

# WARNER'S CORNER

## QUITE AMAZING!! 25 YEARS...AND STILL SURGING AHEAD!



JAMES WARNER

The year was 1988...an enthusiastic group of 61 people from throughout the United States and Canada met in Naperville, IL, agreed on Bylaws, and selected initial officers; and the International Association of Concrete Repair Specialists was born!

So how did this great interest develop? For me, it started 35 years earlier—in 1952—with the need to repair a defect on a small structure I had built. In those days, there wasn't a repair industry—no repair materials or guidelines—in fact, nobody really wanted one. After all, concrete was that marvelous material that would last forever. The “law” of the industry prohibited the words “concrete” and “repair” being used together! Therefore, anyone who admitted an interest in concrete repair had to be witless and was scorned. But we plodded along; applied the good practice of controlling shrinkage of our self-blended materials; and performed generally durable, long-lasting repairs. But our progress was not without tribulations, especially with the new so-called “high-performance” materials that appeared on the scene.

By the late 1960s and early 1970s, many repair products, such as cementitious patching compounds and resinous formulations, especially epoxies, came on the market. A need for specialty contractors who could apply these materials followed. Often, these contractors were tied to a single manufacturer as a Certified Applicator.

Unfortunately, the new materials didn't always perform as intended, and many repairs were failing within a few years. The cementitious compounds tended to have very high strength and rapid strength gain, which was deemed advantageous. And yes, it could have been. However, high strength usually meant high cement content, which translated into high shrinkage and cracking, resulting in the loss of bond. And because these compounds typically developed stiffness much greater than the parent concrete, the two didn't always get along harmoniously. And then, the epoxies! These were capable of a miracle-like performance, so we sometimes expected much more. However, we had yet to understand their limitations. And when they misbehaved, the results were often best described as catastrophic!

Jump now to 1976, when World of Concrete (WOC) was a year old. The program for the second year was to include several seminars, one of which would be on concrete floors. There would be four speakers on the various aspects of concrete slab construction, maintenance, and repairs. I would discuss repairs.

Perusal of previous seminar evaluations showed repair to be the most popular subject by far. So for 1977, an entire seminar on the repair of slabs-on-grade was scheduled. Because of my experience and interest, a similar session on structural repairs was also planned. Attendance and interest were phenomenal, which resulted in the development of a whole suite



*Believe it or not, the cover photo is the after picture, taken approximately 3 years after extensive repairs. The whole article was from a story in the March/April 1991 issue about a failure of a repair*

of seminars on concrete repair for the following year. In those early days, nearly all of the attendees were contractors. Their questions revealed that many had encountered the same material problems I had previously experienced.

It also became apparent there were many very knowledgeable, experienced contractors throughout the country who had an interest in concrete repairs and thirsted for knowledge to better perform the work. Accordingly, a full series of seminars on concrete repair, which included three separate sessions on repair materials, was organized. These sessions became some of the highest rated and best attended of the entire seminar series, which had become a major feature of the exposition.

Interest continued to grow. In 1988, I posed this question: “Is there a place where repair professionals can gather and exchange information?” “No, but there should be,” I replied, “why don't one of you stand at the door and collect cards of any interested people on the way out. Maybe we can get something started.” Milt Collins took the initiative. He collected 130 names, representing people from 34 states in the U.S., in addition to five countries on four different continents. More than abundant interest was there!

The late Bill Avery, founder of *Concrete Construction* magazine and WOC, as well as an exceptional mentor to many, including myself, donated \$1000 to get the ball rolling. This was augmented with donations from another 51 interested individuals, leading to an organizational meeting on May 21, 1988, in Naperville, IL. Sixty-one people showed up for that first meeting, and Milt Collins became the Executive Director.

The objective of the organization was established:

“To improve the QUALITY of concrete repairs by:  
Maintaining lines of COMMUNICATION among the members;  
Disseminating INFORMATION about proper products and processes to the members, and to the purchasers of their services;  
EDUCATING the public as to the availability of high quality repairs through the use of qualified specialists.”

The organization has accomplished these goals—far beyond our wildest expectations!

In 1993, to more accurately describe the organization, the name was changed to the International Concrete Repair Institute (ICRI). While the name has been updated, ICRI’s basic

mission remains the same and progress continues unabated. We need to be grateful for the early officers and Directors who set us up for such success. Yes, ICRI has many great accomplishments to be proud of during our 25th anniversary year!

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***James Warner, PE**, is an independent Consulting Engineer who specializes in foundation and structural restoration and repair. Formerly a contractor in these specialties, he organized the original concrete repair program for World of Concrete and presented those seminars for 19 years. It was at one of his seminars that the seeds were sown for what is now the International Concrete Repair Institute (ICRI). He continues an active consultancy and is an Honorary Life Member of the Institute.*