

Looking Back on the Journey — Some Highlights

A lengthy position of service with the pre-eminent state dental association in America brings with it the privilege of sharing some personal perspectives on some of highlights in dentistry in California during the past 35 years of our service.

As former *Journal* Managing Editor Susan Lovelace noted in her marvelous history of the California Dental Association that was published in July 1995, the first meeting of the California Dental Association occurred on June 29, 1870, in San Francisco, just 21 years after California was admitted to statehood. That makes California dentistry 134 years old this year.

My journey of service to the profession commenced in 1969 in Los Angeles, just four years prior to the unification in 1973 of the northern California Dental Association and the Southern California Dental Association, forming the California Dental Association as we know it today. It startled us when we calculated that our 35 years of volunteer service represented 26 percent of the lifespan of organized dentistry here in California! We believe that statistic only serves to illustrate that dentistry is still a relatively young profession. I believe that the people we will mention and the events we will review, while only a small sampling of highlights, will illustrate what a memorable journey that California dentistry has traveled in that time.

In 1978, five years after unification, Dale Redig was hired as the third CDA executive director. The association offices had been housed in a relatively small leased office space (compared to today's standards) in the Tishman building complex in the Los Angeles Airport area. His hiring would mark

the beginning of an 18-year period of significant and unprecedented growth.

When we first became members in the 1960s, liability insurance was considered by many to be the most important membership benefit. In the mid-1970s, premium levels had started to soar to levels that were of great concern to leadership, not to mention the members. J. David Gaynor, who had the original vision, along with other association leaders, was instrumental in the untiring efforts that ultimately resulted in the formation of The Dentists Insurance Company in 1980, the first dentist-owned liability carrier in the country! The early years of TDIC's existence were not easy. Some of us can still remember the Certificates of Contribution that policy/shareholders purchased to support the company during the trying formative years. Despite the difficult times, including several challenging administrative changes, TDIC has become a major success and a contributor to the financial health of this association. Policyholder dividends have been another highlight in recent years. Aside from the financial benefits derived from TDIC by the association and its members, the "management" of the liability environment by the profession via TDIC and its very existence in the marketplace, helped to slow down and to control the escalating premium costs both short term and to this day. In addition, CDA's subsequent efforts in the legislative arena to support a cap on damages were important to bringing stability to the professional liability marketplace.

In April 1983, the CDA board, meeting in Newport Beach, Calif., voted to move the



CDA's subsequent efforts in the legislative arena to support a cap on damages were important to bringing stability to the professional liability marketplace.

CDA office to Sacramento and appointed yours truly to serve as editor of this publication. In August, 16 of 47 employees employed in Los Angeles moved with Dale Redig to open the CDA office in Sacramento. Dale's vision that CDA needed to be in Sacramento at the seat of state government would be validated over and over during the next 20-plus years. Among those who helped with that move is current Chief Governance Officer Janice Johnson, whose loyalty to this organization has been unsurpassed.

In mid-August 1983, at about the time of the move, a new managing editor, Rich Martin, was hired in Sacramento because the Los Angeles *Journal* staff did not follow the association to Sacramento. Rich had a background in newspaper journalism. Speed of publication and short deadlines were his forte. We were in awe of his ability to put together a quality first issue of the *Journal* in Sacramento, in little more than two weeks. That first issue, with a photo of the 818 K St. headquarters building on the cover was awaiting the Board of Trustees on their desks on the first weekend after Labor Day at the first trustee meeting in Sacramento. To this day, we appreciate the skills we learned from Rich.

In 1988, two things happened of significance to this writer. Rich Martin became ill with cancer and had to leave his position after five years of marvelous service. Earlier that year, feedback from leadership at a strategic planning retreat identified the need for a monthly "newsletter" type of publication. As she had during the transition period between Los Angeles and the new Sacramento *Journal* staff, Cissie Cooper, who served various directorship positions with the association including Scientific Sessions and Communications, again stepped in. She bridged the production gap between Rich Martin's departure and the hiring of Douglas Curley as managing editor, months later in January 1989. She confided to us that

she proofread copy for *Journal* issues while waiting to catch flights at the airport while traveling on Sessions business.

We have been amazed time and again at the skills of our professional publications staff, traits that have been there from the very beginning of our tenure. In less than one month after his hiring, Doug Curley launched the first monthly issue of *Update* while overseeing the monthly publication of the *Journal*. We believe that the monthly publication of two first-rate publications by a small, ded-

**We believe that
the presence of the
association at the
1201 K St. location
has been extremely
beneficial to CDA
in undertaking its
various initiatives**

icated staff has been a remarkable achievement. *Update* to us has been an important vehicle for CDA publications. It has enabled us to separate the news, information, opinion, and feedback that would be less appropriate to a professional journal. While we don't have a survey to back up our opinion, the belief here is that the reader target audience for the two publications is quite different, underlining the need for the two different publications that validates the judgment of the leadership at that first-ever strategic planning retreat.

In 1996, Susan Lovelace, who provided outstanding skills in the production of the *Journal* following Doug Curley's tenure as managing editor, left to serve San Diego County Dental Society as executive director. The *Journal* experienced a smooth transition to Jeanne

Marie Tokunaga who served us with distinction for the next eight years. Patty Reyes has now been managing the day-to-day development of the *Journal* for more than a year while Jeanne Marie has overall responsibility for publications. The quality of the five individuals who have served us in this capacity has been a source of great personal satisfaction. Our successor, Alan Felsenfeld, will find the contributions of Jeanne Marie and Patty to be a source of strength.

By the late '80s, Dale Redig's vision, coupled with his practical realization that CDA in a very few years was already starting to outgrow the 818 K St. offices, pointed to the need to study the potential of a move to one of two buildings under construction in downtown Sacramento. While this decision, like the previous Board of Trustees decision to move the offices to Sacramento, was controversial with some trustees, we believe this move has been the most important event in the 30-year history of the unified association.

Beyond the necessity of additional space, the 1201 K St. address that became the CDA home in 1990, helped to establish CDA as a major player in Sacramento. Even when leadership was faced with some more difficult times after 1996, we believe that the presence of the association at the 1201 K St. location has been extremely beneficial to CDA in undertaking its various initiatives on behalf of the membership and the public.

As many individuals who read this know, the next 6½ years presented some difficult leadership challenges from time to time. A positive perspective to share is that volunteer leadership, and the officer positions in particular, became out of necessity, more engaged in the process of governance. This in no way suggests that we have any less admiration for the performance or representation provided by the many outstanding leaders we served with from

1983 until 1996. But it has been evident that additional demands on an officer's time, opinions, and decisions started to occur out of necessity in the post-1996 period. We believe in retrospect, that the role modification we have witnessed has been an important step in the growth of this organization.

CDA is now in the second year of what we consider the profession's future direction. Peter DuBois, during the past 20 months, has demonstrated that he has a vision, which is at the forefront of his efforts to restructure the association's operation and to direct strategic initiatives. He has demonstrated thus far how important the vision of an administrator can be. He has also incorporated changes in organization structural efficiency that are paramount in the business climate of today. We believe that time will show his administrative style, skills, and contributions, while vastly different than those of Redig and Gaynor, to also be of lasting importance to the future strength of this organization.

The dedicated contributions of "Dr. Bob" Horseman have been critical to the success of the *Journal*. He has been contributing editor "par excellence" for the past 22 years, providing a monthly feature unique to a professional journal. Many colleagues anxiously await Bob's humorous creations every month, and their inclusion provides *Journal* a marvelous balance of features for the reader.

Not to be forgotten are the Scientific Sessions that have continued to grow in size and quality in the period since unification. Staff and volunteers continue to attract the top experts to the northern and southern Sessions every year. In addition to quality educational offerings, exhibitors value the opportunity to participate in these meetings and contribute to their financial success while introducing the latest in materials and technology to the membership.

Next month, "I Believe it IS Time to Go ..."

CDA