



THE ASSESSMENT FILES

COUNTY ASSESSORS ASSOCIATION OF OKLAHOMA

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News From the President

Greetings Assessors and Deputies,

Things are finally slowing down a little bit in our office. I hope you are experiencing the same thing. By slowing down I mean to a pace you might be able to handle with an 8-hour workday!

The District Meetings were great this year! I went to Roland in Sequoyah County, McAlester and Krebs in Pittsburg County, Taloga in Dewey County and El Reno in Canadian County. Each meeting was very enjoyable and each was unique. It is a treat to see different parts of the state that are 'new' to me. Thank you to all assessors who played host this year — and to the deputies who helped!

I attended the State Board of Equalization Meeting on Monday, June 20th. Almost all of the abstracts were in and were accepted. That always relieves some pressure on us.

There is still no definite location for the August OTC School in Tulsa. Hopefully, that will be decided very soon so we can finalize our plans.

We were finally successful in killing HB1715 for this year. Unfortunately, I am sure we will deal with it again next year. Thanks again to everyone for calling and talking with your representatives and senators to help defeat it.

Enjoy your summer!

Denise Heavner

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Ad Valorem Update (written prior to the June 15th deadline)

It's abstract time again and completion of the public service valuations came up fast for 2005. The Ad Valorem Division had an extremely busy month building up to the June 20th State Board of Equalization (SBOE) meeting. We hope that we can duplicate our effort of the last two years and get all 77 county abstracts in on time. Our public service valuations are on track to be completed on time, but with our stretched-short staff situation, we will be challenged to get all the values done on a very short time schedule.

We completed the Annual District and OATR meetings last month. I thought the meetings were really productive this year. The Oklahoma Association of Tax Representatives invited us to their spring meeting in Tulsa; we always appreciate an opportunity to discuss their concerns. The OATR membership has lots of experience and knowledge in the process.

On behalf of the County Assessors Association, President Denise Heavner and her officers, the Ad Valorem Division really appreciates the efforts of the counties that hosted the District meetings -- Jack O'Neill (Sequoyah), Jim Kelley (Pittsburg), Lennet Pisacka (Dewey), and Ron Funck (Canadian). We had great attendance with a super turn-out. I always learn so much. This year we had a lecture on the Eastern Cedar Plague in western Oklahoma, some Native American dance demonstrations, great meals including some Italian food in McAlester, and some western chuck wagon fare in El Reno at their Rock Island Museum.

The Legislative session resulted in a few, but significant pieces of legislation. We'll be getting copies out shortly. We have two changes in the five-year program as well as a couple of other changes. Annual Conference planning is proceeding. Our bid process is late this year, but we hope to have dates and a hotel lined up fairly soon. We'll notify you as soon as possible.

I saw a recent interview on OETA about one of the traditions of the Oklahoma Highway Patrol Academy. Each new cadet is charged with the duty to remember one of the troopers lost in the line of duty. Each cadet learns the name and details of someone in whose path that they are about to follow. It is a way of recognizing the work and sacrifice of those that have gone before us. I think it is a wonderful link between the past and the future.

As the county assessors work through their abstracts, I think it is interesting to reflect on the "old days" before some of our accomplishments in computerization of so much of the county ad valorem system. When I first got in the business, Oklahoma County had already computerized its system, but many of the county assessors I knew told me horror stories that they remembered when in late May and early June every county assessor's office was almost submerged in huge rolls of calculator tape on the floor during the struggle to complete the abstract. The statute provided that if the roll was not completed on time: no one got paid. This penalty was invoked on a regular basis. It was a serious, difficult task and I'm glad those days are gone, but in some ways, it is a loss. We have a tendency to take the new systems for granted. It is difficult to realize how hard it really is to put together a complete and accurate abstract for the public and the taxpayers who support schools and county government. Like the Academy, we don't want to forget the hard work and sacrifice of those that went before us and our duty to make this system work as fairly and equitably as it can.

Have a good month. If we don't see everyone at the June SBOE meeting, we'll see you at the Annual Conference in Tulsa at a hotel to be named later after the bid is complete.

Jeff Spelman, CAE Director Ad Valorem Division

Reporter's Notes

The Oklahoma IAAO Chapter has announced that its Course 300, Mass Appraisal, for this summer is full. The chapter is exploring plans to bring Course 101 and 102 to Oklahoma next year. These two introductory courses are rated as some of IAAO's best courses. The chapter has also sent out dues for chapter members. Keep in mind that you can belong to the Oklahoma Chapter without belonging to the national IAAO organization.

The Oklahoma IAAO Chapter just chalked up its twentieth year as a chapter and I asked Jeff Spelman to put together a few paragraphs on the start of the chapter. The following excerpt on Page 4 of this month's newsletter details the chapter's early beginnings.

Hope everyone is enjoying their summer and had no major problems in compiling an abstract this month. I know most offices breathe a huge sigh of relief once the final abstract is on its way to Oklahoma City -- either by mail, automobile, or carrier pigeon.

That's all for now.

Your Reporter,
Todd Mathes



July Birthdays

Jack Matthews (Pushmataha)	July 8
Vernon Crumm (Caddo)	July 14
Monica Schmidt (Woods)	July 19
Jim Kelley (Pittsburg)	July 20
"King" Ralph Wilson (Major)	July 21

English inventor Michael Faraday is credited with both conceiving the idea for and building the first electric motor. When Faraday then tried to get the backing of Prime Minister William Gladstone, the prime minister reportedly was less than impressed with the crudely-made invention. "What possible good is it?" asked Gladstone.

Faraday's reply changed Gladstone's attitude: "Some day you'll be able to tax it."

The Oklahoma IAAO Chapter “The Early Days”

Historically, the Chapter started in 1985. The late George Keyes, Oklahoma County Assessor at the time, talked with several of his staff about starting a chapter after Oklahoma County had brought the first IAAO Courses in a long time to Oklahoma. (Tulsa County had sponsored some courses about ten years before.) I talked with IAAO about setting up a chapter and was told that we had to write a set of by-laws. We “borrowed” some language from the County Assessors Association by-laws, CODA by-laws and the Oklahoma English Language Teacher’s Association (my wife was teaching at the time). We put the Director of the Ad Valorem Division and the President of the County Assessors’ Association on the Executive Board to keep them involved in the Chapter’s activities. We had a short deadline and got the material in to IAAO with minutes to spare and had to re-write something to meet IAAO Rules.

Our first organizational meeting was at a local real estate contractor’s building that he’d loaned and it was basically an Oklahoma County and Oklahoma Tax Commission gathering with only a couple of other counties there. As a loyal county employee at the time, I was interested in getting George Keyes elected as the first president so we had a big discussion on that possibility since he had a “real” election coming up the next year.

We designed a chapter logo and chapter pin. (My little sister did the graphics.) And Tom Henry and others set up a Charter Member Certificate that the Chapter Charter Members all had on their walls.

The IAAO Chapter’s first big event was inviting the IAAO President to come to the Annual Conference which was held in Stillwater in those days. We had IAAO President Diggs, CAE from Virginia, come to talk in the Student Union. We presented him with a nice Stetson. Through some mix-up in the communications, his secretary had informed us he wore a size six hat which is a very small head size so for the ceremony he had a hat that literally floated on the top of his head.

In 1986, the IAAO Chapter Executive Board met with House Speaker Steve Lewis. He indicated that he wanted to study the Ad Valorem system in depth. We discussed using IAAO professional staff to do an extensive study of the system. The Speaker agreed to provide \$50,000 funding for the study. Richard Almy, Executive Director of IAAO, and a team that he had assembled came to Oklahoma for a couple of months. They visited numerous counties and came up with many of the recommendations for computerization, mapping, relationships with County Boards of Equalization, etc. that were implemented in the major Ad Valorem reform legislation in HB 1750 and HB 1388.

That fall, we started holding IAAO Chapter meetings in conjunction with the County Assessors Association Annual Convention or the Annual Conference. It provided us an opportunity to get more counties involved, although it was difficult since everyone is so busy at those meetings. In the next year, we had five or six counties join the IAAO Chapter.

In 1988, IAAO’s Awards Committee came up with a new award for IAAO Chapter of the Year. The system, unlike the Country Music Awards or the Academy Awards, you nominate yourself. So I nominated our Chapter for its work on Ad Valorem Reform. The Oklahoma IAAO Chapter won the first IAAO Outstanding Chapter Award ever given in Nashville in 1988 at a banquet and awards ceremony hosted by country & western comedienne Minnie Pearl. George Keyes accepted the IAAO Chapter Award, which is still at Oklahoma County. IAAO, however, lost record of the award and for several years the 1989 winner of the Outstanding Chapter award was listed as the first IAAO Chapter to win the award. We later got the record set straight. (More on this history to come in a future edition of the Assessment Files.)

Photos of NW District Meeting in Dewey County May 20th



Windmills in western Oklahoma



NW District Chair Lennet Pisacka prepares to begin the meeting



Good eats at the NW District meeting



OTC's Greg Harmon with beautiful hand-stitched quilt