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# We Reemerge Tested, Smarter Than Before

Michael T. Scanlon – SSA President & CEO



Last night I finished reading a book that I received as a Christmas gift, *Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption*, by Laura Hillenbrand—the author of the bestseller made into a hit movie, *Seabiscuit*. *Unbroken* is the true story of Olympic athlete and Army Airman and bombardier Louis Zamperini.

The book details his life and what he went through during the War. I will not give away any details, for it is a good read; but, as I put it down on my nightstand, I vowed never again to complain about life's up and downs.

Sure, the last few years have been difficult for all of us—it is difficult to have to cut budgets and let some workers go. Sure, it's tough to face huge increases not totally planned for—like health care costs that increased by 48% last year and another 24% coming in 2011. There is a big difference between looking for new revenue streams and finding ways to cut spending versus finding food to survive in a life raft and then in a brutal prison camp (as Louie Zamperini had to do).

These days, it is all about the survival of your business in the face of an economic slump that happens once in a lifetime. Tens of thousands of small businesses have ceased to exist or have cut back to cottage industries operating out of a basement. Millions of home and business mortgages are “underwater,” in terms of their value.

There is much to be learned from the struggle to survive and the ingenuity it takes to get through a crisis. You have to be resourceful and willing to take chances that perhaps you wouldn't consider in ordinary times. You find ways to get by that you didn't know were hidden away in the inner folds of the cortex of your brain. You find strength that perhaps you didn't know you had until you needed it. All these are part of the resilience that rises to the top in the survivor.

There are thousands of stories out there about how self storage owner-operators got through the last two years—stories about finding new revenue streams, cutting expenses and rearranging employee work schedules and assignments. The *SSA Globe* will endeavor to uncover those stories and report on them in the coming year and include them in our event programs. The more we expand the knowledge gathered in trying to do business in difficult times, the smarter each of us can become.

Your Association has changed in many ways these last two years. We have focused on legislative and regulatory activities at the state level and been successful (see page 4).

We are also reaching out to find new ways to attract direct members to support the good work of this Association. If you know someone who is not a member, but should be, let us know.

I have heard many complaints about the negative effects of the economy on members, vendors, advertisers and sponsors. In fact, I've complained myself about some of the measures we've had to take to survive; but after reading the story of Louie Zamperini, I will never complain again about how tough I've had it. ❖