Commentary

President's Award: Honoring Becky Winchell

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I detest award presentations where the speaker rambles on for 30 minutes, reciting all of the sterling deeds of the incipient recipient, but deviously contorting his words to avoid giving any clue as to the identity of the person being honored. Many accomplishments have full meaning only in the context of: who did them? Accordingly, I promise to reveal the name of the present laureate within the next 10 or 15 minutes.

Tonight, I am bestowing the President’s Award. Our By-Laws specify that this honor “may be given to a member who has displayed outstanding dedication and service to the Association. The selection will be at the discretion of the President.”

Now, I have never been known for discretion. But being smart enough to recognize this weakness, I appointed an Honors Committee two years ago, on the theory that, by this method, nothing would get done. I do feel that awards should not be passed out indiscriminately; they have no value when the supply exceeds the demand.

Sure enough, no awards were recommended last year. However, it became obvious this year that Becky Winchell’s long, loyal, and dedicated service to IAOM demanded recognition.

I must admit that I received the report of the Honors Committee with a nasty, “I told you so” reaction. I had attempted, in 1977, to create some awareness of Becky’s worth to our Association; one of my first official acts was to present her, and Zoe Strock, with rather limp bouquets as an indication of my personal gratitude for their unfailing and long-term assistance in a hundred matters. I even paid for the flowers myself!

Becky was not one of the original little group who founded IAOM, but only because no one told her about that first meeting. She was among the first small wave of recruits soon thereafter, and has maintained an unswerving dedication to our cause ever since.

I will not attempt to catalog all of Becky’s contributions to IAOM. Even the highlights are impressive. No sooner had Galen Peachey and I drawn up the original By-Laws than Becky was in there, smoothing and polishing. I think that she has never refused any request for her time and efforts, and the requests have been many. She has been the moving force behind every one of the Western regional rap sessions. She has served wholeheartedly on many committees, most recently as Chairman of the By-Laws Committee—in fact, that committee’s only Chairman since it was first constituted—and as Chairman of the Convention Committee responsible for the present meeting.

It has not always been the big assignments, or the obvious enterprises, that have been the measure of Becky Winchell’s worth, but rather the countless small obligations that she has taken on, often without even being asked, and never with a view to embellishing her own image. She has added a touch of class to our group.

And this steadfast devotion has continued despite some very shabby treatment, however unintended, from her fellow members. For example, when our blue brochure was first printed, containing a list of our officials, the office of Parliamentarian, and therefore Becky’s name, was omitted from the roster: and when it was later added—it was misspelled. At the first regular election when Becky was a candidate for reelection, that office was omitted from the ballot. It was a series of incidents such as these that drove Becky to begin introducing herself as “What’s-her-name.” In fact, I have a letter from her bearing that signature, a letter expressing some hurt, but no recrimination.

In view of the foregoing, I feel that the present recognition is long overdue. It is with great pleasure, and even greater vicarious pride, that I present the President’s Award to . . . What’s-her-name?

R.H. Barrett

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