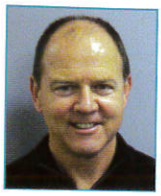


By Stephen R. Bupp, PCAM

Stephen Bupp is president of CVI, a firm managing 24 condominium and homeowner association communities in Maryland. Bupp served as the national president of Community Associations Institute in 1999/2000. He holds the highest honor from CAI, the Distinguished Service Award. Bupp was also heavily involved in the development of the M-100 The Essentials of Community Association Management course.

My PCAM Designation

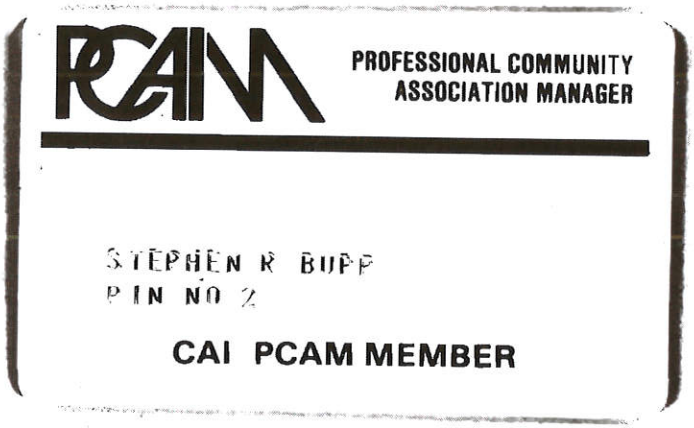
I am proud to say that I earned one of the first Professional Community Association Manager designations. When I received PCAM "Pin No. 2" in May 1982, at the CAI National Conference in Dallas, Texas, it did not mean as much to me then as it does today. At that time, not many people knew what being a "PCAM" meant, but today many managers value the designation enough to earn it for themselves. Their hard work to obtain this designation speaks to the value of holding a PCAM and it is something I am honored to have held for more than 30 years.

I was among the first 17 PCAM designees approved. I wish that I could say I was awarded Pin No. 2 because of my innovative and ground-breaking approach to property management, but in actuality, the first 17 PCAMs were awarded in alphabetical order and the last name "Bupp" had its advantages for once. Over the 30 years I have held the designation, the question I get asked most is, "Who holds Pin No. 1?" The answer is Bob Aglar of Denver, Colo. Aglar retired from the business in 1990 leaving me with the lowest pin number.

There are not too many of us left in the industry today that know the real story of how the first 17 of us earned the designation. The PCAM designation had been approved by the CAI board of trustees, but we had no designees–no one eligible to receive it. Therefore, the Managers Committee and the board of trustees set up criteria whereby existing managers could complete a detailed application, be reviewed by a select committee and earn the designation under a "great-grandfather" provision. The first designees did not have to take the five Professional Management Development Program classes, we did not have to do a case study, which was not even in existence in its current form until 1991, and we did not have to complete an equivalent project, a book, a Guide for Association Practitioners report. It was easy, right? Wrong.

It was extremely difficult to earn the designation under the great-grandfather provision. First, the application was reviewed by a select group of 12 CAI leaders, none of whom were managers. Second, we had to have seven years direct experience managing common-interest communities. Third, and hardest, we had to accumulate 450 CAI service points. Back then, service points were earned by serving on the national board of trustees and national committees, founding local CAI chapters, serving on the chapter board, writing GAP reports and articles for CAI publications or writing and teaching the PMDP and Leadership Training Program courses. Today candidates are required to accumulate 55 CAI service points and some of those points can be earned from attendance at conferences and seminars. As it was originally designed, not many candidates could qualify under the great-grandfather provision. I was fortunate enough to be awarded the PCAM designation based on my experience and my CAI service.

The designation has become more valuable to me as time has gone by and as the number of PCAM designees has increased. As more communities have become aware of the designation and what it means, they make it a requirement for employment, which makes it more valuable. Not all PCAM designees, just like not all doctors or teachers, are equal. But the designation is one measurement that our clients can use to evaluate us.



I have gotten an enormous amount of satisfaction from facilitating the case study courses and seeing hundreds of managers in my classes pass and receive the designation. I facilitated my first case study in 1991 and still enjoy facilitating the classes. Grading the case study is not a treat, but the results are worth it. The camaraderie that develops among candidates and designees is refreshing to see. PCAM designees support each other and go a long way to validate our profession and our industry. As our numbers grow and time passes, I hope that the historical record of the establishment of the designation and that first group of professionals who obtained it is not lost. It is all of us, the designees from the very beginning through to the more than 2,000 designees today that make the PCAM designation important. I encourage all designees to maintain and protect the value of your designation through continued efforts to advance the industry and ethical professional service to your clients.