1980 — 1986



1980 — 1986

1986: A Century Of Progress

As the first century of the Board's existence drew to a close, the world was filled with the promise — and the threats — of its expanded technology. In this century, science had taken Man to the moon and had brought information back to earth about the sun and stars; but nuclear technology holds the threat of destroying all life on our planet. Radio and television brought all parts of the globe into American living rooms; at the same time, the reading and writing skills of American schoolchildren declined. Medical research found cures for many diseases that were fatal in 1886, and made many lives better — but some research also led to concern about germ warfare and genetic engineering.

City Concerns

There was much concern in the 1980s about the strength of Omaha's economy in the face of a crisis in American agriculture. More Nebraska banks failed in the Eighties than at any time since the Great Depression. Some major Omaha corporations, including Enron, Union Pacific and AT&T, laid off a number of workers. Economic development became a focal point at City Hall, in the state capitol, and at the Omaha Area Board of Realtors, where an Economic Development Task Force was organized.

Downtown Omaha enjoyed a resurgence of interest with the completion of the first phase of the Central Park Mall, continued renovation of older existing buildings (including the transformation of some into apartments and condominiums), and continued interest in the Old Market area. By late 1986, the Old Market had surpassed the Ak-Sar-Ben race track as Omaha's top tourist attraction.



This view of downtown Omaha was taken from 16th Street, looking south. The city's architecture is a blend of old and new.

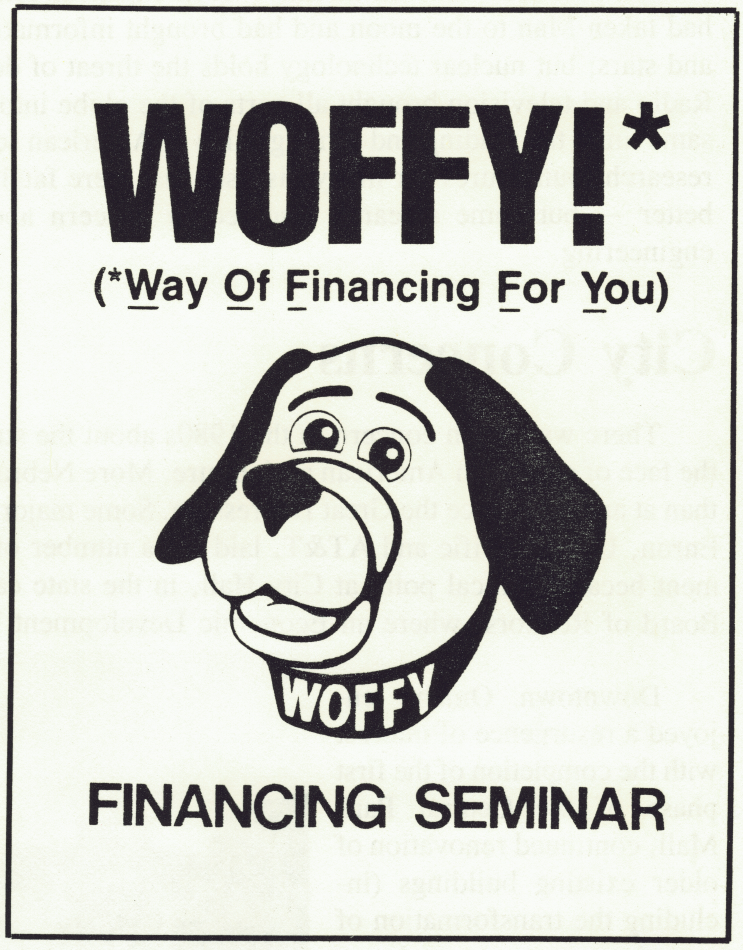
West Omaha continued its boom in construction of office and commercial space through the mid-'80s. The Miracle Hills area, which had been the site of a drive-in theatre and mobile home court until 1984, became a busy office park and shopping area by 1986, and plans were made for still more construction in the area.

1986 also saw the citizens of Omaha recall Mayor Mike Boyle in a special election. It was the first time such action had been taken in the city. City Council member Bernie Simon was appointed by his fellow council members to fill the vacancy.

Financing

Mortgage interest rates rose to as high as 18.5% in the early 1980s. ''Economic experts predicted that fixed rate mortgages were dead,'' wrote 1981 OABR President Gwen Lemke. ''Thank goodness for the Nebraska State Mortgage Fund low interest loans.''

During the terms of Board Presidents Don Rohr and Gwen Lemke, the Board began action of its own to help consumers find ways to afford to buy homes. The ''WOFFY'' (''Way of Financing For You'') program was developed by the MLS Board Of Directors and the OABR Education Committee in late 1980. The first presentation of the WOFFY program was made in January 1981, and met with great success. The Board signed a marketing agreement with a local advertising agency, and WOFFY was made available to other boards across the country. Among those boards which purchased the program were the Champaign, Memphis, and El Paso Boards of Realtors. The WOFFY campaign continued into 1982.



Above: The cover of the workbook used in the WOFFY campaign. Among the subjects covered were Conventional Wraparound Loans, Buydowns, and Blended Rate Loans. The program was designed to help Realtors serve the public with greater knowledge of the options available.

By 1985, mortgage interest rates had begun to fall back to 12%. Rates had fallen to about 9.5% on some loans by the end of 1986. And although some mortgage loans still utilized adjustable rates, blends, wraps and other ways of financing that had come into use in the early '80s, more loans were made using conventional, VA or FHA financing. Conventional 15-year mortgage loans became more common, too, during this time.

One side effect of the good market in 1986 was the delay in processing of many VA- and FHA-insured loans. A federal hiring freeze imposed as a deficit-reduction measure meant that VA and FHA regional offices were unable to fill vacancies. 1986 President Arlyne Geschwender wrote letters to Nebraska Senators Edward Zorinsky and J. James Exon and to Congressman Hal Daub for their help in the matter. As a result the regional offices were allowed to hire additional personnel.

J. JAMES EXON
NEBRASKA

330 SENATE HART BUILDING
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

287 FEDERAL BUILDING
LINCOLN, NEBRASKA 68508

6305 FEDERAL BUILDING
OMAHA, NEBRASKA 68102

275 FEDERAL BUILDING
NORTH PLATTE, NEBRASKA 69101

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

COMMITTEES:
ARMED SERVICES
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION
BUDGET

October 15, 1986

Mrs. Arlyne E. Geschwender
Omaha Area Board of Realtors
11421 Davenport Street
Omaha, Nebraska 68154

Dear Mrs. Geschwender:

Just recently I received a reply from the Veterans Administration in response to my inquiry on your behalf. For your information, I am enclosing a copy of that correspondence.

Thank you for contacting me on this matter, Mrs. Geschwender. I appreciate the opportunity to provide this information.

Best wishes.

Cordially,

J. James Exon
United States Senator

Enclosure

Above: This letter from Senator J. James Exon to OABR President Arlyne Geschwender informed her of action taken by the Veteran's Administration to add personnel to the Regional Office of the VA in Lincoln. Responses were also received from Senator Edward Zorinsky and from Congressman Hal Daub.

Cost Of Living

Inflation, which had been such a problem in the 1970s, was finally brought under control by about 1982. The annual rate of inflation had dropped to approximately four percent by 1986.

The price of gasoline dropped below $1.00 per gallon in 1986 for the first time since the 1970s. The prices of most new cars continued to rise; a mid-sized American-made car could cost $14,000, while luxury cars could be purchased for $35,000 or more. Some auto manufacturers began to make small cars at prices much lower — the Yugo retailed at about $4,000.

The average sale price of a home in Omaha increased from approximately $50,000 in 1980 to approximately $68,000 in 1986, according to statistics from the Multiple Listing Service.

News Highlights

A former actor and Governor of California, Ronald Reagan, won a landslide election for the Presidency of the United States in 1980 over Jimmy Carter. The Reagan Administration cut federal spending in many of the social services, reversing a trend begun during the Administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Defense spending was increased during the first few years of President Reagan's term.

On March 30, 1981, President Reagan and three others were wounded by gunshots in Washington, D.C. John Hinkley, a mentally unstable young man, was institutionalized after admitting to the shootings.

Hundreds of American Marines stationed in Beirut, Lebanon, as part of an international peace-keeping force were killed in a terrorist car bombing in October, 1983. Other incidents involving Middle-Eastern terrorist groups included the taking of American and European hostages in Beirut, the hijacking of the cruise ship Achille Lauro, and the hijacking of planes.

In 1984, presidential candidate Walter Mondale chose Geraldine Ferraro as his running mate on the Democratic ticket. It marked the first time a woman had been chosen by a major American political party for one of the nation's highest offices.

Congress passed and President Reagan signed into law a sweeping change in the nation's tax code with the Tax Reform of 1986.

In late 1986, news reports revealed that shipments of U. S. arms had been sent to Iran in exchange for the release of several of the American hostages in Beirut. Profits from the arms sales were funneled to Nicaraguan Contras fighting the Sandinista government in Nicaragua. A number of Reagan Administration officials resigned in the wake of the revelations.

Contracts

In late 1986, the Directors of the Multiple Listing Service and the Omaha Area Board of Realtors approved a change in the Uniform Purchase Contract, which added an agency disclosure statement to the form just above the signature line.

Membership Concerns

A Commercial/Investment committee was formed in 1980, recognizing a need in the Board's membership for such a committee. In 1983, the Board began researching the possibility of organizing a commercial listing service, which would be separate from the existing Multiple Listing Service. The Commercial Listing Service (CLS) began operation in 1984, one of the first of its kind in the nation. A CLS logo, shown here, was approved for use in 1985.



Above: Members of one of the Board's committees at work in the OABR Office's conference room. Below: This logo was used to help publicize the Board's Recycling Drive.

An annual essay contest was started in 1980 by the board's Public Relations committee. At the outset, the contest was open to third and sixth graders in the Omaha Public School District. The contest was expanded gradually to include students in all public and private schools throughout Douglas and Sarpy counties. In 1986, the contest was also expanded to include high school juniors and seniors. Over the years, the contest has resulted in a great deal of good will toward the Board from students and their parents and teachers.



The Public Relations Committee began a second major project in the same year — the annual "Recycle For Wildlife" drive. Each year, members of the committee joined with other Realtors and with Affiliate members to gather newspapers and aluminum cans at collection sites scattered throughout the metro area. The proceeds helped the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission purchase land to provide homes for Nebraska's wildlife.

The Board had another change in its name approved in 1981, when it became known as the Omaha Area Board of Realtors.

The Board's Equal Opportunity Committee originated its Minority Outreach Scholarship in 1981 as one aspect of its continuing efforts to fulfill the objectives of the Voluntary Affirmative Marketing Agreement. The program continued through 1986.

In 1982, the OABR Bylaws were changed to allow for the election of Board Officers and Directors within 30 days preceding the election of officers of the Nebraska Realtors Association. The Board's election and annual Installation ceremonies are now held in August or September.

Also in 1982, the OABR Neighborhood Association committee began work on a pictorial booklet showing the various neighborhoods of the Omaha metro area. The book was published in 1986; the cover is shown at right.



The Board's interest in fair housing continued during the 1980s. In 1983, a Fair Housing Symposium was scheduled by H.U.D. for six cities across the country, including Omaha. Board President John Hansen encouraged all Directors to attend the symposium. In 1984, when Harold Johnson was President, the OABR co-sponsored a seminar with the Omaha Department of Human Relations, the Institute of Real Estate Management, and the Small Property Owners organization; the subject of the seminar was discrimination in rental housing.

During 1984, the OABR Board of Directors approved a plan to make attendance at the Cuyahoga Fair Housing Training Plan mandatory for all members of the Board, with a deadline of December 31, 1986. Any members who did not take the program by that time were deleted from Board membership; more than 95 percent of member-

ship complied with the program. The Board received a Partnership Award from the City of Omaha in 1985 for its work in the area of fair housing.

Through 1986, the OABR's Legislation and Political Affairs Committees continued to take an interest in city and state political issues and candidates. Committee members interviewed candidates for legislative seats throughout the metro area. Some of the legislative issues which the Board tackled during the '80s included Agency Disclosure, Property Tax Relief, and Initiative 300 (which restricted the amount of farmland in Nebraska which could be owned by non-family corporations).

In January 1986, the Board's computer system was changed to allow MLS-participating firms to input directly into the computer. "Broker Load" input was a controversial move, but the result was that Realtors had faster access to all listings through their computers. Other programs allowed members to use their computers to perform functions such as Buyer Qualification and Area Market Analysis.



Left to right: 1985 Pres. Ed Young and 1984 Pres. Harold Johnson congratulate Realtor of the Year Don Rohr and Oustanding Service Award Recipient Jim Patton at Inaugural Ceremonies in September, 1984.

Although the Board's membership declined somewhat during the tough times of the early 1980s — from the 2,000 mark in 1979 to about 1,750 in June 1980 and to about 1.550 in December 1983 — the figures rebounded in 1985 and 1986. The OABR had 2,073 Realtor members in November, 1986; the membership roster also listed ten Realtors Emeritus, 15 Institute Affiliates, and 100 Affiliate members in that month.

Dues for 1986 were $160.00; $59.00 in local dues, $60.00 in state dues, an $41.00 in dues to the National Association of Realtors.

Population Of The Area

The population within a fifty-mile radius of Omaha was over one million in 1986. Forty percent of the metro area's population was 25 years of age or younger. The boundaries of the city of Omaha extended west to 168th Street, south to Harrison Street, and north to include Glenn E. Cunningham Lake.

Quotes From Old Coots

The Old Coots customarily held a luncheon or dinner to honor new members (the Board Presidents, as they completed their terms). 1981 President Gwen Lemke said, "The Board President is usually given a dunce's hat to wear — they brought me a beautiful red straw picture hat."



Front (sitting on floor): Don Rohr, William Otis. Second Row (seated): Lad Tesar, Harold Scott, Clay Thomas, Hiram Manville, Russell Bailey, Robert Hastings, Lloyd Peterson, Gwen Lemke, Jack Evahn. Third Row (standing): Leonard Geschwender, Frances Rice, Charles Rasmussen, Mel Strong, Grant Miller, N.P. 'Phil' Dodge, Paul Merker, Irv Wilkie, G. E. Shukert, Harold Peterson, Rodger Lindwall.

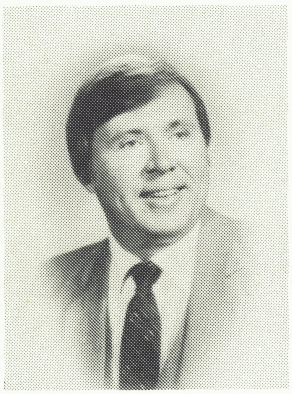
Presidents Of The Omaha Area Board Of Realtors 1980—1986



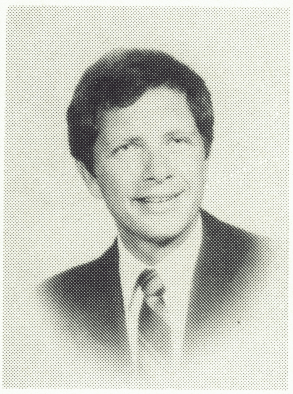
Donald J. Rohr
1980



Gwenivere Lemke
1981



Bill Morrison
1982



John F. Hansen
1983



Harold Johnson
1984



Edward R. Young
1985



Arlyne Geschwender
1986

Geri Schrag was Executive Vice President of the OABR until her retirement in July, 1986. Robert W. Sadler was chosen as Executive Officer in August 1986.

Presidents Of The Omaha Area Board Of Realtors 1980—1986

Donald L. Rohr
1980

Gwendyne Lemke
1981

Bill Morrison
1982

John F. Hanson
1983

Harold Johnson
1984

Edward R. Young
1985

Arlyne Geschwender
1986

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Epilogue

A century of progress in the housing of Americans: We have seen opportunities for all our people to own the home of their dreams without discrimination. We are better clothed, better fed — and better housed — than any other nation.

In these 100 years of progress we have seen:

- Legislation to end discrimination in housing
- Innovative, far-reaching changes in the financing of real property
- A sophisticated MLS computerized processing system
- Mobile car phones and pocket beepers for agents
- A centralized lock box system
- Laws enacted for disclosure of borrower costs prior to closing
- A growth in our Board to more than 2,000 members
- Startling developments in construction: Luxuries such as microwave ovens, dishwashers, computers and garbage disposals have become standard equipment in new homes.

Realtors in the Omaha area have weathered one hundred years of tornadoes, floods and blizzards; we have also enjoyed one hundred years of laughter, growth, change and achievement. We have helped to truly make this corner of America a better place in which to live, grow, and prosper. We look forward to the future with anticipation.