

# We Did It Our Way

Ten years ago I was privileged to become the editor of *Operative Dentistry*. Since I had been both a reviewer and associate editor for many years, I thought I knew what I was getting into, but the reality was that I didn't really have a clue. My entire tenure as editor has been a continuous learning experience and my life has been truly enriched by the process. So, before I step down, I thought that I might share some of this knowledge with you.

## 1. Don't believe everything you are told.

Dick McCoy, my predecessor, told me that being editor wasn't all that hard and would, at most, take up about a half-day a week of my time. Now Dick is a very honest man and probably believed what he was saying but, even then, senility must have been setting in. Of course, the other possibility (and probably the most likely) was that I am just a lot slower than Dr McCoy. The reality for me, however, was another 40+ hour work week tacked on to my regular responsibilities. My wife has commented over the years that most of her contact with me is talking to the back of my head as I stare at my computer screen. Strangely, she doesn't seem to find this arrangement all that bad.

## 2. You get by with a little help from your friends.

Moving a journal from the west coast where it had been conceived, birthed and spent the first 25 formative years of its life, to the cornfields of Indiana, could have been a very traumatic experience for everyone involved. Fortunately, the entire Seattle group went far above and beyond anything we could have expected in making the transition as painless as possible. The professionalism and friendship of Dick McCoy, Marty Anderson, Dave Bales, Ian Hamilton, Darlyne Bales, Kate Flynn-Connolly and all the others who went out of their way to provide the invaluable information and assistance our "wet-behind-the-ears" group needed, can never be repaid with a simple "thank you"...but I've learned that real friends don't need the words. They understand, and that IS what friends are for.

## 3. Up with the organization.

We are not an independent journal, but the publishing arm of several professional dental academies. The support we have received from our sponsoring organiza-

tions has been phenomenal. The Academy of Operative Dentistry, the American Academy of Gold Foil Operators and the Academy of RV Tucker Study Clubs have been extremely generous with their time, suggestions and promotion of their journal. Our existence is due to the wisdom and foresight of Dr Jose Medina, who founded the *Journal of the American Academy of Gold Foil Operators* in 1958 and Dr. Ian Hamilton, who created *Operative Dentistry*, as its successor in 1974. I will always be grateful to these academies for the opportunity to serve as editor of this distinguished journal. It has been a great honor and an experience I will treasure for the rest of my life.

## 4. You have to get it down on paper (OK...or on a web page).

We owe a lot to our publisher and to Keith Parsons and all the professionals at Allen Press, who take our copy, catch our errors and print, assemble and mail *Operative Dentistry* around the world every other month and load the online journal to the server. They are the ones who not only make sure that you have your journal in good shape and on time, but work tirelessly behind the scenes managing manuscripts and communicating with authors and reviewers to ensure the timeliness and accuracy you have come to expect.

## 5. You're nobody 'til somebody reads you.

Without readers, a journal can't exist. You are the consumers whom we must satisfy on a regular basis. We hope we are succeeding, and we seem to be, with a readership that is growing every year and spans more than 69 countries outside the US. The move to providing an online as well as a print edition has been well received, especially by our institutional subscribers, and we are providing them with a Virtual Network that allows access on up to 10 campuses, with student and staff secure sign-on from remote locations. Hopefully, this will continue to generate increased interest and potential for additional subscribers over time. Please remember that all of our work is for you, and we welcome suggestions and criticisms that will help us provide a better journal. Considering size, content (no advertising) and quality (see below), we feel that *Operative Dentistry* is a tremendous bargain...so

tell all your friends, we can always use more subscribers.

### 6. Quality is as quality does.

For me, it has been a continuous tightrope act in terms of the content of *Operative Dentistry*. Considering the spectrum of our readership, how much research versus clinical techniques and case reports do we publish? We have tried to keep a balance, with quality as our primary goal. I think we have succeeded in the quality, if not always in the balance. *Operative Dentistry* has achieved a position as the premier journal for our discipline, and I believe that the high volume of manuscript submissions from internationally recognized researchers is verification of our status. We sincerely appreciate all of our authors, work very hard to earn their respect and their submissions and strive to provide appropriate critiques and suggestions for improving their manuscripts. The Institute for Scientific Information, which evaluates journals from over 3,000 publishers in 60 countries, currently ranks us 22<sup>nd</sup> in impact factor out of hundreds in our ISI category. This places us in the top half of ranked periodicals...higher than the *Journal of the American Dental Association*, the *British Dental Journal*, *Quintessence International* and the *International Dental Journal*. Not bad for a specialized, limited distribution publication! We can also take pride in the accuracy of the journal. Every reference in each article is compared with Advanced Medline listings to ensure that author, title, date of publication, journal volume, issue and page numbers are correct and that any citation in the text of an article is listed in the bibliography and vice versa. We continue to provide color at no expense to the author and publish all accepted papers within one year of submission. There are downsides, however. We receive so many manuscripts that, to keep with our policy of publishing accepted papers within a year, our rejection rate is around 70%. This means that we must be extremely selective and some good papers will not be printed in *Operative Dentistry*. In addition, many authors and readers seem to think that we are a much larger group than we really are. Expectations for quick responses and turnaround times are occasionally unrealistic for the few people who handle these requests. Fortunately, most seem to understand after we explain things to them.

### 7. Keep your friends close and your Editorial Board closer.

The Journal Editorial Board is responsible for the outstanding quality of our journal. This group of almost 150 individuals from private practice, academics, research, the military and organized dentistry provide critical reviews and suggestions for improvement of all submitted manuscripts. They spend countless hours on top of already busy schedules to provide this service to

the Academies and our readers. There are no words to adequately thank them for their dedication...and, unfortunately, no money to pay them. Just remember, folks, altruism is its own reward.

### 8. There is no "I" in TEAM. (\*NOTE—THIS IS THE BIG ONE)

Now there is a hackneyed cliché if there ever was one...but, from my experience, no truer words were ever spoken. I have never been a believer in micro-management. If you have good people, let them do their jobs however they see fit, and give them the authority that should go with responsibility. I have been blessed with an editorial team that, in my opinion, is the best in the business. I can never thank them enough for their true friendship, honesty, candor, willingness to do whatever is necessary to get the job done right and dedication to excellence in all they do. While I could write a book on this group, there just isn't room here, but I feel obligated to at least give a brief nod to each individual:

- Tim Carlson, Managing Editor, who keeps track of all the fiscal operations of the journal and maintains the viability of the entire publishing process (with a tremendous amount of help from Joan Matis and his Assistant Managing Editors, Joel Wagoner, Bob Keene and Kevin Doyle, who give needed financial advice and encouragement, whenever solicited).

- Bruce Matis and Jeff Platt (along with Ed DeSchepper and Dick McCoy, who have stepped down), Associate Editors, who advise, review, edit, critique, correct, cajole and generally make sure that everything gets done on time. Bruce has also done a magnificent job of managing our Corporate Sponsorship program.

- Karen Wilczewski, Editorial Associate, who handles the entire formatting, layout and production of each issue of the journal. Her talent and professional eye are responsible for the look, tone and content of the finished publication. We work closely together on each issue, and her input is always insightful, her humor is greatly appreciated and her support is unfaltering.

- Joan Matis, Subscription Manager, Editorial Assistant and HEART and SOUL of the journal, who works with everyone to make sure that our financial affairs are handled properly and function smoothly, and our authors, subscribers, reviewers and staff are kept happy. Special recognition and appreciation are due Joan for her enthusiasm, ingenuity and proactive efforts toward enhancing our subscription base. She works tirelessly to streamline our operation and continues to develop subscription-producing ideas.

- Kevin Matis, who was almost single-handedly responsible for getting *Operative Dentistry* online and who continues to oversee this enterprise. He has also

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gained a new position with the journal as the Director of Continuing Education—his dedicated efforts have made it possible for us to receive acceptance as an ADA/CERP provider, and he is on a first-name basis with all of the Allen Track people, since he is the go-to guy for Allen Track. Kevin is gradually assuming the duties of Joan and will eventually take over her multiple positions.

- Jeremy Matis, who has the job of Webmaster for *Operative Dentistry*; he also serves as a proofreader for the journal. His insight and skill in all areas have been a tremendous help.

It is an amazing, talented group of people, but I love them most because they have always let me THINK I'm in charge...

### **9. Don't ever rest on your laurels. It will become very uncomfortable in a short time.**

One thing that will destroy a publication quickly is complacency. We have tried to make sure that we stay fresh and keep coming up with new ways to improve both the journal and the services we offer. Among the many improvements and additions to the journal during the last 10 years, have been:

Corporate Sponsorship to provide increased revenue without advertising, a new "look" and layout for the journal, a new website, a decrease in publication time to one year for accepted papers, the use of color as a regular feature, creating text-searchable CD's of all issues of both the *Journal of the American Academy of Gold Foil Operators* and *Operative Dentistry*, the addition of the Academy of RV Tucker Study Clubs as a sponsoring academy, the introduction of *Operative Dentistry* online, making all manuscript submissions and reviews electronic through the Allen Track Internet system, establishing consortium agreements with distribution groups in Brazil and India, receiving ADA/CERP accreditation as a continuing education provider and continuing improvement in the overall management of the journal and its finances. Wow, we have been busy!

### **10. Fun is where you find it.**

One of the most enjoyable duties for me has been writing my editorials (not that they aren't a real pain to finish at times...particularly after 10 years). It's always fun to be able to express your opinions to your

colleagues from a distance, so they can't easily get their hands around your neck.

### **11. Breaking up IS hard to do.**

As demanding a job as this has been, it was truly a labor of love and I would be lying if I didn't say that I'm going to miss it...a lot. You can't put 10 years of your life into something you believe in and not feel some regret as you close that chapter. However, I have been blessed with so many friendships that will endure and so many marvelous memories, that I will always look back on my editorship with pride and a sense of both accomplishment and gratitude. It has been an amazing ride!

### **12. If you have to leave, make sure you leave everything in good hands.**

I am very excited about our new Editor, Dr Jeff Platt. Jeff has been a friend and colleague for many years and has excellent administrative abilities, dedication, honesty, work ethic and people skills. He has served admirably as one of my Associate Editors and consistently demonstrated his strengths as a reviewer and an adept problem-solver who is open to constructive criticism and others' ideas. He is both a leader and a team player, and his credentials include considerable research experience and extensive contacts in the research and academic sectors, as well as organized dentistry and the private practice community. Most importantly, Dr Platt is familiar with the many aspects of publishing this journal, has been participating in all editorial decisions during the past year and has the confidence of the current Editorial team, most of whom will remain in their present positions. I know that Dr Platt will continue the tradition of excellence that *Operative Dentistry* has enjoyed and will bring new perspective, vigor and vision to the journal.

### **13. Say goodbye, already, and shut up!**

Finally, my sincere appreciation to my team, the academics and all the individuals who make the journal what it is...but a special thanks to all of you for sticking with *Operative Dentistry*. I hope you agree that the last 10 years have been a job well done and that the future holds tremendous promise.

Michael A Cochran  
Editor