



The History of KRWA – A Perspective and Hope

It is humbling to me to be the person who has been tasked with the development of a 50th Anniversary publication for the Kansas Rural Water Association. The publication is a separate document that will be available to all those who attend the KRWA conference. Those who cannot attend will receive a copy at their utility or organization by mail.

There is a purpose to spend time and effort on history. A shared history is a large part of what binds individuals to each other and to an organization. Much that happens around us today is because of the work and accomplishments of others and the course that they have set.

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It's important to understand that there is a "history" to any organization. Reasonable people don't just show up and complain about their utility or whatever organization they become involved in. Instead people do well when they try to understand and appreciate how the organization – including your city or water district – got to where it is. "The present,"

according to the historian and philosopher David Carr, "gets its sense from the background of comparable events to which it belongs....Discovering or rediscovering the story, picking up the thread, reminding ourselves where we stand, where we have been and where we are going – these are as important for groups just as for individuals."

So what is the relevance of that quote by David Carr? Well, knowing about and actually caring some about the history of an organization can help people understand that they are part of a still unfolding event and something larger than themselves. There's more to being a member of a town city council or RWD board meeting than showing up for semi-monthly or monthly meeting. The same holds for the staff member understanding that he or she will need to be polite the next time a customer calls with a complaint about their utility system. The board/council and the staff, just as with KRWA, are there to serve the citizens. It's not the other way around.

It's important to also remind ourselves too, "Who is KRWA?" KRWA is you – the members. KRWA is not the board of directors and staff. They represent KRWA. Consider the many professionals who take time to present at training sessions sponsored

An advertisement for BG Consultants, Inc. The top part features a stylized illustration of a water tower, a small wooden building, and a large circular water treatment tank. The text reads: "With BG Consultants, Inc., Your Vision Matters." Below the illustration, a paragraph states: "You may not think about having high quality water available to you every day, but we do. With extensive experience, our engineers will help you develop dependable, innovative and cost effective solutions for all your water needs." At the bottom, the BG logo is shown next to the company name and services: "BG Consultants, Inc. Engineering | Architecture | Surveying". To the right, the phone number "1-800-748-7572" and website "www.bgcons.com" are listed.

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by KRWA. They are KRWA and have done much to expand the value of the Association programs. Yes, they are in business to have a livelihood – but there is a larger commitment – and that is to help others. People who have participated on KRWA training programs for decades are not there for their personal gain; they are there to help the operators, clerks, board/council members, managers and administrators in cities and RWDs and wastewater systems to be better prepared to deal with the issues local communities face. The growth of KRWA’s Annual Conference & Exhibition is a testament to that effort. In 2016, all 345 booth spaces filled and there are additional companies on the standby list. That level of confidence in an organization does not happen overnight. It takes lots of work – making sure that every possible detail is covered. In other cases, KRWA members have joined in writing to their legislators to express concerns about proposals – and rules that might be changed to be less burdensome.

The KRWA history is also about leaders. Some were risk takers, with

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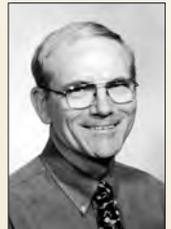
some success over adversity. It takes leadership and an enthusiasm and persistence to get things done.

I am proud to have been a part of KRWA and I look forward to continuing to do what I can as one of the KRWA-team members. There is not a day that goes by that I do not recall serving on the KRWA board and also working with many previous board members, making many trips to Topeka and Washington, driving home from night meetings in all sorts of weather – all to try to be the best spokesperson possible for the local systems that are KRWA – and that KRWA represents.

Working together, KRWA has been true to its mission, its members and its future. The past fifty years are solid ground to continue to build on.

Last, I hope that the 2016 Annual Conference & Exhibition is an event that readers will place on their calendars and attend. This issue features the entire program again. You may find a registration form on page 57, or register online at www.krwa.net under “Training” and then “Conference”.

Elmer Ronnebaum is KRWA General Manager; he has been employed by KRWA since 1983. He served seven years on the KRWA board of directors prior to that. He also helped develop a large RWD and served for fourteen years on a water district board of directors.





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