

You Really Ought to Give Iowa a Try! On the Road With TDGA

by Larry Keene

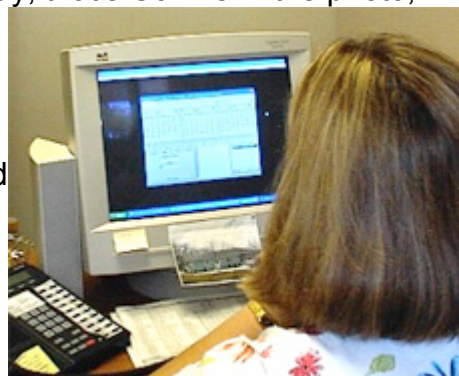


Meredith Willson was right! It's a grand State and a perfect stop along the way as I visited the folks at Smarts to take a look at their brand new Second Generation Traffic & Billing Software System. TDGA is about to start its reviews of software products and Smarts was one of the first to respond, offering their new, all-Windows traffic product for review by the TDGA and a group of selected Traffic Directors to put it through its paces.

John and Jan Schad are the epitome of perfect host and hostess. We had a chance to see their complete operation as we strolled through "World Headquarters" at the Smarts Broadcast operation in Emmetsburg. Obviously, at this time of the year, the crops of corn and soybeans are everywhere. John jokingly showed me the four most popular views to take in as we drove around this excellent example of small-town America. Those views are: (1) Corn on the left, beans on the right; (2) Beans on the left and Corn on the right; (3) Corn on the left and the right; and (4), Beans on the left and beans on the right. Truth is there's far more to see, including the lakes, boating and a genuine smile and warm greeting from nearly everyone in town. The Emmetsburg Chamber can be mighty proud of the staff at Smarts.

For a former Traffic & Billing Software Sales Rep, it was like a "Busman's Holiday," but I quickly saw an incredible pride in their new Windows System, which adds unlimited flexibility and a host of new features to the earlier DOS version, which was the starting point for Smarts nearly 20 years ago. One thing I really enjoyed was the staff and we were on a first name basis quickly with the programmers, developers, front office and customer relations folks their customers deal with from time to time. (By the way, that's Connie in the photo, guiding a caller through a quick and easy process.)

Several folks were in town from their Dallas operation as well, so we got to see the depth and expertise that has helped this company satisfy both Digital and Traffic Customers over the past



two decades. We obviously focused most of our attention on their "Second Generation" system. But seeing what's in the processing line for Digital Audio users is really exciting, too.

After a day "at the office," we headed for the cabin up at the lake to talk with more of the Staff over Burgers, Steak, Chicken and some fresh-from-the-farm Iowa Corn. (Wow !) Here, Bob from Dallas (we prefer first names out here at the lake) and several others had a test of call letter assignments from here, there and everywhere. Bob's the champ and even the kid from Jersey knows when to admit he's run up against the Call Letter "Champeen" of all time! I was sure I had him with WIBG, but he even knew when they moved from Philly to Ocean City NJ, their frequency, etc. I'll have to brush up on my Call Letter Trivia.

I was impressed with the Second Generation, to be sure. It's removed all the limitations we accepted with DOS programs, and they've done a great job of establishing a list of priorities, aided by their very loyal customer following who have stepped up from the earlier DOS program they've sold for years. I have a feeling they've positioned themselves perfectly for everyone looking for an easy way to step up from other DOS programs. Sensible pricing, easy to learn procedures and support that includes Web-Ex hands-on response to get you through the few areas that need added explanation. Best of all, there's no waiting for available trainers-it's a quick, easy conversion from any of the "old" DOS systems still out there.

Best of all, the company is steeped in decades of hands-on experience in Radio. They offer some nice bells 'n whistles that are there because Radio Stations needed them. And -- how refreshing -- everything they offer is included in the base package. No extra costs or constantly increasing support fees. (Support fees exist with Smarts, but "reasonable" would be a fair description considering it doesn't cost extra for every little item you ask about.) I was definitely impressed and look forward to the Review from TDGA members in the coming month or two.

Then it was back to reality, tolls on the turnpikes, never ending construction as you drive through the concrete barriers my wife likes to call the "walls of death." I'm convinced the Pennsylvania Turnpike (first in the nation) will never actually be completed. I did like one of their billboards, however: "The Road to Success... is always under Construction." How true, how true. Back home in New Jersey and enjoying our Garden State Tomatoes and Jersey Corn--- but somehow, missing the Iowa version and our visit with "new" friends at the Lake near Emmetsburg.

 [go to top](#)