

Moving to a New Rhythm

Following is the text of Dr. Kalebjian's outgoing president's speech to the 2003 House of Delegates, given Nov. 8.



When I last stood before you, I spoke of composing a plan, of creating organizational rhythm, of producing a balanced “sound” for CDA. I spoke of how the music of our profession would play. *Since then, there has been the sound of music!* I am happy to report that our members and a significant number of non-members have begun to hear the clear melody of the California Dental Association. Today, it is especially relevant to remember the classic Rodgers and Hammerstein musical entitled “*The Sound of Music*” for within the story is a scene when the VonTrapp family members conclude their final performance. One by one, they step from the performance stage, and in the dark of night prepare to leave the homeland. Today the CDA family begins the final performance of the CDA year. While none of us has any plans to leave the homeland, it will be time for me to step from the CDA stage on which I have had the privilege to be. I am grateful for the opportunity, and ready to repeat the lyrics and song of the VonTrapp family. *However*, before I do, let us reflect for a moment on where we were, and where we went during 2003 ...

The year began with more questions than there were answers, and among some individuals, there was more doubt than confidence. There was uncertainty and a

list of unresolved issues. However, to CDA's credit, there was an ingrained organizational optimism.

The first three months of the new CDA year brought closure for two important areas of activity within the association. Settlement was finally reached on the Proposition 65 consumer notice after two years of protracted legal involvement. Secondly, the seven-member Executive Director Search Team concluded its seven-month effort on a foggy Sacramento day in January. The board hired Mr. Peter DuBois as the new CDA Executive Director.

It was very soon thereafter that volunteer leadership began to spend quality time on the priority issues that define the profession and not on matters of management. Suddenly, CDA began to function with an organizational rhythm! The Board of Trustees quickly acclimated to the new focus—discussing issues such as the statewide peer review process; a global approach and strategy regarding amalgam and wastewater; and, professional ethics.

The subsequent organizational direction has been outstanding:

- Dr. Dave Famili has led development of a stronger statewide peer review process,
- Mr. DuBois has promoted an amalgam strategy collaborative with the ADA, and
- Finally, 10 demographically diverse CDA members will fashion an Ethics Code that is not only relevant to the 21st centu-



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ry, but also worthy of full enforcement by **this** association. CDA **is** the trusted source. Never forget that the U.S. Supreme Court gave us the victory and the ability to remain the trusted profession. *Now it is up to us to carry out that charge.*

As the year progressed and the external legislative agenda unfolded, the association was reminded that in today's world—nothing is ever easy. The Restorative Techniques (RT) examination as a separate gateway for licensure was sunset in good faith (and hopefully for the final time). On another front, an effort to place dental assisting scope of practice into legislation was pre-empted with regulatory action by the Dental Board of California. Next year, CDA will commit further time and effort to establish the appropriate dental assisting duties into statute. At the same time, we will continue to protect on-the-job experience as a training alternative for dental assistants, preserving an important avenue of entry into the dental workplace.

In 2003, we also learned that the added twist of the recall of a governor, coupled with a \$38 billion state budget shortfall creates added challenges. Substantial volunteer and staff resources were consumed in the effort to save the adult Denti-Cal program. A special CDA workgroup analyzed every proposal, and we even came up with a few on our own. In the end, adult Denti-Cal was preserved, but with mixed results accompanied by DHS regulations, which jeopardize provider

participation. **Access to care again becomes the issue.**

The same mixed result was true with CDA-sponsored legislation to allow debt-burdened dental students an opportunity to acquire an interim license to practice hygiene. There was unanimous support from the

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Legislature, but in the end, it was derailed by recall politics. Next year we will watch a new governor and we will watch the 2004 World Olympic games. In matters of good legislation (such as AB539), we are hopeful that the Olympic games will be the *only* games observed by Californians.

As the year progressed, CDA was also introspective. A special project was undertaken under the auspices of

CDA Holding Company. A committee of 10, in consultation with PriceWaterhouseCoopers, considered alternative scenarios to enhance efficiencies of the 1201/TDIC relationship. The 1201/TDIC Organizational Strategy has been advanced and offers strategic and operational benefits for your serious consideration.

Last but not least, your association has considered licensure alternatives, which have potential to refocus energy and resources that will improve our profession. The team created to respond to last year's House resolution 26RC was broadly chosen. It was placed under the guidance of Dr. Stan Surabian and the Council on Education and Professional Relations. If we are truly **here to seize the moments that define us and the profession**, then we must say "No" to an out-of-control licensing process which finds patients, and auxiliaries leveraging their services to the highest bidder; we must rethink the arbitrary benchmarks of current testing practices; we must reject our parallel with cosmetology as the only professions to use live patients for licensure testing; and finally, we must question how exactly it is that the current process "protects the public."

We would do well to cast aside the status quo of 70 years, and incorporate validity, not chance; respect, not burden, into the process, which introduces hard-working, bright, young professionals into dentistry. **I urge you to seize this moment.**

Ladies and gentlemen, add to my list conferences and sessions, ADA programs, for-profit subsidiaries, the CDA Foundation, Cal-DPAC, and there you have the essence of the 2003 CDA year. For many in the cast, the year felt like a performance without an intermission—but the “show must go on”—and it did. It went on because of the spirit of volunteer leadership, the administrative know-how of our talented executive team, the committed and dedicated staff we enjoy at all levels.

How was our performance in 2003? Perhaps, performance is judged by a net change in membership, or measured by the stabilization of membership dues. Maybe it is judged by advocacy, which improves the practice environment, or just measured by the public perception that CDA is the “trusted source.” Whatever the case, whatever the final judgment, we are poised for the final act, known as the 2003 House of Delegates.

As we play out that final act this weekend, we begin with a curtain call of the 2003 cast. Importantly, it is *not* the lead actors or actresses who are front and center, who always deserve the curtain call crescendo of applause, *but all of you* who work hard at your components and represent all members of this fine association. You hold their proxy on the future of this profession. I invite you now, as part of the cast, to listen to the music, and draw your own conclusions about “The Performance of 2003” and the future of dentistry. **CDA**