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Final Reflections

MA Gaston

Mary Alice Gaston is emeritus professor of dental hygiene at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center, a past president of the American Dental Hygienists' Association, and current editor-in-chief of the Journal of Dental Hygiene.

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As I prepare this editorial in late December of 2005, I am keenly aware that this is my final opportunity to speak to *Journal of Dental Hygiene* readers as Editor-in-Chief. While I have looked forward to retiring from this position for some time, the decision to give up leadership of the *Journal* was not easy. I suppose other former *Journal* editors who really loved the work must have had similar feelings upon leaving the position. Furthermore, I have recently found myself wondering if as editor I did everything I could have done to make each issue of the *Journal* the very best possible. I can only hope that the record will speak kindly of my efforts. After reflecting back on my experience as editor, I have chosen a few final thoughts to share with you hoping that they might be helpful to those of you who are responsible for maintaining the integrity of the *Journal of Dental Hygiene*.

When I was appointed editor, I had no idea I would stay in the position for seven and a half years. While I did not give much thought in the beginning to how long I would be the editor, I did think a lot about the importance of the *Journal of Dental Hygiene* to our profession's continuing growth and development. I remembered that in 1926 one of the first things the newly established American Dental Hygienists' Association (ADHA) did was to establish a professional journal to keep its members informed. For these reasons, I realized that becoming the *Journal of Dental Hygiene* editor was an enormous responsibility and an extraordinary privilege that only a very few fortunate people experience. Above all, I knew that I had best not mess up in such a highly visible position. There are many reasons to believe that the *Journal* is stronger now than it was when I took over as its editor July 1, 1997. I do not claim the credit for this, but share it with others such as the ADHA talented staff editors, dedicated members of the *Journal* review board, authors, and ADHA leaders and members who offered encouragement all along the way. I encourage everyone to give the same level of support to the new editor-in-chief as she takes on the challenges of leading the *Journal* forward over the coming years. The knowledge of your support should give her the confidence she will need to accomplish some of the important initiatives that will make our *Journal* even better.

As editor, my primary goal from the very beginning was to see that the *Journal of Dental Hygiene* fulfilled its purpose as the ADHA refereed, scientific publication, and the dental hygiene profession's premier research journal. I was particularly sensitive to the need to publish reports of original and innovative work that added to the dental hygiene body of knowledge through scientific inquiry in basic, applied, and clinical research. In recent years I was more and more impressed by the public health related scientific studies and projects being undertaken by dental hygienists in various settings all over the world. I felt strongly the importance of documenting such work in the literature, and therefore, encouraged individual investigators to submit their reports for publication in *JDH*. This part of my work was very satisfying because I was privileged to read such reports before everyone else. It was really exciting to me personally to know who was doing what kind of work, where, and when. I believe it is urgent that this dental hygiene research be encouraged, continued, and reported in *JDH*. I know that our new editor-in-chief feels a strong commitment to continue to focus on this primary purpose of the *Journal of Dental Hygiene* and I hope you will support her efforts in this regard.

I want to talk a bit about the *Journal of Dental Hygiene* format. No one is more aware than I that changing to the electronic format had a dramatic affect on some of our readers and may have resulted in fewer people actually reading the *Journal* regularly. While I know that the electronic format is here to stay, I am confident that the new editor-in-chief plans to explore ways to ease the transition from paper copy to online copy and to increase *JDH* readership. The major point I think we should remember is that the *Journal* contains high quality dental hygiene scientific reports, regardless of whether it is delivered in paper or online format. Yes, it may take a little more effort to access those reports online, but accessing them is worth the effort. It may also mean that dental hygiene educators will have to require their students to regularly access the *Journal* online to complete reading assignments as a part of regular classroom and clinical education so that they will develop the habit of reading it online while they are students. It also may mean that the ADHA will have to develop ways to remind subscribers when issues are published and available. We simply must read the latest dental hygiene research being reported in the *Journal of Dental Hygiene* because that is where the majority of such research is being published. We owe it to our profession, don't we?

Finally, I want our readers and ADHA leaders and members to know what a pleasure and honor it has been to serve as editor. From the very first, you welcomed me into your hearts and gave me your complete trust and support. I will always be grateful for the kindness and the encouragement you expressed to me throughout my tenure. I thank the members of the editorial review board for their commitment to the *Journal* and to mentoring authors. I particularly applaud you for completing an unbiased review of each manuscript, and for the fact that you do this work as a service to our profession. I appreciate the cooperative attitude of the many authors who have submitted manuscripts during my tenure. I thank you because you have taken our suggestions and criticisms as constructive and have used them wisely, making our job easier. I want to especially thank each of the ADHA staff editors who have worked with me on the *Journal of Dental Hygiene*. You have each been different, but each very talented and a pleasure to work with.

Over the last month, I've thought of a scene in the movie, "Lonesome Dove," in which the colorful character, Gus, lay dying from wounds sustained in a brutal fight with the Indians. In that scene, Gus knew he was near the end of his life and, being a very brave man, was willing to accept the facts as they were. To express his life and how he had lived it, he said, "It's been one hell of a ride." While I certainly don't think I'm nearly at the end of my life, I may very well have completed the last big assignment of my dental hygiene career when I retired as editor of the *Journal of Dental Hygiene*. Therefore, like Gus, I'm pleased to say, "My dental hygiene career has been one heck of a ride."

My final wish is that Rebecca Wilder will treasure the position of editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Dental Hygiene* and that she will be encouraged by the support of her peers in dental hygiene as I have been over the past seven and a half years.