



The Resurrection of Mac Hennigan

FORMER APRO PRESIDENT, TULSA, OKLAHOMA

Like former Beatle Paul McCartney, this former APRO president isn't as dead as had been rumored

By Kristen Card

It's the definition of a dilemma—which phone call would you rather receive? *Scenario 1:* You're a retired rent-to-own leader—a former APRO president, in fact—who has been out of the industry loop for a while. One morning, you receive a call from an RTO pal with whom you're still in contact. “So, you're still around, huh?” he asks with a chuckle.

“Sure, I'm still around—I talked with you last week,” you answer, puzzled.

“Well, APRO thinks you're dead,” he responds.

Scenario 2: You're the editor of APRO's magazine and have just published an issue featuring memories and insights from APRO's past presidents. One morning, you receive a call from a past president you—with confirmations from several reliable sources—listed as deceased. Only he's not; he's on the phone and—thankfully—alive, well and laughing. To paraphrase Mark Twain, the report of Mac Hennigan's death was greatly exaggerated.

“The only thing I'm upset about,” Hennigan claims, “is that I didn't receive any flowers at all. Not *one* bouquet from all of my old cronies. Extremely disappointing.” Hennigan's faux outrage and follow-up belly laugh are the mirthful mark of a man who has faced the very real prospect of death several times during his seven-plus decades and lived to tell the tale.

Born and raised in rural Louisiana, Hennigan knew at the age of six he was going to be a soldier. He left home after high school graduation to join the Army and, a decade later, was commanding a field artillery unit in Vietnam.

After an exciting military career, Mac was assigned to the Pentagon, his least-

favorite assignment. He retired from the Army in 1979 and was hired by Willie Talley to work for ColorTyme in Dallas. Hennigan managed ColorTyme's Fort Worth market, added the Dallas market, then, when ColorTyme was sold, took over a Tulsa Curtis Mathes franchise.

“I was pretty good at rent-to-own,” Hennigan says. “But I didn't like retail. By the mid-'80s, I returned to Dallas as director of rental-lease operations for Curtis Mathes. I traveled all over the country and really enjoyed it. That's when I got involved in APRO, as the Curtis Mathes representative.”

Hennigan served on APRO's executive board for five years and as the association's president in 1986 and 1987. “I loved my time in rent-to-own,” Hennigan says. “The camaraderie was my favorite part. I associated with the industry's giants and loved working with those guys. I came through the military system, where entrepreneurship is never one of your goals—and it never was one of mine. I prefer managing an operation larger than I could afford to own.”

Hennigan suffered a heart attack in 1989 and had to undergo bypass surgery. It slowed him down considerably. He resigned from the APRO board. The following year, he went to work for Transamerica Commercial Finance, helping repossess failing rental businesses in Canada. In 1995, a former owner repurchasing his stores, Gord Reykdal, hired Hennigan as his chief operating officer based in Edmonton, Alberta. Hennigan and his wife, Jan, had fallen in love with the Land

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of the Maple Leaf, so it was a great deal. "It was the best civilian job I ever had," Hennigan gushes. "We built the company from 50 stores to 150 stores all across Canada. It was fantastic."

But in 1997, Hennigan was diagnosed with a brain tumor. Again, he returned to Dallas for successful surgery. Despite Hennigan's protests, Reykdal persuaded him to employ his long-term disability insurance and retire. The insurance company required half-time Canadian residency, so Mac and Jan delightedly spent a couple of half-years in a cottage by the ocean in Nova Scotia.

The Canadian cottage couldn't hold a candle to Oklahoma-based grandchildren, though. Reykdal convinced the insurance company to waive its residency requirement so that Mac and Jan could move closer to family.

"That helped me adjust to retirement, which I dearly hated," Hennigan grumbles. "I still don't like retirement much, but with six grandkids between 3 and 13, we manage to stay busy. And every summer, Jan and I get out of the hot weather in our 36-foot fifth-wheel [RV] and go somewhere cool for a few months."

A second open-heart surgery was necessary in 2005, yet today, Hennigan says he gets up every morning feeling good. "Not even a headache," he reiterates.

So, with two heart surgeries, a brain tumor, a Canadian sojourn and an early retirement, it begins to become more understandable how folks might figure Hennigan for a goner. He also mentions possible confusion with his brother, Murl, a central Texas ColorTyme dealer who died of leukemia a few years ago.

No doubt about it, *this* Hennigan is still alive and kicking; so if you didn't send an appropriate gift of grieving and memoriam, then you might want to watch your back. "I didn't get a single rose!" Hennigan chortles. "Well, you can tell them to save their money—they'll probably get another chance one of these days. But not soon!" ✧

EDITOR'S NOTE: Whenever it happens—and we hope it's not on our watch—rest assured, you won't read it here first. Kristen Card is a freelance writer living in Austin, Texas.

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of their education and carved out great careers for themselves," Zagorniak says. The younger of the two, Julie, graduated from the University of Missouri and now lives in California. Cindy graduated from Kansas State University and lives near Kansas City, Missouri, which is where the Al and Carol reside.

It was in Kansas City, while stationed at Richards-Gabaur Air Force Base, that Zagorniak started working for Sears in 1966. "[U.S. Army] General Robert Woods was president of Sears at the time and he favored hiring prior military personnel," Zagorniak says, "because we were disciplined, knew how to take orders and had a strong work ethic." Since his Air Force days, Zagorniak has called Kansas City home—and also deems it one of America's "best-kept secrets. I love it here."

Zagorniak stays busy with many post-career passions, including golf, travel, baking and driving his vintage 1969 Volkswagen Bug. Perhaps he's most proud to be a member of Elks Lodge 26; he was instrumental in fostering that group's involvement with reStart, a charity organization that aids the homeless. "reStart works to find housing for the homeless, run-aways and throw-aways—those children who have been abandoned by their parents," Zagorniak says. "Throw-aways are the ones that really grip me."

If he's not at the 125-year-old Elks Club (one of the oldest in the country) or on the golf course, Zagorniak might be found in the kitchen. "I've always had an interest in cooking," Zagorniak says. "When we were first married, Carol gifted me with enrollment in gourmet cooking classes. Soon after, I started baking yeast breads. I have my grandmother's original recipe for holiday stollen and I bake more than 40 loaves every Christmas to give to my neighbors and friends. I have a collection of cookbooks that you wouldn't believe!"

To know Zagorniak is to like him. His generosity, enthusiasm and sense of humor are infectious—traits that served him well during his years in rent-to-own. When APRO moved into its current Austin location in 2000, Zagorniak provided Sears' top-of-the-line appliances for the building, charging \$1 for the whole lot of them. Around that same time, he traveled to Austin to work alongside rental dealers and APRO staffers building a Habitat for Humanity home, and he donated the appliances for that house, as well. He was a handy craftsman during the Habitat project—a natural for someone so good at building bridges. ✧