To the members of ESTA, thank you

AFTER TEN YEARS of ESTA Board service including the past three-year term as President, I’m stepping aside to make way for others to share their vision and energy and help to lead ESTA into even brighter times. So, this is the final Directions I’ll write, and my heart and head unanimously say thank you.

First and foremost, thank you to the members of ESTA. It’s for you this Association exists at all. Thank you for continuing to volunteer unlimited energy and countless resources of time and funds, all wrapped in the faith that ESTA will continue to deliver on our promise of “building the business of show business.” I believe we’ve done a great job of that over the years, and there is every reason to believe that, now, equipped with a new, surgically-precise strategic plan (which you can read about later in this issue), ESTA will continue to solicit your wants and needs and forge them into an ever more focused path forward.

Thank you also to ESTA’s small but powerful staff. The reader may recall that about four years ago the going got really tough. However, you may not know that when building our platform to recovery a key plank was the undying commitment of the staff; they rolled up their sleeves, dug in their heels, and delivered double-time for less. And, rather than ESTA suffering from staff reduction through attrition, that same staff attracted new team members who are equally talented and committed. Thank you for persevering and for leading by example.

To the leaders of the foundational programs—thank you as well. This includes the Technical Standards Program and its Council and many working groups, the Entertainment Technician Certification Program and its Council and many subject matter experts, the Production Equipment Rental Group and the Rental Guard program it leads and its many members, Protocol and the editor and publisher and the many contributing authors, and the many other official and ad hoc committees. Your capacity for and success in collaborating at the highest level are reasons that ESTA continues to serve the needs of others. Thank you for your volunteerism, your collegiality, and your leadership.

To the founding Executive Director, Lori Rubinstein, I extend an enormous thank you. There is no way to quantify your decades of undying devotion to ESTA or your deep understanding of the mosaic of the many personalities and interests that are our industry. It was a privilege and an honor to serve alongside you; though you may have retired from that role, your continued advice while ETSA finds new directions are invaluable. For that and much more, thank you.

To Erin Grabe, Executive Director, now with almost a year under her belt in that role (following years of assisting Karl Ruling in managing the TSP), a great big thank you. Your boundless yet focused energy in taking ESTA new directions will help chart a path through waters not yet even defined. Thanks for your balance, drive, and enthusiasm.

To the Executive Committee and the Board of Directors, a sincere thank you. Four times a year for the past ten years I’ve had the distinct privilege of meeting and working in person with people who give of themselves and collaborate in the true spirit and definition of volunteerism. Conversations were sometimes heated, never bloody, and always respectful, productive, and held at a higher level. Goals were not always identical, yet, through civil communication, positive end results were achieved for the good of the Association and the industry. It has been a privilege to serve with each of you, past and present.

Exactly three years ago, while driving a pickup truck across Texas...
for opening day of deer season, I got a friendly call from David Barbour, Editor-in-Chief of Lighting&Sound America. An interviewee had bailed at the last minute and David needed a fill-in. “Can you help?” he asked—and of course I said, “Sure.” He immediately shifted into official interviewer voice and mode. “As the first new president of ESTA since the Association’s demerger from PLASA, what are your top three priorities?”

Whoa! Considering the context, that might seem like a daunting question. However, the tough year prior had crystallized ESTA’s goals and needs, so a fluid response came easily. “Recent loss of trade show sponsorship makes financial stability top priority. Next comes constantly evolving our member benefits to meet their changing needs—and to make sure members are aware of those benefits. Lastly, making sure the entire industry knows well what ESTA is and does.”

In retrospect, ESTA indeed has made great gains in all three of those areas over the past three years, due fully to the careful guidance and choices by the Board and the tireless efforts of members and staff. For allowing me to be a part of ESTA’s past and to participate in building that view to the future, thank you all . . .”

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