Commentary

President's Message: Passing the torch

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President's Message

The time has come for me to render custody of this organization into new hands. Because I am an emotional person, this is not going to be easy for me to say. But since this is the last chance that I will have to speak, without threat of being silenced by the chair, I will grasp the opportunity to offer a few final remarks.

First, I would like to pay tribute, and publicly acknowledge my great debt, to the wonderful people of the Executive Committee who have served with me these past two years. Each of you has performed in admirable fashion, and as a group you have made my life much easier. I liked each of you before we started, and I have come to love and respect you even more during this tenure. The membership owes you rousing applause for your efforts.

I would also like to thank most sincerely those of you who have borne the drudgery of committee work. All of the essential tasks were completed. Even to the few who have not labored too arduously at your committee assignments, I thank you. You have served a purpose, if only allowing your name to fill out an official-looking committee roster.

I want to thank especially the members of the Convention Committees of the past two years. You did a magnificent job in a most demanding mission. You have truly polished our image while providing us with meaningful programs. Thank you.

I should say a word about the stewardship of the group now leaving office. I think that our organization has grown taller, if not broader. Our membership has remained fairly constant, despite the loss of quite a number who could not withstand the adverse pressures that have beset our profession. Nevertheless, I think that we have gained in stature, for our principles have earned respect, even from some of our former critics. I feel that we have stood fast through some of the worst days. I am certain that the vast potential of oral myology, the seed that we have nurtured, cultivated, and protected over the recent drought-ridden years, will begin to flower in the not too distant future.

Perhaps I can share with you briefly something of my personal evaluation of our position as a profession—my own position paper. As with almost every new idea, we have been attacked, or simply ignored; the effects of such reactions have, in some areas, been devastating. There is no single cause for our distress, but rather there has been a most unfortunate combination of circumstances, all coming down on our heads at once, that has complicated our situation. For example, the best of you are judged by the work of charlatans who profess knowledges of our field. Decisions that affect us deeply are made, not on the basis of fact or reality, but because of political expediency. And we contribute to our troubles by our continued failure to provide definitive research, thus meekly defending our position with negative denials rather than attacking our tormentors with positive data. Of course, some of the best research would require the cooperation of a few skeptics, and being skeptical, they refuse to cooperate.

Nevertheless, I have the feeling that things are beginning to shift—partly through the sheer validity of our concepts. An increasing number of open minds are taking a close look at our work. I hope that you show them worthy results. For over twenty years, I have never for a moment doubted the ultimate acceptance of my chosen work. I feel the same assurance about I.A.O.M. If we, as an organization, can cherish our beliefs, if we maintain our integrity, if we bolster our confidence and self-respect, if we find strength in adversity—we will also find our rightful place in the scheme of things.

So now I pass the torch to Logan's capable hands. Keep the faith!

R.H. Barrett

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