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**Industrial brokers group celebrates 75th anniversary**

By Richard Mize

The timing probably could not have been better — or worse, depending on how you look at it — for forming a professional organization for industrial property brokers.

War clouds loomed over Europe in 1939 when a few brokers started meeting monthly in a Philadelphia hotel. They would work out a concept for the Society of Industrial Realtors, an affiliate of the National Association of Real Estate Boards.

The real groundwork started in 1940. The would-be parent group, now the National Association of Realtors, initially rejected the idea, but then approved it at that fall's national convention.

Also that fall, before SIR was even incorporated — that came on March 17, 1941 — founding member Frank Binswanger got a call from President Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration. With France having surrendered to Germany in June 1940 and Britain going it alone against the Nazis, the U.S. government was gearing up for the fight.

SIR, now SIOR, for the Society of Industrial and Office Realtors, was born at work, at war, 75 years ago.

"Industrial locations for the manufacturing of the following products were in desperate need: smokeless powder, munitions, explosives, anhydrous ammonia, ammonia nitrate, proving rounds, small arms, artillery, lubricants, automatic weapons, small cannons, aircraft engines, air-frames and assembly," the organization recounts in a special issue of SIOR Report commemorating its silver anniversary.

From January through October, SIOR founding members worked in Washington, D.C., to help create a national exchange of listings of industrial properties for sale or lease.

They found more than 10,000 buildings with millions of square feet of space, "the manufacturing and distribution space needed to fight and win World War II," the SIOR Report recalled. "No other organization will ever be able to make that claim."

After the war, starting in August 1945, the organization helped the government dispose of property, and its newsletter soon reported: "Our policy has shifted sharply from government activity — principally the disposition of surplus property — to a revitalized and action-paced program directed at your potential customer: private industry."

What a time and what a way to start. Thanks to SIOR for sending me a copy of the SIOR Report — the first time it's ever made it available to nonmembers and the media — or I, and probably most of you, never would have known.

SIOR, with 3,500 or so members, is not the largest or best known professional organization for commercial real estate brokers.

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But it represents the "gold standard" for proven ability, production and ethics, said Randy Lacey, Oklahoma chapter secretary and a vice president at CBRE in Oklahoma City.

It takes more than taking some classes and passing a test to earn and keep SIOR membership, he said. It requires consecutive years of success, a minimum gross income, specialized instruction and continuing education.

"It's kind of an elite deal," Lacey said. "Not everybody can get in."

In fact, counting Lacey, there are just nine active SIOR members in Oklahoma City:

Kris Davis of Newmark Grubb Levy Strange Beffort, J.R. Fulton of J.R. Fulton Co., Gerald Gamble of Gerald L. Gamble Co., Thomas Lange of CBRE, John Lenochoan of CBRE, A.E. Porter of Porter Investment Co. Realtors, Brett Price of Newmark Grubb Levy Strange Beffort, and Tim Strange of Newmark Grubb Levy Strange Beffort.

Notice, those are some of the most commonly seen names in the biggest, most prominent real estate deals in town. So, while you may seldom notice SIOR, despite being forged at a time of highest ideals, you often see the expertise, experience and ethics it represents.