

Thanks for the memories of many wonderful years!

Not being Bob Hope, I'm not about to break into his theme song, but I do have many thanks to extend as my term as ERA's CEO concludes. (And I wonder if some of our younger readers know who Bob Hope was!)

In 1984, my friend of many years and ERA's then CEO, Ray Hall, knew I would be in Europe at the same time ERA was holding its conference in London. He invited me to stop by, and I did. One of the first people I had the good fortune to meet in London was

the late Jess Spoons, who was ERA's chairman at the time and would eventually be elected to ERA's Hall of Fame. Jess urged me to "stick around" for the conference. Not being able to resist his southern charm and his assurance that I would meet many terrific people, I did indeed "stick around" ... and now it's been more than three decades!

In my earliest years with ERA, I handled some legal work for both ERA and its Insurance Trust as well as individual members. Eventually, I was appointed COO under Ray and then CEO after his retirement in 2004.

In all these years, the one indelible impression I've had of ERA is that it is a FAMILY. This has been, by far, the most rewarding and most satisfying aspect of my association with our staff and our members.

What a pleasure it has been to work with Karin Derkacz, Tess Hill, Bill Warfield, Kathy Green and, most recently, Bob Terwall and Stephanie Tierney! They are consummate professionals who never say "no" when asked to do *anything and everything* for ERA. And, like me, they genuinely enjoy working with each other and on behalf of our members. I am deeply grateful to them, and I trust you are too.

Over my years with ERA, the family has, of course, also included too many memorable relationships with members to recount here. It has always been remarkable to me that

so many talented members have continually stepped up into leadership positions and given so much of their time and expertise to this organization. I've worked with countless executive committees, board delegates, committees, task forces, chapter leaders and other volunteers who seemed to have extra energy when it came to giving their best to ERA. Thanks to all for your unselfish service!

Our ERA family also includes many multi-generation rep firms, an unusual phenomenon in the association world.

I've had the privilege to know and work with several generations of the same families, and I consider ERA unique because it has this strength of history among its rep members.

While I'm doling out my thanks, allow me to note that my wife Lorene and daughter Meaghan have marvelous memories of ERA events they've attended. They've both assisted the staff at ERA conferences and trade shows, and they've

attended various industry meetings where they've become friends with many of our members as well as our industry partners. So please add their appreciation to mine for the gracious way they have always been welcomed.

Finally ... my special thanks to my dear friends, Ray Hall and Jess Spoons, for bringing me into the ERA family so long ago. It's been a great ride, and I'm so glad I "stuck around" that week in London!

In the next issue of The Representor, this space will be turned over to ERA's new CEO, Walter Tobin. I have known Walt for a number of years, and I believe he is an ideal choice to lead ERA into the future. He has a long history in our industry and with many of our members. For those of you who have not yet met him, I hope you have that opportunity very soon. I also urge every member to provide your input and to say "yes" when Walt asks for your assistance.

Congratulations, Walt ... and welcome to the ERA family!



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