

Dr. Conley Has Left the Building



It is nearly 22 years ago that Dr. Jack F. Conley signed on as editor of the *CDA Journal*. In 1983, he was a callow youth of 45 summers who had been immersing himself with distinction in various services to the California Dental Association since 1972. Fortified with that much experience, it's a wonder he accepted the editor job. It's like being selected to be the cook on a camping trip. Betray a certain willingness to be exploited, a vague concept at best of what you're getting into and bingo! The job is yours in perpetuity.

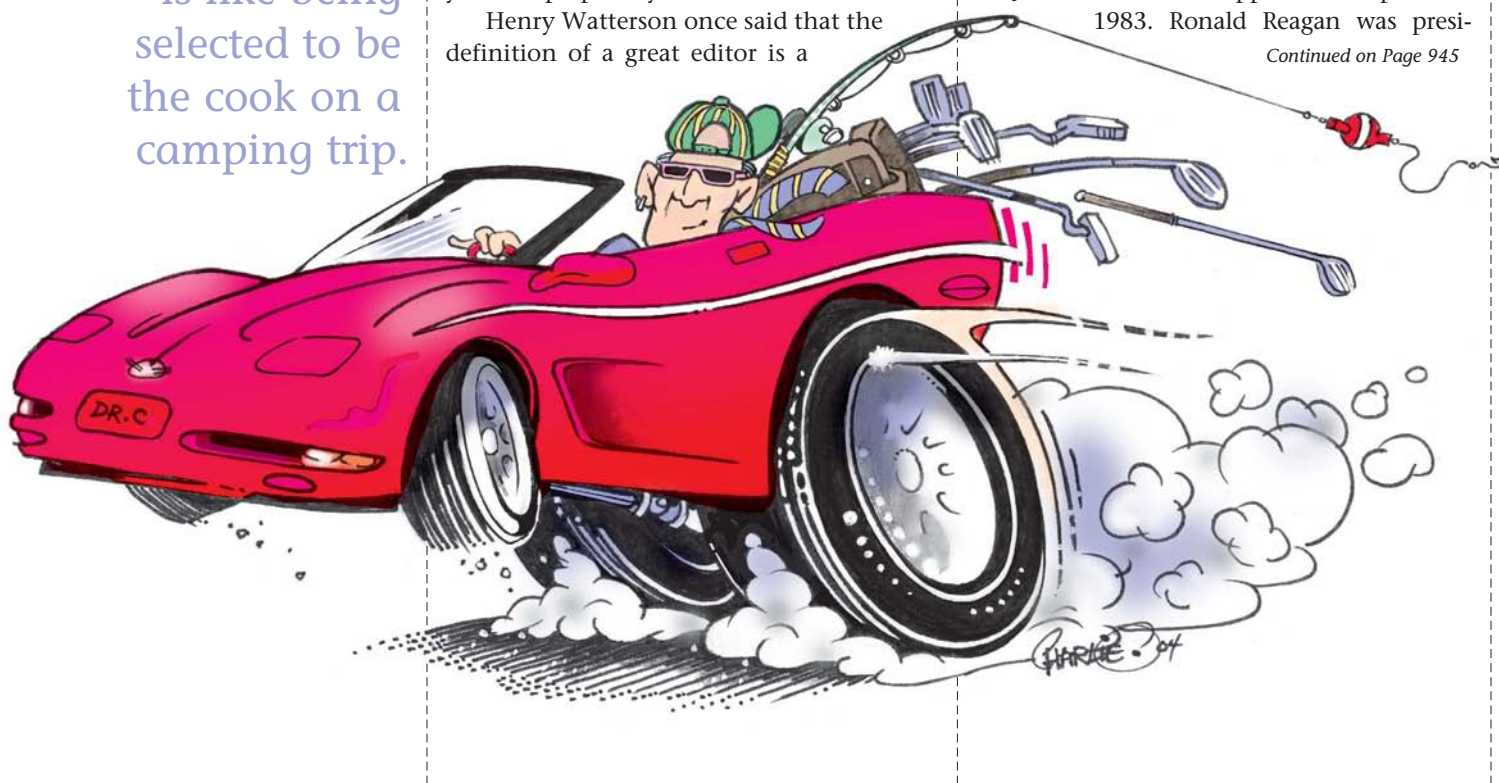
Henry Watterson once said that the definition of a great editor is a

man of outstanding talent who owns 51 percent of the company's stock. Conley is owner of nothing of any monetary value, but he has an idea of what he wants, even though he may not know what it is. He does understand that an editor is a man to whom the wastebasket is mightier than the pen. He probably shares the feeling of the late William Allen White who stated he became the editor of a weekly newspaper because he wanted to be "my own particular kind of a damn fool."

Jack's first editorial appeared in September 1983. Ronald Reagan was presi-

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dent, a first-class stamp cost 20 cents, the U.S. invaded Grenada, and Botox had yet to erase its first wrinkle. Like a duck takes to water, Conley wrote 250 additional editorials over the next 20 years, and in the process began accumulating awards, recognition, and kudos from professionals all over the country. He found himself elected president of the American Association of Dental Editors, and along the way won a special citation for his *Journal* in the International College of Dentists Journalism Competition Awards.

Pretty good for a guy so self-effacing he describes himself as “bland and forgettable.” OK, so he’s no Billy Sunday “hell and brimstone” type of editorial writer, but with his picture featuring a full head of hair and the requisite number of teeth beaming out from his editor’s page each month, he got his messages across in an erudite and professional manner.

Now, two decades later, the only award he hasn’t received is the Longevity Cup, held presently by Alan Greenspan of the Federal Reserve Board. So now he wants to retire? After only 22 years? Well, that’s the kind of help you get nowadays. Stick around long enough to find their way around the office without bumping into the furni-

ture and they up and quit. Conley could have been the Father Superior of dental editors if he wanted.

So forget the Longevity Cup. Conley will forego that honor because he has what seems to him a valid reason. Jack isn’t quitting to tackle something else. Golf and fishing hold no appeal. He already has a full plate with his position at USC Dental School. Conley thinks — rightly or wrongly — that 22 years as editor is long enough, that the right thing to do is pass the mantle on to a younger man. He could be right. After all, he doesn’t wear a baseball cap backwards and his pants are not at half-mast most of the time. No

piercings or tattoos are visible. He doesn’t tool around in a two-seated roadster, and he invariably wears socks with his shoes. Obviously, the real world as aired by MTV is passing him by.

Staffers who have worked closely with him for years say he’s as close to real gentleman as they’ve ever met. He doesn’t gossip, he doesn’t talk out of school, he works a political mine field, and hasn’t lost a limb yet. When cooler heads prevail, his will be one of them.

Twenty-two years ago it was Conley’s mission to make the CDA

Journal the best in the nation. Thank you, Jack Conley! Mission accomplished with clarity and grace. **CDA**

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