

ARTICLES

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS: BACK TO BASICS¹

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ABSTRACT. The basic strength of the AMCA family is the wide range of expertise and "can do" attitude of its diverse membership. The AMCA is currently experiencing problems with federal legislation and fiscal stability because we have not fully utilized member strengths to reevaluate the association's direction and set new goals to address change. However, the AMCA Board of Directors and many committee chairpersons met, reevaluated direction and clarified goals, and initiated major changes to meet the challenges facing the association and its members. Members of the AMCA are encouraged to contribute their individual talents to ensure that the association prosper and serve the needs of the mosquito and vector control family.

INTRODUCTION

As I traveled and spoke to you this year, I talked about getting back to basics. And, I talked about changes . . . changes in many of the basic problems and challenges facing mosquito and vector control workers and the AMCA. Today I will continue to talk about basic issues. I will discuss what I feel to be the association's greatest strengths, identify some of its weakness, note some challenges before us, and discuss how the AMCA has begun to plan to meet and adapt to change. I chose to discuss strengths, weaknesses, challenges and change because I believe the future of mosquito and vector control and the future of the AMCA depend on how well the AMCA utilizes its strengths, identifies and responds to weaknesses, meets current and future challenges, and monitors and adapts to change.

I will first discuss the greatest strength of the AMCA—its members. Then, I will discuss the greatest weakness of the AMCA—its past failure to routinely reevaluate its direction and set new goals. Then I will talk about current challenges before the AMCA—federal legislative issues and fiscal responsibility. Finally, I will talk about some changes the AMCA made and is making to adapt to utilize our strengths to identify and meet new challenges.

STRENGTH OF THE AMCA

AMCA members are our greatest strength. I have seen and heard the work of commissioners

and trustees, inspectors and other field workers, biologists, university researchers, mechanics, administrators and local, state and federal government employees at numerous meetings from California to Massachusetts and from Florida to Michigan this year. Many of you, and many other mosquito and vector control workers who have not yet joined the AMCA, gave numerous examples of good, solid work. This work was often done in cramped facilities with inadequate funding and almost no moral support.

Bruce Landolt of the Four Rivers Mosquito Abatement District in Oregon gets my vote for the most daring and innovative work of 1991–92. Bruce Landolt typifies the committed, courageous, daring and innovative nature of mosquito and vector control workers everywhere. I met Bruce and saw his presentation in Missoula, Montana in September. Bruce told us that they needed an aerial application program to larvicide in flooded mountain meadows in Oregon. But his district did not have the financial resources to fund an aerial larviciding program. So, Bruce personally bought a two place ultralight aircraft and started making aerial applications of a biopesticide with the ultralight. Bruce Lanholt showed the results of his work at the Missoula meeting to prove it works. This is not atypical of the initiative and dedication of AMCA members. Bruce works for a mosquito abatement program. But our university scientists, CDC employees, corporate members, trustees and other mosquito and vector control workers possess the same spirit of dedication and creativity. One of the AMCA's greatest strengths is that AMCA members have an "I think I can" attitude and do the impossible in spite of the circumstances.

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WEAKNESS OF THE AMCA

Now, let's turn the other way and look at what I feel has been our greatest weakness. I feel that our failure over the years to monitor change and set new goals and direction for the association to meet new challenges has been our greatest weakness. This has resulted in fiscal problems for the AMCA, crisis management on some critical legislative issues, and a failure to meet the needs of operational members.

These issues jumped out at me almost daily this year. So, I had to wonder as the year progressed how the AMCA got to this situation. Why had we been practicing crisis management on legislative issues? Why were we experiencing a budget crisis in the AMCA, and why aren't more operational mosquito and vector control workers joining the AMCA?

I think I found the answer. One of the AMCA's greatest successes, the *Journal of the AMCA*, seems to be tied by a common thread to our greatest weakness—our failure to provide new direction and goals. Let me explain how I reached this conclusion. Let us go back in the written record to 1941. In 1941 the Eastern Association of Mosquito Control workers was already publishing *Mosquito News*. The March 1941, issue of *Mosquito News*—Vol. 1, No. 1, Page 1, paragraph 1—states, "In order to meet the costs of soliciting articles, preparing material and printing, the Association became a dues-paying organization to finance the publication."

Now, let us go forward in the written record 3 years. We find in Vol. 4, No. 2, that the Eastern Association of Mosquito Control Workers, on March 16, 1944, voted to change its name to the American Mosquito Control Association. Thus, *Mosquito News* (which became the *Journal of the AMCA*) is at least 3 years older than the association. The first meeting of the AMCA Executive Committee was held on April 27, 1944, and the only item on the agenda was a discussion of *Mosquito News*. Annual meeting plans, the journal and other AMCA publications have been the major topics at board meetings ever since. This is because we have tried to adapt the 1944 AMCA goals to meet all member needs and we have tried to solve all our problems through publications. Our original goals were to publish *Mosquito News* and hold annual meetings for mosquito control workers. It does not seem that we ever reevaluated those goals in light of new challenges.

Now, let me state quickly that the AMCA could not exist without our publications. And, we should do everything possible to improve the quality of our publications. But, the world of 1944 was far different than the world of 1992. And, annual meetings and publications are not

the only reason for the AMCA to exist and pay dues. In 1944 the Fax machine, telephone and airplane were not part of our daily lives and the logistics of travel and communication dictated that local people make arrangements for annual meetings. But, in today's society mosquito control personnel and scientists are babes in the woods when it comes to dealing with hotel and convention management people. And, our jobs do not allow us to devote as much time as we need to prepare properly for annual meetings. Consequently, we have continued to reinvent the wheel each year and some of our annual meetings have not met AMCA member needs. We can all remember meetings where there were problems with reservations, where the meeting rooms were inadequate, the lighting or audiovisual equipment was poor, or where our commercial members did not get their money's worth.

Mosquito News played a critical role in the AMCA in 1944 and it met many needs for operational members. We later developed *Mosquito News* into a premier scientific publication and renamed it the *Journal of the AMCA* in 1985. We did that to meet the needs of AMCA scientists. While the journal of the AMCA evolved to meet the needs of our scientist members, it lost its utility to our operational members. However, we were slow to recognize this and to develop new ways to provide those services. But, more importantly, we failed to identify the other member and association needs that could not be met with the journal and our other publications.

The *AMCA Newsletter* and *Wing Beats* have helped restore some of the services formerly provided by *Mosquito News*. These publications have provided a vehicle for mosquito control workers to share information in an informal way. But, publications cannot meet all AMCA member needs. One of the big failures of the AMCA has been that we tried to make publications serve all member needs. The AMCA's greatest weakness has been in trying to adapt our 1944 goals to a changing world rather than set new goals to meet new and different challenges.

CHALLENGES TO THE AMCA

The third thing I wish to discuss are some challenges before the AMCA. There are many, but let us look at 2 of the most pressing challenges. One of the greatest challenges this next year will be in the area of federal legislation. The decisions Congress makes on wetlands, FIFRA, minor use pesticide issues and the preemption issue will literally determine the future of mosquito and vector control in the U.S. Listen

to the following and see if they have meaning to you: The Hayes Bill; H.R. 1330; Senate bill 1463; preemption; The Hatcher Bill; H.R. 3850; Senate Bill 2085; The Supreme Court Ruling in the Wisconsin Public Intervenor case; and the minor use pesticide issue. All these refer to critical federal legislative issues which are before congress now. Unfavorable congressional action on any one of these federal issues will drastically affect mosquito and vector control operations. Unfavorable congressional action on some of these legislative matters could put individual mosquito and vector control agencies out of business.

Bill Hazeltine will be presenting testimony again on behalf of the AMCA before a congressional committee on March 19. We cannot afford to quit or let up now. If the AMCA does not become an effective voice for mosquito and vector control workers at the federal level, we all may be legislated out of existence. I believe that decisions made this year on federal legislation will be critical to the continued existence of mosquito and vector control in many parts of the country. Remember, the AMCA is not just the Board and the Scientific and Regulatory Committee. It is all of us. The AMCA must have your active support this year. Your input is absolutely necessary. We must all be united and we must act in concert at the correct time. Timing is critical. Watch the *Newsletter* and look for special communications on these national issues. Be prepared and act quickly when action is appropriate.

A second very important challenge before us is for the AMCA is to become financially sound. We had several years of deficit spending. Obviously, that cannot continue or we will spend ourselves out of existence. I am going to leave you hanging on this one because I think that is the single best way to get you to come to the business meeting on Wednesday, March 18. If you want to know more about how the AMCA is dealing with this challenge, be there at four PM.

CHANGE IN THE AMCA

The last item I wish to talk about concerns change. The AMCA is taking action to assess weaknesses and bring about positive changes to meet many current and future challenges. I will briefly discuss 6 significant changes in the direction AMCA is taking.

One of the most important days in the life of the AMCA was Saturday, March 14. This day was certainly a day of change for the AMCA. The AMCA board of directors, our new full-time

executive director, Mark Vinsand, and AMCA committee chairpeople participated in a goal-setting workshop facilitated by Don Salverda. Don led us on a mission to determine direction and set goals for the AMCA. The group identified and prioritized issues which we felt needed to be addressed to move the association forward in a timely manner, meet member needs, and assure future financial stability. These matters definitely involve changes in the way we operate the association. I will discuss this with you in more detail during the annual AMCA business meeting. I think it is the biggest and best thing to happen to the AMCA in many, many years. I think we have begun to develop some clear goals that will help us turn lemons into lemonade.

There were a number of items of change at the board meeting on Sunday as a direct result of this workshop. If you want to know about all the changes, come to the business meeting. But, let me whet your appetite. As a result of the workshop: the AMCA Board of Directors reached a consensus concerning change number two—publishing articles about other vectors in the *Journal*; change number three—developing a program for an AMCA Accreditation of Mosquito and Vector Control Agencies; and change number four—expanding the scope of the sustaining membership to provide services and increase association revenues. There were many, many more changes.

A fifth indicator of change is the AMCA Scientific and Regulatory Committee letter-writing campaign at this meeting. This signals big change in our association. You need to go by and find out about this. They have a sample letter in their computer which you can use to send to your legislators and let them know how you feel on the critical legislative issues in Washington, now! If you did not recognize the words Hatcher Bill, Hayes Bill, preemption, HR 1330, etc. earlier, don't worry. The people at the computer have all the appropriate information for you. Tell them where you are from and they will type in the names of your legislators and print a letter for you, in seconds. Free! They have done the hard part. Now, it is up to you and me to go by and let them help us. If you will participate in this, we will have our voice heard as never before in Washington on critical legislative issues. This signals big change for the AMCA. We have become proactive.

A sixth area of change is in our bylaws. On Wednesday, AMCA members will vote on a bylaws amendment, which signals change for the AMCA. This bylaws change will add an industry or corporate member to the AMCA Board of Directors. This is a big, and I think very positive change.

SUMMARY

In summary, I have talked about strength, weakness, challenges, and change: The AMCA's greatest strength is in its membership. Your wisdom, expertise, commitment, dedication and "I think I can" spirit in any and all circumstances provide the AMCA with an unbeatable combination. The AMCA's greatest weakness is that we have not given better direction to these member strengths in the past and reexamined association goals and member needs routinely. Consequently, the AMCA is currently challenged with financial problems; mosquito and vector control agencies are at great risk from pending federal legislation; we do not have a good network to voice our needs in Washington; and some AMCA member needs are not being met. So, we do face some big challenges this year, some external and some internal. But, it is not too late on the external legislative issues, if

we continue to work together. And, the AMCA Board has already taken action to bring about many of the changes necessary to utilize our strengths in addressing internal weaknesses and challenges. Many of these board actions will be discussed at the AMCA business meeting.

There is a Proverb that says, "In many counselors is much wisdom." There is much wisdom in our membership. So, bless us with the benefit of your counsel and be present at the business meeting Wednesday. With the strengths the AMCA has at its disposal, we can not go wrong if we reach a common consensus and we are united in our cause. We have too much at stake this year to be divided. The "I think I can" attitude of mosquito and vector control people like you and Bruce Landolt of Oregon has a way of turning ultra-lights into spray planes and lemons into lemonade. Come to the business meeting and help us make a pitcher of lemonade.