THE CONSUMMATE PROFESSIONAL

Casey Jones, CAPP, looks to a bright future for IPI

By Kim Fernandez
When IPI Chairman of the Board Casey Jones, CAPP, looks at parking, he sees much more than lines on pavement. That lot, on-street space, or multi-story building may well be among the most important services a business or city can offer.

"I see parking as access management," he says. "We work in places where people want to be. The busier these places are, the more important it is for us to manage access in the right way."

He comes by that opinion honestly, having worked his way through the parking industry since his first internship in 1993. He says IPI has been key to his career in more ways than the obvious.

"There was a time when I felt really isolated in this industry and I didn't know where to look for resources," he says. "I was managing a 4,500-space off-street system under contract in Portland, Ore., and the city staff I worked with had people attending a conference in Las Vegas. They asked me to fly down there and take a look at some equipment, and that's where it started. My eyes were opened wide to what a great organization IPI was and how many resources were available. There was this whole network of people who do what I do, and they were just a phone call away. It was a great discovery, and has been the best thing that's happened to my career."

Jones, director of transportation and parking for Boise State University, says he constantly encourages his colleagues to take a closer look at IPI if they haven't yet. "We are in a challenging industry," he says. "Knowing we have a group of people that I can reach by picking up the phone to talk through an issue is powerful."

He hopes to continue that kind of outreach and the group's growth over the next two years.

**Goals**

Long a champion of sustainability, Jones says that effort will be something of a centerpiece of his chairmanship.

"I feel at my core that we have to be thinking several generations into the future," he says. "We can't keep doing what we've been doing to the planet. A lot of people don't understand that our industry is part of the solution and not just the source of the
problem. We're working hard on the Parking Matters program, and we'll continue to raise awareness about the profession and why we should be at the table."

"We are the best organization to train the parking industry on sustainability and best practices," he says. "We're working on that now, and our joint publication (to be published) with the National Parking Association is a start. We're also working to develop a vision for sustainability in our industry. Once we have that in place and once we have some deliverables like the book, we can focus our attention on training people in our industry and increasing our capacity to respond to questions regarding sustainability and environmental impact."

The Parking Matters industry-wide program for advancing the parking industry, he says, has already met with success, and for good reason.

"I'm so pleased that we've done it," he says. "Just like any successful awareness campaign, it will evolve and change and grow. We're at the ground floor now with building awareness and our next challenge is to raise the bar and continue to help more and more people understand what we do and why."

"Right now, I think getting people to understand that there's a profession out there that deals with parking issues is step one," says Jones. "Next is getting them to see our role in the whole transportation realm. Many of us are dealing with transportation demand management, transit systems, supporting bicycle and walking programs—we really are multi-modal."

He'd also like to work to define the role of IPI's state and regional associations. "We've had kind of a loose and undefined partnership with them," he says. "It'd like to see those relationships strengthened. These associations are the backbone of IPI and we need to formalize our relationship with each of them. This requires clarity in terms of what IPI will deliver and what the associations will do in return."

That goes hand-in-hand, he says, with working more closely with allied organizations and governments. "We've really made significant progress in reaching out to some strategic partners," he says. "Those include commuter transportation groups, international associations, downtown associations, and others. The more we seek out mutually beneficial relationships, the stronger our association will be. And we're also making strides on the international front. The experiences of our colleagues from around the world can profoundly impact our U.S. members, and vice-versa. IPI should be the conduit between countries and facilitate idea exchange while raising the bar for the industry worldwide through continuous professionalization."

He also plans to champion efforts to involve IPI in federal transportation efforts. "I think it's time to consider a government affairs committee," he says. "That doesn't have to mean that we're weighing in on every piece of legislation, but the federal government is getting more and more involved in transportation, especially in areas that we deal with daily. I think we can position our industry and our association to support good transportation programs, but we need an apparatus to do that effectively." He says IPI could become a sort of clearinghouse of parking information for government agencies and legislators.

**Successes To Date**

Jones says not a day goes by that he doesn't feel proud of his affiliation with IPI and what the group has become over the years.

"I'm not a very patient person," he says. "But I'm quite pleased with how far we've come, especially in the last several years. It's amazing. For a volunteer organization with a small staff to have done as much as we have done is a great credit to our volunteers and the leaders who have preceded me."

Several of those get a special mention from Jones, who looks back at his early days with IPI and offers credit to a few people who, from his first event, helped him get acclimated and encouraged his involvement on higher levels.

"There are so many amazing people in our associations and many of them have gone out of their way to help me. I really admire Cindy Campbell, Dennis Burns, Mike Swartz, and Dorothy Harris," he says. "They are wonderful, very giving people who tucked me under their wings and helped me progress through my career. And they've become lifelong friends and colleagues along the way."
"I never got into this thinking I'd build lifelong relationships, but that is what has happened," he muses. "Wherever I go, these people are with me. For that I am grateful."

Those people, he says, keep him coming back for more. And in a fast-paced industry that's constantly changing, IPI membership has been critical to keeping him informed and linked in.

"The technology changes have been huge," he says. "We're able to do things now that five or 10 years ago were just a pipe dream, things we weren't even thinking about. Technology is helping us deal with so many aspects of our work, from helping with revenue control to offering multiple payment options, to collecting data that keeps us informed. And we can build our credibility and what resources we are as professionals with those tools."

"We now view ourselves as service businesses similar to hotels, retailers, and restaurants," he continues. "This way of thinking is manifest in the way we communicate, how we present our facilities, and the ways we market ourselves. It wasn't always the case. Providing a quality customer experience wasn't always the goal of our organizations. We've really turned a corner."

That, he says, is an open door to working more with the public and increasing both service and the perception of parking as a profession.

"People are willing to pay a fair price for the use of a parking space so they can enjoy whatever it is that brought them to a destination," he says. "We are starting to see ourselves as a facilitator of that, and we're trying to emulate the other exceptional organizations out there that deliver great customer service. We know that people have choices and options. People will go elsewhere, and whatever destinations we're supporting might not thrive."

Downtime
When he's not working at the university or on IPI matters, Jones can usually be found at home with his wife, Robyn, and two sons, Anson, 10, and Caiden, 6, "trying to play every sport imaginable." He runs, bikes, and plays everything from soccer to basketball to baseball with his boys, and is a big fan of professional baseball, holding fond memories of watching Oriole Park at Camden Yards' construction while earning his degree at the University of Baltimore, and meeting Cal Ripkins Jr. and Sr. at an event in that city.

Baseball and parking, he says, have a few parallels.

"To somebody who's not a baseball fan, it seems like a simple sport," he says. "But the more you learn about it, the more you realize how complicated it is. There are certainly superstars, but the successful teams are the ones that are true teams."

The team aspect of IPI is one that's important to him. Looking two years down the road, he says, he hopes his legacy will reflect that.

"I'd like people to say that we kept IPI moving in the right direction," he says. "We have a great board and a great staff and lots of great volunteers. I think if anything else, it will be our shared legacy, and not my own, that people remember."