**ESTA DEALS WINNING HANDS DURING LD197**

by Lynn Kennedy

During the first year as official sponsors of the LD1 trade show, ESTA personnel were busier than ever both before and during the fall show in Las Vegas. In addition to ESTA Day events including programming sponsored by the Business Practices Committee and the Annual Membership Dinner, ESTA launched a pavilion on the show floor for first time exhibitors and introduced the Dealers’ Choice Awards to recognize the best new product offerings. Fortunately the hard work paid off and another successful year was logged with ESTA assisting its members in successfully presenting their products to the marketplace.

ESTA's annual dinner has become a favorite conference activity and this year grew to include approximately 250 people. While the poolside location at the Rio Suites Hotel, beautifully lit and decorated thanks to Vari-Lite and ETC was far more festive and relaxed than a traditional ballroom setting, a cold wind had some shivering and clutching their napkins. There was no chill on the conversation however, and the crowd thoroughly enjoyed a terrific ESTA staff and officers made short announcements followed by the presentation of this year's Swan Award.

Recently appointed ESTA Director Bill Groener spoke about the ESTA member being honored for his outstanding contribution to the Association. Having been tipped off to the identity of the winner, I enjoyed watching surreptitiously as George Sabbi, poised to photograph the recipient, realized that he would soon be on the podium accepting the award instead. Bill recalled George's early involvement as chair of the NEC Committee and how this commitment to one code-making organization led to his key role in the formation of the Technical Standard Program, a formidable undertaking, and critical to the evolution of ESTA. Not only does George continue his TSP work, he has also consistently contributed to the Association in numerous ways, including assisting with booth set up and tear down, acting as computer consultant to the ESTA staff, wiring the ESTA office, and taking photographs for Protocol. George's employers, BASH Lighting Services owners Bob Cannon and Don Stern and more recently PRG's Jere Harris and Bill Ennis were also recognized for supporting George's efforts on behalf of the Association.

The dinner and award ceremony followed a full day of seminars organized by the Business Practices Committee. Forty people reserved space for the morning sessions with the numbers growing to 75 for the afternoon sessions as more members arrived in Las Vegas. A follow up survey confirms that the day was well received with the greatest praise offered to the two attorneys for their sessions.

*Putting the Value in Performance Evaluations* was led by Bell, Boyd and Lloyd's Nancy Bertoglio who offered a description of the legal climate in employment matters and advised attendees on how to prepare their firms for the inevitable employment related lawsuits. She covered appropriate and inappropriate

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**Photos:**
- Swan Award recipient George Sabbi (BASH Lighting Services) is flanked by Karl Ruling (ESTA) and Zoe Paine (Production Arts).
- Thanks to Rosco Labs for providing the gobos and to ETC and Vari-Lite for the festive decor and lighting.
- Dan Altman, Senior Vice President and CFO, Ray Maloney, President and CEO, and Cam Bishop, Senior Vice President of InterLEC joined ESTA members for dinner.
- Kathy and Bob Cannon (BASH Lighting Services) relax after dinner.
- Tony Douglas-Beveridge (PLASA) visits with Larry Schmoonan (Interesting Products).
- Frances Thompson (TOMCAT), properly dressed for the “ESTA Fiesta,” with Marshall Bissett (TMH Associates).
- Geoff Thompson (Bay Networks), who chairs the IEEE 802.3 Ethernet Working Group and contributes his wisdom to ESTA's Control Protocols Working Group, with Minn Hefer (Rosco/ET).
Daniel Colner (Rosenberg & Koffman) makes a point during his session on Land Mines in Your Contracts.

Stan Schwartz (Rosenberg) gracefully fulfilled his obligation to ESTA’s President to attend the Board meeting wearing a Cleveland Indians hat in honor of their winning the pennant race (having beaten the Yankees in earlier post season play).

Interview questions and record keeping and review procedures, while stressing consistency in dealing with employees in addition to paying attention to the letter of the law and properly documenting files. Comments on this session included “Nancy does an excellent job of keeping us aware of the real world.” and, “You can’t hear this information enough. Nancy is great.” In response to requests for further information on the subject, Nancy has generously taken the time to write a follow up article on employment law which may be found on page 16.

Land Mines in Your Contracts by Daniel Colner of Rosenberg & Koffman, who is legal counsel to the American Sub-contractors Association of California, involved a lively discussion of the frustrations and dangers involved with construction projects. Again, advice was given on properly documenting a job from beginning to end should evidence be required to resolve a dispute. “Lawyer avoidance” was stressed which elicited chuckles from the audience as Colner discussed the options of mediation and arbitration versus litigation. Recommendations were also provided about how to amend contracts to be fair prior to signing. Comments on the session included “Land Mines was great and well worth my time,” and, “Especially like class on contracts—good concrete information.” ESTA has been fortunate to arrange a session on rental contracts led by Mr. Colner in conjunction with the 1998 USITT Conference giving more members the opportunity to gain some very relevant insight on contract law.

At the Sands Convention Center first time LDI exhibitors from around the world were setting up their booths in the ESTA Pavilion. Participants included Dealer, Manufacturer, Affiliate and International members all of whom took advantage of inexpensive all-inclusive table top exhibit spaces from which to market their goods and services. Exhibitor reaction was extremely positive and included comments about good traffic and the benefits of being easy to find and feeling “at home” in the consolidated pavilion location. A number of the participants are already discussing plans to return to LDI in 1998, some with larger booth spaces.

Throughout the show, ESTA Dealer attendees noted placards in the booths of many exhibitors identifying products nominated for the new Dealers’ Choice Awards. Products were entered either in the “equipment” or “expendable/widget” category and attending Dealer member companies were allowed one vote in each category. After the votes were tallied, ESTA President Paul Vincent presented awards, designed by David Brandon of Cobalt Studios, to the winners in conjunction with the LDI awards ceremony. The winning product in the expendable/widget category was BlackTak™, an adhesive backed light masking foil, manufactured by Le Mark and distributed in the U.S. by City Theatrical. In the equipment category the Obsession II lighting console manufactured by ETC and the Mac 500 moving head profile spot manufactured by Martin Professional tied for the award.

As in prior years, the ESTA booth, now part of a World-ETF pavilion shared with PLASA and VPLT, served as a central meeting point for many members throughout the show. Our thanks go to lounge sponsors RJS/Olsen, High End Systems, Strand Lighting, TMB Associates and TOMCAT whose contributions enabled ESTA to supply the pavilion with comfortable furniture, coffee and cold drinks all of which were greatly appreciated.

After the show wrapped up and the booth was packed and labeled for a variety of destinations including LDI98 in Phoenix, ESTA members could take a moment to reflect on the success of both the Association and its agreement with Intertec. We are pleased to be part of such a successful event and will continue to explore ideas to help members strengthen their businesses.