

Out With the Old ... In With the Old

In 1715, Henry the VI was the king of France and had the misfortune of dying. It is purported that his captain of the guard came out on the balcony of the palace and stated before the throngs of well wishers that the "The king is dead. Long live the king."

Now, in all candor, I have had a difficult time through the years understanding exactly what that classic saying means. There are two schools of interpretation I can offer. The first is that the present king has died but we should not forget who he was or for what he stood. Jack Conley, I am very happy to report, is not dead but has recently retired as the editor of the *Journal of the California Dental Association* after 22 years in the position. One would have to assume that tenure of that length sets some sort of record in the annals of editorship. Certainly that would be a reasonable guess for state dental journals or even any science publication. In commemoration of his laudable and lengthy service to our organization, the House of Delegates appointed him editor emeritus, a newly established and well-deserved position to honor his dedication and service to us all.

The *Journal* was first published in 1973 with the amalgamation of the then-(Northern) California Dental Association with the Southern California State Dental Association. In the formative years, there were four individuals who served as the editor, none of whom lasted more than 36 months. The Board of Trustees selected Jack as the editor in 1983 and history began. For 22 years, the *Journal* has grown to be a well-respected publication that serves the members of the California Dental Association, as well as other individuals, very well. It has the second-largest circulation of any dental publication. During the time Jack was edi-

tor, the publication grew in size and quality of the articles. It has won numerous national and local awards for its merit. The *Journal* has become a solid pillar of our association.

Arguably, one could interpret the expression about the king to suggest that the king has died now let us turn our loyalty to the new king. That would be me — sort of. The process of selection of the new editor was laborious. A select committee of the association was appointed, and many very well-qualified and experienced individuals applied for the position of editor. Each applicant had to submit the requisite letters of recommendation and curriculum vitae. In addition, a sample of previous writings was reviewed. From the larger group, a smaller group was chosen to be interviewed. Prior to that process, the finalists were told to write an editorial with a short deadline on a given subject. The committee then selected the editor, and the Board of Trustees approved the appointment.

The work of the editor has three phases to it. The first and obvious one is to publish a quality *Journal* on a monthly basis and on time. As I have been indoctrinated into the process, let me assure you all we have an excellent staff who works extremely hard and allows me the pleasure of problem solving only when it comes to the publication. Secondly, the editor must provide editorial topics in each *Journal*. This is a seemingly overwhelming task, but if one considers that Dr. Conley did more than 200 editorials, then it is doable. I will be assisted ably by Dr. Steven A. Gold, our associate editor, in this area. The last, and most time consuming, part of the position is that the edi-



I would like to hear from the readership as to what they like and expect on a monthly basis.

I am likely to take some positions that I called controversial in discussion with my friends but was advised to call provocative.

tor is a member of the Board of Trustees and Executive committee, ex-officio, without the right to vote. This involves not only a tremendous time commitment but also an understanding of the issues facing the organization. To a certain extent, if an editor is reappointed in perpetuity, as was the case with Jack Conley, then they can serve as the historian of the board as well.

One has to wonder why I was appointed and I think about this often. This is not my first time being involved in organized dentistry at a high level. Throughout my 30 years in dentistry (I, too, am not a youngster), I have been committed to doing for all of our colleagues in the political and administrative facets of our profession. I have been active not only in my two components and the California Dental Association, but also in my specialty organization. I have been a delegate in many houses, served on local, statewide and national committees including chairing several of them. Having served in the chairs and on boards at all levels, I have a variety of perspectives. I have been in private practice and presently am in a full-time academic position. This is not intended to be braggadocio, rather to show that I have been around, have a variety of experiences, and hopefully can understand the issues facing dentistry in our ever-changing environment.

One of the other concerns with becoming editor is that with the present structure of the *Journal* there is no stair-step progression to the top. The editor starts Day One as the top official in the *Journal*, albeit with superb staff support, but with a dearth of experience in actually managing a publication of this size and importance.

Many of my colleagues have already contacted me and were curious as to the changes that I plan to make to the *Journal*. When asked a similar question in the interview, I responded that change for the sake

of it without cause is not a reasonable option. We have a *Journal* that works well as it is. Can it be improved? Of course. Will there be changes? Possibly, but they will be gradual. I would like to hear from the readership as to what they like and expect on a monthly basis. As I think through my editorial topics, I am likely to take some positions that I called controversial in discussion with my friends but was advised to call provocative. If we can provoke a thought process or generate a response of letters to the editor for and against any specific issue, then we will improve the value of the *Journal* to our members. I can be reached via e-mail at the CDA headquarters at AFelsenfeld@cda.org. I would appreciate letters to the editor, suggestions for how the *Journal* can better serve our readership, topics you might like to see in dedicated or topical *Journals*, and articles that you the readers write and would like to have published. With respect to the latter area, recognize that this is a peer-reviewed journal and that all articles need to meet our standards.

One thing is for sure. I have already received two death threats regarding the possibility that I might stop publishing Dr. Bob's column. That will not happen. Many of us, myself included, start reading the issues from the back to see what is on his mind then going to the front for the scientific part. Dr. Bob will continue for as long as he is willing to write his column.

So am I the new king? No, not hardly. I suppose that you could say I might be the prince or possibly heir to the throne. For now, I have a steep learning curve and will work hard to maintain the high level that Jack Conley showed for the past 22 years. I am delighted to be the editor of such a prestigious publication and will strive to serve our organization and dentistry as well as I can.

CDA