

Historical Perspective

Through April, 1993, the *Journal of Endodontics* will continue to feature addresses and/or profiles of all 49 AAE past presidents. Begun in 1991, this feature is intended to give members insight into the history and movement of the AAE and endodontics as a specialty, as we approach the 50th Anniversary of the founding of the AAE.



Gerald C. Dietz, DDS
Past President, 1989-90

Serving the AAE as 47th President in 1989-90 was a wonderful experience. As a long time member, I had the pleasure of meeting and knowing all the Presidents of AAE with perhaps one exception and of observing first-hand the organization's change from a small dedicated endodontic study club to a powerful and viable specialty organization.

This change and growth didn't just happen and many exciting battles and strategies occurred over the years. Some are well-known and some remain obscure.

I've enjoyed reading the past presidents' comments in the "Historical Perspective" section of the *Journal of Endodontics* these last few months. They shed light on many events and recalled many pleasant memories. Now it's my turn to reflect on events just three years past. I feel that insufficient time has passed to warrant a detailed description of events so recent, except perhaps for one. So allow me to share an experience with you.

You will remember that the years 1980 to 1990 particularly were years of incredible change of direction, maturity and progress for AAE. So much had been accomplished in such a short time that my greatest concern was that there would be no major project or issue to tackle for my term as President. I had just about resigned myself to a year of business as usual, or "Keeping the Faith" as they say, when all of a sudden, "it" happened!

"It" was the denial of AAE's application for re-recognition as a specialty. Approval had been anticipated and expected, since the application was meticulously drafted by our blue ribbon task force composed

of Chairman Ed Osetek, Chuck Cunningham, Mike Heuer, Joe Maggio, Herb Schilder, Eric Hovland and Steve Schwartz. Long hours and hard work had gone into the application, and everyone felt it was equal to or better than the applications of the other specialty groups which had previously applied and been re-recognized. But something went terribly wrong, and so on May 15, 1989 - eight days into the new administration - our application for re-recognition was denied on two counts. We were also informed that the appeal process was structured so that a re-submission of our application would not and could not be considered for another eighteen months -- at the 1990 ADA meeting in Boston. This eighteen-month delay was cast in stone by the rules of the Council on Dental Education. AAE couldn't afford eighteen months of "twisting in the wind." The economic, litigious, educational, and political stakes would be enormous. Thus was born an "Issue" - a project, turmoil, something in which to become involved.

The news hit the Executive Committee, Dietz, McGraw, Tenca, Hovland and Fountain like a near death experience. We were reminded when, in 1957, endodontics' first application for recognition failed. A series of moratoriums and bureaucracy delayed its final approval until 1963 - six full years later. Could this happen again? Obviously this was serious business and something had to be done immediately. It was, and instead of eighteen months passing, just 185 days later, on November 8, 1989 by a vote of 417 - 0 in favor, endodontics was recognized as a specialty. An amazing turn of events. How did it happen?

The complete story of how that happened may never be told. Perhaps no one knows the entire story, or if it's known, perhaps parts of it should not be told to protect the participants. Nevertheless it is a compelling story. Some of the chapters in the story would be:

The Meeting in Chicago: Assembling the Team

The Executive Committee in emergency session met for two solid days and nights with Irma Kudo and most of the blue ribbon task force on re-recognition, as well as legal counsel.

The Quarterback

Although the team was enormously talented and totally experienced on the subject, unfortunately a new quarterback had to be substituted. The new quarterback (President of AAE) would know little about the process, the problem or the solution, but he would need to get in the game because only the President of AAE would have possible access to all the parties who could create the solution. This called for a giant leap of faith and cooperation on the part of the team.

I was reminded of and took courage from the experience of my old friend Earl Morral, All American quarterback at Michigan State in '53 - '55, who in 1972 stepped in at mid-season for the injured Bob Griese and for twelve games kept the Miami Dolphins unbeaten for the only time in NFL history, en route to a Super Bowl victory.

The Strategy

I. The two parts of the application that were being questioned had to be examined, reviewed and re-written.

See *Dietz*, next page

II. A strategy had to be developed to change a flawed re-recognition time schedule which would have delayed our re-recognition effort for eighteen months until the fall of 1990. We set Hawaii 1989 as our target date.

III. If successful in re-arranging the time schedule for Hawaii, which seemed impossible then, a strategy had to be developed to assure a positive vote by the delegates for our re-recognition.

All parts of the strategy had to be accomplished simultaneously since time was of the essence. Mike Heuer spent the Memorial Day weekend revising the sections in question for immediate distribution to the team for comments. The team would operate independently from all parts of the United States with Irma coordinating information in Chicago. Most of the contacts would be confidential and some bordered on covert. Each member of the team had goals to accomplish without ever knowing if the rest were doing their job or meeting with any success. They never gave up!

The Letter

The first product of the team was the drafting of a letter, the finest letter I've ever signed, which outlined all of the AAE's problems with re-recognition denial, all of the concerns with delay in the review process, proper reminders of the Association's good record with organized dentistry and in my view strong demands for action. It became the road map for our strategy and focused our mode of action.

It was drafted and redrafted in committee with help by phone and by fax from committee members not in attendance. Faxes were new and not available in many places, and I'll never forget faxing an early draft to a 7 Eleven store in Boston where Herb Schilder had walked to receive it and later refaxed his input. What a team! It was written in final form by a truly gifted and inspired writer who shall remain nameless for now. I hope that letter is in our archives!

The Agenda Meeting of the Council on Dental Education

One obstacle after another was overcome until a glimmer of hope emerged with the possible inclusion of the AAE's request for a change in the review procedure by the Council to appear on their last monthly meeting agenda before the ADA meeting in November, 1989. Upon hearing that the petition would not make the agenda, the AAE President flew to Chicago and with your Executive Director appeared, uninvited and unannounced, at the Council meeting door and, as they say, "by hook or by crook" lobbied the motion onto the agenda. We then disappeared for hours until we finally heard that our new revised application would be rescheduled for immediate review, speeding up the process by twelve months.

The Meeting

As part of the reconsideration of the application, the President of AAE - me, the Executive Director - Irma, and someone else of our choosing - Mike Heuer, would meet with the Council on Dental Education's Subcommittee on Specialty Re-recognition in Chicago to be questioned concerning our case for re-recognition. Knowing that I would be at the meeting with *the* walking encyclopedia of dental procedure and bureaucracy on my left, Mike Heuer, and the most charming and most respected Executive Director in dentistry, Irma Kudo on my right, I felt freed up to prepare for what I considered a crucial sales job.

To get in the mood, I pasted the picture of the chairman of the committee on the mirror on the wall in my hotel room and practiced the INTRODUCTION, QUALIFICATION, PRESENTATION and CLOSE for my "sales pitch" while gazing at his picture to be sure I would be comfortable and convincing the next day. We passed our orals and the rest of the story is history.

Networking and lobbying helped to gain the delegates' unanimous support for re-recognition on November 8, 1989. A long story, but only in skeleton form with the hope that those of you who read it will work to see that our specialty remains ever strong and organized for the time when the next crisis strikes, as well it will.

Other memories or highlights of the year were:

- Irma's ten-year anniversary surprise party in Hawaii with all her family attending
- First ever IFEA meeting in Mexico City
- Publication and subsequent demise of "Endodontics for the GP"
- Annual Session in Las Vegas
- President's Messages in the JOE
- Presidential visits to the districts and affiliates
- Delivery of the Opening Session breakfast oration and the decision to destroy the recorded tape because of the strongly worded message

It was an exciting year but just one of fifty others in our dynamic organization history.

Dr. Gerald Dietz is in private practice in Birmingham, Michigan where he is the managing partner of Endodontic Associates, P.C. - a group of 16 Endodontists. He now spends his free time reducing his golf handicap from 14 to 7.

Currently, Dr. Dietz serves as National Chair of the R&E Foundation's fund-raising efforts.