

April 2000 Newsletter

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Can you believe Spring is here already? It seems like yesterday we were concerned with "Y2K" which turned out to be the biggest non-event of the 20th century.

For those of you who were not able to attend ARA National in Anaheim, you weren't alone. I don't know the actual attendance figures but the activity on the floor felt very light. The location didn't help, I'm sure, but the biggest factor was probably consolidation. There are just fewer companies that send people to the show and the buying season is year round.

There was some excitement for the New Jersey folks that attended the show. Megan Jones of Celebration Party Rentals in Flemington (and Secretary of our ARA-NJ) was named "Rental Person of the Year" for Region 2 and received the award at the regional dinner. Congratulations, Megan, for a job well done.

On March 15, ARA-NJ sponsored a seminar on the Essentials of Customer Service. This was a great seminar! Everyone that attended left with some information they could take back to their business and begin to use right away. We will be sure to do something like this again in the future and it will be worth your while to attend. Special thanks to Howard Heller of M&R Sales and Brian Kreger of Taylor Rental Center, Berkeley Heights for making arrangements.

Our next regular meeting is April 18th at Millers Rentals and Sales in Edison. This meeting is "Vendor's Nite" and will be a tabletop format so please mark your calendar (it's a Tuesday) and try to attend. It's a great opportunity to get together for a few hours and network with your fellow rental professionals and Associates. You will also get to see Miller's newly renovated showroom, offices and warehouse, and Steve always puts out a great spread. This will be our last meeting until October and you might pick up some useful information to help you this season.

I hope to see you all there.

Brian Higgins, President

Oops!

We've been taken to task for misspelling the last name of Lori Mattheiss of Taylor Rental Center of Berkeley Heights. We are guilty. When we filled in her name in the last issue to note that Lori was hosting the March meeting - we did it phonetically and had every

intention to look it up before going to press. Things got away from us and we never did look it up. Sincere apologies, Lori, from the Rental Rag.

Words to Live By

Two wrongs don't make a right, but three rights make a left.

RENT A PRENUP

We had an argument at our house. It seems the more I try to ease our path through life, the more dissension is created. I mean, what's the big deal? Prenuptial agreements are now recommended for *all* married couples - why shouldn't we have one?

Do you think my wife said, "Are you out of your mind? We've been married for a zillion years already!"?

No surprise, that's just what she said.

"Does it matter," I protested, "don't you think I have a lifestyle that should be protected? A lifestyle that could be dragged through the courts to be picked apart and denied me if we ever split?"

"Shouldn't you have thought of this *before* we married?" she asked in that nasally, "nyah nyah," tone.

I lowered my voice, "I didn't have anything worth saving then," I mumbled.

"You might as well speak up, that's no secret, " she snickered, "besides," she added, "we can't make a prenuptial agreement, our nuptials are *post*, not *pre*-"

Restoring my voice to its full masterful power, I said, "Ha, you should know I'd research this before bringing it up. I have consulted a lawyer, he said we can make a retroactive prenup agreement."

I could not help but gloat.

"Is he the one who advised you to get a deep tan and he'd guarantee big money for you in a race discrimination suit?"

"Yes."

"The same lawyer who never found a bar he couldn't pass?"

"That's a double negative."

"It's supposed to be!" she shouted.

"I don't see why you're so set against this when we haven't even discussed it," I purred in my best well modulated Walter Cronkite trust-me tone.

"All right, tell me what it is you can't stand the thought of parting with if you and I part." In measured terms I explained that if we divorce I do not want to be responsible for house maintenance should the court award her our house.

"You don't do maintenance now," she seemed delighted to remind me.

I plunged ahead undaunted, "And I want to be able to continue sleeping in the bed I've been sleeping in all these years - the groove fits my body."

"Suppose I remarry" she interrupted.

"There are details to be worked out, of course. Perhaps it may be a little crowded at first.

I also explained about the computer - it *has* to come with me. It'll take many, many, many years for me to master Windows 98 at the rate I'm going." She assured me the computer will be mine. Actually, I knew she wouldn't want it for herself, she's not a computer person, but I feared she would want it for resale. I spent a fortune on upgrades.

In appreciation of her generosity regarding the computer, I magnanimously awarded her our children.

"Why in heaven's name would I want the children?" she hissed in a most un-motherly tone, "They are adults, they're all married and have been gone for years!"

"Yes, but suppose they come back?" I reasoned, "You never know." the thought alone caused me to break out in an uncontrollable sweat.

"You know, dear," she said, "divorce was the farthest thing from my mind but this frightening conversation has shown that it is something I should seriously consider."

"YES." I cheered, giving my right arm a clenched fist pump, "Now you're making sense!"

"But," she added, still wary, "the high cost of legal services causes me to hesitate. After all, a prenup is not something we've budgeted for."

She's always been the sensible one. "Don't worry," I soothed, "it won't cost a cent to have the papers drawn up."

"And why is that," she asked.

"My lawyer thinks he can make big bucks on a class action prenuptial agreement."

"Better hurry," she whispered, "it's likely he'll be nominated to the Supreme Court before he can do this job for us."

Carl Sparacio

YOUR ARA-NJ CALENDAR

April 18, 2000 (Tuesday)

Miller's Rentals & Sales, Edison

Program: Vendors Table Top Display

May 10, 2000

Nite at the Races!

August 23, 2000

ARA-NJ will have a tailgate party at a Somerset Patriots baseball game.

September 10, 2000

Demo Day, Lebanon, PA

October 25, 2000

Regular meeting - Location and program to be determined.

November 15, 2000

Annual Round Table meeting - Location to be determined.

MINUTES OF THE MARCH MEETING

The meeting, held at Taylor Rental in Berkeley Heights, was called to order By President Brian Higgins at 8 pm.

ARA-NJ Vice President, Brian Kreger, Manager of the host store, Taylor Rental, spoke briefly of the history of the Mattheiss/Neuwirth owned store, gave an overview of their business and thanked the members for coming.

Associate Members spoke about new items and/or specials they are running. Maywood Table informed us they are making a Samsonite look-alike chair available for \$11.95 (with quantity breaks available). Brian Cleven, CPA, after working with his father, Wayne Cleven (who specializes in accounting for rental stores) announced he is accepting new clients.

Tom Lade gave the Treasurer's report. We currently have a balance of \$6954.62.

John Futcher recapped the success of the Casino Night Social. He announced that the date for Nite at the Races will be May 10th and we are going to have a tailgate party at The Somerset Patriots baseball game in August (ONLY \$10)! John also thanked the Vendors who contributed prizes for Casino Night.

Steve Kohn gave a report on the upcoming certification program by the ARA for party rental professionals. Those completing the program will be CERP-Certified Event Rental Professional. Steve urged all who rent party equipment to look into the program as it will give those certified credibility in the field. It will begin in about 3 months.

The next meeting (Tuesday, April 18th) will be at Miller's Rental in Edison. Steve urged everyone to come see his new Office/Costume/Warehouse addition. That's TUESDAY! ****Yes, TUESDAY!

Steve Kohn asked that members who do not have their e-mail address listed on our ARA/NJ website contact him so it may be added to aid interested members who wish to contact them.

Demo Day will be September 10th at the Lebanon Fairgrounds, Lebanon, PA.

Joe Mihalko, Jr. gave a report on a proposed bill in the Senate that prohibits charging late fees by rental stores and would require posting of policies in stores. We feel this is aimed at video rental stores and, though our type stores do not charge late penalties, we don't feel we need additional regulation and that it puts rentals in general in a bad light. Insiders have indicated to Joe that the bill will probably die in committee.

The floor was turned over to Bob Ash, our speaker for the Customer Service Seminar held before the meeting. Mr. Ash's ideas on personal and employee motivation were fantastic. Those members who attended the seminar were energized by Mr. Ash and those who didn't attend the seminar wish they had.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30.

FROM THE "VEEP"

A REALITY CHECK

Welcome to the 21st Century, the information age, life and business with the aid of computers at every turn. They make our daily chores such a breeze! By now, hopefully, you have survived the threat of a

(I hate to even say the phrase) Y2K bug. But how prepared are you for another potential disaster? What would you do if your system crashed in *June*?

Do you backup *every* day? do you have the ability to write contracts, keep reservations, take payments, track your equipment, and process credit cards without the use of your computer system? Do you have a FULL SYSTEM backup? (If your hard drive needs to be replaced, you'll need a current copy of all your software and data ready to install in order to be able to become functional once a new hard drive has been installed).

Can you reach your support people on weekends and at night? Can your employees function with a manual system? If you answered "*NO*" to any of these questions you have the potential for your worst nightmare - a screeching halt to your usually "smooth as glass" operation and a migraine the size of Cleveland.

One of the secrets to success in this business is being prepared for a twig in the spokes of your front wheel. Yes, we depend on our computers, there's no getting away from that. But we should also be prepared to function without them, if only temporarily. Are *YOU* prepared?

Brian Kreger.

Brian Kreger, Vice President

RODEO DAYS

Keystone Rodeo Days

September 10, 2000

Lebanon Expo Center

Lebanon, PA

How often have you wished that you could set on and operate a piece of equipment before you bought it? Or how often have you wished that you could take your employees along to check out new equipment before you make the decision? Here is a great way to start building a better team by bringing your staff to the Keystone Rodeo Days.

There will be seminars in the morning starting at 9 am featuring Driver Training, Trailer Towing Safety, and Tent Set up and Safety.. These are all hands on, not just sit and listen seminars. At noon we will be serving a hot lunch and at 1 pm the actual Rodeo will start.

The fee is \$5.00 per person 16 years and over. There will be things for the kids to do also and there are also attractions around the area for the family, so why not make it a weekend and have some fun for a change.

Here's one tip

By now, if you've been paying attention, you have noticed that one of this administration's primary objectives is to help your business become more competitive and prosper in today's economy. "Improve your customer service and give your customer no reason to go elsewhere" has been our moto.

Over the next few months (and hopefully beyond) many of our members (along with our association's efforts and programs) will be sharing ideas to help you accomplish your goal-to-survive and thrive in the 21st century.

Here's one tip. I've started a training program at our store that will help educate our employees. I call it, "Training at Two." Everyday in the two o'clock hour, I take 15-20 minutes to have a qualified employee talk to my customer service reps on a specific subject. Sometimes it's me, sometime it's someone else who is knowledgeable on a specific subject. I choose a subject (usually the day before or morning of) that may have been passed over during the usual training process, or an area they feel they need help with or do not feel confident with. I also ask for suggestions for topics.

I've been getting really good feedback after finishing. "I feel more comfortable recommending that item now," is a common comment after a session.

Sometime we cover credit/deposit/cancellation/ reservation/check or charge policies. The more knowledgeable and consistent our service is, the more successful we will be. It takes a little time, it takes a little effort, it takes a little **work**. the optimum work here is **little**. If the success/survival of your business isn't worth a little effort, maybe you shouldn't be in it.

Brian Kreger

Taylor Rental - Berkeley



ARA of NJ

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Revised: