

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

## CLOSING THE GAP!



BUD EARLEY

I thoroughly enjoyed reading Jim Warner's column in the January/February 2013 issue of the *CRB*. Jim does an excellent job explaining where our industry was with regards to concrete repair and restoration materials and methods. With what is available today compared to over 25 years ago, one could come away thinking that the industry "know-how" back then was actually quite primitive.

If we take a close look at some of ICRI's milestones over the past 25 years, we can see some very meaningful accomplishments. Things that are now looked at as standard procedures started out as one person's idea or possibly a goal of a group of individuals. The organization was technically born on May 21, 1988, when the inaugural meeting was held in Naperville, IL. An eager group of about 60 people from various locations across the United States and Canada met and set up what would be the first executive committee, by-laws, and so on. This new association of concrete repair specialists wasted no time in introducing a source of information on concrete repair to the industry, as by October of that same year, the first issue of the *Concrete Repair Bulletin* was published. Additionally, a short 18 months later, they introduced the very first Technical Guideline, "Surface Preparation for the Repair of Deteriorated Concrete Resulting from Reinforcing Steel Oxidation."

Since the first actual "convention" wasn't held until 5 years after the initial meeting, how were things getting done? Well, in the early days, task groups were formed to work on specific guidelines, and these met at the same times as the Board meetings.

It was also decided early on that the best way to get ICRI's message to as many people as possible was to organize local chapters in key areas across the country. It should be no surprise that the first official "chapter" of the organization was established in Chicago in 1989. In the first 5 years, the International Association of Concrete Repair Specialists had 11 chapters. Many changes took place in that fifth year. The organization would change its name; the first full convention would be held in Baltimore, MD; and the very first "Project Awards" program was held.

If we follow the ICRI timeline, we will see that the Technical Committee structure wasn't formed until 1999. That's 10 years into the organization's existence before the official framework of the permanent technical committees actually got started. As I mentioned, prior to that, task groups worked on a guideline, and then disbanded once the guideline was finished. Adding the permanent committee structure enabled ICRI to work better under a specific set of rules and also gave a place to work on reauthorizations and revisions of current guidelines, in addition to generating new ones. The contributions of the local chapters, which by this place in time had

doubled in number to 22, were also of great importance to the continued success of the organization.

I first began getting involved in ICRI at the national level in the latter part of 2000. It was around the same time I had the opportunity to travel to several chapters in the southeast on a fairly regular basis. In just a few years, I heard many members of the chapters I visited speaking of a "disconnect" with national. After reading the aforementioned, one might wonder how this could ever come about. With the advent of the national conventions and the development of additional technical committees, it became much easier to complete more work at the conventions than ever before. One program that tried to close the gap was the development of our "Chapter Delegate" program. This allows a member of a local chapter to attend a national convention without the cost of the convention registration fee. This program has developed and grown, as we have more delegates from chapters attending than ever before.

We are currently over 2000 members strong with approximately 1750 of those being a member of a local chapter. In recent years, changes have been made that are making our chapter members even more important at the national level. The Board of Directors is now chosen from a specific "region" and each Board member now serves as a representative of his/her region elected by the chapters from within each specific region.

In the fall of 2009, discussions began at the Chapters Committee meeting for Chapter Roundtables or regional "mini conventions" that would focus entirely on chapter issues. In November 2010, leaders from eight chapters in the northeast spent a day and a half sharing their successes, failures, and lessons learned. This was to be done on a trial basis to see if the attendees from the chapters, as well as the Executive Committee, felt it was beneficial. The first full cycle that has included every chapter was completed in the spring of 2012. We are nearly halfway through the second cycle of this exciting program and from all accounts it is very successful.

I have had the pleasure of attending three of these Chapter Roundtables and I can assure you that it has been everything we hoped it would be. Our chapters are sharing all things with each other. Many are coming away from these meetings with refreshing new ideas that will give a spark to their own chapters. It is also an opportunity for those attending the meetings to have one-on-one time with the current President of ICRI, the Executive Director, the Chapters and Marketing Manager, and the Chapters Committee Chair. This important program has closed the gap between "national" and the local chapters. I offer a sincere thank-you to all who have attended a Chapters Roundtable meeting.

*"Clients feel about a service the way they feel about the provider."*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William R. Earley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline.