

President's Message

Remembering John Arthur Hinckley, 1932 - 2006

By James G. Ramsay, MD

President, 2005-2007

Those of you who attended our annual meeting last year in San Diego will recall the SCA created a lifetime outstanding service award in the name of John Hinckley, and he was the first recipient. John was the founder of Ruggles Service Corporation 32 years ago, and was instrumental in the early development and continued success of our society. It is with great sadness I announce to you his peaceful passing away after a long struggle with lung disease, on December 18, 2006. John is survived by his daughter Heather and son Stewart, who continue to operate Ruggles. There are three other children and eight grandchildren who survive John.

When we created John's award last year, I spoke with past presidents Earl Wynands and Jerry Reves as well as the founders of the society who are lifetime Board members, George Burgess and Bob Marino, to find more about John's history. My brief remarks in giving the award really did not do justice to his life and contributions, and my intention is to let you all know what a wonderful man he was and how he helped us create the very successful organization we have today. I have drawn from these individuals as well as from eulogies given by Heather's husband, Bruce Spiess, and John's son Stewart.

John was a native of Fauquier County, Virginia. He was a direct descendant of Presidents James Monroe, Theodore Roosevelt and Franklin D. Roosevelt. A graduate of St. Paul's School (NH) and the University of Virginia, he completed studies at the Stonier Graduate School of Banking. Commissioned in the U.S. Army, he served in Wurzburg, Germany and Fort Riley, Kansas with the First Infantry Division. After his work in the service John worked for State Planter's Bank in Richmond, Virginia, until he tired of the corporate world and decided to start a family business in 1974. He and his wife Elizabeth founded the "Institute for Continuing Education," but he soon changed the name to Ruggles Service Corporation because the former was too hard to say when he answered the phone (he lived in a home on Ruggles Road). His first clients included the Virginia Society of Anesthesiologists, the American Academy of Cerebral Palsy and Developmental Medicine, the American Society of Post Anesthesia Nurses, and the American Society of Regional Anesthesia. A few years later George Burgess was searching for a meeting planner for the SCA, and Ruggles was recommended to him through the search process. An excerpt from a letter George wrote in 2001 describes his early interactions with John:

"...Then came the first of what would be many contract negotiations. The SCA had little in the way of reserves and wanted no risk; John was understanding... to a point. Each year or two, the contest started a few months before contract expiration. Of course, John was also our compiler of finances and knew exactly what

SCA could and could not afford. He invariably started out with his desired proposal for contract renewal; which invariably was just as courteously rejected, followed by a counterproposal. This ritualistic negotiation always led to a final capitulation stage on both sides, accompanied by statements that neither John nor SCA could possibly afford the contract terms. Yet, both parties always seemed to do just fine under the final terms... year after year. These were very enjoyable negotiations; and, he always got the contract. I wish that my managed care negotiations were as enjoyable."

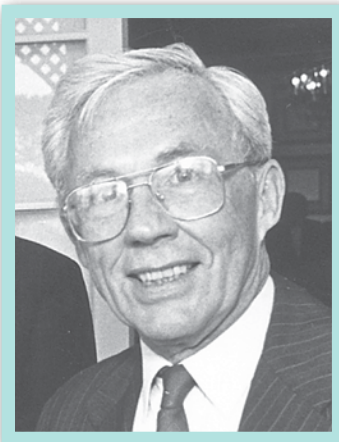
Successive SCA presidents all relate stories of their interactions with John, and these reflect John's great humanity, his genuine interest in the well being and success of people he worked with and for, his integrity and honesty, his focus on family, and a wonderful sense of humor. From his son Stewart:

"A number of years ago, while running a meeting in Montreal, Dad asked Kevin Johns, our Director of Meetings, to put "foot prints" down on the sidewalks between the hotels that we were using. I guess Dad thought this would make our convention delegates feel closer to one another. Well...Kevin was in the middle of marking up the sidewalks when the Montreal police arrested him. Kevin called Dad from jail, and when Kevin handed the phone to the policeman, Dad told them in fluent French that he had no idea who Kevin was."

Over the years Ruggles took on many more societies, yet John and his family's commitment to SCA remained stronger than ever, and with their

help we grew from one annual meeting to three meetings per year, as well as an international meeting every other year. When John retired in 2002 he stayed connected with the affairs of the society but had already effectively "handed the reins" to Heather and Stewart who had been helping him run the society's business for many years. He continued to come into the office and contribute thoughts and ideas about the SCA virtually until the end. This smooth transition, Heather's knowledge of our history and key players, and her considerable organizational and people skills have greatly facilitated our growth and development in recent years. Heather and Stewart now have 20 employees and manage 13 societies, with Heather focused almost exclusively on our very successful SCA.

Our relationship with John Hinckley was clearly more than a business contract. His humanity fostered relationships with successive leaders of the SCA that continued long after their terms of office. We all grew to respect not only his business and organizational skills, but also his ability to help us make decisions that were in our own best interest, his unfailing integrity and honesty in dealing with us and helping us deal with each other, and in our contractual relationships with the hotel and travel industry as well as our own medicine related industries. He will be remembered as a great human being, and is missed by all those who had the good fortune to know him.



John A. Hinckley