

Rental Rag March 2002

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Have just returned from New Orleans and the ARA convention, I am determined to make this a terrific year. From an ARA standpoint, the Association is doing lots of new things for the members - I hope that we in New Jersey will take time to investigate, ask some questions, and partake in some of them. Job fairs, credit checking, lobbying, Rent-tech, and REAP are some of the buzz words - watch your mail!

From a personal standpoint, attendance at the show appeared to be off. To me, that means it will be up next year in Anaheim. With some very positive signs (real estate sales and auto sales) on the upswing, I am convinced that a general upswing in in the making.. I am encouraged.

Welcome to Kristin Remond, Tim Voss and Dan Mihalko as new Education and Safety Committee members. And welcome to the newest board member, Murray Vail, our new social chairman.

Next I do want to encourage all rental members and associate members to get involved with the ARA-NJ. Contribute your ideas and use the association to teach and learn from others. We are in challenging times with a changing industry - Let's use the ARA-NJ as a resource and help make it better.

Howard Heller

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### THE WALL

Everyone has a photographic memory - some just don't have film.

He who laughs last, thinks slowest.

A day without sunshine is like, well, night.

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## *Jersey Talk*

### **Congratulations!**

Keith Klarin, former owner of All Purpose Rentals, Shrewsbury has been elected to the ARA Hall of Fame. Keith is also a Past President of ARA.

Ann Marie Wagner of Maywood Furniture was recognized at the ARA Convention for convincing 6

rental companies to join ARA

And to John Capece on his new granddaughter!

## **R & R**

Matt & Megan Holt of Celebration Party just returned from a short stay at a Health Spa in Mexico. Massages, Mud Packs, and Saunas, but no cold Cerveza. (Beer, if you don't know Spanish)

The Kohns, Steve and Linda of Miller's spent a few days after the show in Ixtapa, Mexico

Roy & Joan Peragallo of Associate Member RLM Agency just returned from their annual trip to Maui with their golf swings grooved.

Dave Hinck, A Party Center, received some less than preferential treatment at a famous New Orleans restaurant. Dave believes this may have been attributed to the tie he wore, but I suspect there may be some other reason for the lack of hospitality, perhaps his jacket.

Brian Higgins

Editors note: If you have news or gossip you feel must be shared - give Brian a call.

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### **NEW ORLEANS REPORT**

New Jersey was represented by about 25 stores at the New Orleans ARA National Chow. According to some vendors the party segment was better attended than the tool side. Several of the party specialty goods suppliers expressed positive results while some of the suppliers of basic goods were disappointed.

The seminars seemed to be very well attended, often with standing room only. Perhaps stores were looking for inspiration more than goods and financial commitment. Scheduling of seminars barely overlapped with the show.

On the brightest side, the weather was great and, of course, the restaurants were hard to beat.

David Hinck

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***The following is reprinted from the "Inflatable News" magazine.***

#### **PRODUCT REVISED SAFETY BULLETIN FOR INFLATABLES**

The U.S. Consumer product Safety Commission in cooperation with several states has

investigated several incidents involving inflatable amusement rides. The incidents occurred within one year and involved broken bones, head injuries, contusions, abrasions and sprains. Additionally the Commission is aware of three deaths in previous years involving inflatable rides. These mobile inflatable rides are customarily used at fairs, carnivals and festivals, but are also operated at private fairs and parties through rental agencies. Riders on inflatable vary in age from children to adult.

The Commission is aware of nine incidents which resulted in 21 injuries on large slide-type inflatables and 33 incidents which resulted in 33 injuries with bounce-type inflatables. These incidents were primarily attributed to improper operation, anchoring and set-up. Due to the number of injuries involving inflatable rides and to reduce the number of injuries through a more consistent industry-wide operation of all inflatable rides, the Commission staff is issuing this Safety Bulletin.

The "Hazard Alert," dated March 14, 2001 from the South Australian Department of Administrative and Information Services addresses operation, set-up and safety related aspects of inflatable amusement structures. We request all owners, operators, state safety officials and those firms that rent inflatables to private parties, to closely follow manufacturers' instructions and guidelines for operation and set up. In addition, the following recommendations should be adhered to.

Inspection procedures and guidelines for safe set-up and operation on inflatable rides may vary from ride to ride or from manufacturer to manufacturer, please follow manufacturer's requirements.

**The CPSC staff recommends the following additional guidance:**

Minimum number of operators on a large inflatable slide is two (2) for slides over 15 feet tall.

Minimum number of operators on an inflatable bounce or small slide, under 15' is one (1)

Maximum recommended weight per passenger is 200 lbs.; or per manufacturer's recommendation.

DO NOT exceed manufacturer's requirement for maximum loads for individual rides.

Follow owner/operator's manual for site layout, inflation procedures, ropes, tethers, tie-downs, anchors, use temperature range, maximum number of riders, size of riders, electrical codes, daily operation, daily inspection, washing, repair, deflation, drying, storage, and transportation.

ALWAYS anchor rides per manufacturer's requirements and instructions.

The on-ground anchor weight used for various inflatable rides range from 75 lbs. (for bounce type rides) and 500 lbs. (for slide-type rides) for each recommended anchor position. This weight range strongly indicates that an inflatable ride's operator should follow the ride manufacturer's recommendations for proper

anchoring and placement or certain type of stakes.

Place and use anchors at all of the manufacturer's required positions at all times for both indoor and outdoor use. These anchors can be straight stakes, screw stakes, ground weights or sandbag ground anchors. Straight stakes to be used range from 30" to 42" in length with at least 75% or more of the length in the ground (this length will be dependent on surface where set up). The ends of stakes should be covered to prevent a tripping hazard.

Anchor ropes, tethers and tie-downs should be attached to a secure device or permanent structure and attached so they cannot slip off the top of their stake during use. DO NOT attach anchors to motor vehicles.

Ropes, tethers, and tie-downs should be sufficiently strong to resist breakage during use. CPSC staff recommends that the buyer purchase ½" diameter solid-braided polypropylene rope with a minimum tensile strength of 3,700 lbs. Tensile strength or 370 lbs. Safe working load and follow manufacturer's requirements; whichever is greater.

Identify and use the number and location of tie-downs specified by the manufacturer. DO NOT use non-load bearing positioning loops as tie-downs at anchor points.

Do not use inflatable rides above wind speeds that exceed the manufacturer's recommendation. Various manufacturers recommend maximum wind speeds from 15 to 25 mph depending on the ride. However, unload and deflate any inflatable ride when wind speed exceeds 25 mph.

Manufacturers and operators should consider that the inflatable ride should not collapse onto the riders in the power to the blower(s) inflating the ride should unexpectedly fail. Inflatable rides need a sealed chamber to prevent rapid collapse of ceilings and walls onto the riders if electric power to the blower(s) fails. Inflatable slides over 15 feet tall should not deflate and collapse, so that they dump riders to the ground.

In addition, we recommend that state inspectors provide this bulletin on inflatable rides to rental companies within their state and that rental companies provide renters with the following materials:

1. A training program for the renter for the proper operation of the inflatable ride.
2. A copy of the operation manual (and/or videos, training manuals) for each rental period.
3. A copy of this safety bulletin.
4. A release statement signed by the renter documenting that he has received and understands the rise operating procedures.

We request all state and local amusement ride safety inspectors, insurance inspectors and private contract inspectors, as well as owners and operators of "Inflatable Amusement Rides"

to follow and adhere to the above guidance during inspection.

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*The following is a partial reprint from an insurance column by Dick Wardlow in the "Inflatable News"*

## **INSURANCE COSTS ON THE RISE**

### **Claims are out of control**

There are more of them and the size of the legal awards are staggering. Insurance carriers are getting a rude education when they go to court. In many cases, courts order insurers to pay claims that the policies were never intended or designed to pay.

The measure of being liable for a claim is going from "proof of negligence" to a strict liability" standard. In some instances, a person's negligence is not the issue. The fact is that someone is claiming injury and the insurance company may have to pay regardless of the details. The claimant needs to show only that they were injured at the site.

### **Be Smart**

Many claims must be paid promptly and efficiently; however, scams and phony or padded claims are a fact of life. They must be dealt with.

Take pictures at the scene of an accident within an hour. This can show the condition of the site. Was there trash or litter on the ground? Was it raining at the time of the accident? A photo helps ensure that the correct person(s) can claim injury at a later date. Early in my career, I was told that in the event of a bus accident, one of the driver's first duties was to keep people from getting on the bus. This same precaution can be used in the inflatable industry.

In addition, an incident report and a written statement at the scene of the accident helps prevent fuzzy memories at deposition. This can also serve as a back-up plan when the case goes to trial a year or more later, and the employee cannot be located.

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## **MARK YOUR CALENDARS**

### **March 20th - Regular meeting at Unirents (Haskel)**

Program - Sales Development through Networking. Our speaker will be Kevin Shulman of the consulting firm Shulman Terrisi & Associates. Plus a talk on the new propane tank ruling by Suburban Propane.

**April** - date to be selected: Annual Nite at the Races scheduled for Pegasus at the Meadowlands Race Track.

**May 15th** - Nite at the Races! An annual social bash where members can blow the rent while they enjoy great food. This year we'll be dining at the Pegasus.

(There's a form in this Rental Rag for you to use to advise us if you intend to attend. There's no obligation, we'd just like to get a handle on how many tickets to order).

**Apri 24th** - Will advise location

Program to be presented by REAP (Rental Executive Advisory Program - sponsored by the National ARA Foundation). The program will be on Operations. Not to be missed.

**July 17th** - Board Meeting

**August 21st** - VENDORS NIGHT! Location to be detirmined.

**October 16th** - Regular Meeting. Location and program to be determined.

**November 13th** - Board Meeting

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# THE NEXT MEETING

Wednesday, March 20th at

**UNIRENTS, INC.**

1438 Ringwood Avenue

Haskell, NJ

Tele: 973-835-1750

Our host for this meeting is John Futcher, Jr.

(John promises an exceptional spread of food)

Doors open at 7 PM for food & socializing

The meeting starts promptly at 8 PM

Our program:

**"SALES DEVELOPMENT THROUGH  
NETWORKING."**

(Increasing Sales)

Making this presentation will be Mr. Kevin Shulman

Of Shulman Terrisi & Associates of Iselin, NJ

Mr. Shulman is a sales training expert who has spoken before many of this country's leading business organizations. He is eminently qualified to lead our program

**AND THAT'S NOT ALL!**

**SUBURBAN PROPANE** will bring us up to snuff on the new OPD (Overfill Protection Device) regulations for propane tanks which come into effect April 1st. These regard fittings on your propane tanks. Be sure you're within the law!

**DIRECTIONS:**

This is an easy one. From anywhere in the world take Route 287

North and get off at Exit 55 on your right. Make a right off the off-ramp to light at end of ramp. Make a left at bottom of ramp. Unirents is the second building on the left.

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## Website Tips

### 1. Your Web Site Should Be Easy to Read

The most important rule in web design is that your web site should be easy to read. What does this mean? You should choose your text and background colors very carefully. You don't want to use backgrounds that obscure your text or use colors that are hard to read. Dark-colored text on a light-colored background is easier to read than light-colored text on a dark-colored background. You also don't want to set your text size too small (hard to read) or too large (it will appear to shout at your visitors). All capitalized letters also give the appearance of shouting at your visitors.

Keep the alignment of your main text to the left, not centered. Center-aligned text is best used in headlines. You want your visitors to be comfortable with what they are reading, and most text (in the West) is left aligned.

### 2. Your Web Site Should Be Easy to Navigate

All of your hyperlinks should be clear to your visitors. Graphic images, such as buttons or tabs, should be clearly labeled and easy to read. Your web graphic designer should select the colors, backgrounds, textures, and special effects on your web graphics

very carefully. It is more important that your navigational buttons and tabs be easy to read and understand than to have "flashy" effects.

Link colors in your text should be familiar to your visitor (blue text usually indicates an unvisited link and purple or maroon text usually indicates a visited link), if possible. If you elect not to use the default colors, your text links should be emphasized in some other way (boldfaced, a larger font size, set between small vertical lines, or a combination of these). Text links should be unique -- they should not look the same as any other text in your web pages. You do not want people clicking on your headings because they think the headings are links.

Your visitors should be able to find what they are looking for in your site within three clicks. If not, they are very likely to click off your site as quickly as they clicked on.

### 3. Your Web Site Should Be Easy to Find

How are your visitors finding you online? The myth, "If I build a web site, they will come," is still

a commonly held belief among companies and organizations new to the Internet. People will not come to your web site unless you promote your site both online and offline.

Web sites are promoted online via search engines, directories, award sites, banner advertising, and links from other web sites. If you are not familiar with any of these online terms, then it is best that you have your site promoted by an online marketing professional.

Web sites are promoted offline via the conventional advertising methods: print ads, radio, television, brochures, word-of-mouth, etc. Once you have created a web site, all of your company's printed materials including business cards, letterhead, envelopes, invoices, etc. should have your URL printed on them.

#### 4. Your Web Pages' Layout Should Be Consistent Throughout the Site

Just as in any document formatted on a word processor or as in any brochure, newsletter, or newspaper formatted in a desktop publishing program, all graphic images and elements, typefaces, headings, and footers should remain consistent throughout your

web site. Consistency and coherence in any document, whether it be a report or a set of web pages, project a professional image. For example, if you use a drop shadow as a special effect in your bullet points, you should use drop shadows in all of your

bullets. Link-colors should be consistent throughout your web pages. Typefaces and background colors, too, should remain the same throughout your site.

#### 5. Overall Web Page Size should be 75K or Less

Studies have indicated that visitors will quickly lose interest in your web site if the majority of a page does not download within 15 seconds. (Artists' pages should have a warning at the top of their pages.) Even web sites that are marketed to high-end

users need to consider download times. Sometimes, getting to web site such as Microsoft or Sun Microsystems is so difficult and time consuming that visitors will often try to access the sites during non-working hours from their homes. If your business does

not have good brand name recognition, it is best to keep your download time as short as possible.

A good application of this rule is adding animation to your site. Sure, animation looks "cool" and does initially catch your eye, but animation graphics tend to be large files. Test the download time of your pages first. If the download time of your page is

relatively short and the addition of animation does not unreasonably increase the download time of your page, then and ONLY then should animation be a consideration.

Finally, before you consider the personal preferences of your web page design, you should consider all of the above rules FIRST and adapt your personal preferences accordingly. The attitude "I don't like how it looks" should always be secondary to your web site's function. Which is more important: creative expression corporate image or running a successful business?

## Steve Kohn

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### RENT-A-MISS AMERICA PAGEANT

I was shocked! SHOCKED! when I heard that the people who put together the Miss America Pageant were threatening to take the pageant out of New Jersey. Yes, sir, I was shocked.

Did I say I was shocked? Well, I was. What's even more shocking is they asked us to pay a million dollars to get them to stay. This pageant has been going on for over 80 years (and, frankly, I suspect that some of the contestants are getting just as long in the tooth - eighty years is a long time for a beauty pageant).

There has never been a Miss America Pageant outside of New Jersey. A pageant anywhere but in Atlantic City would be a travesty of sorts or maybe even sacrilegious. I wonder if the Pope has heard about this.

"Why are your getting so worked up?" My wife asked, "you were never a fan of the Miss America Pageant."

"I am so --- I was so!" I said unable to keep my tenses straight. "The pageant was the only place other than porno movies where we got to see girls in bathing suits wearing high heels. That's something you don't see on the beach very often – or around here, either," I added and ducked just in time to avoid a whup upside my head.

"Is that all you get out of the Miss America Pageant?" she scolded, "Anyway, I don't think they wear high heels anymore. I never realized you were so shallow," she continued, and added, "After all, they did say that the Miss America Pageant is not a beauty contest, didn't they?"

Hey, when she's right, she's right.

But what is it? Maybe it's supposed to be a talent show. I've sat through a lot of "dramatic readings" done by girls who I'd have bet dollars to donuts couldn't read. Talent can't be the sole criteria. Oh, I know, it's a "scholarship" contest! Right? Yep, that's what it is – they try to pick the most beautiful brains. They do this by

narrowing the contestants down to the final five and then they ask each of them a very scholarly question like: "What would you do to make this world a better place?" Then, the contestant who can say, "I will pray for peace and work to protect all the little children," in the most sincere manner, wins.

I explained all this to the wife and she felt I was just being nasty so I confessed my true feelings.

"We must pay them the million dollars they ask for," I announced, "but not to get them to keep the pageant in New Jersey – we should give them the money only if they take the pageant somewhere else. Iraq would be nice."

"As always, you are shallow and inconsistent," she sneered.

Truth be known I've always thought the Miss America Pageant was an embarrassment. It's demeaning – not only to women but also to the guy who has to get out there every year and do a poor imitation of Bert Parks who himself was a poor imitation of a pageant host. And how much respect can you have for a contest that selects its judges from the bottom of a Grade B personality list?

Perhaps I am being too hard on what has become a Garden State institution. It would only take minor tweaking to get the pageant right. First off, get rid of the pretense that the Miss America Pageant is what it pretends to be when it really is meant to show-off pretty girls, their figures, their teeth, and their big hair. Oh, yes, and to fill the pockets of the promoters who, apparently, are in the process of looking for a very large raise.

Perhaps I should call the people who put the pageant together and offer them the benefit of my suggestions. It's obvious they need my help. Besides, if they offer me a piece of the pie I would likely see the value of keeping this fine American tradition in our fine State of New Jersey.

Nah, money is not enough to get me to change my mind, Let's get rid of it and use the money to put together an honest to goodness New Jersey major league baseball team. Maybe they'll embarrass us, too, but you can bet it won't be because they play baseball in bathing suits and high heels.

Ugh, that's an ugly picture.

*Carl Sparacio*

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