



Happy 40th Anniversary AAPRA!

September 2020

Over the next twelve months, as we celebrate the **40th Anniversary** of the American Academy of Parks and Recreation Administration (AAPRA), we will reflect on our history as an organization; remembering leaders and events that were instrumental to our founding, development and growth. We'll celebrate AAPRA's forty years of success; as noted in the initial ten-year history prepared by Bob Toalson, charter member and Executive Secretary/Treasurer at the time (1990), "from its inception the Academy has been very successful because of the hard work and efforts of some very dedicated people." Historical background was prepared by Charlie Hartsoe, also a charter member and AAPRA president 1984-85.

The initial idea for establishing a park and recreation academy grew out of the merger that created the National Recreation and Park Association in 1965. Many of the founding board members of NRPA felt that an academy of distinguished professional and citizen leaders should be established to serve as an advisory body to the NRPA Board of Trustees; in fact it was included in the original NRPA Constitution ... *Article IV, Section 6 : "There shall be a Recreation and Park Academy composed of lay and professional persons who have distinguished themselves in the recreation and park movement, to serve as an advisory body to the Board of Trustees. They shall be elected to this position of honor for life by two-thirds (2/3) vote of trustees. They need not be or have been members or officers of the National Association."*

By 1973, the provision of the NRPA Constitution regarding establishing an academy had not been fulfilled. A special 12-member board committee was appointed by the NRPA Chairman, to develop a charter and procedures for establishing a park and recreation academy as outlined by the constitution; however there was no follow-up to the report nor an academy established and the provision of the NRPA's Constitution that mandated an academy was subsequently dropped from the Constitution.

During the late seventies, several of the senior members of NRPA voiced a concern for the lack of opportunity for engagement and continued professional service. Thus, at the 1980 NRPA Congress in Phoenix, Frank Vaydik, President of American Institute of Park Executives (AIPE) at the time of the NRPA merger in 1965, and a small group of potential Academy members met to discuss the prospects of forming an academy. A resolution to establish the **American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration** and to pledge \$100 each to assist with the cost of the organization was signed by twenty-nine park and recreation professionals attending the Phoenix meeting.

“We the undersigned, meeting in Phoenix, Arizona on the 22nd day of October 1980, and other interested colleagues, not present her today, hereby endorse the establishment of the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration, as well as its principles, concept and objectives, as outline in its preamble, and we each hereby contribute or pledge the sum of \$100.00 to assist with the cost of the organization.”

PREAMBLE ...

“We, the concerned parks and recreation professionals of America, in order to promote understanding of parks and recreation goals and methods, to increase knowledge through encouraging its gathering, organization and dissemination, and to unify and strengthen our purposes, all toward improving the quality of life in America, do hereby decree the establishment of an Academy of illustrious parks and recreation fellows to undertake this charge.”

Frank Vaydik was named temporary president and five committees (*Constitution & Bylaws* (C. Hartsoe), *Nominating & Elections* (K. Smithee), *Membership* (R. Frazer), *Finance* (R. Wilson) and *Program* (B. Toolson)) and respective chairpersons named.

The proposed Bylaws of AAPRA were presented and approved unanimously at the 1981 NRPA Congress in Minneapolis. The objectives of the Academy were stated in these Bylaws:

- 1) To advance knowledge related to the administration of recreation and parks.
- 2) To encourage scholarly efforts by both practitioners and educators to enhance the practice of park and recreation administration, and to promote broader public understanding of the importance of parks and recreation to the public good.
- 3) To conduct research, publish scholarly papers and/or sponsor seminars related to the advancement of park and recreation administration.

Fifty individuals joined the academy in 1981; and were declared founding members.

The year of 1981 produced the seeds for two critical programs of the AAPRA:

- 1) **Journal of Parks and Recreation Administration** – The idea for a journal was proposed by Indiana University members: Tony Mobley, Ted Deppe, Cheryl Beeler and Dan Sharpless. Given the approval to proceed, the group prepared a formal proposal to publish a *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration* mailed to Academy members prior to the meeting at the NRPA Congress in Minneapolis. The rationale for the Journal was:
 - There is a unity of aims, interests and feelings among individuals to promote a better understanding of parks and recreation administration through conducting, organizing, and disseminating scholarly works.

- There is a need for a new professional park and recreation journal. Reference was made to a paper prepared by Chrystos Siderelis “*Concept Paper for a Practical Journal,*” stating that present journals and periodicals were not adequately addressing research needs in recreation and park administration.
- There is an expressed need for cooperative efforts among park, recreation, leisure scientists and practitioners. In addition, the proposal called for a monograph called the “Academy Papers” to be published bi-annually. The monograph would comprise articles, reports and distinguished papers pertaining to the administration and management of leisure, parks and recreation agencies. In Minneapolis, the Academy unanimously approved a motion that the proposal to sponsor a *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration* be accepted in concept, and that the Board of Directors be authorized to seek bid proposals from interested agencies.

Co-editors were appointed (Joe Bannon, University of Illinois, and Ted Deppe, Indiana University) as well as fifteen Associate Editors and a Book Review Editor. The first copy of the *Journal* was mailed in July 1983 to 401 subscribers; and by 1989 there were 955 subscriptions and a formal application process for selecting the position of Editor developed, which would be implemented in 1990.

2) Legends in Parks and Recreation – “The *Legends in Parks and Recreation* program was initiated by Robert (Bob) Toalson, who thought it would be good to record interviews with top administrators in the field on video.” (*History of American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration 1980-1990*) The first tapings were done at the 1981 NRPA Congress in Minneapolis and included: Dr. Edith Ball interviewed by Ralph Wilson and Roger Brown; Conrad Wirth interviewed by Lou Twardzik and John Schultz; Frank Vaydik interviewed by Jim Mertes and Jerry Darter; Robert Crawford interviewed by Charles Hartsoe and Robert Toalson ; Clifton French interviewed by David Laidlaw and Donald Cochran. Through the years additional interviews were taped by the Academy. Additionally, other tapes were obtained by the Academy e.g., “State Parks-Past and Present” (presented by Bill Forrey), “Dr. Kim, Father of Korean Recreation (presented by Dr. Larry Neal).

A third key Academy program emerged in 1986 – **The Recreation and Park Hall of Fame.** Robert Crawford and Charles Hartsoe prepared and presented a proposal to the Academy Board of Directors at the October 1986 meeting; which called for “a Joint Academy/Lee Library Committee to be created to develop guidelines, recommend candidates and manage the project; that pictorial plaques of the honorees be displayed in the Lee Library; and that the Committee seek a small grant to fund the project.” (*History of American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration 1980-1990*) The project was unanimously approved. The Hall of Fame Committee was composed of the Chairman and Executive Director of NRPA; the Chairman of the NRPA Joseph Lee Memorial Library Committee; the NRPA Director of Professional Services; the Executive Secretary/Treasurer of the Academy; and three additional

persons who are members of both NRPA and the Academy. The first honorees were recognized at the NRPA Congress in Indianapolis in 1988 and included: Howard S. Braucher, Luther H. Gulick, Joseph Lee, Frederick Law Olmsted, George A. Parker, Lebert H. Weir, and Theodore Wirth. Jane Addams, Ernest T. Attwell, Henry S. Curtis, Dorthy Enderis and Stephen T. Mather were added in 1989.

Towards the end of the decade, the spark for another key program that would ultimately be a turning point in the park and recreation industry was initiated ... a proposal for the *development of an accreditation process for Park and Recreation agencies* was first presented to the Academy Board on April 22, 1987 by Dr. Lou Twardzik, Michigan State University. The proposal to proceed was presented at the annual meeting of the Academy in October of 1989. The Academy Board of Directors asked the Committee to develop a realistic operational plan; and at the October 11, 1990 Board of Directors meeting the plan was outlined, including objectives, implementation timeline, etc. for the organization and administration of a national accreditation program. A financial commitment of \$5,000 was made to complete phase one of the accreditation plan.

At the initial meeting in Phoenix (1980), and for a few years following, there was a concern among a few that the Academy was founded to rival the National Recreation and Park Association. This is not, nor was it ever the case. In fact, many of the people attending that initial meeting had served in NRPA leadership positions and were looking for a way to continue to serve the profession and support NRPA. The Academy has, throughout its forty years, continues to be a supporter of NRPA.

I can remember the 1980 Phoenix NRPA Congress, in fact, I recall walking down the hall of the Convention Center (or it could have been the host hotel) having just left the National Therapeutic Recreation Society's Board meeting, passing by Bob Toalson, Mary Grogan, and a couple of other "distinguished NRPA leaders", who were a buzz about this Academy they had just created. At the time, I didn't know what an "Academy" was, but it seemed pretty important as I overheard the group's conversation. Now forty years later, as an Academy member, I reflect and celebrate the contributions of the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration has made over the years and the difference it continues to make in the park and recreation profession. (Michal Anne Lord)

40th Anniversary Task Force Members: Michael Ann Lord & Becky Benna, Co-chairs; Linda Kotowski; Ralph Cryder; Board Liaison Carolyn Fredd McKnight.