



## *Member Spotlight*

### **Ken O'Neill**

The Traffic Club of New York  
Member since 1970



I began my career in the Traffic/Transportation industry in 1967, joining the Shippers Carline Division of ACF Industries as a sales trainee. The company specialized in leasing rail freight cars to industrial companies and railroads.

In 1970, I was promoted to Outside Sales Representative in the New York City District Sales Office. My then-boss, Mr. Jim Malone, took me to the Traffic Club of New York for the first time. The Traffic Club was a spacious facility with a large bar and dining room, located atop Grand Central Station. Jim introduced me to the Club's manager, Ms. Cathy Bongiovani, who signed me up as a member. We, as club members, owe it to Cathy, upon her retirement, for having found, recruited, and hired Kathy Rizzotti as her replacement, who currently still serves in this principal position

In 1970, there was no technology to support professional sales personnel in their endeavors to present, market, and sell their products and services. The internet, as we know it, did not exist. Personal computers, smartphones, digital cameras, and modern telecommunications, including texting, email, and video presentations, were non-existent. Business was conducted face-to-face and eye-to-eye, where trusted relationships were established and sustained. Deals were confirmed with a handshake; Your Word was your BOND. Membership in the Traffic Club of New York allowed members to develop and foster these precious relationships. Most importantly, it provided a one-of-a-kind setting conducive to creating a tremendously valuable Networking Venue.

Today, the Traffic Club of New York continues to provide this extraordinary personal foundation while efficiently assimilating advances in technological support. Over my 55 years as a member, my career has advanced from sales trainee to Senior Vice President of Connell Finance Company, a leader in the leasing of railroad freight equipment. I have truly benefited from a lifetime of not just business partnerships, but lasting personal relationships and long-time friendships, both of which the New York Traffic Club has had a major impact. I have many fond memories of club functions and events. For example, many Thanksgiving Day Luncheons had to be scheduled over two days to accommodate the demand for tickets. My favorite memory of this annual event was watching the raffle winners having to lug a 20-pound turkey through the streets of New York City on their way home!

Every year, there was an outing at Platzl Brauhaus in upstate New York. This family-centered outing was an all-day affair of testing athletic skills. One event I fondly remember from the 1976 outing was the "Tug-of-War," which left me huffing and puffing while my team celebrated victory! All our fun and hard work culminated in a wonderful mouth-watering Steak Dinner. What precious memories indeed!

Most importantly, there are so many people I have met along the way who have influenced my career. Starting with Charlie Ficken of Mobil Oil. Charlie was an old-timer when I was the new kid in the business. He was a colorful character whose contributions to the Traffic Club culminated in the Club's naming of the annual "Charlie Ficken Award" in his honor. The recipient of this prestigious award was recognized for their outstanding contributions to the industry. The Charlie Ficken Award continues to remain a highlight today..



Ken presenting the Charlie Ficken award to Jim Malone at the 2015 Annual Dinner



TCNY's Thanksgiving Luncheon 2003 at the Downtown Athletic Club

Thanks to my long-standing membership in The New York Traffic Club, I have been very fortunate in developing both long-standing friendships and business relationships. Along with many others, John Breslin, Jack Allen, Dave Dufault, Carm Catanesse, Marylou Robinson, Linda Gillis, Bob Rodino, Roger Winkoop, John Gallaher, Kathy Rizzotti, Jim Malone, and Steve Gould are just a few. Many of the aforementioned individuals have also served as Club Presidents over the years.

I am now retired and continue to look forward to participating in the Club's ongoing activities. If you are not yet a member of the New York Traffic Club, I urge you to consider joining. Becoming a member will not only benefit your career, as it has mine, but will undoubtedly have a positive influence on your life experiences.