

HOOYAH for the 2013 NAELB Western Regional Conference (Irvine, California)

When I first attended an NAELB Western Regional Conference all the way from Charlotte North Carolina, I was not too excited about going to Costa Mesa or Irvine. I liked San Diego, the beaches north of Redondo, the mountains and desert, San Francisco and Napa. What is in Irvine? I would ask myself. Well, I have found that there is a plenty as well as excellent proximity. Though known for its business friendly environment, with its 200,000 residents, Irvine is nestled between the eastern mountains and the beautiful and exciting ocean front towns of Huntington, Newport and Laguna Beaches. Irvine was chosen as *CNN Money's* fourth best place to live, work, eat and play and sixth in the U.S. by *Business Week*. And get this, the FBI loves Irvine, as FBI.org lists Irvine as having the lowest crime rate in the country with populations over 100,000.

Each year I stick around for an extra week or two to conduct business and peddle a few screenplays in the 90210 zip code. When I was a young buck traveling 24/7 I only remember LAX, and fifty other airports. I have learned my lesson. Life is good (we should make a t-shirt with that slogan, maybe with stick figures), so take your time, and enjoy a few days extra when you travel. Last year I hung out between Redondo and Manhattan, but this week I am going to stay just a tad south, in Long Beach. Okay, okay, it was the lowest hotwire deal, but not bad for a Hyatt Regency on the water at \$89.00 per night. You know, I learned the art of Hotwire years ago from my son's band, long before it was a prevalent mode of booking.

Today I will head up into the mountains and maybe take a short jaunt over to the waterfalls in the desert to do some hiking and writing. Wait, I am editing – writing is rewriting – and I am actually at the Lookout Restaurant (Established 1968) overlooking Lake Elsinore. We have plenty of lakes in North Carolina, but there is something about a lake out of place. So, now the next two sentences are not quite as applicable, but you might find them interesting. Maybe I'll stop in to see my desert crazy Westlake, Ohio high school friend who designs biospheres. That is truly another story over a few beers.

Last night, just eleven minutes away, down Laguna Canyon Road, I stumbled upon a stairway leading to a small cove beach, below and between six multimillion-dollar cliff houses, and watched the sun go down over Catalina Island. The breathtaking view compensated for the tide crashing in and soaking my Oxford Loafers. I returned topside and found The Beach House, built on a cliff overlooking the Pacific. After some amazing lobster who also was more than 3,000 miles from home, I sat with my writing tablet fifty feet over the crashing tide, until my batteries ran out: both sets. Ah, for a perpetual CJ-Energy cell. Ken Greene reminded of a Grateful Dead philosophy, paraphrased: do not tell it all in the lyrics (prose), the listener (reader) has to have something to think on.

Where was I? Right, so, how much better does it get than combining business, great food, a super hotel, FBI's top secure spot, fabulous leasing industry friends and business associates?

What's not to like? Yes, this east coaster likes Irvine and loves the Western NAELB regional conference as much as he does the Eastern, which, take note, will be held at the Sheraton Music City Friday, November 01, 2013 - Saturday, November 02, 2013.

Lest I continue to segue, more than usual, lets visit the halls of the Irvine Hyatt conference center with the attendees of the 2013 Western Regional NAELB conference in Irvine, California. As a board, one of our many missions is to choose conference sites three years in advance. That kind of planning can be a bit tenuous, I mean, who can predict the future? What I remember most about a minor in economics was how the professors did not agree on one single market theory and forget about the predictions of future trends. Think about the art of predicting back in 2005 what we all experienced in 2008. Like weathermen, economists can be wrong more than 50% of the time and still keep their jobs. I have always been prone to want to change things up a bit and we looked at five to ten other great western locations for the meetings. Each time we returned to the southern side of Orange because it provides just what the Irvine advertising promotes including convenience for the greatest number of association members. And no, their chamber of commerce is not underwriting this essay, but if they offer –

So, here we are with a wonderfully successful meeting. In the robust days approaching the great technology bubble burst of March 15, 2000, a regional meeting with 200 in attendance was coupe d'etat! I always wanted to find a way to use that term in a business sentence. If you look closely at my first novel, you will find the word *reconnoiter*, perhaps well out of context, but metaphorically, a writer can get away with murder, especially a fiction writer who is given a license to lie by the likes of Ian Fleming, Jules Verne, and H.G. Wells. Within today's economic recovery, a regional coup would be over 100 attendees for our particular niche, the 600 billion dollar subset of the entire financial universe. Preliminary numbers, hot off the press last night, as I was rushing out to the Laguna Beach sunset, showed 141 NAELB members in attendance, with quite a few new faces. **Oorah!** the Marines would say. Since I am so close to Seal Beach where last year I sat agape during maneuvers as the Black Hawks flew close overhead, I will change that exclamation to **Hooyah!** Yes, there are plenty of argument amongst journalists and other writers as to how you really spell either. But it is interesting that each of our wonderful military services have a similar word, spelled differently. The army says **Hooah!** And the Air Force believes in efficiency with HUA! I have not researched deep enough to tell you what the Coast Guard says, but since they are akin to the Navy, I will go with Hooyah! though I have seen **Hoorah!** In print. I have a feeling I'm going to get a few cards and letters.

#### Hooyah! by the Numbers, Content and Accolades

Within the 141 members turning out for the food, fun, networking and education, 78 were funder representatives, 58 leasing brokers and 7 associate members with a smashing 58 exhibitors. Smashing? I think I will leave that alone, somehow it is appropriate.

CLP stands for Certified Leasing Professional. The CLP Foundation proudly announced that at the NAELB Western Regional Conference, seven new leasing professionals obtained and were awarded their CLP certification. To obtain this monacle, the candidate must know his/her leasing business, they must study hard and many long hours and then pass a rigorous test which was conducted at the Hyatt on the Thursday before the conference. Congratulations to all.

Seven dynamic educational and informational workshop sessions spread out between networking breaks, lunch and Exhibits. On Friday, the first workshop was appropriately followed by the aforementioned CLP exam, entitled *Why Should I Become a CLP and What Will it Do for Me?* Shervin Rashti, CLP, with Maxim Commercial Capital moderated this session with support from Reid Raykovich, CLP, with the CLP Foundation. The next session is one I needed like a hole in the head, *LinkedIn's for Leasing*. Say that five times, real fast. Sorry, I am just a bit social network inept. Those social media future of marketing oriented smart gals and guys scare the –. Professional presenter David Wiener, from the Alta Group, packed the room and everyone came out chatting social media like cheetahs. Next year, David, I will study up on my LinkedIn, FaceBook, Tweeter tweets and the like. Promise.

On Saturday, smart guy also ran a seminar called *Hands "Online" Marketing and Relationships*. Nuff said. Attendees for the future of our cyber world as it relates to business seminars had nothing but great things to say about David Wiener's presentation. Thank you, David, and I promise not to hide next time, really.

The next session *How to Market, Sell and Closer Your Funding Source* dealt with the meat and potatoes of closing a deal. David Normandin, CLP from PacTrust Bank moderated a lively discussion that centered on how originators (brokers) and lease administrators (funders) interact. It became clear that personal relationships are as important as ever to maximize a positive result, to provide dynamic solution for their mutual customer, the lessee or borrower. Also participating on the panel were Stephanie Hall of Bryn Mawr Funding and Mae Philpott of Maxim Commercial Capital, LLC – and Moi (now you know, that is the extent of my French vocabulary).

Saturday was topped off with a very interesting session called *Working With Community Banks*. The best part about this workshop was that the presenting bankers passed on their wisdom to leasing brokers who are always hungry for more portals to place good business. Presenters were Archie Julian from Exchange Bank Leasing, Gary Staring, Mechanics Bank and Steve Tidland, Commerce National Bank.

Hey, do not take my word for it alone; let us see what some had to say during my exit poll. Just a minute, as I shuffle through this half a ruler sized stack of comments.

- It was good to hear funder's ideas and comments.

- I notice a marked increase in broker attendance. Those that attend receive a benefit others do not and I highly recommend that they put regional attendance in their marketing budget.
- (from a funder) Irvine was a great meeting. I was kind of surprised to see new members and new creative and important sessions.
- This was my first meeting and it was a great experience.
- (from a Master broker with more than ten consecutive years) This was the most uplifting conference I've attended.
- This was my first NAELB meeting and I've learned a lot! This will not be my last. I'm so glad I came.

The NAELB 2013-2014 President is Corey Bell, he is a true SOB (quickly now: Son Of A Broker) a title my son would have maintained had he not gone off rockin' the suburbs (Ben Folds style) and the cities (Steel Train and FUN style) and beyond. Wait, Corey, is he not still an SOB even if he is not working in the industry? Justin has since moved on to produce music for REZ downtown in Kansas City and could not be happier. What more can a father want? However, on another plane of fatherly pride, there is an imbedded picture in my mind of seeing a son follow in the father's footsteps observed by hundreds of associates and his father, Bob Bell, former NAELB long-term board member and former president. Bell seniors eyes watered last April at the NAELB National meeting in Las Vegas, Nevada as SOB Corey Bell accepted the gavel of NAELB President. Hooyah!

To me, Bob Bell's presence as an association leader was strong and judicious, yes, I think like a robed judge. But then again, I was just a wild-eyed entrepreneurial mid-thirties and I viewed many of my leaders that way. In contrast and keeping in mind that he and I are close in age, Corey Bell's presence is relaxed and conversational. He presents to his peers and the rest of the audience an air of friend, comrade in arms, and leader – all in one. Corey, along with many others at the Hyatt, expressed a renewed vigor about the future as business origination has picked up momentum. Concurrently, the number of funding sources available to originators has increased substantially, portals to place and fund this new vibrant business. Anecdotally, when Corey met my son at his first NAELB meeting, he started the conversation, "So, you are another SOB."

As the board held their quarterly meeting in Irvine, all board members attended the conference including Moi, Pete Sawyer (Vice President), Mike Parker (Director), Joan Modes (current President Elect), Rodney Blecha (Director), Patrick Sponsel (Past President), Gary "Panama Jack" Greene (Director). Also in attendance were two Boston schooled attorneys, NAELB's counsel attorney Joseph Bonanno (Red Sox), and *Leasing News* board of advisors member, Ken Greene, (Yankees). These two legal eagles presented the workshop *Is it Legal? Is*

*it Ethical?* Ethics is a primary axiom for all members of the NAELB and the CLP Foundation. Abiding by a strict ethics code is imperative, good for the members, good for the association, and good for the industry.

I will bet that when you started reading this conference follow up, you did not think you were going to learn about Irvine and the Wikipedia verified correct spelling of what you say after a coup in military hyperbola terms? Or, where best to watch the sunset over Catalina Island. All of this is up for debate. Bring it on. I hope through this short essay journey, (short compared to my last 180,000 manuscript, you gained a feel for how over the past two decades a Cleveland born boy, bred by the Tarheels of North Carolina, is now fully indoctrinated into an Orange County, California style living. And most how the choice of having the NAELB meeting in this quadrant of the west is the perfect place for a Western Regional NAELB conference in the future. And for those of you not affiliated with the NAELB or perhaps not even the leasing industry, I hope you have gleaned a little perspective. That you have picked up on a few reasons why hundreds of business professionals come together each year in places like Denver, Austin, Vegas, Nashville and Irvine to engage in networking and education toward taking our new economy by the horns and yelling Hooyah! along the way.

Take me home Laguna Canyon Road! I know I could have used the 405, but it just did not ring with the John Denver song playing on the speakers here at the Hyatt's 6IX Park Grill. Oh, oh, during this rewrite here at The Lookout Restaurant, the Musak is chiming out *Please Come to Boston*. Now what am I going to do? Writing is rewriting, at least until I push SEND.

See you next year in Irvine, or sooner in Nashville or Orlando. Hooyah!



Born in Westlake, Ohio. Brian received a BS in economics and a BA in public policy from the University of North Carolina, where he competed as a springboard diver. His experience ranges from an assistant to the NC Attorney General to CEO of corporations in various industries. His writing voice developed through a climb up the corporate ladder followed by diving off the top into the wilderness of

entrepreneurial ventures. Since those early years, he has owned businesses in advertising, manufacturing, and finance, taken a company public and sat on the board of national and international associations, all the while writing the *Perpetual* series. His inspiration comes from his own adventures in life and business, having experienced firsthand that reality is stranger than fiction. Brian competes as a master's swimmer. He and his family live near Charlotte, North Carolina.