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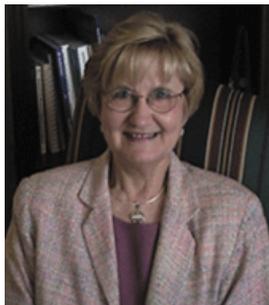
A Tribute to Our Friend

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The American Dental Hygienists' Association (ADHA) central office staff is made up of highly competent individuals who work together for the benefit of our profession. Sometimes it seems as though people take positions with ADHA and stay only long enough to gain experience and build a reputation before moving on to better paying positions somewhere else. This can't be prevented and is an expected part of doing business in today's world.



Fortunately for ADHA and for our profession, such people bring their energy and creativity to their positions and are serious about doing a good job. With rare exception, they readily accept appropriate responsibility for the function and successful operation of their particular division. In general, they are not satisfied with maintaining the status quo, and they look for innovative ways to improve our processes. Since becoming editor of the *Journal of Dental Hygiene*, I have worked with several young staff editors in the Division of Communications and have most certainly regretted losing each one of them.

The roles and work assignments of this essential second tier of ADHA staff are determined by the division directors, or senior staff, who are responsible to the executive director for managing specific components of the day-to-day business of the association, and for implementing the decisions of the Board of Trustees (BOT) and House of Delegates. Whenever a senior ADHA staff member or division director leaves, there is an immediate and broad-ranging effect on other ADHA staff and member volunteers.

Because I have been actively involved in ADHA business for many years, I, like some of you, understand that some turnover of division directors is unavoidable and is to be expected. Even so, I was unprepared for the departure of Rosetta Gervasi, director of the Division of Communications. Actually, I nearly lost my breath when, in early December, Ms. Gervasi notified the division that she would be leaving ADHA at the end of December 2004. I couldn't immediately visualize what it would be like to work without her wise and capable guidance. At this time, I'm still adjusting to the reality that we will simply carry on.

To compensate for their loss, ADHA communications division staff joined hands and are conducting business and meeting their obligations, as others have done when other division directors have moved on. Now that Rosetta Gervasi is no longer with us, I believe it is appropriate to pay tribute to her for the significant contributions she made to ADHA and to dental hygiene.

Rosetta left her position at the American Dental Assistants' Association in the spring of 1988 to join ADHA as director of the Division of Communications. For the past 17 years, she has influenced every aspect of the association's business. I had the unique opportunity of working with her as an ADHA officer and president and, more recently, as the editor of the *Journal* for the past seven years. I have admired Rosetta for her great talent, keen intuition, and extraordinary political sensitivity. She knew when to press ahead with an idea and when to stand in place, both extraordinary skills that work well at ADHA. Let me review only a few of her accomplishments, so that you can view Rosetta through the eyes of those who know her well and recognize her great talent.

Creating and refining *Access* magazine for ADHA was perhaps Rosetta's greatest achievement. For many years, ADHA members expressed their desire for a timely news publication that would give them current clinical practice information, plus news about issues concerning the profession throughout the country. With Rosetta's lead, ADHA members got their wish. *Access*, first appearing in a tabloid format in March 1987, was converted to the newsmagazine format with Rosetta's guidance in August 1988. *Access* has received public recognition and awards for journalistic excellence several times over the past 17 years, and it is a benefit cherished by ADHA members.

Rosetta's editorials in *Access* touched all of us because they were remarkably insightful and provocative. You see, Rosetta was often the point person in our profession's skirmishes with organized dentistry. She protected our officers by writing biting editorials and raising difficult questions that dental hygienists found it hard to openly explore because of possible threats to their jobs. Rosetta always took the position that she was a dental hygiene outsider just stating her views, questioning current practices, and lobbying for change in the oral health care system. Dental hygienists everywhere applauded each time one of her inspiring editorials appeared in print.

As for the *Journal*, Rosetta supported it throughout her tenure at ADHA. She recognized the *Journal's* unique status as the dental hygiene profession's premiere peer-reviewed scientific publication. I can't speak for previous *Journal* editors, but I can say that, without fail, Rosetta respected my position and always deferred to my judgment concerning *Journal* content. We enjoyed a collegial relationship in which we each respected the position of the other. Rosetta took care of the business of the *Journal* and provided staff support, permitting me to do my job unrestrained by resource concerns.

Early in her tenure at ADHA, Rosetta recognized that the *Journal* publication process would run more smoothly if the editor position became a staff position, reporting to the communications division director rather than directly to the BOT. The BOT approved this administrative change, and it has worked well for the past 15 years. Perhaps it has worked well because Rosetta was sincerely respectful of the position of the dental hygienist editor of the *Journal*. She often reminded me that I was the *Journal* content expert, especially when we were trying to resolve a politically charged issue, while at the same time protecting the peer-review process. I can never forget her favorite phrase: "It's your call, Mary Alice." I grew to appreciate Rosetta's strong commitment to dental hygiene's professional goals, and commend her for her willingness to support ADHA programs designed to promote public awareness of dental hygienists.

Under Rosetta's leadership, the materials ADHA produces each year for National Dental Hygiene Month evolved into visually pleasing depictions of dental hygienists' contribution to the nation's oral health. Rosetta supported all ADHA initiatives to bring greater visibility to dental hygienists and completed all special projects that were assigned to her division. These outstanding projects included implementing the toll-free consumer hotline, creating information packets for use in combating preceptorship training of dental hygienists, developing and implementing the first ADHA Web site in 1993, producing several important position papers, including those on managed care, dental prophylaxis, and tooth polishing, and producing a consumer brochure explaining the link between oral and systemic health and diseases.

I am quite sure many of you could add examples to this short list of Rosetta's contributions. I want to leave you with thoughts of two accomplishments that will always set Rosetta apart from the ordinary in my mind. First, Rosetta is a lover of art and expressed that love when she was put in charge of the most recent updating and redecorating of the Chicago ADHA office on Michigan Avenue, a task far above her usual division director duties. Finally, Rosetta sometimes helped officers draft important speeches to be delivered in settings not always friendly to the position of dental hygiene. She did

so for me in 1990 when ADHA was invited by the American Dental Association to speak during a meeting to discuss dental workforce issues.

The night before the meeting, I didn't sleep much because I wrote and rewrote and practiced my speech over and over. Although I made numerous changes to Rosetta's draft, I kept the phrase that defined the day for the dental hygienists present in the very large conference room packed with dentists. There was a part of the speech in which we wanted to make it clear that ADHA would always adamantly oppose preceptorship training of dental hygienists, and that it was not a suitable alternative for increasing the dental hygiene workforce. I took Rosetta's wording and declared to all that the concept of preceptorship training for dental hygienists was a "dinosaur" that had outlived its usefulness. The dental hygienists who were there cheered loudly in support of the dinosaur statement, and they still laugh whenever we recall that speech and that day. Of course, the opposing majority group was highly offended.

I still view that afternoon as one of the funniest events of my presidency and, to this day, attribute the success of my speech to Rosetta Gervasi's marvelous wit and extraordinary grasp of the English language. Yes, I owe her much, and so does the dental hygiene profession. I wish our friend Rosetta the very best in this career change and in whatever she does in the future. She will be missed.