

ICCFA[®] MAGAZINE

August - September 2008

CEMETERY

CREMATION

FUNERAL

Cover story: ICCFA in DC to talk to Congresspersons



Lobbying: Paul Elvig's Capitol Hill diary

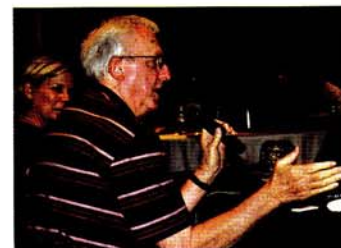
Preneed: The 5-point due diligence plan



Service to families: Acting on ideas for better veterans tributes

Personnel: Workers can challenge new union

Going green: Pesticide-free turf maintenance



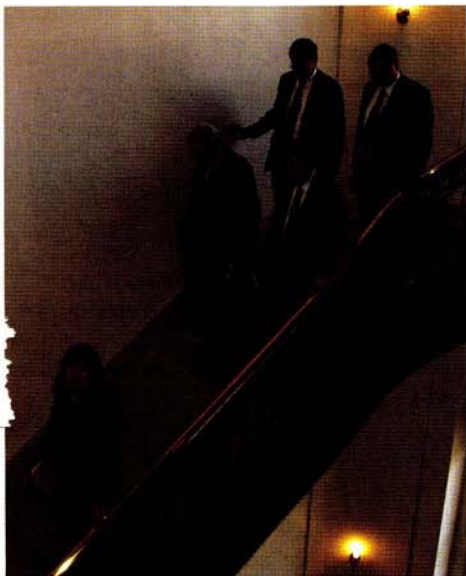
Celebrants: Sharing service success stories

Plus: • Want a Ritz reputation? Check out the Fall Management Conference program
• Why Colorado (still) doesn't have licensure
• Complying with FIN 48 • Reviews of end-of-life & caregivers handbooks, books on restoring a cemetery

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LOBBYING



On the move from one Congressional office to another: front, Caressa Hughes; center, Bob Fells and Steve Schacht; back, Bob Gordon Sr. and John Resich.



Talking to the staff of Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY).



Paul Elvig and Ed Horn outside Sen. Clinton's office.



Ray Frew massages his sore feet.



Our visit with Rep. Kenny Marchant (R-TX) was arranged by Caressa Hughes. From left, Ed Horn, Steve Schacht, Bob Gordon Sr., Bob Fells, Marchant, Hughes, Larry Anspach, Irwin Shipper, Mark Krause, Ray Frew and Paul Elvig.



Meeting with Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY), from left, Ray Frew, Ed Horn, Bob Gordon Sr., John Resich and Bob Fells.



Photos of some of those who have died in the Iraq war, displayed in the halls of Congress.



From left, Bob Gordon Sr., Mark Krause, Irwin Shipper and Larry Anspach outside the Russell Senate Office Building.



On the long walk between the Senate and House office buildings, you pass the Library of Congress.

cover cemeteries. We considered this a victory, as the ICCFA was the only professional organization to oppose expanding the rule to cover providers other than funeral homes.

We had scheduled visits with a number of members of Congress, plus we planned to make unannounced “drop-ins” at various members’ offices. You’ve heard the expression, “the halls of Congress,” but we soon learned you’ll never hear about “the chairs of Congress.” The corridors were long, the marble floors hard and chairs just don’t exist in the halls of Congress. Hint-hint: Don’t linger.

Our feet were hurting with a day and a half still to go. We ran upstairs, downstairs and across busy streets. Thank you, Past President Ray Frew. It was his idea, two years ago, that the ICCFA hold its first Capitol Hill trip for the purpose of just getting to know members of Congress.

Our good-will trip then proved to be so popular that we decided to continue our “Can we be of help?” visits. This time we doubled the size of the ICCFA visiting team and more than doubled the number of congressmen and congresswomen we met.

In this election year, the only thing we were running for was the opportunity to be of assistance should members of Congress have any problems or questions about our profession. We found few if any problems, but made a lot of friends while asking. We also urged support of veterans legislation that would reinstate funeral/cemetery benefits dropped in the early 1990s.

While traveling between buildings we noticed choppers and military aircraft on the move. Thinking it to be routine, we paid little attention. It wasn’t until we picked up newspapers the next day that we learned there had been an incident of security interest: “Small plane diverted near Capitol.” Security officials had ordered Capitol per-

sonnel to prepare to evacuate. The incident was resolved before evacuation was ordered, according to Capitol Police Sgt. Kimberly Schneider. We had seen a number of armored vehicles patrolling the area. Evacuate? That would have been us.

The U.S. Capitol physically separates the Senate office buildings of Dirksen, Russell and Hart from the House office buildings of Cannon, Longworth and Rayburn. It’s a long walk between. Making the trip, you pass the Library of Congress and its beautiful fountains and cast bronze statuary, and the Supreme Court, flanked by its symbols of justice. Those who see the U.S. Capitol for the first time are amazed at its size and length. So were our feet.

We split into teams, meeting personally with five senators and almost three dozen member of the House. This required going back and forth between office buildings, finding the right floor and trying to understand the signage. Understand the signage? We found Bob Fells puzzling over an office number direction sign. Was it really saying you can’t get there from here? I haven’t seen signs like that since leaving library service 40 years ago.

Speaking of signage, how about this one: “This elevator will be reserved for members only when bells ring for attendance in the House.” What bells, what elevator?

We noticed variations of colored lights located near clocks that seemed to advise members when their attendance was requested. There seemed to be numerous quorum calls (that’s when all members of the House must be on the House floor within 10 minutes), some said to be for political reasons.

We enjoyed lunch in a very crowded House Dining Room hosted for us by Rep. Jane Harman (D-CA), along with a member of her staff. We were given “official” badges

to get in. Ray had arranged the lunch.

During a quorum call, the congresswoman

excused herself but was back in an amazingly

short time, perhaps because our dining room was located in the Capitol Building. One can only imagine the rush-rush, go-go members are exposed to all the time.

The food was great! I forgot to turn in my “OFFICIAL BUSINESS VISITOR H-118” badge as we left; I still have it by my keyboard. Don’t tell anyone back in D.C. I don’t want a visitor holding an AK-47 at my door.

ICCFA President Mark Krause, at the time still president-elect, was able to visit with Democratic Sen. Herbert Kohl from his home state of Wisconsin. Irwin Shipper met with his friend from Florida, Democratic Sen. Bill Nelson. Steve Schacht and Caressa Hughes had several one-on-one appointments, as did Ed Horn. Each regaled us with stories about the crowds and time pressures members of Congress face.

We also met with many senior congressional staffers, including those from the offices of Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY) and Rep. Shelley Berkley (D-NV). Our purpose? As it was before: “If we can be of help to you or any of your constituents with cemetery, funeral or cremation matters, here is our calling card.” Each person we visited received an ICCFA Roladex card with our contact numbers.

Knowing my (Republican) political leanings, Ed Horn insisted I be photographed next to the office sign for a (then) leading candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination. After strenuous objections, I submitted.

Each Congressional office seemed to reflect the member’s home district and/or special national issues. The office décor of Ed Horn’s congresswoman, Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY), included icons of New York City in photos and art. Walking into the office of Larry Anspach’s Congresswoman, Rep. Berkley, is like stepping onto the streets of Las Vegas. No, there weren’t any slot machines, just large photos of Vegas everywhere.



The sign letting us know when to stay off the elevators.

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Everywhere, office space was tight, with a lot of staffers jammed into limited quarters and small waiting rooms into which not many visitors can crowd.

Simple bronze plaques in the echoing marble hallways list each member's name and state. Usually state flags grace the entryway into each office. At times one would encounter hallway posters mounted on easels next to a member's office that made political statement such as "Nuclear Waste Routes," "Blue Dog Coalition" and "Earmark Reform Coalition." But it was the photo posters of those who have died in the Iraq war that stood just outside an office that captured your attention and heart.

Between appointments, we used our Congressional Directories to plan unscheduled meetings. We broke up into small visitation teams to visit the congressional offices of those we personally know from back home.

Bob Gordon Sr. and I toured several floors, just stopping in to say "hello." I encountered Rep. Dave Reichert (R-WA), who just happened to be standing in his



Which are the Beatles and which are members of the ICCFA?

outer office. A brief visit, our short message of help offered, and it was, "See you, Dave." "See you, Paul." Mission accomplished. All together, we made dozens of these unscheduled office visits.

We had some hams amongst us. In a painted crosswalk in front of the Capitol, Ray, Larry, Mark, Ed and Irwin did some in-line strolling, swinging their arms in unison, as the Beatles did in the famous photo

on their Abbey Road album cover. (John Resich pointed this out to me.)

Bathrooms seemed to be a best kept secret. Get a little panicky and you can find one. By the second day, we found that the office buildings were connected by well lighted tunnels which allowed us to stay within the security system's perimeters. Every outside door entrance required metal detector passage. Some of our visiting team got to ride the small underground electric train between the Capitol and Senate office buildings while visiting with the new Republican senator from Wyoming, John Barrasso, who is a friend of Larry's.

By day's end, we were tired. Government & Legal Affairs Committee Chairman Irwin Shipper expressed delight with the outcome. I was delighted to see a limo, not just a cab, arrive to deliver us to the airport.

We were reminded that we do have accessible government—and that there are many who seek access. But one thing we will not forget is there are no chairs to be found in the halls of Congress. The only good chairs are the ones you are elected to sit in, and I am not a candidate. □

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