

# INSIGHT FROM THE CEO

## A SALUTE TO THOSE OF YOU WHO STEP UP TO THE PLATE

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One of the joys, or curses, of reaching senior citizen status is that you reminisce a lot. As I am writing this, the national PBUS convention is fast approaching, and I was thinking how far that organization has progressed since we first met many years ago in St. Petersburg, Florida.

The Vera Institute had started a pilot program in Manhattan to allow indigents to be released on their own recognizance, with supervision. Illinois and Kentucky, for different reasons, had gone to state run deposit bail programs, and pre-trial release agencies had begun to rear their ugly little heads all over the place. Everyone was beginning to feel the effects and wondering how long we would be in business.

Several agents decided a national organization of bail agents was needed to combat this new enemy. Jerry Monks and Don Vannerson of Texas and John Gilbert of Florida were the early organizers in sending out invitations to join.

Almost 100 people, from all over the country, attended that first meeting. I met Celest King for the first time at the baggage carousel in Tampa. We shared a cab to the hotel and I had the first of many long conversations with this great man.

In that first meeting many discussions were had, and ideas came from throughout the room. It was generally decided that we needed to proceed with forming an organization. I was chosen to be on the nominating committee to select a slate of officers to present to the floor. One thing that was decided in that meeting was we did not want the organization to be dominated by any one group, or by any agents representing one company. In making the nominations we decided that no company would have more than one individual nominated.

Several years before, the general agent for Cottonbelt Insurance had called a meeting in Reno to propose such an organization, but it became clear that it was nothing but a means for agent solicitation. This we did not want.

Jerry Monks was elected President and served for several terms. He went to great lengths to keep the organization in front of everyone and was very instrumental in getting state associations started in a number of places.

I remember going to both Louisiana and Oklahoma with Jerry to help establish state associations. The amount of hours he put into keeping the organization alive can never be repaid, and the bail industry owes him a debt of gratitude.

Jerry also recognized the value of the American Legislative Exchange Council. He joined and became an active member of ALEC's crime committee. This was the start of a long and very fruitful association with this great organization.

Celest King followed Jerry as President of PBUS. As the former President of the California association, I thought Coles was more organized. With his dynamic leadership the organization began to grow and attract more and more of the industry leaders.

Each succeeding President, Ron Olzowy, Tony Madrid, Gene Newman, Armando Roche, added something to the organization; from a full time office with an executive director to the Council of Presidents, the Certified Bail Agent Programs, and a full time legislative committee, to name a few. They all sacrificed their time and their money to make the organization and the industry stronger and they deserve your respect and thanks.

There are many others who serve as officers, committee chairs, and duties with less of a profile. Each position requires commitment and financial resources and they also deserve your thanks. Many state organizations can attribute their founding to one or two individuals who had the vision to see the need early and were instrumental in their formation. Hank Snow, founder of Accredited Surety was such a visionary. His state organization was originally, for the most part, made up of Accredited agents, but soon attracted agents from all companies and had one of the great commercial bail lobbyists of all time in Harry Landrum.

Passing of the 10% on misdemeanors in California actually was the stimulant for that state to get organized. Coles King and Marvin Byron were great leaders to start the ball rolling, followed by Buffy Osti and through today's President, Mark McLaughlin; they continue to be an effective association.

I can remember when I had a retail shop in Memphis many years ago, Jimmy Fuller out of Chattanooga was the driving force for the Tennessee association and they continue strong today with Dan Gibbs in Knoxville leading them. They just need to stop the property versus surety bickering and get about the business of being a strong overall industry, no matter how you are licensed.

The current president of PBUS is Dudley Goolsby, Dudley is best known for building Oklahoma's association into one of the most influential and best run in the country, their current president is veteran bondsman Dave Hamilton of Tulsa. The same could be said for Guy Ruggerio who heads Louisiana's state association.

I recently attended an annual meeting of the Georgia association, which is under the leadership of Cathy Joyce of Atlanta. I was very impressed with their membership and the progress being made in their state. The last time I attended several years ago, I was asked to leave because I represented the evil insurance companies. They now realize that they represent all agents and run it that way.

Texas has always been a strong association, from Jerry Monks through newly elected PBT president Marjorie Walstad. They show strong leadership and a big voice in Austin.

Mary Casey in Connecticut, Mike Fallaw in South Carolina, Tom Short in Ohio, Don Holifield in Arizona are just a few of the many who continue to work hard to keep your industry strong.

When Bill Roe was alive and operating Allied Fidelity, everyone in Indiana sat back and let him pay the lobbyist and author the legislation, which was always good for Allied, but maybe others thought not necessarily good for bail in Indiana. After Allied went under, it was the late Ron Ostrowski who was instrumental in getting an association started again. Terry Robbins, Kelly Stokes, and Lee Sexton have continued the leadership of Indiana's state association.

These are only a few of the many, and I apologize for any of you that I have failed to mention, it's not because I don't think you do a good job, it's that age thing. All these people deserve your thanks, but even more than that they deserve your support.

If there's one thing hampering the activity of these associations its money. The way they get money is by you joining and sending in your dues. These people sacrifice many hours away from their own businesses to support yours. You need to reciprocate by paying your dues regularly and on time.

I find it hard to believe how some bail agents can continue to make an excellent living from this industry and not contribute one dime to the local, state and national organizations that keep this industry viable.

That last statement also applies to the companies that are involved in this industry. Some, you can always count on to pay their share, whether it is for a lobbyist, or a study of pre-trial activities in an area. Others never answer the call. When Amwest, was doing business, Dick Savage was always there with a check, I was really sorry to see the demise of Amwest a company he worked so hard to build.

Phil Konvitz of International is another who not only writes checks, he has contributed many hours of Jerry Watson's time for working on legislation, testifying before legislators, and his work with A.L.E.C.

I know small one-state companies such as Pioneer in Colorado have given their checks on national projects on which they get no direct benefit, because they feel it is good for the industry, and in the end they will benefit if the industry as a whole does. Most of the companies do contribute, and if you represent them you should know. If they don't, why are you writing for them? Or are you one of those who don't contribute either. Birds of a feather?

A quick apology to my good friend Bonnie Johnson of San Bernardino, who I somehow failed to mention in the last newsletter on spotlighting Women in Bail, she has been a long time leader within the industry. She has operated very successfully for almost 40 years, but being of the same age she does recognize our shortcomings.