



PIGs, Parking, and Grunts



The 2012 ICAS Convention is now in the books. As one would expect with a still-slow economy, attendance seemed to be down and the convention floor a little slower, yet business was done and show schedules were filled. Off the convention floor, things were hopping with a much improved education program, the ICAS bar setting new records, and networking at full steam.

One of the highlights was the ICAS Marketing Awards Luncheon. The cross-border collaboration of Matt Jolley and

Ric Peterson again brought life to what could be a dull listing of award winners. Matt's dry wit fully offset by Ric's madcap humor produced a fun presentation.

At the conclusion of the awards, ICAS President John Cudahy announced this would be the last Marketing Competition. Next year, the new "Pinnacle Awards" will be judged on every facet of the entry from marketing to execution. This will include everything that leads to a successful event: performer selection, entertainment value, vendors, parking, and traffic. As it was with the marketing awards, the goal will be benchmarking the best to improve the quality for spectators, customers, and sponsors.

Another positive development was the PIG meeting. ICAS is working to form a Performer Interest Group that the participants quickly named the PIGs. The lively meeting was harsh at times, but ICAS leadership got an ear full of the dissatisfaction within the ranks. Improving any process requires acknowledging problems and issues, and the PIGs have felt their opinions and needs are being ignored by ICAS. This time, the PIGs were able to freely express themselves in an atmosphere free of implied threat or recrimination. The other PIGs and I hold great expectations for this process. It was the first time in my 40+ years in the business where the "little guy" had the opportunity to make constructive input to our industry association. I applaud ICAS for this effort.

I was privileged to moderate several of the much-improved educational sessions. I found the quality and value to be exceptional. A great example was "Air Show Basics: Parking" presented by Jeffery Shapiro of Solutions Events Services. Jeffery's session was unusual in that it was totally hands-on. Starting with an empty room, Shapiro walked the participants through the development of a parking lot. First the parking and traffic lanes were identified, then the flow pattern.

Several of the participants were then issued "Little Tikes Cozy Coupe" toy cars and the rest of the class was designated "the parking crew." Complete with orange vest and traffic wands, they made ready to receive the brigade of airshow customers entering the event. The first attempts were as chaotic as your average airshow, but by the end of the session, the participants were able to smoothly control the onslaught of traffic and efficiently park the "cars" in a manner that maximized the speed and number of cars in the lot.

In fact, judging from the participant response, the entire "Air Show Basics" series was excellent. I would recommend that the programs pertaining to the crowd side of the show line be repeated on a

two to three year cycle to account for the natural turnover in airshow volunteers and management.

One of the highlights of the 2012 assembly was the United Airshow Grunts (UAG) meeting/brawl. In honor of our great leader, Bill "Big B" Beardsley, Proairshow, LLC is now the meeting's beer sponsor, supporting all those who labor in the background to "Make Airshows Fly!"

The Paris Hotel has a rather high opinion of their beverages, so the UAG Clandestine Operations Group (UAGCOP) was dispatched to acquire the appropriate supply of the official adult beverage of the Grunts - Bud Light. Why Bud Light? Big B supplied the product for years from his sponsor's ample supply, so the tradition continues. The method of moving the product into the meeting by the UAGCOP is highly classified and only disclosed on a need to know basis. Simply say, "We have our methods."

At this year's secrete conclave where no performers (boo) are permitted, over 20 oppressed performer (boo) support personnel were initiated into the ineffective union. As is required by the UAG by-laws (no written copy has ever been found), the Grunt dues of \$2 are to be paid by the Grunts performer (boo). Performer (boo) wingwalker Jane Wicker followed the rules and her Grunt, Rock Skowbo, entered the secret location with his two dollars signed by Jane and pinned to his shirt. How demeaning is that?

The new Grunts delivered their testimony on how their performer (boo) made them do menial, demeaning, and degrading jobs. In one of the worst cases, the performer (boo) made his Canadian-based Grunt purchase pharmaceuticals (aka "little blue pills") north of the border to save money. There are other stories of oppression too terrible to relate in this family publication.

In a startling development, this writer's own Grunt (a Grunt of a Grunt) accused him of "riding in the hero car" at Sun n' Fun, a reason for expulsion from the UAG. Jim Froneberger, editor of this fine publication, then produced photographic proof that confirmed the ride and also showed the suspect waving to the crowd!

The accused immediately hired reforming lawyer, Announcer Bob, to defend him against the serious charges. Bob attempted to prove the photograph was Photoshopped, but the prosecution produced the unedited digital image and the defense fell apart. Bob, reverting to the standards of the legal profession, then switched sides to the prosecution.

The accused, having no other options and in the best traditions of American justice, resorted to buying the jury with additional adult beverages. All charges were dropped as another round was consumed. The meeting broke up and, confidentially, the custodial staff was also bribed to ensure the Paris Beer Nazis could not trace the smuggled beverages.

If you are an airshow Grunt and missed this meeting you missed a good one!

Which brings me to my final thoughts on the 2012 ICAS Convention. I started attending ICAS as Kim Pearson's Grunt back in the early '80s. I endured the Nashville Death March, the Dallas Hotel from Hell and many others, so I have a good frame of reference: 2012 rates as one of the best conventions ever. Congratulations to the ICAS staff. Your hard work shows and is appreciated.