

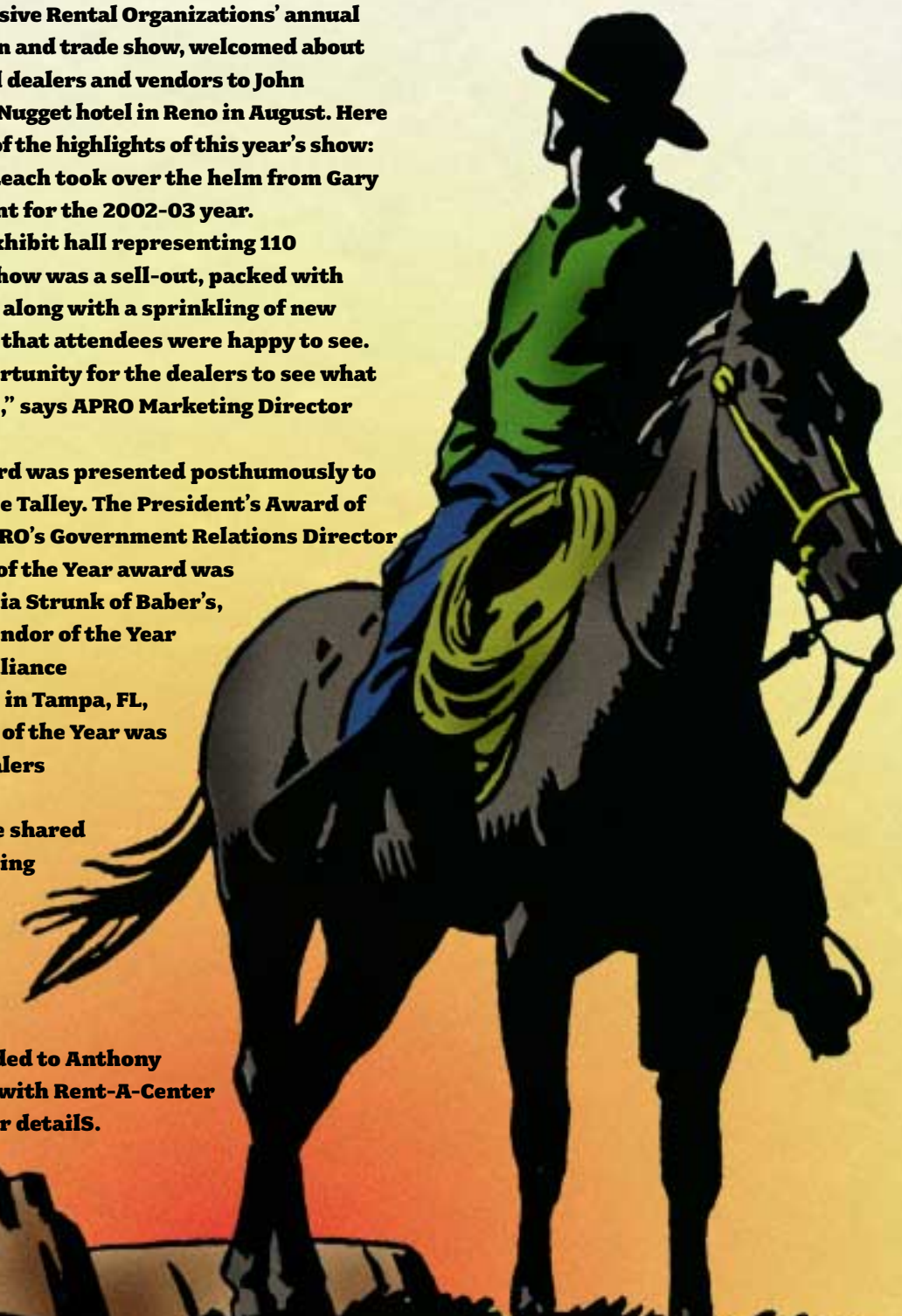
THE 2003 APRO RENO REVIEW

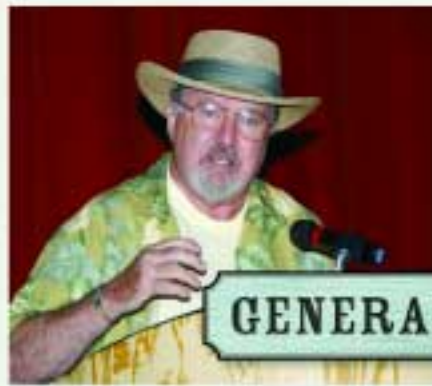
A LOOK BACK AT APRO'S 2003 CONVENTION AND TRADE SHOW

BY JULIE SHERRIER

A PRO 2003: Ridin' High in Reno, the Association of Progressive Rental Organizations' annual convention and trade show, welcomed about 950 rental dealers and vendors to John Ascuaga's Nugget hotel in Reno in August. Here are some of the highlights of this year's show:

- 2003-04 APRO President Lyn Leach took over the helm from Gary Romine, who served as president for the 2002-03 year.
- There were 205 booths in the exhibit hall representing 110 companies. "This year's trade show was a sell-out, packed with exhibitors from previous years along with a sprinkling of new exhibitors displaying products that attendees were happy to see. The show provides a great opportunity for the dealers to see what is new in products and services," says APRO Marketing Director Cindy Ferguson.
- The Lifetime Achievement Award was presented posthumously to former Rent-A-Center CEO Ernie Talley. The President's Award of Excellence was presented to APRO's Government Relations Director Ron Waters. The Rental Dealer of the Year award was received by Shannon and Cynthia Strunk of Baber's, based in Pascagoula, MS. The Vendor of the Year award went to John Foster of Alliance Computing Technologies, based in Tampa, FL, and the 2003 State Association of the Year was awarded to the Ohio Rental Dealers Association.
- Keynote speaker Frank Maguire shared his wisdom with attendees, saying that how employers treat their employees is exactly how their employees are going to treat their customers.
- The 2003 Rental-Purchase Employee of the Year was awarded to Anthony Robinson, an account manager with Rent-A-Center in Lakewood, CO. See page 34 for details.





GENERAL SESSION



Far left: keynote speaker Frank Maguire presented his "Absolutes" and led the crowd in a hand-holding moment. Above left: Employee of the Year Anthony Robinson with Rent-A-Center's Matt Harveson. Above: Customer of the Year Donna Brown.



TRADE SHOW



GOLF



This year's Tom Kitchens/Joe Eason Golf Tournament's first-place team: Kevin Wolfe, Scott Young, John Cleek Jr. and Ann Cleek. The tournament, held on the Lakes Course at Reno's Red Hawk Golf Club, was a great success, with more participants than ever before.



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THANK YOU TO APRO'S 2003 SPONSORS AND SUPPORTERS

CONVENTION SPONSORS

- Alliance Computing Technologies
- Ashley Furniture
- BDI Laguna
- ColorTyme
- Florida State Games
- Foresight
- G.E. Appliances
- High Touch
- Imagery Marketing Consultants
- Inform Business Services
- Klaussner Furniture

- Philips Consumer Electronics
- Rental Information Systems
- RES Accessories
- Rental and Sales Software Systems
- Strategic Marketing Associates
- Ther.A.Pedic
- Thomson
- TRIB Group
- Whirlpool
- Zenith

TREASURE HUNT DONATIONS

- The following companies donated products for this year's trade show treasure hunt:
- ABS Artistic Jewelry
 - American On Hold
 - Benefit Marketing Solutions
 - Bonnie the Flyer Specialist
 - Bowman Displays
 - Bryce Co.
 - ByteSmith Inc.
 - Florida State Games

- G.E. Appliances
- H.H. Scott
- H.K. Global Trading
- The Hoover Co.
- Klaussner Furniture
- Protect-A-Bed
- River City Bank
- Sandberg Furniture
- Ther.A.Pedic
- United Distributors
- Zenith Corp.

2003 BUDDY AWARD WINNERS

The APRO "Buddy" awards are presented every year to those outstanding individuals and organizations that have raised the level of what can be done to better the industry for everyone. At the annual APRO Awards Banquet, held August 15 at John Ascuaga's Nugget in Reno during the 2003 APRO Convention and Trade Show, the recipients of the Lifetime Achievement Award, the President's Award of Excellence, the Rental Dealer of the Year and the Norm Smith Vendor of the Year were named.

APRO LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD: ERNIE TALLEY, RENT-A-CENTER

The 2003 Lifetime Achievement Award was presented posthumously to former Rent-A-Center CEO Ernie Talley. One of the industry's founding fathers, Talley passed away on Saturday, June 21, after being admitted to the hospital for a stroke. Talley had been battling cancer for a few years.

Talley was laid to rest on June 24, 2003, in the small



Michael Talley accepts Ernie Talley's Lifetime Achievement Award on behalf of his father.

community of Pilot Point, TX, north of Dallas. This farming and ranching community seems to have carried Talley full circle from his early days in Yardelle, AR. Yet along the way, this unassuming man made his mark in this world, changing the lives of many.

It's been said that all roads lead to Rome. In rent-to-own, it seems all roads lead back to Ernie Talley. Talley began building the first chain of RTO stores in the 1960s, sold them and got out of business by the mid-1970s and re-entered RTO in the 1990s with what was Renters Choice and later became Rent-A-Center. Nearly every major dealer who has contributed to furthering the RTO industry sprang forth from Talley's employ, including Tom Devlin, Chuck Sims and Bud Holladay.

With his reintroduction to the industry, he led the effort to bring rent-to-own into the public-trading arena—another very signifi-

cant milestone for the industry. His success with running a publicly traded company has turned heads from Wall Street to Congress. His company grew (twice) from a multi-store chain to a leader in the industry. He embodied the history of RTO and his company represented the future and commitment to APRO and the industry.

Talley received the APRO President's Award of Excellence in 1998 and retired as CEO from Rent-A-Center in October 2001.

He is survived by his wife, Mary Ann, sons Michael, Mark and Matt, sister Barbara Cole, daughter-in-law Kathy and grandchildren Benjamin, Regan and Madison.

PRESIDENT'S AWARD OF EXCELLENCE: RON WATERS, APRO

One of the highest honors an APRO member can achieve is the President's Award of Excellence. This is presented to the person who exemplifies the best in the industry through involvement and support of industry goals. This award can go to anyone who represents what the industry strives to be as a whole.

This year, the award was presented not to a rental dealer, but to APRO's Government Affairs Director



Ron Waters. Waters has tirelessly promoted the industry's legislative agenda not only in Washington, D.C., but also throughout the country. One of his more remarkable political achievements on behalf of this industry was his work with Rep. Charlie Gonzalez, a Democrat from San Antonio. Gonzalez's father, the late Henry B. Gonzalez was easily the most outspoken critic the industry has ever confronted. When Charlie Gonzalez ran and secured the seat left

behind by his father, Waters worked hard on educating the younger Gonzalez on RTO issues. Today, Gonzalez is a co-sponsor on the industry-supported bills in the past two Congresses.

Waters has logged more than 100,000 miles a year in travel since he has been with APRO. He has attended more fund-raising dinners and parties than any individual rental dealer. He has shown great patience with politicians and rental dealers alike as he has worked hard to keep rent-to-own businesses safe since he began working for APRO in 1989.

RENTAL DEALER OF THE YEAR: SHANNON STRUNK AND CYNTHIA BABER-STRUNK, BABER'S

The Rental Dealer of the Year was awarded—for the first time—to a husband-and-wife team: Cynthia Baber-Strunk and Shannon Strunk, owner/operators of the 45-store Baber's rental-purchase chain based in Pascagoula, MS.

Cynthia currently serves as president of TRIB—The Rental Industry Buying Group—and has been very active civically. She is a past president of the Pascagoula Area Chamber of Commerce, Kiwanis Club, Civic League and the local PTA. Cynthia is the former Cynthia Littlepage, a native of Butler, AL.

Shannon Strunk rose through the ranks of Baber's to become its president. He is currently president of the Alabama-Mississippi Rental Dealers Association, having



recently reorganized his state and Alabama into a strong two-state association. He is currently serving his third term on the APRO Board of Directors. He was instrumental in pushing through Mississippi's rental-purchase legislation and is chairman of the APRO public relations committee. He most recently founded the APRO Charitable Foundation and the APRO Scholarship Fund.

Together in June of 2000, Shannon and Cynthia bought the rest of the company from other family members and continue to run the family-owned business. This husband-and-wife team joins an elite group of rent-to-own owners/operators who exemplify the dedication to furthering the interests of the industry, superior customer relations and ethical business practices.

VENDOR OF THE YEAR: JOHN FOSTER, ALLIANCE COMPUTING TECHNOLOGIES

The Norm Smith Vendor of the Year Award is given to an outstand-

ing associate member who has supported the Association and its activities. This year, John Foster, owner of Alliance Computing Technologies, received this award. Foster has been an active member of APRO since joining in 1994 and has served on the APRO Vendor Advisory Committee for four years.

Alliance Computing Technologies is going into its sixth year as an exclusive technology supplier to the rent-to-own industry. Providing hardware solutions with high-end products such as Hewlett-Packard, Compaq and Dell, along with 24/7 toll-free customer service support, Foster has created a successful company with a great reputation. In addition to supplying the industry with cutting-edge technology, Foster has gone the extra mile every year by providing the registration computers and support for the APRO staff during the Association's annual convention and trade show. He and his wife have also made the annual trek to Washington, D.C., to attend the industry's annual legislative conference to lobby for federal legislation.

Last but not least, for the past four years ACT has been the sole sponsor and supplier of the now invaluable Internet Café in the exhibit hall during the APRO Convention and Trade Show. Foster and his associates arrive early for the show every year to set up a bank of computers for attendees to surf the Web and/or check their e-mail.

It is this kind of support and involvement that John Foster was honored with the 2003 Vendor of the Year award.



STATE ASSOCIATION AWARDS

STATE ASSOCIATION OF THE YEAR: OHIO RENTAL DEALERS ASSOCIATION

The State Association of the Year award was presented to the Ohio Rental Dealers Association. The criteria for this award includes the following: the state association has a well-

the current board, as well as the state association's previous leadership, Ohio membership includes virtually every dealer in the state except for Aaron's. ORDA is the industry's third largest state rental dealer association in terms of RTO stores, members and customers. In the spring of 2003, ORDA

golf, free seminars, free food and free hotel stays at its fall meeting last year to encourage attendance. More than 100 showed up for the two-day event.

Future goals of the association include the creation of programs ranging from a college scholarship award to the elimination of dealer dues altogether. This is the second time ORDA has won this award. The first time was in 1996. ORDA was named "Most Improved State Association" in 1992 and received a "Continued Excellence" mention in 2001 and 2002.



"Tiger" John Cleek, left, presents the 2003 State Association of the Year award to Ohio's Ernie Lewallen, Amy Zeller-Fankhauser, Tony Craig, Ron Wilson and Rich Anderson.

defined leadership structure, including periodic election of officers; a continuity of organizational structure with annual or regularly scheduled meetings; and, most importantly, the State Association of the Year must have sustained membership support over time and demonstrated strong legislative and educational performance.

Under the guidance and leadership of ORDA President Ernie Lewallen and

expanded its board of directors to 11 full-time members.

Over the past year, ORDA has made substantial gains in boosting its "war chest" without raising membership dues through the creation of a special vendor program. ORDA's "Vendor Partners" sponsor the group's meetings, golf outings and other events in exchange for a product and sales pitch to a captive audience of rental dealers. As a result, ORDA has been able to provide free

late 1980s until the mid- to late 1990s, according to three-term ARDA President Geron Vail. ARDA then began to lose members and interest. "Those of us who were new to the industry saw a need to revive the association, so we began, over the past four to five years, to hold seminars, produce some newsletters and are now experiencing good, strong support," says Vail.

This past year, ARDA held its first trade show, complete with 15 booths and seminar speakers. Approximately 80 attended. Also, ARDA created an advisory board to tackle the problem of leadership succession. The advisory board grooms people who are interested in participating in the association, but who aren't necessarily ready to handle the responsibility of serving on the board. A "step-up" system moves at least one member of the advisory board into the bottom spot on the ARDA board of directors every two years.

On the slate for the future for ARDA members is exploring the possibility of holding a legislative conference in Little Rock.

MOST IMPROVED STATE ASSOCIATION OF THE YEAR: ARKANSAS RENTAL DEALERS ASSOCIATION

The Arkansas Rental Dealers Association was very active in the



Arkansas' Geron Vail accepts the award from "Tiger" John Cleek (left).



Texas' Kelly Sayre accepts the award from "Tiger" John Cleek (left).

LEGISLATIVE ACHIEVEMENT AWARD (FORMERLY THE FIREFIGHTER OF THE YEAR): TEXAS ASSOCIATION OF RENTAL AGENCIES

The winner of the newly coined "Legislative Achievement Award" goes to Texas rental dealers for their recent victory in changing the state's rental-purchase law. Texas dealers lobbied the Texas Legislature to amend the state's rental-purchase law to change the existing seven-day grace period on weekly rentals to three days and included capping the loss damage waiver at 10 percent. These changes will provide a much improved working environment for rental dealers in Texas. With Governor Rick Perry's signature, the new changes took effect September 1, 2003.

TARA Chairman Mamie Harper and President Kelly Sayre would like to recognize members Robert Briley, James MacAlpine, Danny Wilbanks, Kent Lycka and

thanks also to Rent-A-Center General Counsel Chris Korst, for all the hard work required to change the law. It was a true team effort that secured this legislative victory.

2003 CONTINUED EXCELLENCE AWARDS

- ☛ California Rental Dealers Association
- ☛ Colorado Rental Dealers Association
- ☛ Florida Rental Dealers Association
- ☛ Illinois Rental Dealers Association
- ☛ Indiana Rental Dealers Association
- ☛ Missouri Rental Dealers Association

MEET THE 2003-04 APRO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Every year during the annual APRO Convention, APRO members elect eight candidates to fill positions on the board of directors. The board has a total of 16 directors (plus a vendor member and an immediate past president). Board members serve staggered, two-year terms and half of the positions become open each year at the convention, in addition to any vacancies that need to be filled.

APRO's 2002-03 President Gary Romine handed over the gavel to Lyn Leach of Ace Furniture & TV Inc. in Malcolm, NE, who will serve as APRO president for the 2003-04 term. The new executive committee is as follows:

- ☛ President: Lyn Leach, Ace Furniture & TV, Malcolm, NE
- ☛ First vice president: Shannon Strunk, Baber's, Pascagoula, MS
- ☛ Second vice president: "Tiger" John Cleek, Cleek's Rent-To-Own, Columbia, MO
- ☛ Secretary: Kevin Quinn, KLQ Enterprises, dba Quality Rentals, Tacoma, WA
- ☛ Treasurer: Larry Carrico, SKC Enterprises Inc., Mt. Vernon, IL
- ☛ Immediate Past President: Gary Romine, Show-Me Rent-To-Own, Farmington, MO

The remaining 2003-04 APRO board of directors is as follows:

- ☛ Robert Briley, Rent City Superstores, Abilene, TX
- ☛ David P. David, Full-O-Pep Appliances, Bloomington, IN
- ☛ Gary Hughes, AAA Rent to Own, Clarkston, WA
- ☛ Chris A. Korst, Rent-A-Center, Plano, TX
- ☛ Jeff L. Lebakken, Lebakken's, Eau Claire, WI
- ☛ Ernie Lewallen, UHR Rents, Cincinnati, OH
- ☛ John Rogers, High Touch, Wichita, KS
- ☛ Mamie Harper, Fiesta Rent to Own, El Paso, TX
- ☛ Kelly Sayre, Alliance Rental Centers, Denton, TX
- ☛ Michael J. Viveiros, Rainbow Rentals, Canfield, OH
- ☛ Mark Windsor, National TV Sales and Rentals, Lebanon, MO
- ☛ Amy Zeller-Fankhauser, City Rentals, Defiance, OH