

Remembering Bob and Andrea Bell

IMA will miss former President Bob Bell, 61, and his wife Andrea, 58, for a long time. As most of you know, they died August 31 in a plane crash on Hilton Head Island, S.C. Devoted to each other, family, friends, IMA, and a variety of community activities, these two special people will be remembered with fondness by all who knew them.



A CMA and CPA, Bob (Robert E. Bell, Jr.) was CEO of Hickory Brands, Inc., in Hickory, N.C. He had joined the footwear products company as controller from Arthur Andersen & Co., deciding to switch to industry. He bought the company in 1987 and began adding trademarks such as Griffin, Esquire, and Ten Seconds. He was devoted to his Hickory Brands team and was always tossing around new business ideas. In fact, he and the company were featured in a segment of the Today show a couple of years ago regarding the manufacture of shoelaces that don't come untied when you exercise.

Andrea (Andrea Gilstrap Bell), whom Bob called "my spice," was owner and president of Jet Kleen Car Wash Company and had previously taught elementary school. She was a member of the Executives Club, served as secretary of Informed Investors, and was a member of the Joy Class of St. Luke's United Methodist Church.

Julie Huffman, senior vice president of Hickory Brands, said in a local newspaper report that Bob "was a wonderful boss, very active with his family. His wife Andrea was the epitome of a lady and always backed Bob 100% with whatever he did. She was a wonderful mother and grandmother." Company President Nissan Joseph said in the same report that "His is a great loss to the community. He represented the spirit of Hickory."

Bob joined IMA in 1973, affiliating with the Catawba Valley Chapter. He served twice as national director and had been a member of the Marketing, Membership, and Member Interest Groups committees, chair of the Academic Relations Committee, area vice president, and Annual Conference program chair. He was IMA president in 2001-2002.

A 1964 graduate of the Citadel, he reported for active duty in the Army 10 days after graduation and served as an officer in the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers. He spent 1965 in Vietnam as a qualified Airborne Ranger. He also held a master of accountancy degree from the University of South Carolina.

In addition to his long service to IMA, Bob had served as president of the Catawba Valley Executives Club, the Catawba Valley Chapter of the North Carolina Association

of CPAs, and the Rotary Club of Lake Hickory. One of his favorite activities was flying his own plane, which he did to business and association meetings and for pleasure.

Bob and Andrea were devoted to their son Robby and his wife Kathi, their daughter Ginger, and their two grandchildren Lexi and Bo. Although Bob and Andrea will be sorely missed, their humor, friendship, spirit, and love of life will remain in our hearts and memories.

Donations may be made to IMA's Memorial Education Fund (one of Bob's causes during his term as president) or to the Robert E. Bell and Andrea G. Bell Memorial Fund, c/o Bank of Granite, 25 Third Street, NW, Hickory, NC 28601. ■