

Remembering Bob Tall

Past APCO Member & Association Executive Director

On April 20, Robert “Bob” E. Tall (82), APCO International Life Member and former executive director, passed away after a long battle with cancer at Halifax Health Hospice of Volusia-Flagler, Edgewater, Fla.

Tall was born in Baltimore on May 15, 1926. A graduate of the University of Maryland, his career included serving in the U.S. Navy and owning and operating Washington, D.C., based newsletters, *Telecommunications Reports*, *Industrial Communications* and *Washington Radio Reports*, which focused on FCC actions. After 33 years of publication, Tall sold the newsletters to Phillips Publishing Inc. in 1983.

Tall joined APCO in 1954 and was a member of the Virginia and, later, Mid-Eastern chapters. He had great leadership abilities and was a productive person, working on local, regional and national level APCO conferences. In addition, he held positions on standing and special committees and task forces, sharing his expertise at both chapter and national levels. He was a proactive member for more than 50 years and authored more than 200 articles for the APCO BULLETIN.

Tall became APCO executive director on March 1, 1984, taking a significant cut in his personal income to take on the role. He was interviewed by the APCO Board of Officers, and his appointment was approved by the Executive Council.

Craig Jorgensen, who was APCO president when Tall was hired, says, “The challenges were enormous. I think one of the things most members will never recognize is the depth of the issues [APCO] faced on multiple levels [when Tall took the position].”

The difficulties tackled during Tall’s time in the position included low membership numbers, a struggling magazine



In January 1989, then APCO Executive Director Bob Tall led a People to People Public Safety Communications Delegation to China. **INSET:** Tall was accompanied on the trip by his wife, Roanne, who was the 9-1-1 director for Seminole County, Fla.

and the need to nurture the association’s relationships. “I think we made the right decision [in hiring Tall],” says Jorgensen. “Associations evolve, and leadership changes. If you can get someone in the right position at the right time, they can achieve the objectives you gave them when they were hired.”

Under Tall’s watch, APCO grew as an association from 3,000 members to more than 9,000, with new chapters in Canada and the Caribbean. The APCO staff grew from five to 30 employees. The national conference significantly increased in exhibitor and attendance numbers.

According to Jorgensen, two of the greatest accomplishments under Tall’s tenure were the growth in membership and the refocused attention on the APCO BULLETIN. “[Tall’s] background knowl- edge gave us the insight to deal with

the magazine and regulatory issues,” says Jorgensen. “He had the experience and the insight into how we [could] correct [these issues].”

This period also saw the establishment of the APCO Institute. According to Tall, this achievement coined the title *telecommunicator*, which was “imbued with dignity and recognition, and raised the prestige of those who hold the title to an unprecedented, professional level.”

Taking on frequency regulation: According to APCO Past President, and Tall’s long-time friend, Joe Nasser, Tall had an “uncanny knowledge of the regulatory process,” as well as personal relationships with key Washington figures.

Nasser says, “One of the earliest memories I have of Bob was when we went to Washington together. Bob said we needed to meet with people at the Commission. I asked him if we had any appointments. He said, ‘No.’

“I said, ‘You can’t just walk into the Federal Communications Commission and say *Hi, I’m Bob Tall, and I’m here to talk to you.*’

“He said, ‘Sure you can.’ And we did, concluding with a meeting with Office of Engineering Technology Director Thomas Stanley and his associate director, Will McGibbon.

“He and I simply waltzed into the building and started going door to door, and every time he popped his head into an office, they were like ‘Bob! How are you?’ This went on dozens of times. He [also] knew every clerk, assistant and

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secretary,” says Nasser.

The regulatory and legislative successes under Tall include the FCC certification and formation of the APCO Automated Frequency Coordination in 1986, which had been approved by the APCO Board and Executive Council three years earlier. Nasser says, “[Tall] was like a charging bull for two years to force the issue to a vote and get approval [from the Executive Council] to establish the division.”

Tall also helped draft the concept and goals for an advisory committee on 800 MHz for public safety, which eventually became the National Public Safety Planning Advisory Committee that NPSTC is founded on.

“After I really got to know him well,” says Nasser, “I realized that he was one of the iconic figures of the 20th Century for communications in the U.S., not just public safety. ... He left such a mark on the industry. I can’t think of anyone in the last 15–20 years who can compare to the achievements that Bob Tall made in our business. He was an extraordinary person.”

Tall retired from the executive director position on March 16, 1992. In his final APCO BULLETIN column as executive director, Tall wrote, “The executive director did not do all of these things, of course. We did them, and many, many more, together. ... I am honored to have served you all, and am grateful for the opportunity to have done so.”

After his retirement, Tall worked as a consultant on FCC regulatory issues and public safety grants while living in Florida.

Tall was predeceased by Jane Suell Davies Tall, Roanne Ruben Tall and his companion, Martha Goodwin. He is survived by his former wife, Gaye Tall, and children, Robin Hogan, Roberta Morton, Ben, Grover and Jimmy Tall, Jenny Kerven, Larry Erlich, 12 grandchildren and two great grandchildren. Tall was cremated, and his ashes returned to Calvert County, Md. Condolences may be sent to M/M Ben Tall, 2326 Nantucket Dr., Crofton, MD 21114.

“[Tall] will be missed,” says Jorgensen.

“He was an important part of our history. ... He did more than one would expect of an executive director and gave more to the association than he received. ... I think he was most passionate about APCO as a whole. He loved the association, the membership, public safety. No one could fault Bob’s belief in APCO.”

~HELEN RUSHING, Mid-Eastern Chapter, & NATASHA YETMAN, Assistant Editor

ASSOCIATION NEWS

SGI Outreach

In April, APCO held three teleconferences with 50 leaders representing 21 Chapters. A progress report from the Strategic Governance Implementation (SGI) Task Force was a major highlight.

According to Task Force member and presenter Lynn Feller, the task force has been working diligently to address the major concerns raised by rank-and-file members and the Executive Council (EC). As members will recall, at last year’s conference in Kansas City, 63% of the Quorum representing APCO members voted to adopt the original SGI plan, just short of the two-thirds majority required to pass. The feedback the task force received, said Feller, indicated that folks would have felt more comfortable with the governance changes if they’d had more time to

study the changes, if the plan were more detailed and if there were more checks and balances in the structure and in the process used to get there.

To ensure a system of checks and balances, the proposed governance structure sets up a Board of Directors separate from but elected from members of the EC. The Policy Manual includes several sections addressing removal of a member of the Board of Directors for cause. Board members are limited to two consecutive two-year terms. Under a recent change proposed to the Bylaws, Feller reported, the Board of Directors will be required to attend EC meetings.

When Regional Representatives are elected to the Board, they must relinquish their Council seat. According to Feller, Chapters need to ensure they have a process in place to select a replacement to serve on the EC.

Communication is another area Feller clarified for participants. The illustration below shows how information will flow from members to the leadership and back.

Feller said that at the February Mid-Year Meeting some EC members strongly expressed the opinion that the Immediate Past President should be a voting member of the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors to help ensure checks and

Responsibility for Information Flow



balance. The updated proposal includes that recommendation.

“We are now in the 10th version of the Bylaws,” said Feller. “There have been a number of updates to the Bylaws, as well as revisions to the Policy Manual. The changes to the Bylaws and the Policy Manual are being thoroughly vetted by the Constitution and Bylaws Committee, which has been a massive effort.”

APCO members are encouraged to learn more. If you’re interested in participating in an **SGI Member Update webinar**, send an e-mail to **governance@apointl.org**. Choose from the following for a convenient time:

- **Thursday, July 23, 2 p.m. EDT;**
- **Wednesday, July 29, 11 a.m. EDT; or**
- **Thursday, Aug. 6, 1 p.m. EDT.**

Also, visit the SGI section on the APCO Web site (**www.apointl.org/governance**), where two Quorum Resolutions, proposed changes to the Bylaws (and a side-by-side comparison of the current Constitution and Bylaws to the proposed Bylaws), Policy Manual Section updates and other documents are already online. To register a comment or pose a question, send an e-mail to **governance@apointl.org**.

“This is still only a proposal,” said Feller. “The Quorum still needs to approve it.”

The Strategic Governance Implementation effort will be presented at the First Business Meeting and voted on at the Second Business Meeting to be held in August at the 75th Annual APCO Conference & Exposition in Las Vegas. Look for a summary of the Resolutions the Quorum will vote on in the July issue.

~ **KERI LOSAVIO**, Editor,
Public Safety Communications

Honoring Leadership

On April 7, at the Fairmont Hotel in Washington, D.C., leaders from all levels of public safety and government gathered at the Fifth Annual Leadership in Policy Awards Dinner to honor five individuals who have worked to create, advocate and promote public safety communications policy. The celebration began at 7 p.m. and included the Presentation of Colors by the Fairfax County Virginia Department of



Public Safety Communications.

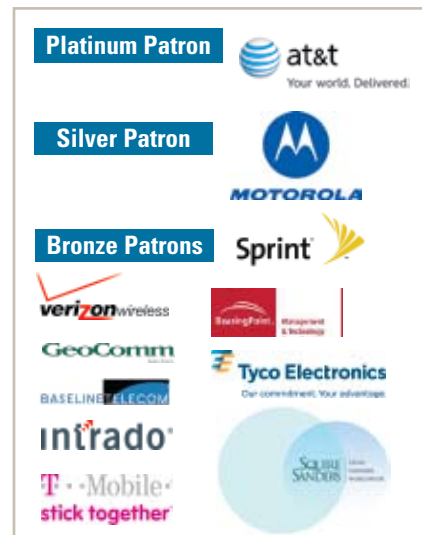
In his opening statement as master of ceremonies, APCO Executive Director George S. Rice Jr. said, “We have gathered to honor individuals and organizations who have made significant contributions to the field of public safety. The awards we’ll present tonight commemorate advancements in all aspects of public safety communications policy, including regulatory affairs, legislative affairs and advocacy within our membership. ... The work we do would not be possible without the tireless dedication of these volunteer leaders of our organization. You can’t imagine the number of hours they log during their terms of office.”

APCO President Chris Fischer then took the podium to begin the formal award presentations. “Leadership has never been more important,” said Fischer. “Keeping our universal goals in mind, developing strategies for success and pushing on through the turmoil that currently surrounds us. Leadership, above all else, is what we are here to recognize tonight.”

This year’s honorees: Department of Homeland Security Secretary **Janet Napolitano** received the Leadership in Advancing Communications Policy Award; Sen. **Daniel K. Inouye** (D-Hawaii) received the Leadership in Legislative Service Award; FCC Public Safety and Homeland Security Deputy Bureau Chief **Erika Olsen** received the Leadership in Regulatory Service Award; APCO Project 25–35 Project Director **Craig Jorgensen** received the Leadership in Advocacy Award; and Director of the Office of Emergency Communications, Department of Homeland Security, **Chris Essid** received the Special Recognition Award. Napolitano and Inouye could not be present to accept the awards in person.

~ **FYI:** www.apointl.com/LeadersDinner

APCO’s 2009 Leadership in Policy Award winners: (from left) Brian De Vallance, accepting the award on behalf of Janet Napolitano; Erika Olsen; Chris Essid; Margaret L. Cummsky, accepting the award on behalf of Daniel K. Inouye; and Craig M. Jorgensen.



APCO Creates HR Task Force

On April 20, APCO announced the formation of the Professional Communications Human Resources Taskforce (PRO-CHRT). APCO President Chris Fischer says, “This effort will help us honor [telecommunicators] every day by ensuring the needs of these dedicated professionals are addressed locally and nationally.”

PRO-CHRT will gather information, study and prepare reference materials of communications human resources and recognition issues, including professional certification levels and minimum training requirements and standards, and first responder status for public safety communications professionals, from across the country. In addition, it will examine retirement benefits and the Fair Labor Standards Act pertaining to compensation and scheduling. The study’s goal is to develop tools to help APCO members address these issues at the state level. It will include a synopsis of state labor laws, retirement benefits and training and certification requirements, as well as sample legislation and effective advocate strategies.

“A majority of these [topics] have to be researched, and some changes have to come from a national, not a local, level,” says APCO First Vice President and Board

Liaison Bill Carrow. "This is a long time coming ... and I think APCO needs to be leading the charge on this. I'm really proud that APCO is doing the research."

The taskforce has eight members and is chaired by Steve Souder, Virginia APCO. Carrow says, "I think [the taskforce comprises] a great cross section of members that have been heavily involved in all aspects of what we are looking for."

~FYI: www.apcointl.com

MEMBER SERVICES

Stretching Education

Agencies have always struggled to budget dollars for communications. Lately, it seems like everyone, everywhere, is experiencing budget cuts and learning that money previously allocated for communications will be spent elsewhere. APCO staff is hearing from agencies all over the U.S. that budget dollars assigned to training and travel have been slashed. Public safety communications professionals must make the most out of what they have.

If your agency is one of those few blessed with some training, conference and travel dollars, make sure attendees from your agency bring back what they've learned. I'm not advocating stealing curriculum or plagiarizing, but they can pass along the information and their insights ("ah-ha" moments). Employees can type up a summary sheet of vital information and pass it along, or maybe give a 15-minute presentation to staff at the start of a shift.

Supervisors and managers should mentally prepare all personnel attending a training event or a professional development opportunity for their return. They will be sharing what they learned with their co-workers. Don't intimidate them with the idea that they'll have to present the material in a slideshow with handouts. It's just a discussion about the latest information and trends "out there." If a conference session has handouts, the employee should ask the presenter if they can share them with their co-workers. Most of the time, they'll get an affirmative response.

Other sources: Rip informative articles out of this magazine, highlight the key

ideas and circulate the articles around the agency. Forward news articles and informative Web sites to co-workers. Tell your staff to read them, and plan a time to discuss them later to see what ideas the information sparks and how it can be used in your center.

We can't afford not to share educational information and resources. All communications professionals must keep their skills sharp.

Speaking of spreading the word, when was the last time you told colleague about the benefits of APCO membership and its resources? If you're not an APCO member, see p. 11 for the application.

~ANN RUSSO, Member Services Manager

STANDARDS

NIMS Evaluation Program Aims to Improve Interop Solutions

In responding to large-scale terrorist attacks or the incidents that occur daily at a local level, emergency responders face common challenges that affect their mission to save lives and protect property. None may be as critical as their ability to alert citizens and fellow responders and communicate with Incident Commanders.

However, when procuring new systems, agencies often run across dozens of products that all appear to have the same functions. A program sponsored by the FEMA should assist responders in making these product-related choices. The National Incident Management System Supporting Technology Evaluation Program (NIMS STEP) allows agencies to verify that technologies conform to interoperability standards and can exchange critical messages.

"The application of NIMS standards by public safety entities promotes interoperability and compatibility ... and provides these employees with a safer work environment," says David Barrabee, section chief for the Indiana Department of Homeland Security and a member of the initiative's steering group.

According to NIMS, "[C]ommunications and data standards, related testing, and associated compliance mechanisms are necessary to enable diverse organizations to work together effectively." NIMS

STEP evaluations determine if products conform to data exchange specifications, including the Common Alerting Protocol and Emergency Data Exchange Language standards. These standards provide common formats for exchanging messages among emergency response and lifesaving systems, such as 9-1-1 communications.

In addition to responder benefits, the program outcomes provide value to the vendors that have their products evaluated. David Lamensdorf, past chair of the Emergency Interoperability Consortium and owner of Safe Environment Engineering, says that—from a vendor perspective—NIMS STEP has helped him compete for business. "Our customers are further comforted in their procurements knowing our company has been through this process considering specific reference to CAP, EDXL-DE and other EDXL [interoperability] standards are now part of the bid requirement," says Lamensdorf.

NIMS STEP evaluations are conducted at a DHS-funded laboratory in Somerset, Ky. The laboratory is part of the NIMS Support Center, which was established by FEMA and the Justice & Safety Center at Eastern Kentucky University. This laboratory recently became the first in the nation to receive accreditation from the American Association for Laboratory Accreditation for testing emergency response information technology.

Evaluation results are available through the Responder Knowledge Base at www.rkb.us (keyword: NIMS STEP). Officials should reference these results when purchasing products as part of the Interoperable Emergency Communications Grant Program or other federal grants. For more information, visit www.nimsstep.org or e-mail nimsstep@nimssc.net. Visit Booth #2109 during the APCO Annual Conference & Exposition in Las Vegas to find out more about NIMS. **||PSC||**

~CHAD FOSTER, Associate Director of Incident Management Programs for ECU, & Camille Osterloh, NIMS STEP Task Lead, SAIC

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