

Wingert Recognition Event

Friday, September 15, 2017

Crowne Plaza, Springfield

Comments of Bob Wingert

Thanks so much, ladies and gentlemen, for being here this evening. I see so many familiar faces, some from several years ago, and it brings back a flood of wonderful memories.

I must admit that this is a rather humbling experience, one that I didn't seek nor really want. But I was told by Chairman Marantz and convention Chairman Parrott it would happen no matter what, and that I needed to get on board with it. So, I decided that if my retirement is a good reason to have a party, then so be it. Welcome to the party!

A good party, of course, requires good planning, and I extend my appreciation to our staff and leadership, especially to Tracy McQuinn and Mike Kelley, for your efforts. Thank you all very much!

The wonderful financial support of close friends of community banking has helped make this evening special, and I also want to express my sincere thanks to representatives of The Baker Group, Bank On IT, CBIS Gallagher, Equias Alliance, Federal Home Loan Bank of Chicago, Fitech Payments, ICBA Bancard/TCM Bank, Quad City Bank and Trust, SHAZAM, and

Wolters Kluwer Financial Services for your meaningful participation tonight. These organizations believe in community banking; they understand your importance to this nation, and their services are designed to contribute to your success. Thank you, again.

I'd now like to introduce my family members who are here with us this evening. First, my lovely wife Diane, who has been so supportive and understanding over the past 34 years; and our children, the loves of our lives: Doak from Estero, Florida; Paige and her wonderful husband Kyle Eldridge from Miami, Florida; Chase from Springfield; and Cash from Springfield; and my fine brother Steve from Dallas.

Tonight, I bid farewell as CBAI president. After nearly 43 years involving 43 state conventions, 41 national conventions, 850 association leadership meetings, 350 group meetings, and 250 conferences and committee meetings, the time has come to move on to the next chapter in the proverbial book of life. It's been a rewarding experience filled with many successes and challenges, constant adaptation to change, but always adherence to our founding principles that have served us so well.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, I will conclude my comments by sharing with you some personal reflections in a video presentation. [See Video](#).

Narrative for Video Presentation

One of the positives about getting older is that we have so much to look back on. As I reflect on my life's journey, I'm amazed at how fate has determined where I am today. Perhaps you can relate in your own ways.

Fate gave me the opportunity to experience this wonderful life here on planet Earth. On a muggy night in the Philippines during World War II my dad was standing in a trench in a jungle clearing having a cigarette with a friend when a sniper shot his fellow officer by targeting the glow of his cigarette. My dad was spared.

So, as fate would have it, I experienced the miracle of birth in Mt. Vernon, Illinois in 1950. Our family lived in nearby Fairfield until 1955 when we moved to Springfield. My two wonderful parents worked their entire lives to raise a family with love and compassion for which I am forever indebted. And my two fine brothers set the example for high achievement which has motivated me my entire life.

Like so many other boys growing up in Central Illinois, I wanted to pitch for the St. Louis Cardinals. And although I ultimately played Division 1 college baseball, the realities of competitive sport ultimately worked their will.

Then fate entered in again. The call came early on a January morning in 1975. Chip Backlund, a community banker

in Peoria, whose son John was my college roommate at SMU, told me of an opportunity to represent community banks during the spring session of the state legislature. After researching the issues and receiving an offer from Art Murray of Milford, our first chairman, I accepted the opportunity. The learning curve was steep, but I had great mentors in Chip Backlund, Art Murray, and Jack Marantz of Springfield who later served as our chairman in 1980. I will always be indebted to Art, Chip, and Jack who provided fatherly advice to this young neophyte. What began as a temporary four-month stint became a pursuit or more than four decades. My passion for community banking was immediate and enduring.

And as fate would have it, I met my wife Diane, a labor and delivery nurse, here in Springfield. We married in 1983 and then had four children in seven years. Thank God she was a nurse! Life became a balancing act between the demands of serving the community banking mission and raising a family. Although it cost me my hair, the experiences were rewarding thanks to a supportive spouse and four wonderful children – Doak, Paige, Chase, and Cash.

I've often said that the people in community banking make America proud. You make me proud to serve you because you've always represented what's right about our nation – hard-working, patriotic, and willing to say what's on your minds. Hundreds of community bankers have carried the torch for this association, bankers who truly care about your towns

and neighborhoods, not just your own self-interest. Many of you have become good friends of mine along the way. I couldn't ask for more. After all, it didn't take me very long to realize that there are real life George Baileys all over the state of Illinois.

(“It's a Wonderful Life” segment)

Thanks to you and so many that came before, the association has grown and expanded to meet the changing demands of the community banking profession, whether it's in government relations, or education, or special services. CBAI is truly an association of the community banker, by the community banker, and for the community banker.

Thanks to the actions of so many involved community bankers over the years, CBAI has expanded its budget from \$55,000 in 1975 to \$5.5 million today. The rent for our first office on West Jefferson was just \$50 per month. We then moved to South Second Street in 1978 and then on to West Edwards across from the Capitol in 1984. And finally, thanks to the wisdom of leadership bankers, we built and occupied our own headquarters in 1991 where we reside today.

Finally, in our brief lifetimes we end up spending about as much time with our co-workers as our family members, and I've had the good fortune of associating with an incredible staff. My thanks to all of you.

Yes, fate can take us in directions we never envisioned. It guided me to a just cause that gave my life purpose with passion. After all this time, the main lesson I learned in the beginning remains the same today: community banks must have autonomous representation and never succumb to the hollow overtures of unity from the mega banks and their representatives. So, ladies and gentlemen, stay the course, volunteer your time, and lend support to your great profession through CBAI. Long live community banking and CBAI! Thanks for the memories, everyone! It's been a wonderful life!

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