

## MAY 1999 RENTAL RAG of THE ARA of NJ

### Presidents Message

#### What Price Safety?

The first impression one might have when visiting my "tiny" rental store in crowded Manhattan might be "How does one survive, let alone succeed in such a limited space." With residential neighbors right, left, and on top of our business it's surprising we don't receive complaints concerning noise levels. Then again, this is N. Y.C. and it's not likely you would be able to hear a pin drop in all the commotion.

Well, honestly, in the 10 years operating this rental business at our current location and 4 years at one 1/4 its size, there have been very few complaints even though the majority of my neighbors are in the arts & science fields and require their beauty rest during the day. So why have we not had complaints? It's because we coordinate the noise levels to be acceptable to our neighbors within times we've jointly agreed to and also within N.Y.C. codes. That's called conforming to your surrounding environment and staying in business. Supplying a "free rental" to a neighbor every now and then goes a long way in the conforming process.

It's not my intention to "toot my horn" on the great model we are at "conforming" but, rather, to relay to the association the failures we've experienced in providing safety as it relates to the storage of flammable material on our premises. "Safety" - the quality or condition of being free from danger, injury or damage-giving protection, involving no risk, trustworthy to all.

Our realization that we were contrary to this definition was brought to light on Feb. 22, 1999 when we had a visit from the NYC FIRE DEPARTMENT. The first violation order was a notice that our fire extinguishers had not been inspected within the last 6 months. The maximum penalty would have been \$1000 had the inspection not been completed by 3/31/99. It was rectified---post haste.

The second violation proved to be a bit more arduous. It was violation order Rule 23 - for providing a double walled metal cabinet for storage of more than 100 gals. of combustible liquid (defined as anything marked flammable) but not exceeding 200 gals. The storage cabinet to be ventilated to the outer air at both top and bottom. At first thought, 100 gals. of flammable material may seem excessive, however, if you sell polyurethane by the 5 gal. can, were talking 10 - 5 gals. satin finish and 10 - 5 gals. gloss finish cans and that's not counting the one gallon cans you sell -- this Rule 23 would apply to you in NYC.

What this means is that no oil based paints, polyurethanes or solvents may be stored on the shelves without the construction of a container conforming to Rule 23. When

investigating which metal cabinets were constructed to conform to this code, I contacted the manager at Lowe's Hardware, Piscataway N.J. and, upon explaining my situation to the manager, he said all oil based flammable materials were taken off their shelves at the request of the local Fire Department.

Again, conforming to code was the Issue. An additional violation order (SFOM-13) was issued to me to secure a "letter of no objection" for storage of this material to comply with section 27-243 of the NYC Building code & the Fire Department regulation. We were required to dismantle our wood ventilated tool shed and construct a shed in conformance with Rule 23 to store our heaters, gasoline products and kerosene. I guess your 5 gals of gasoline in the can - stored in your wood tool shed, to start your lawn mower, is still safe from fire code regulations. I wonder? I was required to attend a hearing at the Environmental Control Board (ECB) where I cooled my heels for about an hour before being called. The meeting was for 3/31/99 and I was requesting an extension of this deadline to conform to code 23. Being escorted into a room by a representative of the ECB, there waited an attorney who wasted no time in obtaining my comments on this request via a tape recording. She asked two questions: Would the ECB allow an extension: Answer: "No." On flammable materials there can be no extension. Then: what type of penalty should be imposed minimum or maximum? Answer: minimum. A sigh of relief for the time being..... I found out on 4/22/1999 that the minimum fine was \$450. Total cost with fines & permits & construction: \$3,850. A small price to pay (and a big lesson to learn about safety) to protect ourselves and our neighbors quality of being free from danger, injury or damage.

If you've had a similar experience or would just like to comment about them, please share them with the association. A good forum for this discussion could be our internet web site: njara.org.

Your comments gladly accepted,

Yours Truly,

Anthony Perrotta

[E-mail: repairs@tprental.com](mailto:repairs@tprental.com)

### **MINUTES OF THE MARCH 17, 1999 MEETING OF THE ARA-NEW JERSEY**

The meeting was called to order at 7:45 PM by President Tony Perrotta who began with a Saint Patrick's Day joke - a real groaner.

Members in attendance introduced themselves.

Associate Members announced new products and special deals.

Tony introduced our host, Curly Boelhouwer, and thanked Joan and Curly for hosting the meeting. Our hosts supplied a delicious Saint Patricks Day spread of Corned Beef and Cabbage with boiled potatoes and carrots - plus a side of baked ziti for those whose blood isn't green. Curly noted that he has been at this location since 1972 and advised members if they watch the bottom line and not overextend, they will succeed. A discussion followed about a division of Home Depot which is opening across the highway from Curly's place.

Howard Heller introduced Ms. Kitty Vance of Bell Atlantic for the evening's program. Ms. Vance taught members how best to handle phone problem customers and how to tell just what kind of personalities they have. It was enlightening and members enjoyed the program.

After the program Tony called for officer and committee reports. Reading of the minutes of the last meeting was dispensed with because it was the Murder Mystery Dinner.

Treasurer Tom Lade gave receipts, deposits and deductions to our account and reported a balance of \$5831.04

Legislative Chairman, Joe Mihalko, advised that National will hold their annual Legislative Caucus in Washington DC on April 18th .

Education Chairman, Howard Heller, said he is looking for ideas for additional seminars and deemed the one held this same day, a huge success (see page 6 for a report on the seminar arranged for ARA-NJ members earlier in the day).

Associate Rep., Roy Peragallo, asked associates for ideas.

National Liaison and Web Site Director, Steve Kohn, advised members of the passing of Trysh Mueller Farber, after a long illness, who served as National's Director of Education. Steve also squashed the rumor the the ARA will no longer have a convention in Las Vegas. Conventions, he said, are booked through the year 2025 and will be back in Las Vegas in ten years. Members were also advised that the Big East will be held in Baltimore on October 31st this year.

He said, too, that we have averaged 400 hits a month on our web site and suggested that those who are not already on board do so ASAP.

There was a short discussion of the success and/or lack of success of the MBA. Opinions were divided among members.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 PM

Respectfully submitted

Carl Sparacio

## ***ASK NOT WHAT YOUR ASSOCIATION CAN DO FOR YOU.....***

The year 2000 marks a major milestone for all of us. On a personal level, it also marks my 20th year of being active in the ARA of NJ. During that period I have held every position available, some even more than once. Why have I remained involved? Well, lots of reasons which I am going to share.

First of all, many folks ask me this question. *"How to do you have the time"*? My answer *"Time is not something we have, its something we make"*. I have never met anybody in this business who has time to spare. I'm sure many of you have the same, if not more commitments than I. This list should include your spouse, kids, business, religious affiliations, after school activities, coaching, vacations, other committees and groups, hobbies and even once and a while sleep. All of us have busy lives and we have different paths we follow, but the one common goal we share in the rental business is we strive for success.

This success goal is a key reason to become active in the ARA. In today's business environment we all need to go that extra step and put in that extra effort to come out on top. I believe by networking and becoming involved with others, with this same goal in the rental business, it will help us to achieve success. I am a firm believer that whatever you put into this association, you will get back no less than 10 times more out of it.

I have learned more on such topics as how to run a profitable business, managing employees, how to display items in a showroom, how to maintain equipment, dealing with customers, and many others. I would also like to mention the repore I have developed with associate members, who are my main source of supplies and equipment to keep my inventories up-to-date and current.

Besides learning good business practices, I have also developed friendships that will last a lifetime. Both my wife Linda, and I have made many friends in the association who we see on a social level and enjoy their company tremendously. True friends are important to enhance the quality of life, and I can honestly say, the friends we have made are as best as they come.

It hard to explain, the satisfaction one receives when you see an idea or suggestion at a board meeting develop and then become a reality. Sometimes this only takes a few days, other times it might take a year to blossom. After its done, you can say "Wow, I helped do that". There are few greater feelings than being able to know you helped on an important issue or concern.

Earning the respect of others in your field is a challenge I urge all of you to take. All of us have mentors we look for when we need advice. Image the feeling when others start to look to you as an expert or as a teacher. Being an active member will get you there.

Now, that I have given you the facts, if you would like to relish the opportunity to become involved in this association as an officer or committee member, please contact our current, President Tony Perotta or Vice President Brian Higgins. You'll find their numbers in this Rental Rag. If you would like to discuss anything with me about my views, my door is always open for a fellow rental man or woman. Lets see what **"YOU CAN DO FOR YOUR ASSOCIATION."**

Respectfully submitted,

Steve Kohn

## RENT-A-PORN

I read a while back about a woman who sued her town's public library because her 12-year-old son downloaded pornographic material while using the library's computer. I find it unusual that a mother could be ignorant of the first rule of puberty - it states that neither rain, nor snow, nor dark of night shall stay a pubescent male from prurient interests. Dr. Spock said it first or, if he didn't, he should have - you'd expect as much from a child expert with pointy ears.

One wonders how this mother found out about her son. It's not information a 12-year-old is likely to contribute to dinner table conversation.

I wonder, too, why she believes the library is responsible for her child's hormones and why she doesn't accept some responsibility for his actions. The apple doesn't fall far from the tree, you know.

It's difficult to relate this incident to my own upbringing because we didn't have computers back then. The closest you could come to anything similar in my day was being caught in school with a copy of *Playboy* concealed in your notebook. The teacher, no dummy, became suspicious when she asked the class, "Who shot Abe Lincoln?" and I shouted, "Miss January!" Bear with me, puberty incites raging hormones, not brilliance.

The outcome was no surprise. The teacher took the magazine, kept me after school, then sent me home with a note. When Mom read it, the furthest thing from her mind was to sue the school for my indiscretion. Nope, Mom wouldn't sue - she hit me a good one upside the head instead and then told Pop about it when he got home from work. Pop didn't hit, he believed that was woman's work, but Pop yelled, "Stupido!" at me. No arguing with that, though to this day I'm sure Pop meant that I was stupid for getting caught. His wink gave it away.

Today we live in a litigious society which, simply put, means we're ready to sue at the least provocation. I wish I had a "sue now, think later" mind-set. I'd be a great sue person if it weren't that suing is such a lawyer intensive process. I have strong anti-lawyer

feelings. Anything involving lawyers is either frivolous, self serving (for the lawyer,) and/or expensive (for the sue-er and the sue-ee).

There are lots of people in the world I would sue if I were sue inclined. There are, for instance, the paper delivery people who promise delivery by 6 AM but arrive much later. This puts me in a sour mood. When I don't have my daily paper with breakfast I'm out of sorts for the rest of the day, then I bark at my wife. Unfortunately, Mrs. S. barks back and hard feelings ensue - feelings which solidify throughout the day until I become a non-person in my own home. After that it's all downhill and the following scenario is typical:

The telephone rings. Mrs. S. picks up. "Hello," Silence (someone is speaking on the other end). Mrs. S. then says, "How are the children," (a clue; she's talking to one of our own). The conversation goes on but I hear just one side. I ignore that side until I hear, "Dad?" (followed by an unheard response on the other end). Then my end says, "Your father? Your father, who?"

The other end surmises at this point that father has been demoted to a non-person again. That end has learned, over time, not to delve more deeply into any subject that causes this condition.

Only with time will I regain recognition as a person. Until then there is little to do but wait. I retreat to my computer sanctuary and communicate with other non-beings - those faceless people in cyberspace. I could pass time researching further into the porn part of the porn/library news item but it's of little interest.

OK, OK, so maybe there is interest and perhaps a bit of temptation, especially now that Mom's not around to smack me upside the head. And, to be honest, it would make my day if I could find Miss January on line, the one who lit my pubescent fires.

No, I'd better not. I could still catch a good one upside the head if I'm caught. Women pass that ability down from generation to generation.

Carl Sparacio

## FROM THE VEEP

By now you've been inundated with the term "Y2K" which is short for year 2000. The reason for all the hoopla is that a few decades ago computer programmers represented years in two digits rather than four to save memory space. The problem this may cause is that some computers can't recognize the "00" and may interpret this to mean 1900 instead of 2000. This error could cause programs to shut down or perform calculations improperly. Even if you don't use a computer in your business you could be affected because of problems either your suppliers or customers have.

If you have a computer, check with your hardware provider and make sure the date will roll over correctly for the year 2000. Inventory your software programs and contact the manufacturers. Back up all your critical data on floppy or Zip™ disks and print whatever you can. This way if something bad happens you have the data to reload.

You probably don't want to take all your money out of the bank but it's a good idea to have current detailed records of all your important argots. This way if the worst happens you will be able to prove it's yours.

With the problem getting so much attention, chances are that the worst won't happen. By starting to think and act on it now, you can dramatically increase your odds of an incident free Y2K.

*Brian Higgins, Vice President, ARA-NJ*

## YOUR ARA-NJ CALENDAR

As you might have surmised by now, our may meeting was cancelled. This was due to a last minute program scheduling problem. We'll make it up in July with a whiz-bang, knock 'em dead program. Our next regularly scheduled meeting should be **July 21st** so mark your calendars accordingly.

Also in the works is a softball game pitting the ARA-New Jersey against the Delaware Valley Rental Association (DVRA). If the logistics can be worked out you'll be notified as to the date, the time and the place. Oil your glove, weight your bat and check your staff, we're not above putting ringers on the field.

Looking ahead to January, the committee is working on putting a Casino Night together for our annual social event. If you've ever been to one you know how much fun they can be. You gamble with fake money for real prizes. If you bombed out at the races you may have better luck at this affair.

In the meantime, if you have a suggestion for a program that would be of interest to you, contact Vice President, Brian Higgins. If your suggestion is for a social event, give John Futcher a call. You'll find both numbers in this Rental Rag.

## A report on a SMILE SEMINAR

**Successfully Managingirate Callers** with Lasting Effects. This ARA-NJ sponsored seminar was an excellent training session on how to deal with difficult customers. The Objectives were to increase skills and knowledge on:

How to deal with customer's feelings.

How to solve a customer's problem.

How to show you earn about the customer.

How to keep the caller as a Customer.

How to keep your sanity when receiving angry calls.

Celebration PartyRentals had several early morning sessions with the staff on this seminar, we wanted to reduce stress when handling difficult customers, Improve our telephone skills in dealing with angry customers and keep a record of customers complaints and how problems were solved.

We use a customer complaint form and have developed methods of solving customer complaints with our staff. Customer complaints are tracked to solve repeated problems The staff was given telephone tips to use as they are speaking to a customer on the phone. These telephone skills are put on top of the computer screen. We also have a computer note field where the tips are available to the staff on the computer screen.

The staff has reported that they feel more knowledgeable and have less stress when handling difficult customers.

Thanks to Howard Heller for this most informative training program.

James Jones, Celebration Party Rentals

## **WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!**

Joe and Andrea Peregman

Ocean Tents and Party Rentals

Barneгат, NJ

Bonnie and Joseph Kremer

Acme Party Rentals

Matawan, NJ

Glen Feiner

**Edmar Restaurant Supply**

**Burlington, NJ**



**ARA of NJ  
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**Revised:**