
Executive Director's Annual Report—1980–81

The annual reports I have presented to you in previous years have dwelled primarily on the Society's financial condition and management problems. With each year that passes, however, your financial affairs grow stronger and your managerial problems diminish. Although both of these areas have been dominant concerns in the past, I can give you every assurance that they have become manageable and that as a concerned member you can, with confidence, shift your attention to other areas of greater urgency to AmSECT.

Having given you these comforting assurances, I can also tell you that the 1980–81 fiscal year was fully capable of being disastrous. The recession that began in 1980, and which continues on even now, announced itself to AmSECT in various dramatic ways. For example, the advertising revenue from the Journal went into a precipitous decline almost to the month that the recession began. Thus, what had been a profitable operation for two consecutive years is now only barely breaking even.

As a second example, we had expected revenue from our corporate sponsor program to increase this year. Instead, it remained at the same level as last year. In some respects we were fortunate not to have experienced a decline in corporate sponsor revenue because we are aware that several companies, who themselves were coping with the recession, had to make hard choices regarding the continued support of AmSECT. I believe it is important for you to know that the majority of these organizations voted to stay with the program when they had compelling financial arguments not to do so. For this reason I believe we owe them special thanks.

We are weathering this recession primarily because the Society started to place its affairs in order two years before the recession appeared. You will be proud to know that today AmSECT has the highest membership in its history and is adding new members every day. I interpret this to mean that our old members believe that membership is worthwhile, and that new members are being attracted because of what the Society is doing.

I have also been pleased to hear favorable comments from industry. Many representatives from leading companies have unilaterally stated that AmSECT is

better organized than ever and that the Society's professional activities are impressive.

As your Executive Director I am always mainly concerned about your internal management and financial condition. However, today I have something more important to call to your attention.

Someday we may look back at 1980–81 and refer to it as the year of the recession. I hope, however, that the recession will fade into oblivion and that this period will be remembered as the Year of Healing.

My staff and I have now served you for three years. During this period I can tell you categorically that the relationship of AmSECT with the American Board of Cardiovascular Perfusion has been the greatest source of consternation and concern to us. Of all the Society's problems, including the financial and managerial ones, this one seemed to defy a satisfactory resolution.

We were overwhelmed with the differences of opinion held by representatives of both organizations. On any given issue positions were taken that were in diametric opposition. Seemingly, there was never any middle ground, and in every instance the case for and against a certain proposal was argued with some passion.

As a general statement, virtually every conflict situation was ultimately rooted in a concern over the integrity and/or equity of the certification process the profession has created. Over a period of time we came to understand that certification and its preservation is probably the most important issue to you as a professional group. It affects your economic livelihood, but of no less importance, it affects your own self-image and stature within the allied health field. We understand better now what you have tried to build over the years, and why you seem to be especially sensitive to any proposal that might undermine what you have achieved.

This time last year during our annual meeting in Philadelphia, I held private discussions with a representative of the American Medical Association. I was informed that the AMA was rapidly reaching the end of its patience with the inability of AmSECT and the American Board to complete the procedural work necessary to establishing a new perfusion training

program accreditation apparatus. I shared his frustration level. However, acting more on faith than on anything concrete, I assured him that I believed the two groups would begin to work cooperatively toward a common end.

I am pleased to report that six months later AmSECT and the American Board collaborated successfully and all the procedural work was completed. Soon a new organization called the Joint Review Committee For Perfusion will assume control of the accreditation function.

A second volatile and devious issue is the matter of the April, 1981 deadline for enrolling in the certification program administered by the American Board. On this matter the organized surgeon groups were particularly concerned. Yet I can report to you that on January 25, 1981, representatives from AmSECT and the American Board met together with representatives from STS and AATS to explain this matter, as one of several areas of concern to them. I believe I can fairly describe their reaction to the deadline as one of general approval and tacit acceptance. As we departed the meeting room we were applauded, which I mention only to convey to you some sense of how well the discussion seemed to have been received.

Both of these cases I have recited would not have been possible if AmSECT and the American Board had failed to join together in a common effort. The two organizations did join hands, which begs the question of how this all came about.

In my opinion it happened because your President, Larry Cavanaugh, took the initiative to open lines of communications with the American Board and, once opened, tried to sustain them. Working quietly behind the scenes, he expended a great deal of personal time and effort to create an environment in which agreements could be developed. His overtures were in turn reciprocated by the American Board.

Mainly because of President Cavanaugh's statesmanlike activities, some of the accumulated wounds

were quietly healed. In my opinion, in the years to come, you will remember his presidency as one of reasoning, showing clearly what can be accomplished with patience, moderation, and a willingness to deal with problems with a modicum of objectivity.

There is one thing I have learned from three years contact with you perfusionists—you have an absolute genius for creating crises. I am mightily impressed with your talent in magnifying insignificant issues to the proportion of world problems. What's starting to worry me now is that your National Office staff is beginning to exhibit these same tendencies.

In any event, let me close on what I hope is a positive note. While not becoming complacent, take a moment to enjoy what you have. And here's what you have, after only nineteen years:

- A society that is growing
- A society that is in a sound financial and administrative condition
- A Continuing Education program that is imaginative, improving, and admired by other organizations
- A profession that is officially recognized as a member of the allied health family by the American Medical Association.
- An established certification process
- An accreditation process that is positioned to move forward
- An annual meeting in a beautiful city that has broken all previous attendance records
- Support from industry and physician organizations who believe in you and what you are trying to accomplish.

I congratulate you on what you have accomplished and for what I believe you are going to accomplish. Your's is a continuing story, fascinating in its plots and details. Come to Miami next year and I'll give you the latest episode!