted leaders are successful because they were approachable and paid personal attention to their people. You are my people, and I truly hope that I have been that kind of leader to you.

I will leave you with a quote from Mother Teresa: *"Honesty and transparency make you vulnerable. Be honest and transparent anyway."* ✨