

# Very Problems

By John Van Horn

the time the driver requested it until the car leaves the facility. He knows averages, highs and lows, and can look at individual tickets.

"It's not too hard to see if there is anything happening out of line," he says. "When I get a '30-minute' complaint, I simply ask the complainer for the approximate exit time and print out a bracket around that time. Almost always there is nothing in the range of the complaint. Our average, by the way, is four minutes, and that includes the time it takes the driver to get up to the exit gate. I then send the report to the tenant. That's usually the last I hear of it. And I can do all this from my computer on my desk."

"One of the biggest problems in these types of valet operations," says Garage Manager Mario Burga, "is communicating between the cashier upstairs and the valet dispatcher, and when you have a pay-on-foot, it's even more difficult. There can easily be a mix-up; numbers are transposed. It can be chaotic. This system makes it so easy to track and retrieve cars. The ticket number appears on the screen, and we move. It's simple."

The system also tracks contract parkers, with the many different marketing programs in play at the center. There are staff who have multiple cars and are allowed only one in at a time, people who have regular parking, and those companies that have some cars that are tracked as dailies.

"Some want to be billed only for the time in the garage," says Office Manager Maria Solorzano. "We set up the cards so the system tracks them and we can print an invoice monthly of the ins and outs and charge them at the daily rate. This works great for visiting doctors to the hospital. They don't have to worry about anything, and we bill them at the end of the month."



Dispatcher gives a ticket to a valet – note list of tickets on display.



Parkers dip their tickets when they leave the elevator lobby – This puts the number on the display above and prompts attendants to bring the car around.

Validations? Solorzano creates them in her office as they are ordered. The coupons are given to the parkers, and they insert them in the POF before they put in their tickets.

Realtech elected to use AVI devices that are attached to the underside of the car's license plate. "They are great; people forget they are there. We've had only one problem – David [Wilstein], my boss. His is erratic. It's Murphy's law: The boss' card doesn't work. I would rather it be his than a tenant, although I do get a lot of flak." (PT understands that Wilstein's card is now working perfectly.)

Secom International President Ted Burton has spent a lot of time at this location. "A lot of issues needed to be solved on-site. It helps the manufacturer to learn the problems firsthand and the need for an immediate solution. When I see cars backing up the street and the problem can be solved with software, we move quickly."

This high-volume location operates under extremely tight controls. The positive posting system ensures that no card is "on" unless it has been paid and automatically voids late payers. A myriad of reports provide management information both for the operator and the owner.

The IP-based communications system allows the owner to monitor his garage from anywhere there is a computer and an Internet connection.

From a management point of view, the productivity of the valets can be quickly monitored and adjusted as necessary. The owner can immediately get reports to satisfy his tenants.

"We closed the circle with this system," says Buttikofer. "We have the flexibility to handle virtually any marketing issue and the reports that answer our questions."

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PT

# On the Move? Be Flexible

“Sometimes, being a commercial operator can be like musical chairs. You move from place to place, often at the whim of an owner.” So operators such as Quality Parking Service need revenue control equipment they can take with them when they move.

According to Quality Parking Vice President Ron Parto, owners often don't want to pay for the equipment and expect the operator to handle it on their own. “That's super,” said Parto. “However, when we leave, we like to take what we own with us, and the equipment in this garage enables us to do just that.”

Parto was referring to a barcode system that's in use at 606 South Olive in Los Angeles in a valet application, but which he has in use in other applications.

It's an offline system designed by Sysparc. The small, hatbox-size ticket dispenser can be located on a counter or in a small rack. The tickets have all the information about entry time and date programmed in the barcode printed on the ticket in the dispenser.

When the driver brings in the ticket for payment, it is scanned and the fee computed based on a rate structure that is programmed into the system's tabletop computer. If desired, the system can work in an online mode, with the cashier computer tracking entries and exits and data fed to a central computer for reporting and audit.

“In many valet applications, we don't have the luxury of lanes, booths or, in some cases, even power,” Parto said. “This system gives us the ability to have control while at



Parajon processes a ticket.

the same time the flexibility of being able to move about as necessary in typical valet surface applications.

“Uncontrolled valet applications are difficult to audit. Normally, an auditor simply looks to see if there is a ticket on the car. However, that doesn't solve the problem of tickets being reused.

“A neat feature of this system is a handheld scanner,” Parto said. “The auditor can download all outstanding tickets into the scanner and then scan all the tickets on vehicles in the lot. If he finds one that isn't valid, it would trigger a more complete audit.

“Simply knowing that this capability and technology exists has helped greatly reduce such problems at our locations,” he said.

Some valet operations work in a prepay mode. Tickets are issued on entry and paid at that time. When drivers exit, they insert the ticket or give it to the cashier and the gate opens.

“The small size and flexible software fits well into our valet/hotel/restaurant/office building environment,” Parto said. “Although it can handle larger applications, our use in smaller garages can give us a leg up on our competition.”

Ron Parto can be reached at [ron@valetparking.com](mailto:ron@valetparking.com). For more info, log on to [www.sysparc.com](http://www.sysparc.com).



Garage Manager George Parajon and Quality VP Ron Parto next to a gate. The red lights flash when it closes to warn pedestrians.

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VPS Owners Victor Morad and Tony Policella

# Valet Parking is Personal...

By John Van Horn

**V**alet parking is personal." That's how Tony Policella started a recent conversation with *Parking Today*. "You must develop a relationship with the customer.

"Someone gives you a vehicle worth \$50,000, and you give them a little piece of paper. There's got to be a lot of trust there."

Policella and his partner Victor Morad own Valet Parking Service in Los Angeles. They purchased the company from its founder, Herb Citrin, three years ago. Policella has agreed to let *Parking Today* profile VPS over the next few months in celebration of the company's 60th anniversary.

The actual party will be held in May at Lawry's The Prime Rib in L.A., Citrin's first location. "He cut the deal with Lawry's, and they said OK, as long as he personally was there every night." That was in 1946. And he was up until 1960, when he asked for relief since he was then running more than 80 locations. (An Indepth Interview with Citrin is planned for an upcoming edition of PT.)

The business can be frustrating. "Customers pay \$200 for a dinner," Policella said, "but balk at \$5 to park their

car. They don't mind paying \$10 to self-park at the Hollywood Bowl or Dodger Stadium and walk two blocks to their destination, but they fuss when charged \$3 and we take their car and return it to them."

While the company manages and operates all types of parking – valet, attendant-assist, self-parking – at every type of venue from hotels to shopping centers, it all started at a restaurant, and today restaurants and clubs represent about 30% of its operating locations. VPS also handles about 400 special events per year, including the Oscars (32 years), the Emmys (15 years) and the Golden Globes (12 years).

Valet parking at restaurants can be difficult at best from the operational challenges (e.g., working curbside and driving on busy thoroughfares) to the financial aspects (e.g., controlling revenues without loops, treadles, gates or sidewalk cash registers and procuring additional off-site parking locations, since most restaurants usually don't have sufficient on-site parking capacity.)

The operational challenges can be met only by studying the situation and imposing strict rules as to routes, number of personnel assigned to operate safely and efficiently, obeying all traffic laws, and common sense and courtesy. VPS does background and Department of Motor Vehicle checks on all prospective employees and conducts a three-hour instructional, safety and courtesy class for all newly hired employees.

Additionally, an outside "shopping service" constantly visits VPS locations to observe and report "how we are doing" in regard to service, safety and integrity. These findings are shared with location personnel and deficiencies are quickly corrected, Policella said.

To ensure that the locations are operated at peak efficiency, some years ago Citrin and Morad created a system whereby the location manager has a portion of P&L responsibility as to revenue, expenses (claims) and service. While the location manager and all personnel are employees of VPS, there is feeling of ownership, Policella said, and thus the pride and that "little bit extra effort" that a feeling of ownership provides.

"We have employees who have been with us nearly 40 years," he noted, "and in some cases, it's a family business. They grow their families, put kids through college, and live very fulfilling lives, all by managing one or two locations."

Policella said: "It's very satisfying to see people who might not have a chance at the American Dream and have a part of a business. With our help and support, they not only make it, but make it very well."

Valet Parking Service's success over the last six decades has been based on service and personal attention, he added. "If someone is an owner, they work hard, show up early, stay late, and ensure that the customer – whether it's the driver of a car or the owner of the restaurant – is pleased with the result of the service they perform.

"All we offer is service. We train every valet. They wear uniforms. They look sharp and understand that they are taking someone's personal vehicle. They know they have to take proper care of it.

"Problems? Of course. We are in a people business," Policella said, "and when you deal with people, there are problems. ... Sometimes a VIP thinks they shouldn't have to pay. It's a problem since how does the valet tell who is a VIP? So we treat everyone the same – first-class service."

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## DriveCam Inc. Awards Distributorship to Integrity Group

DriveCam Inc. has awarded a distributorship to Integrity Parking Systems of Chagrin Falls, OH. Integrity Group U.S. will concentrate its sales efforts of the DriveCam system to fleet operators in airports, the parking industry, health care facilities, hotels, car rental agencies and universities.

The DriveCam system identifies, manages and improves unsafe driving behaviors through a video and audio recording device mounted to a vehicle's windshield. The system's dual-lens video camera continuously records sights and sounds inside and outside the vehicle. When triggered by a sudden stop, turn, rapid acceleration or accident, the system saves the 10 seconds before and after the event. Fleet supervisors use DriveCam's Hindsight 20/20 software to analyze driver performance or, in the case of an accident, to document insurance claims.

"This is an outstanding solution with an outstanding cost-benefit ratio, where the payback is almost immediate in terms of financial savings, driver skills training, and passenger safety," said Jim LaRocco, Managing Partner of Integrity Group U.S.

## Niagara Falls Revamping Parking Requirements

The Niagara Falls (NY) Planning Board wants to make downtown development a little less difficult.

"We're trying to fix one of the worst things about our zoning ordinance," said the city's senior planner, Thomas DeSantis. "Property owners are asked to develop their property, yet we can't grant anyone [site] approval because of the way the ordinance is currently written. It's overly restrictive."

DeSantis said the parking ordinance puts an unfair burden on developers by requiring them to have too many spaces available for customers. He called the zoning law, which was adopted in 1994, "unrealistic" and said it would fit better in a suburban area with more land.

Existing businesses are covered by the old zoning ordinance, which had no such requirements. New developers must apply for a variance through the Zoning Board.

One thing that would not change if the Planning Board were to change the zoning is the requirement for 1.25 spaces per hotel or motel room downtown.

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Over 100 companies will have the leading edge technology on display for you to peruse. With over 13 hours of exhibit time over three days, you'll have ample opportunity. Plus we don't close the hall on you. From the time it opens until the end of the day, you can meet with vendors without interruption.

We have been called the "intimate" trade show. The vendors don't overwhelm you with flash and dash, but bring knowledgeable people who can answer your questions and provide information you can use.

You will meet not only the "big guns" from the vendors' headquarters, but also be introduced to the people who will be your contacts when you go home. PIE helps you form your network of support.

## Boot Camp – There are four different ones this year!!

This year it's different! Boot Camp is designed for "newbies" in the parking industry. Don't be afraid to admit it. We all started somewhere, and most of the time were left groping for solutions. In the past Boot Camp has been held on one day. This year we have expanded it into four sections, General, On Street, Off Street, and Revenue Control.

Each two and a half hour session will focus on the basics of its title topic. If you have less than five years in parking, Boot Camp is for you.

According to "top kick" Chuck Cullen, everyone should attend the opening "general" session. It will prepare you for the other three, and give you good questions to ask while you network your way through the exhibit hall and attend other seminars. The On Street, Off Street, and Revenue Control sessions are designed to give you the basics in each area. If you manage a group of garages, you probably don't need the On Street session, if you run a city with no garages or lots, skip the Off Street. We strongly recommend everyone attend Revenue Control – it will provide the basics for audit, rates, and ensuring you collect the money due.

## The Senior Seminar

Five Senior Parking Executives from a commercial operator, city, university, airport, and developer discuss parking and its future. Here's the place to discover where parking is going and who is going to take it there. Want to be sure your organization is ready for the rest of the decade? Attend this very "hot" session. Check PT's web site for details.

## **The Opening Session – Don Shoup and the “High Cost of Free Parking”**

Known as the number one parking academic, UCLA's Dr. Donald Shoup will present his sometimes controversial theories on parking planning, charging, and distribution of the revenues. Has parking policy really been the destroyer of our cities? Shoup thinks so. Here he will show you how minor changes in laws can relieve congestion in our cities, and give the parking industry, commercial and public, an even bigger piece of the action.

## **Networking – What this event is all about**

Lets face it, no one has all the answers, but many of us have the same issues and problems. What we try to do at PIE is connect people with questions with people with answers. We do it with seminars and presentations, and there will be some this year. However, we also do it by putting you together with people who are on the front lines just like you.

Seen speed dating? This is speed networking. You will have time to meet people who have solved problems you have, and talk a bit – but mostly to connect. So you can go into depth later. You will build your own personal network. Yes, here's the chance to really meet people and develop a professional relationship.

We'll keep this up until you have met and have the names of enough people to solve your problems for the next year. You can then catch up with them at the next PIE.

AND – we'll have our “issues boards.” When you register you will receive a group of cards. Put an issue on the card and tack it on the board. Check back later – your answer will be there, with someone to contact for the details. Or maybe you will have an answer for someone else.

PIE 2006 will be the place to network... and get solutions.

## **The Airport Seminar**

It's an entire day for airports. If you run an airport – we will be contacting you separately, but the day will cover rate elasticity (should you raise 'em or not?), construction planning, technology from avi to PARCS to lot counts, and that pesky valet program.

Check PT's web site for more details.

## **The Technical Seminars:**

Yes, two hours devoted to garage technology AND two hours devoted to off street tech information. This is where the tables are turned. You will have the manufacturers on stage and ready for your questions. Be general or specific. We'll be there to keep it from turning into a sales presentation, but we don't guarantee that there won't be a few sharp words. When you ask a vendor about a problem, they had better have the answer.

Check the Thursday and Friday schedules for these hot seminars.

## **The Workshops**

They will include Personnel Vetting, Maximizing Lighting, Rate Setting, Problem Customers, Parking Ops in Small Towns and Higher Ed.

These topics need one-on-one discussion and the workshops are the place to have them. Small groups, an expert in the field, and you have solutions. You will come away from these with ideas, but more importantly, a place to go with future questions.



## THE SEMINARS

### The ADA

Americans with Disability Act. Mary Smith, the parking industry's foremost expert on the ADA will bring us up to speed. It affects everyone in the room, from vendors to those responsible for enforcement. It is the new law – find out what it means.

### On Street – A Comparison of Technologies

Jon Martens brings an indepth discussion of P and D, P by Space, Meters, and the enforcement options 2006 technology has brought us. If you are a city, a university, or an operator, this seminar is for you.

### Hotel and Hospital Parking

Valets, staff, visitors, transportation and your guests or patients – they are all part of the hotel/hospital mix. A panel from all the disciplines will discuss each area, and then answer your questions.

### Payment Options

Cash, Card, Cell, Debit, Credit, or leave your spare tire – this discussion gets into the details.

### Double Your Capacity with Technology

Rob Bailey brings the mechanical (stacker) and automated systems into perspective. An inexpensive way to increase your capacity.

### Funding

A banker, a consultant, and a developer all talk about how to fund everything from shuttles to revenue equipment to garages. This is for both private and public institutions.

### The Numbers

Researcher Dale Denda takes us through the 2006 version. How many of us are there? How much do we gross? How many new garages will be built? Oh, and how much do we pay? Want a sneak preview into your opposite number's pay packet? Hear the results of PT's survey here first.

### 21 Networking, Training, and Informational Events

These are for every level of manager in the parking industry from newbie to the seasoned veteran. The Parking Conference and Parking Industry Exhibition is an investment in your future. Spend three days immersed in parking. You will not regret a second.

Notice: The schedule will expand and change as new seminars are added. Check PT's web site for the most up to date information: [www.parkingtoday.com/pie](http://www.parkingtoday.com/pie)



### PIE II in Los Angeles

Wednesday August 23

Campus of the University of Southern California

PIE II will be held in conjunction with the Parking Conference in Chicago. The one day event will have six seminars, including two that will be seen in Chicago – The Don Shoup presentation and Jon Marten's on "On Street Technology." A closed circuit TV setup will connect the two events, with Shoup presenting from Los Angeles and Marten from Chicago. Four other seminars, lunch, and a small "mini PIE" exhibition will round out the one day event.

See [www.parkingtoday.com/pie](http://www.parkingtoday.com/pie) for more details.

**Register online now – save \$100 off the regular \$495 conference fee**  
**[www.parkingtoday.com/pie](http://www.parkingtoday.com/pie)**

## General Schedule

### Wednesday, August 23

8:00 - 5:00	Registration		
9:00 - 11:00	Where we go from here for Senior Managers		Boot Camp 1 General Parking Information
1:00 - 2:00	Seminar 1 ADA		Seminar 2 On Street A Comparison of Technologies
2:30	Seminar 3 Hotel & Hospital Parking		Seminar 4 Payment Options - Cash, Card, Cell, Whatever
4:00 - 5:15	Opening Session Don Shoup - Speaker, Author of "The High Cost of Free Parking"		
5:30 - 7:30		Reception in Exhibit Hall Exhibits Open	

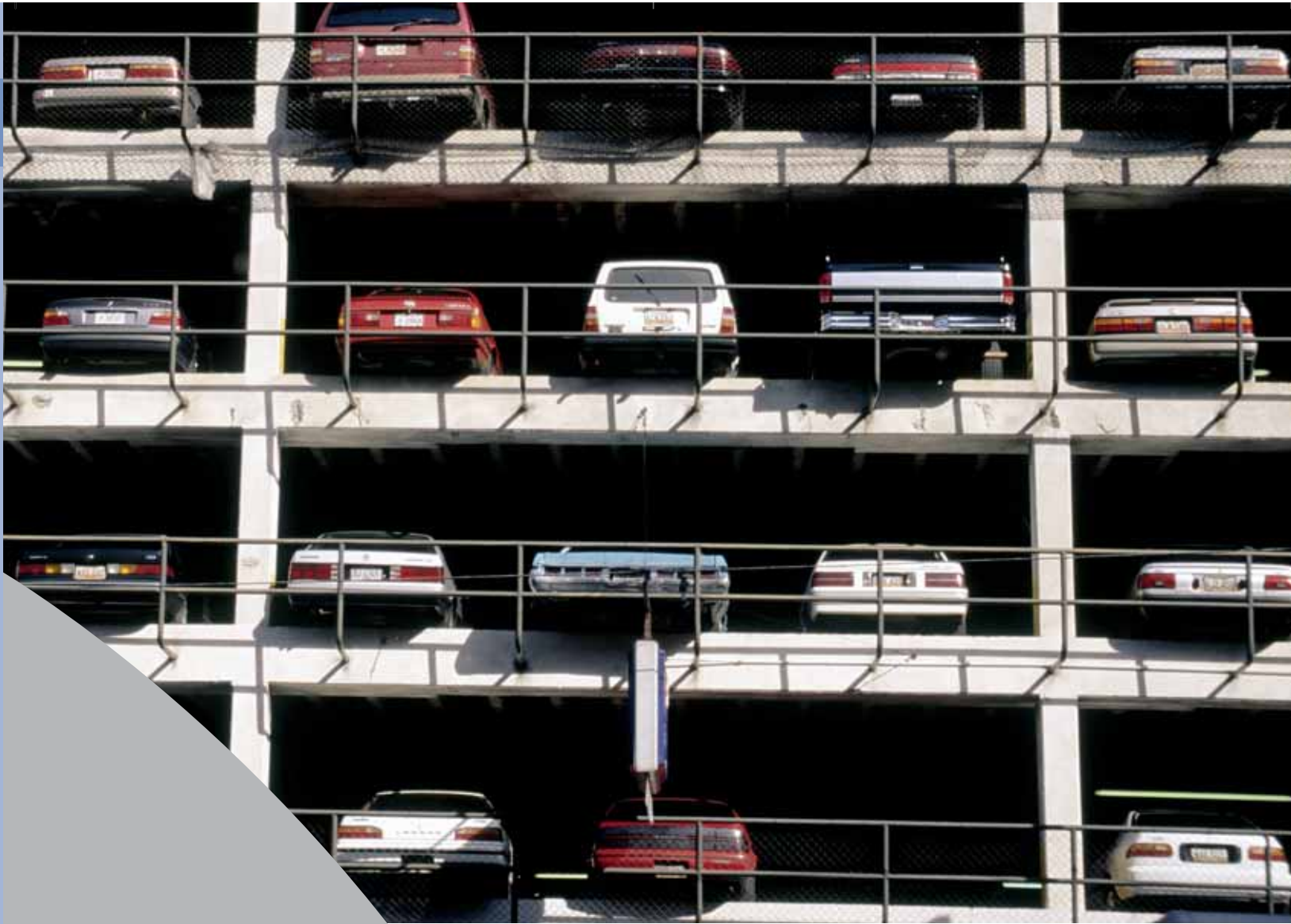
### Thursday, August 24

7:00 - 5:00	Registration		
8:00 - 10:00	Technical Seminar On Street		Boot Camp 2 (7:30) Off Street Parking
9:45 - 11:00	Networking Session Get Connected in the Industry		Networking Session Get Connected in the Industry
11-12 Noon	Seminar 6 The Numbers	Exhibits Open 11:00 - 5:00  Lunch in Exhibit Hall Noon - 1:30	Seminar 5 - Funding Everything from Vehicles to Garages
3:30 - 4:30	Workshop A Setting up Parking Operations		Workshop B Personal Vetting and Retention
	Workshop C Maximizing Exhibiting Lighting		Workshop D Problem Customers and Customer Service

### Friday, August 25 - is Chicago Day at PIE

7:30 - Noon	Registration		
8:00 - 10:00	Boot Camp 3 (7:30) On Street Parking	Technical Seminar Off Street	Boot Camp 4 (7:30) Revenue Control
10:00 - 11:00	Seminar 10 Parking and Economic Development	Exhibits Open 9:00 - 2:00  Lunch in Exhibit Hall Noon - 1:30	Seminar 11 Double your Capacity with Technology
2:00			

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# Richard F. Roti, International Parking Design Founder

**R**ichard F. Roti, the Founder of International Parking Design, passed away Dec. 24, 2005, in Newport Beach, CA. He was 81.

Roti, who was born in Ishpeming, MI, in 1924, was one of six children of Victor Roti, an immigrant from southern Italy, and Victoria Nardi Roti, whose parents were immigrants.

Drafted into the Army in 1943, Roti was wounded in action on March 9, 1945, just across the Rhine River following the capture of the Remagen Bridge. After a 13-month hospital stay, he turned to weightlifting to build up damaged leg muscles and restore his badly depleted frame, later becoming a weightlifting instructor during his under-



Richard F. Roti and wife, Marnie.

graduate studies.

He attended the University of Michigan, School of Architecture. His greatest passion was flying, which he enjoyed with wife, Dorothy, who also was a licensed pilot.

In February 1969, he started his own consulting and architectural practice, specializing in the design of parking structures. International Parking Design expanded rapidly

to three offices, located in Sherman Oaks, Orange County and Oakland, CA.

Roti designed more than 500 parking structures and consulted on more than 800 buildings. His designs can be found in such places as Beijing, China; Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; and Tijuana, Mexico. Clients included the architectural firm of Skidmore Owings & Merrill, as well as Kaiser Permanente Medical Facilities, the cities of Portland, OR, and Sacramento, Santa Monica and Beverly Hills, CA.

Roti wrote countless papers on the subject. He was invited to address the Royal Institute of British Architects in London in 1980. He was a founding member and former chairman of the National Parking Association.

According to Dilip Nandwana, the current IPD CEO: "He leaves a legacy with IPD in terms of the company's commitment to provide the highest level of service and professionalism to all clients. Richard used to say, 'Never do anything that you have to apologize for later.'"

Roti retired in 1993, selling the business to the employees. After Dorothy's death in 1983, he learned to ride a motorcycle and traveled extensively throughout Europe (particularly in Italy), North Africa, Australia and New Zealand. He enjoyed the lifestyle of his Irvine, CA, home on the lake for 13 years, riding his bike on morning outings, puttering on his boat in Dana Point Harbor and traveling.

On March 24, 2000, he married Marnie O'Brien. They moved to Turtle Rock, where he renewed his interest in growing roses and home decorating.

In addition to his wife, five sisters and four brothers-in-law, Roti is survived by Steven and Tina Pavelic-Roti; Rita Roti and Jon Scarborough; Mike and Sally O'Brien; Jim and Kelly Sliwicki; Mike and Patti Shacklett; Dan and Salma O'Brien; and seven grandchildren.

Contributions may be made to the Hoag Hospital Foundation, P.O. Box 6100, Newport Beach, CA 92658-6100. A memorial fund in his name will be established to benefit the Hoag Heart Institute.

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# Heartland Invests in Parcsmart Technologies

Heartland Payment Systems, the seventh-largest credit card processor in the US and 15th in the world, has made a strategic investment in Parcsmart Technologies, an electronic payments company. The investment will further solidify the companies' existing marketing alliance, which provides Heartland limited exclusivity as Parcsmart's merchant acquirer to offer credit/debit card processing services to merchants that adopt the Parcsmart payment solution.

The Parcsmart card and patent-pending payment solution is America's first fully functional parking and local merchant smart card payment system. It offers drivers and consumers a convenient one-card alternative to coins and cash for small-dollar transactions at on- and off-street parking locations, as well as for micro-ticket retail purchases at participating merchants. It is operational in New Haven, CT, and San Jose, CA.

## Parkeon Completes Refinancing

The shareholders of Parco-pole, a holding company that owns 100% of the Parkeon Group of companies, a world leading provider of parking and transport ticketing solutions, performed a refinancing to support the five-year growth plan that Parkeon embarked on at the end of 2005.

This plan aims at growing Parkeon's revenues from \$130 million in 2005 to \$200 million by the year 2010, while increasing its operating margins. Top-line growth will be fuelled by a combination of installed base expansion in the European on-street and off-street parking markets, in conjunction with the deployment of pay-and-display terminals in North America and a wider offering in automated fare collection.

This refinancing has been designed to facilitate external growth by providing Parkeon with the ability to seize and quickly finance attractive acquisition opportunities in its core markets.

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# The Interview and Background Checks

By James W. Bassett

*The best way to handle employee theft problems, says James W. Bassett, is to identify dishonest job applicants before they are hired. In a two-part article, he outlines a seven-step approach to how thorough applicant screening prevents personnel headaches and increases profits. - Editor*

**A** thorough employment application and a comprehensive "honesty test" (see Part 1, Steps 1-3 in January PT) will wash out many undesirable applicants without any significant investment of your time. Now, it's time to interview those who remain.

#### Step 4: Interview the Applicant

Begin the interview by briefly introducing yourself and your company. Candidly point out the negatives as well as the positives of the job he is seeking. Ask if he is still interested after hearing the negatives. If you don't, he is liable to quit soon after he starts.

The applicant's previous job history is extremely important. Talk about each of his jobs in the past five years. Insist on specific explanations for leaving; "quit", "found a better job", "moved" and "too far to drive" are too vague. If his application reveals gaps between jobs of a month or

more, ask him what he was doing.

Try this approach: Have his completed application in hand. Ask about his previous jobs in reverse order, beginning with the most recent. Question him as if he had written nothing in the work history section.

**Interviewer:** "Please tell me about your most recent job."

**Tim:** "Well, I didn't list it. I worked there only three weeks."

**Interviewer:** "Where?"

**Tim:** "Always Open Parking."

**Interviewer:** "Why did you leave?"

**Tim:** "They said I was coming to work late."

**Interviewer:** "How often were you coming to work late?"

**Tim:** "Only about once or twice a week."

**Interviewer:** "Before Always Open, where did you work?"

**Tim:** "The one I put on my application."

**Interviewer:** "Which one was that?"

**Tim:** "Uh, Sir Parks-A-Lot, I think."

**Interviewer:** "When did you work there?"

**Tim:** "Same dates I put on there."

**Interviewer:** "And those dates were ...?"

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