



## 75th Anniversary Roundtable: Giving Back to the Profession

Three past presidents reflect on the ongoing need for service-minded volunteers.

By Jan Seefeldt

Having mentors who were thought leaders in their era and giving freely of their own expertise to the next generation of appraisers exemplify the participants in this issue's Roundtable discussion. The three: Charles B. Akerson, MAI (known as Charlie to his friends and peers); John D.

Dorchester, Jr., MAI, SRA (known as Don to distinguish him from his father who was also an MAI); and Peter D. Bowes, MAI, also have something else in common: Each served as president of the Appraisal Institute. Akerson in 1978, Dorchester in 1982 and Bowes in 1983.

It seemed appropriate during this anniversary year to ask these past presidents for some insights on what they perceive as differences in association membership and leadership between their era and today, as well as what inspired them, and if that same spirit of dedication has an importance today.

### Family and Other Mentors

Becoming involved in the Appraisal Institute was almost preordained for Bowes and Dorchester, since their fathers were both active members of the organization. "My father, Eugene Bowes, was active in the Appraisal Institute as I was growing up and when I went to work. My involvement was not so much a conscious decision as it was what I had always known and what I expected to do," Bowes says.

Dorchester points to the fact that he was directly involved with many of the founders of the profession when he was a boy. "Both my 1957 undergraduate degree and my later Master's degree were designed for what was ahead in appraising and the real estate field and had the advantage of inputs from many of the best-known appraisers in the world. My dad, John Dorchester, had visions that I could not define but that I wanted to discover. And, if possible, not only help others to understand, but to find ways to better articulate what the profession of appraising has meant and can mean." Dorchester himself now perhaps plays a similar role for his son, Andrew, who is an associate member of the Appraisal Institute and heads Cushman & Wakefield's Washington, D.C., Dispute Analysis and Litigation Support office.



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—John D. Dorchester, Jr., MAI  
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Akerson joined the Appraisal Institute in 1966 and became actively involved in the organization as a result of his new interest in the appraisal field. He was inspired by a number of the members of the Appraisal Institute, including L.W. (Pete) Ellwood and Jim Gibbons, early in his experience with the Appraisal Institute. Both were well known and very encouraging to Akerson. Ellwood had recently seen the publication of his landmark volume of tables, which provided a new dimension to real estate analysis. His contribution to the income capitalization approach changed the practice of appraisal. Until *The Ellwood Tables* (published in 1959), most appraisers focused on land and building components. Ellwood added the consideration of mortgage and equity components, not as a substitute but as another dimension to the analysis.

Akerson found professionals like Ellwood and Gibbons fascinating to talk with and to learn from. Their wide-ranging interests inspired him to also diversify his activities. He designed some original computer programs to assist himself as an appraiser and he became a distinguished instructor and author of several well-known study guides, including *Capitalization Theory and Techniques* and *The Appraiser's Workbook*, both of which are still bestsellers today.

Dorchester also points to some of the revered thinkers and leaders of the early days of the profession. Included on his list are 1957 AIREA president David Montonna; Frederick Babcock, who had intimate knowledge of and involve-

ment in formation of the profession and articulation of its principles; and Harry Grant Atkinson, who told Dorchester when he was a college freshman that he would underachieve if he didn't "serve the profession in some advanced role."

Others Dorchester cites as influencing his career include Morris Ashton, a "consummate gentleman and professional [who] posed probing questions to develop new thought"; Joe and Walter Kuehnle, who challenged Dorchester to teach, write and perform research; George Noah and Van Joyce, who "believed that education was necessary to move the profession forward, and made me dig deeper to complete both of my degrees"; and Roy Kavanaugh and Joe Allard, who "put responsibilities on my shoulders that were beyond the full understanding of a 32-year old, but are painfully obvious to me today." Dorchester also adds Akerson and John Remick to his list. "Each saw something in me that I did not know, and pushed me to innovate in a profession in which I was the youngster among those I revered."

### Relevance in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Given that at least one generation of appraisers has appeared on the scene since our Roundtable participants served as president, we asked them what they think has changed and if membership in the Appraisal Institute still has relevance for today's younger appraisers.

The organization "has a continuing, important role to play due to its professional reputation and its many

contributions to the real estate community," Akerson says. "In particular, it has encouraged the younger generation to become involved in its education program."

Bowes sees changes in both the general business world as well as the appraisal profession. "There are many more moving parts for business in general and for the appraisal profession specifically. There is more politics involved in what we do and how people look at us. This was happening in the middle '80s and has become more important over time. Our involvement in government relations is a key part of what we do." Despite changes in communication technology that have occurred in recent decades, Bowes believes that "the way we communicate and transmit information does not change the significance of the Appraisal Institute."

### Professional vs. Business Success

Dorchester also believes the organization is more important than ever, but it needs to rekindle a professional—rather than a business—resolve for the members and the organization. He feels there has been a loss of understanding of and commitment to the public service and other missions of a profession. There is a difference between "making money" and "making a profession," and Dorchester believes more individuals are attracted to the business than the profession.

The challenge, he says, is to convert those who aspire to get a designation into those who aspire to further a profession that will be better when they leave than when they start. Carefully crafted promotions that further the membership as professionals will also further the organization as well, he says. "This is where the organization must become more vital and leadership must become more responsive."

### Giving Back

The concept of giving back to their profession has played a significant role in the lives of these leaders, along with the camaraderie and friendships that developed along the way. "From 1964 to 2000, I spent well over a third of

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—Peter D. Bowes, MAI



my total time in serving the profession,” Dorchester says. “It was the greatest privilege I have ever had outside of my family and closest friends. I have always considered involvement in the profession to be an obligation and a privilege, not just for me but for all who call themselves professional appraisers.”

Akerson, who in addition to serving as president in 1978 was among early pioneers in promoting an international presence for the Appraisal Institute, points to the many friends he and his wife, Jean, made over the years, including during their travels to South America in connection with UPAV (the Pan American Union of Appraisers).

“Volunteerism is a great outlet for hard-working professionals who love what they are doing, and it is also a good way to get to know the younger appraisers,” says Akerson. “Members can be influential in inviting new appraisers to come to meetings, take courses, etc. Many senior appraisers, including myself, have been active in teaching appraisal fundamentals.”

Recognizing how he was influenced by some of the leading thinkers when he was a young appraiser, Akerson understands the need for today’s beginners to have similar role models. Today’s young appraisers, he says, will be influenced by the volunteer appraisers they encounter as well as by the appraisal literature that has been built up through magazine articles, textbooks, course materials, keynote speeches, etc., many of which are the product of volunteers.

Bowes concurs: “Employers and

role models would influence young appraisers to get involved with the Appraisal Institute, either through getting a designation or being a volunteer. The Appraisal Institute needs to actively find able young appraisers, encourage them to become involved, and make them feel welcome and important.”

“A professional organization like the Appraisal Institute allows people to demonstrate their commitment to their profession,” Bowes continues. “Some believe that being a state certified appraiser is enough, and for some appraisers and for some clients it is. But for those of us who want to do more and better, and to be perceived as being better educated and more professional, being a member of the Appraisal Institute is important. It is partly a business decision and partly a personal pride and satisfaction decision.”

Dorchester adds, “Volunteerism with the right attitudes and professional motivations of placing the profession above self is, for most, both the best education and most rewarding activity available to any professional.” While personal sacrifices are sometimes needed for the sake of professional growth and development, he says, “professions reward personal sacrifices with growth of the profession, a betterment of the public we serve, and a sense of accomplishment for those who make the sacrifices. Properly viewed and managed, volunteerism helps to build stronger families, contributes to better health and well being of those who gain satisfactions, and at the end of the day lets one sit back, smile and say, ‘We did well.’” ■

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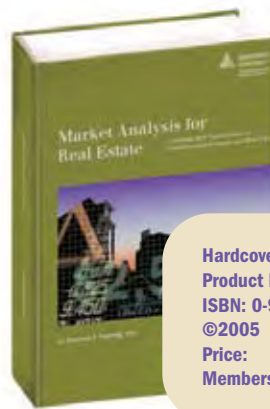
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