

# A HISTORY OF THE AMWA JOURNAL

Compiled by

M. J. Schiffrin, Ph.D. (AMWA president, 1974)

## THE BEGINNING

M. J. Schiffrin, Ph.D.

In 1940, Harold Swanberg, M.D., gathered a group of fewer than 10 physicians who were interested in learning more about medical writing. They formed the Mississippi Valley Medical Editors Association (MVMEA). They published a bulletin and later the *Mississippi Valley Medical Journal*.

By 1941, membership had grown to 27. It was an elitist group, dominated by male physicians. And physicians were the only ones eligible to become president of the association. (It is well to remember that women in this country had won suffrage only 20 years earlier. In 1939, women in the province of Quebec won the right to vote, and some members of the clergy promptly denounced it, saying that the voting booth was a place of Temptation, the Devil, and Sin and that no good woman should enter such a place.)

In 1942, Harold Laufman, M.D., Ph.D., became a member of MVMEA. He is probably the only active member of AMWA today with that distinction.

The requirement that one had to be a physician to be eligible for the presidency was removed by a change in the constitution. As I recall the Executive Committee meeting, three physicians—Laufman, Huth, and Roland—voted in favor of the

change; Dr. Swanberg was the only physician who voted against the measure. Eric W. Martin, Ph.D., was elected president in 1971. In 1976, Jerry McKee became our first president without a doctorate. And in 1977, Virginia T. Eicholtz became our first female president.



## POST-WORLD WAR II ERA

M. J. Schiffrin, Ph.D.

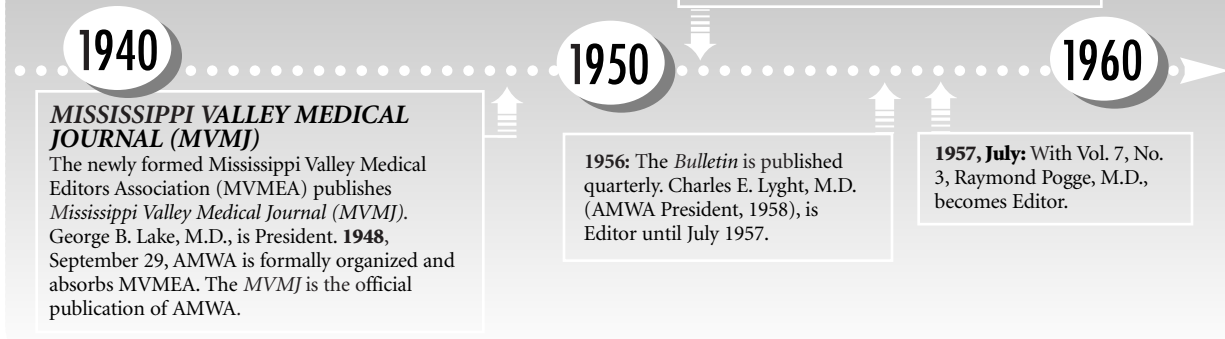
After World War II, Chicago was teeming with medical activity. Among the organizations with headquarters in Chicago were the American Medical Association, the American Dental Association, the American College of Surgeons, the American Osteopathic Association, and the International College of Surgeons. Chicago boasted five medical schools. (And let us not forget that it was the birthplace of *The Journal of Irreproducible Results*.)

Among the physicians and educators whom I recall during the 1945-1960 period in Chicago were Joseph Behr, obstetrician-gynecologist, and author of many articles; Anton J. Carlson, professor of physiology extraordinaire, University of Chicago; Loyal Davis, editor of *Surgery, Gynecology, and Obstetrics*; Harry Dowling, professor of medicine, University of Illinois; Carl Dragsted, a great poet on medical subjects, and professor of pharmacology, Northwestern University; Lester Dragsted,

professor of surgery, University of Chicago; Jacob (Jack) Greenhill, an obstetrician who took over the editorship of DeLee's classic *Textbook of Obstetrics*, which went through several editions and was the bible in obstetrics for decades; Andrew C. Ivy, professor of physiology, Northwestern University (who participated in the Nuremberg trials); Philip Lewin, orthopedic surgeon and prolific author of articles and textbooks; Max S. Sadove, professor of anesthesiology, University of Illinois, and world-renowned lecturer and author; Max Samter, allergist, researcher, and author; Austin Smith, of the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*; Theodore R. Van Dellen, who wrote a daily health column for the *Chicago Tribune*; and Morris Fishbein, of whom more later.

The best description I could find of the birth of the Chicago AMWA chapter, in 1962, is in the Fishbein Festschrift, which appeared in *Medical Communications* (Vol. 5, No. 4, 1977). Dr. Laufman (AMWA president, 1969) wrote a lively and informative Personal Sketch of Morris Fishbein. Here is how Dr. Laufman described the formation of the chapter:

Morris, most significantly, started the Chicago chapter of the American Medical Writers Association (AMWA) in 1962. It was a couple of years after Morris had been national



**1940**  
**MISSISSIPPI VALLEY MEDICAL JOURNAL (MVMJ)**

The newly formed Mississippi Valley Medical Editors Association (MVMEA) publishes *Mississippi Valley Medical Journal (MVMJ)*. George B. Lake, M.D., is President. **1948**, September 29, AMWA is formally organized and absorbs MVMEA. The *MVMJ* is the official publication of AMWA.

**Bulletin of the American Medical Writers Association**

**1951:** The *Bulletin* is first published quarterly. Lee D. Van Antwerp, M.D., is Editor.

**1950**

**1956:** The *Bulletin* is published quarterly. Charles E. Lyght, M.D. (AMWA President, 1958), is Editor until July 1957.

**1960**

**1957, July:** With Vol. 7, No. 3, Raymond Pogge, M.D., becomes Editor.

president of the AMWA. He called me, as he had called some 50 other Chicago M.D.'s and medical writers, asking that we attend a meeting at the Drake Hotel one evening for the purpose of organizing a Chicago chapter of AMWA. Some 20 people attended. Morris Fishbein was at the head table, flanked by Ted (Dr. Theodore R.) Van Dellen (then immediate past president of AMWA) and Jack (Dr. Jacob) Greenhill. Morris held forth on the need for an active Chicago chapter of AMWA and the benefits to be derived from it. Ted made a short speech on the same subject. Jack suggested electing officers of the new chapter then and there. Before I could say a word (I had in mind nominating Jack Greenhill), Morris nominated me for president. Ted seconded the nomination, and Morris moved that the nominations be closed. Phoebe Thompson was nominated for the office of vice president and Roland Main for secretary. It was that fast. The Chicago chapter of AMWA had been born.

Dr. Fishbein was assistant editor and editor of *JAMA* for 37 years. He was widely regarded as the voice of American physicians and was not hesitant to express his political views. He contributed mightily to the growth of AMWA by helping to found new chapters and encouraging physicians to join the organization. His work on behalf of AMWA was recognized in 1959 when he received the Distinguished Service Award (known after 1962 as the Harold Swanberg Award).

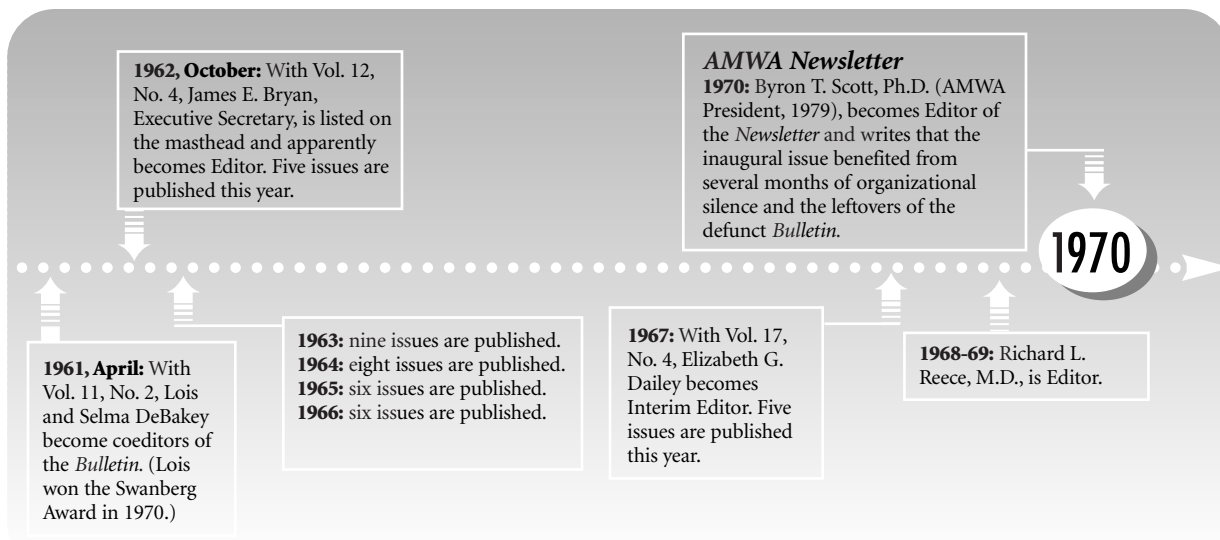
Shirley Linde, Ph.D., joined AMWA in 1954, and she may well be one of the longest-active members still alive. She established the public relations office at Northwestern University medical and dental schools and headed that

office for a number of years. Shirley was instrumental in establishing a close relationship between AMWA and the National Association of Science Writers. She chaired the national AMWA liaison committee and obtained funding from the National Science Foundation for and organized a 3-day workshop in Chicago titled, "When Scientists Meet Reporters." She wrote several books in Chicago, later becoming well known as an author of books on medicine and of cruise guidebooks.

Dr. Laufman became editor of the Chicago Medical Society's *Chicago Medicine* and used every opportunity to publicize and promote AMWA. The Chicago Medical Society was a major medical force, and its annual meetings gathered large audiences. I remember well one such meeting when Dr. Walter Alvarez was a featured speaker and cautioned doctors against becoming errand boys between the laboratory and the patient. It was a chance to renew our acquaintance, which began in 1939.

*Gathering the history of the early days of AMWA publications and the recollections of those who were active members would not have been possible without enormous help from Harold Laufman, M.D., Ph.D.; Shirley Linde, Ph.D.; Lillian Sablack; and Edith Schwager. I am greatly indebted to them.*

□



### EXCERPT FROM AMWA JOURNAL (SEPT. 1990, VOL. 5, NO. 3)

Byron T. Scott, Ph.D. (AMWA president, 1979)

It all began because I made Katherine Becker's deadline. Later, she explained it this way: "When I saw you walking through the door (at an AMWA annual meeting) with three copies of your completed paper, just as I'd asked all speakers to do, I just knew. . . ." What she knew was that I was her nominee to edit the resuscitated AMWA journal, *Medical Communications*.

Back in the mid-1960s, when I'd first joined AMWA, an irregular but vigorous version of the journal existed. Thrashing about amid the nuances of medical reporting and writing as a *JAMA* medical news correspondent, I'd clung gratefully to the ideas of Fishbein, Roland, King, Huth, et al. In a Philadelphia hotel room during an earlier AMWA annual meeting, I'd let that same Dr. Charles Roland talk me into editing a bimonthly newsletter to supplement the then-moribund journal.

Soon after, as part of a budgetary cutback more than anything, the old AMWA journal went into an extended, deep coma. And now, as I walked through that doorway in San Antonio, manuscript in hand, I knew three things:

(1) Katherine, Chuck, and other conspirators were reviving our journal; (2) annual conferences are filled with careless moments for making long-term commitments; and (3) I'd left active medical journalism to become an assistant professor of journalism, thus acquiring a desperate need to "publish or perish." I jumped into the boat.

But the primary benefits were human, not scholarly. I was drawn deeply into the workings of AMWA and into the thought processes of its member-friends. My copy pencil moved and slashed over the texts of writers I previously had held in awe. Unanimously, they did me the honor of not complaining. In retrospect, only those who thought writing an effortless extension of other expertise kicked up; those who knew the pains of good communication were supportive. I quickly learned that not all the good talkers wrote well; and few of the well-intended knew much about deadlines.

By some miracle of democracy, my editorship continued until I moved onto the AMWA executive committee. Edie Schwager, who graces the journal's pages still, was my successor. She can tell you who talked her into that one.

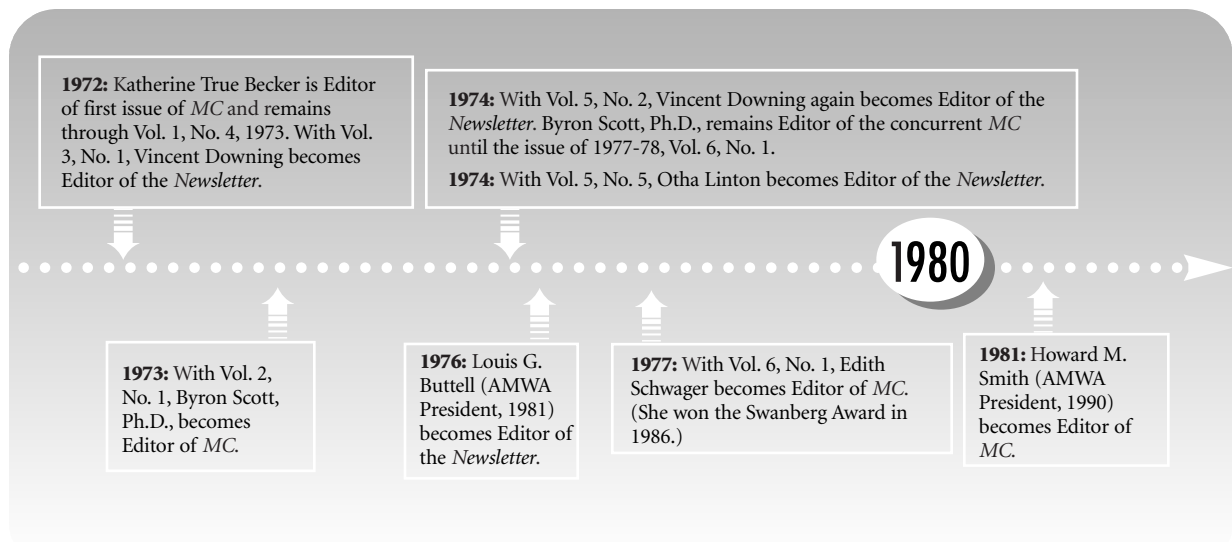
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### MEDICAL COMMUNICATIONS

Arnold Melnick, D.O. (AMWA president, 1975)

In 1971, I was able to persuade Katherine True Becker to take on the duties of editor of the proposed new publication, *Medical Communications (MC)*, with Charles Roland, M.D., as consulting editor. I had known Kathy from her time as an editor of the *Journal of the American Osteopathic Association*. Earlier, she had worked on the editorial staff of *JAMA*. Red Schiffrin tells me that Kathy worked at *JAMA* as early as 1941, when Kathy and Red's bride-to-be were colleagues there.

Kathy had a difficult time starting *MC*, mainly because of problems associated with the organization that was acting



as our executive secretary. Kathy was dismayed by the poor quality of the galley she received. The reason for the many errors became clear when she learned that the person who prepared the galley was a part-time high-school student. But Kathy persevered, and the first issue of *MC* appeared in July 1972.

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### THE FORGOTTEN BOARD

*Charles G. Roland, M.D., D.Sc. (AMWA president, 1970)*

Not only has the Board of Trustees been forgotten officially—its existence is not mentioned in the history of AMWA published in 1990—but I had forgotten it also. Recently, however, Red Schiffrin wrote asking for some memories of the AMWA and its publications in the 1960s and 1970s. Digging through old files, I stumbled across a folder containing correspondence about the Board of Trustees of AMWA. And then it all came back to me.

I should have remembered. Eliminating this particular board was an accomplishment during my term as president, and the effectiveness of this action perhaps explains our collective forgetting. The Board of Trustees had existed for a number of years. The members were former presidents who assumed their places on the board automatically when they surrendered the presidency.

The problem was that the trustees had no assigned duties. They were to be advisory, but no one asked them for advice. So it seemed to some of us that the board served no real purpose. After some discussion amongst the executives, I wrote to all of the trustees to get their responses to the fundamental question, Should the Board

of Trustees exist officially? The file of correspondence I found continued their individual answers.

Remarkably, the response was unanimous: every trustee chose to vote himself and the Board of Trustees out of existence. The men (yes, they were all men back in AMWA Paleolithic days) included luminaries of the group—physicians, of course, such as W. A. D. Anderson, William Hammond, Edward J. Huth, Harold Laufman, Edward C. Rosenow, W. D. Snively, Jr., and Austin Smith.

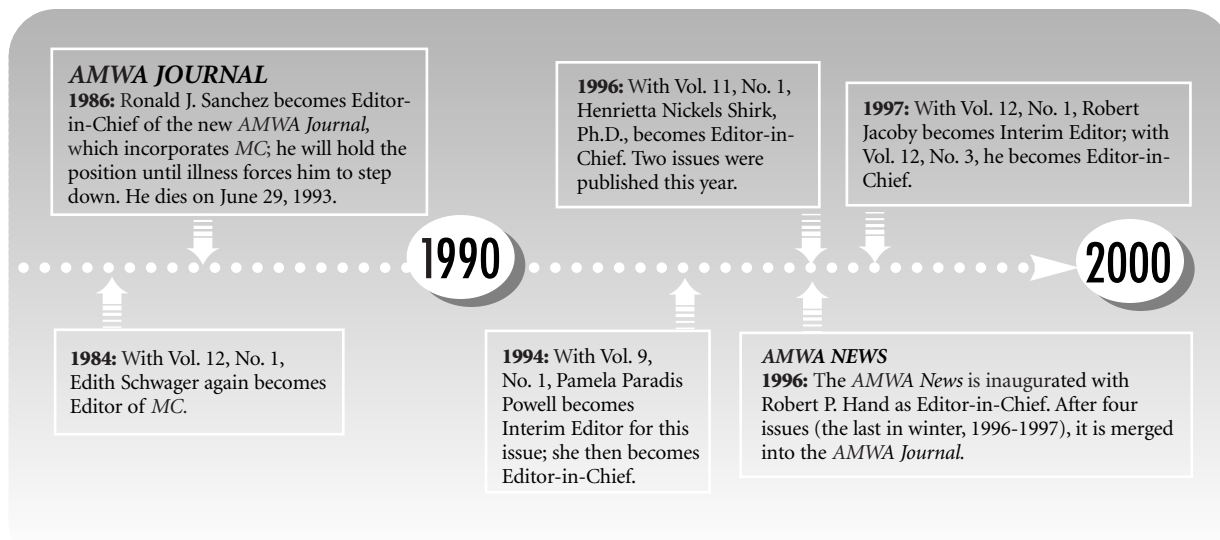
One comment typifies their common reaction: “A Board of Trustees of this kind can serve as not entirely undesirable window dressing. Aside from this, I can see little need for the Board.” As far as I know, no one has noticed or felt deprived by the elimination of the Board of Trustees.

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### THE AMWA NEWSLETTER

*Louis G. Buttell (AMWA president, 1981)*

In 1974, at the request of President Arnold Melnick, D.O., Otha Linton, government relations director of the American College of Radiology, became editor of the *AMWA Newsletter*. Dr. Melnick had been impressed by Linton’s launching of a newsletter for the American Osteopathic Association (AOA), where they had worked when Melnick was president of AOA. When AMWA experienced financial difficulties in 1974, Linton contacted me—I was Director of Public Affairs of the American Podiatry Association (APA, now the American Podiatric Medical Association)—as to the possibility of APA’s taking over production of the *AMWA Newsletter*. Thanks to the cooperation of APA’s long-time executive



director, the late Seward P. (Bud) Nyman, D.P.M., the APA did assume layout and production of the *Newsletter*. David Zych, APA's publications director and an AMWA member, did the lion's share of the work. Camera-ready copy was delivered to AMWA headquarters every 2 months for printing and distribution to the membership. Linton, who also served as AMWA's treasurer and vice president, was editor until 1976.

I succeeded Linton in 1976 and continued the successful layout and production arrangement at APA headquarters. Sometime after 1978, because of reemerging financial problems at AMWA headquarters, the *AMWA Newsletter* was merged into *Medical Communications*. Throughout the 1972-1978 period, there was a continuing effort on the part of the editors to solicit news from chapters, sections, and committees. This effort was generally successful and resulted in delivery to the membership of prompt and accurate information on AMWA's activities, including pictures of AMWA officials, honorees, and member events.

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## FROM GUEST EDITOR TO EDITOR

*Edie Schwager*

*(Editor, Medical Communications, 1978-1981, 1984-1985)*

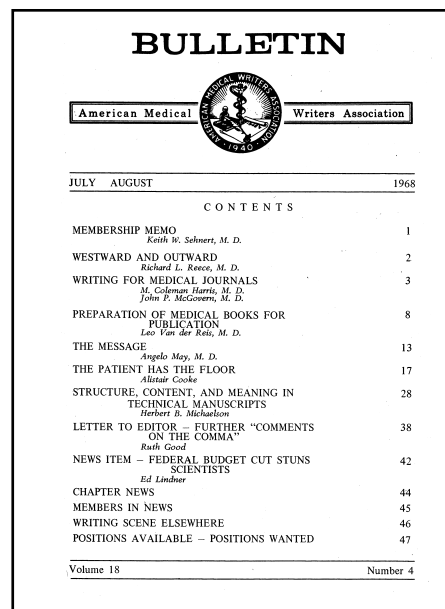
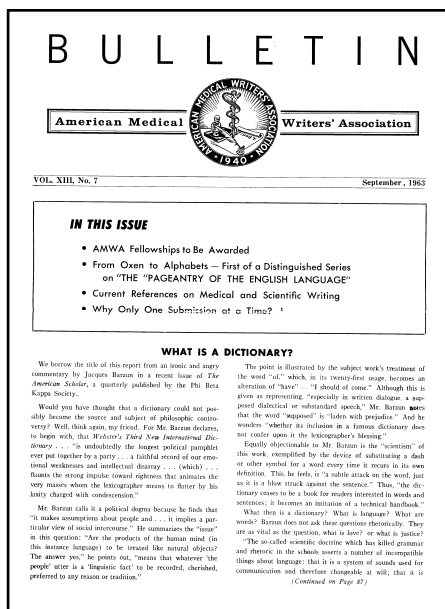
At the 1974 annual meeting of the American Medical Writers Association, I gave a talk titled, "Clarity Begins at Home." I was then the executive editor in the Department of Medicine and adjunct lecturer in allied health professions at Hahnemann Medical College, in Philadelphia. Byron Scott, editor of our journal, *Medical Communications*, asked permission to publish an edited

version of the presentation, and so it appeared in the spring 1975 issue (Vol. 3, No. 4). Apparently, that started a chain of events that led up to Scotty's request in 1977 that I write a guest editorial. Morris Fishbein, M.D., who had died in 1976, was to be the subject.

Dr. Fishbein (1889-1976) was the redoubtable, feisty, fascinating president of AMWA in 1959, a founder of the Chicago chapter in 1962, assistant editor (1913-1924) and editor (1924-1949) of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, and author of the classic *Medical Writing*, as well as 34 other books and hundreds of medical articles. The editorial, in which I acknowledged the invaluable research assistance of Katherine True Becker, was for the 1977 issue (Vol. 5, No. 4) of *Medical Communications*.

When I recognized the scope of my assignment, I felt that such a titanic figure as Morris Fishbein deserved more than an editorial obituary. Rather than lament his passing, I cooked up a Festschrift—although traditionally such writings are in honor of living persons—because I wanted to celebrate his life and work rather than concentrating on his death.

Being naive about how difficult it is to get articles from family and friends of famous people, I undertook to obtain them from Dr. Fishbein's family and friends. I was pleasantly flabbergasted at the results. His daughters, Barbara Fishbein Friedell and Marjorie Clavey, and his son, Justin M. Fishbein, sent me their articles in tribute to him (and to their mother, Anna, who was, among other accomplishments, the editor of *The Modern Woman's Medical Encyclopedia*). Other contributors of remarkable encomiums (one of Morris's favorite words) were Lester



The AMWA Bulletin, 1960s.

S. King, M.D.; Hans Selye, M.D.; Morris T. Friedell, M.D., who was Morris's son-in-law; Byron T. Scott, Ph.D.; Joseph B. Kirsner, M.D.; Irv Kupcinet ("Mr. Chicago"); David Dietz, Litt.D., LL.D.; and Harold Laufman, M.D., Ph.D., cofounder and first president of the Chicago chapter of AMWA.

Trying to describe the life and works of this giant in medicine is impossible in a short work. However, I can't refrain from quoting from two of these tributes:

Dr. Kirsner: "Perhaps the best indication of the international esteem with which Morris Fishbein was regarded is an incident that happened to me in Tokyo. I was introduced to a physician who, in seeking to identify himself, introduced himself proudly as 'the Japanese Fishbein.' \* \* \* A young girl from Chicago wanted to know how to go about studying to be a doctor. She wrote a letter addressed to 'The Chief Doctor of the United States of America.' In the lower right-hand corner of the envelope an anonymous postal clerk had scrawled the name 'Morris Fishbein.'"

Dr. Laufman: "As early as the 1920s, Morris spoke and wrote against black boxes with flashing lights, arc rays with purported magical healing powers, and device-assisted manipulations, which purport to cure everything from the ague to cancer. He wrote articles and gave speeches about these gadgets in order to expose them and thereby curtail their use. But there was no legislation to declare these things illegal. So Morris kept up the battle as a lone voice in the wilderness. \* \* \* The various

councils of the AMA . . . granted or denied a stamp of approval of sorts to various over-the-counter drugs, cosmetics, and foods until the Food and Drug Administration of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare came into existence. But it was not until 1976 that the fight against quack devices, begun by Morris Fishbein and carried on by him for so many years, actually reached fruition by virtue of the Medical Device Amendment of the Pure Food and Drug Act. . . . I wonder how many members of the AAMI (Association for the Advancement of Medical Instrumentation) and how many government officials now serving in the Devices Branch of the Food and Drug Administration actually know what they owe to Morris."

After my stint as guest editor, Byron Scott anointed me as the next editor of *Medical Communications*. I can only assume that no one else was asked. My first issue as editor of *Medical Communications* was the postconvention winter 1977/spring 1978 issue (Vol. 6, No. 1), which contained presentations from the 37th annual meeting (as it was called then) held at the Americana Hotel in New York City. Robert F. Orsetti was the president of AMWA. One highlight of that meeting was an address delivered by telephone by Senator Edward M. Kennedy, who was unable to give the speech in person because of business in the Senate.

In that issue, I pleaded for help in producing *Medical Communications*, for a business manager (we actually had one for a few issues), for a book review editor, and for help with any other "position" on the team. I

especially asked for manuscripts, ideas about columns on word origins and word games, and examples of good or bad writing. All was grist for my mill.

Despite my entreaties, the response to the job call was so meager, except for several “applications” for book review editor, that the editorship turned out to be pretty much a one-person job. Members were busy with their own work and pursuits and didn’t have time to spare for voluntary work. It was hard sledding. Luckily, I discovered a printer in my vicinity whose small business could accommodate our journal. This agreeable man even did the layout for me, since I’m not sufficiently knowledgeable about production. Between us, we turned out what I thought was a creditable journal, with scholarly and informative articles by important people in the medical and allied health fields. One of the greatest left-handed compliments I ever received during the years came from an AMWA member, who called to tell me that she had found a typo in one issue. We were able to maintain this standard for both of my tenures as editor.

All the applications for book review editor were interesting, but among them was one letter, so charming and, yes, so literate—exuding willingness besides—that I said to myself, “Hallelujah! I never heard of this man, but he’s the one.” How courageous of him, I thought, to take on this voluntary work! This obliging soul, whose name is Howard Smith, even wrote the book reviews himself. Little did I know that he would become a national president. Over the years (and it has been more than 20), I’ve grown to love and respect Howard even more, especially when, after I stepped down, he undertook the responsibility of editor of *Medical Communications* with the winter 1981 issue. With his customary élan and scholarliness, he served as editor through the winter 1983 issue (Vol. 11, No. 4).

The spring 1980 issue contained my tribute to a mentor and all-around good guy. Theodore (Ted) Menline Bernstein, who died on June 17, 1979, was arguably one of the best editors and writers in the United States. His timeless books on usage are classics. Thanks to Judy Linn (she of the one typo), I now have a complete run of his books; I also own an enviable collection of his “Winners & Sinners.”

How Martha Tacker, Ph.D., came up with the brilliant, innovative idea of my answering questions about language in *Medical Communications* I’ll never know. I’ll be eternally grateful to her for that and for the equally brilliant title of the column, “Dear Edie.” She wrote in her proposal letter, “We need a ‘Dear Abby’ for the medical editing-writing community and you are a logical choice.” (“Ask Edie” was suggested, but we vetoed it as too aloof a title for such a personal column. Since queries would be

**The AMWA Newsletter**  
American Medical Writers Association

April 1978 Vol. 1, No. 1

**Headquarters to Change**

A suburban Philadelphia executive management firm was chosen at the April 18 meeting of the Executive Committee to take over headquarters functions for AMWA.

The Charles Slack Company won approval over several other bidders. The firm, located in Pitman, N.J., is just outside of Philadelphia—numbers several other medical groups among its clients.

Transfer of management functions will occur over a period of months and will not be completed until after the September annual meeting. Until that time, all AMWA correspondence should go to the current address: Suite 417, 428 Lexington Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017.

AMWA management has been handled for the past two years by Stephen Donohue and Company. Mr. Donohue is also the current AMWA treasurer.

The Board of Directors voted sincere thanks to Mr. Donohue and to Wayne Curtis, current executive director, for their many services. The New York group had accepted AMWA's management on an "emergency basis" after a former executive director resigned.

In other action, the Board of Directors and Executive Committee:

- Approved bylaws for the new Southwestern Chapter, which includes:

**AWARDS REMINDER**

Nominations for awards to be presented at the AMWA annual meeting this fall will close May 1. Members wishing to suggest candidates for the Harold Swanberg Award, Honor Award or other categories mentioned in the last issue should write: S. J. London, MD, Visk Divisions Research, 1 Bradford Road, Mt. Vernon, NY 10553.

**WRITERS WORKSHOP SET**

A medical writing workshop sponsored by the newly organized North Central Chapter has been scheduled for May 22 and 23, at the Marriott Inn in Bloomington, Minn. Charles G. Roland, MD, AMWA president, and Gay Whitehead, PhD, Section of Publications, Mayo Clinic, will be the speakers. The fee for the workshop and Friday night dinner is \$15; for the workshop alone \$10. All interested persons please contact: John T. Martin, MD, Mayo Clinic, 200 First Street, S.W., Rochester, Minn. 55905.

**Annual Meeting Taking Shape For New York**

Plans are virtually complete for the 20th annual meeting of AMWA, to be held Sept. 24-27 at New York's Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. Seventeen major speakers and panelists are confirmed for the program, according to the program committee headed by William Hammond, MD.

Speakers will include: Jacques Barzun of Columbia University; Hilary Krieglbaum of New York University; Francis J. Branciano, MD, editor of the *American Journal of Psychiatry*; and Earl Oell, science editor of *WCBS-TV*.

Roger O. Egeberg, MD, assistant secretary for health and scientific affairs of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, will address a plenary session on Saturday morning. Concurrent roundtable discussions and workshops are planned for Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning.

Theater tours also are planned.

Vol. 1, No. 1 issue of the *AMWA Newsletter*. News of headquarters move makes the headline. Note the photograph of AMWA's founder, Dr. Harold Swanberg.

addressed to me in the form of letters, “Dear Edie” was deemed more friendly.) Martha saw the column as a give-and-take forum for AMWA members and other readers. The column first appeared in 1978 and continues to this day. I am constantly delighted with the well-considered, bright queries our readers send me. Most of the questions, containing issues both subtle and relevant to the professions of writing and editing, require quite a bit of research, which I’m happy to do.

With the spring 1979 issue (Vol. 7, No. 1), I instituted consecutive pagination instead of the awkward system in which each issue (number) started with page 1. In this system, readers wouldn’t have to know the number or season designation, only the year and the page number.

“Hello again,” I wrote, when I became editor of *Medical Communications* once more with the spring 1984 issue (Vol. 12, No. 1). We published the inauguration address of AMWA President Donald Radcliffe in that issue. His address was titled, “Toward Professional Autonomy for Medical Writers.” In his peroration, he said, “We can choose to work toward either professional status or continued anonymity in the larger medical and health community. . . . To make the proper choice, however, we must stop, at least for a moment, and remove the stones from our running shoes.”

Because we didn’t want to seem ponderous, and to lighten the formal tone of *Medical Communications*, we printed amusing features. From an obituary of an M.D.:



1972 heralds the first edition of *Medical Communications*.

“He specialized in internal medicine and gastroenterology. He founded the hospital’s Ground Round Seminar program of guest speakers.” Here are some items from “Inquiring Patron and Succinct Librarian” (contributed by several members): “Do you have any books on gambling?” “If you have a card, you bet!” “Do you have any fairy tales?” “Once upon a time we did . . .” “Do you have any books on psychiatry?” “What do you think?” “Do you have any books on statistics?” “Yes, a significant number.” We also printed a series of medical scramble puzzles, by Susan Sparks and Joyce Hayman, and medical crossword puzzles, by Abe Brown; all three were AMWA members.

In the winter 1984 issue, we printed an article based on the oral presentation of George D. Lundberg, M.D., then editor of *JAMA*, for a panel discussion at the AMWA annual conference in San Antonio (October 10-13, 1984), in which he described in great detail the “*JAMA* style.” During our 59th Annual Conference, in Philadelphia (October 27-30, 1999), as former editor of *JAMA* and featured speaker at the opening plenary session, he brought these concepts up to date to reflect present-day thinking and technology in his speech titled, “Internet Medicine.” Dr. Lundberg is now the editor-in-chief of *Medscape*. Each year, we published presentations from the annual conferences, so that members could enjoy them once more.

Along about the winter of 1986, it became evident that the content, size, and design of *Medical Communications* no longer met the needs of a fast-growing, dynamic

membership. The Executive Committee and the Board of Directors labored long and hard over the form that a new official publication could take. During this gestation period, it was decided that new blood was needed, and Ronald J. Sanchez, a young, enterprising editor, was chosen to be the editor-in-chief of the just-born *AMWA Journal*. Harry Sweeney, a former president of the Metropolitan New York Chapter, was a prime mover. Many others, equally responsible and eager to enrich AMWA’s services to members, were involved during this difficult transition period. Ronald’s long tenure was notable for his ingenious innovations, and so his premature death in 1993 was a heart-wrenching blow to all of us.

Pamela Paradis Powell took up the challenge in 1994 as editor-in-chief. Her scholarly, conscientious work was an example to me and other professional writers and editors.

Since 1997, editor-in-chief Robert Jacoby has added his own solid, meaty contributions and a bright touch to what is now a paradigm for journals of its kind.

Dr. Samuel Johnson was referring to lexicographers in general (and perhaps himself in particular), but I paraphrase the definition in his history-making *Dictionary* (1755): “Editor: a harmless drudge.” But he wrote in his preface, “I am not yet so lost in lexicography as to forget that words are the daughters of earth, and that things are the sons of heaven.” He also wrote (when asked by a lady why he defined “pastern” as the “knee” of a horse in his *Dictionary*), “Ignorance, madame, pure ignorance.” Students at my workshops may recognize that as one of my favorite quotations.

Thus endeth the tale of my uplifting, heart-warming, educative experience as editor of an official AMWA journal for two memorable tenures. What a wonderful ride it was! I never cease to wonder at how much I’ve learned. Then, too, I get to continue “Dear Edie,” which has been and remains one of the loves of my life (if you don’t count certain people). All thanks and kudos (singular *and* plural, strangely enough) to my colleagues, friends, and comrades in arms and to every other member of the American Medical Writers Association.

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## THE BIRTH OF THE AMWA JOURNAL

*William D. Nelligan (AMWA treasurer, 1972-1975)*

The minutes of the November 3, 1985, AMWA Board of Directors meeting indicate that the administrator (a volunteer member of AMWA) of the Department of Publications, Harry Sweeney, Jr., recommended the merger of the *AMWA News* and *Medical Communications*



into one official journal. The Board gave Harry the green light to proceed with this plan, and in early 1986 he presented to the Board a prototype (8½"x11") of our current *AMWA Journal*. His recommendation was enthusiastically approved by the directors. The minutes of that meeting show that he thanked both Edie Schwager, who at that time was the editor of *Medical Communications*, and Ronald Sanchez for their roles in developing the concept for the new publication.

In choosing the first editor-in-chief for our new "official journal," the officers and Board looked no further than Ronald, and he graciously accepted. I take some credit in helping Ronald develop his communication skill inasmuch as I hired him in 1981 as the director of communications for the American College of Cardiology. At the time of his appointment as editor-in-chief of the *Journal*, he was working for Hill and Knowlton in Washington, D.C.

In the first issue of the *Journal* (fall 1986), Ronald's editorial credits Harry Sweeney as having the vision and concept for the new publication. The design of the cover was a gift from Harry's award-winning design partner, Dick Jones. Also in the editorial, Ronald states: "The first issue of the *AMWA Journal* is our vision. Future issues will be yours."

Ronald's arm-twisting and low-key charm persuaded Edie Schwager to agree to continue (even until today, some 13 years later) her "Dear Edie" feature articles. He had an almost cherubic, boylike quality about him that made saying no most difficult for the authors and contributors of his publication. I use the word "his" because it is my view that an editor-in-chief really nurtures and gives loving care to his or her publication. Certainly, AMWA owned the *Journal*, but its stewardship was in the skilled hands of Ronald Sanchez.

He grew up in the south—New Orleans. I think that his warm personality, wit, and skills as a journalist and editor had their beginnings in New Orleans. He spent many hours thinking about how to make the *AMWA Journal* more reader-friendly, and he polished each issue as though it were to be submitted for a Pulitzer prize.

Unfortunately, Ronald's life was cut short, and he died on June 29, 1993. I vividly recall visiting him in his apartment in Washington, D.C., shortly before his death. Although his illness was indeed terminal, never once did he mention his physical condition. He seemed more concerned with my concern for him than with his own health. He still had galley proofs of the *Journal* scattered across his coffee table and said he hoped that he could muster the strength to read them and get them back to Lillian Sablack. One gutsy guy!

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Four types of marketing are commonly used: image advertising, product-line marketing, physician relations and community education.	MARKETING: Health Care Industry Introduces Marketing Strategies and Campaigns	2	Bernadette Longo
Understanding the process can make writing easier to perform and easier.	RESEARCH: Cognitive Process Research: Why It's Important to Medical Communicators	5	Dorothy Foster Rea D.H. Cordes
Media advocacy seeks to promote policy change rather than to alter individual behavior.	MEDIA: Media Advocacy Exerts Powerful Influence on Public Perception	10	Elayne Clift
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Ronald Sanchez was editor-in-chief from 1986 to 1993. Pamela Powell, author of an article in this issue, would succeed Ronald in 1994.

In the fall 1993 issue of the *Journal*, there were numerous tributes to Ronald. AMWA President Betty Cohen wrote that "Ronald was passionately dedicated to producing a fine *Journal*, and in his editorials he courageously addressed controversial social and medical issues." Edie Schwager wrote that "two issues into his tenure as Editor-in-Chief of the beautiful new *AMWA Journal*, I sat back, smiling and content. I thought, this kid is going to make it. And he did."

Ronald's "footprint" on the major communications vehicle of our association was very important. Along the way, he also left "footprints" in the hearts of all of us in AMWA who knew him.

*William D. Nelligan served as AMWA's treasurer for many years during the 1970s, when his creative financing and budget wizardry were all that kept AMWA from going bankrupt. Currently, he is executive director of the American Society of Nuclear Cardiology in Bethesda, Md.*



## AMWA PUBLICATIONS: WHAT THEY ARE AND THEIR FUTURE IMPORTANCE

*Phyllis Minick (AMWA president, 1995)*

The publications of the American Medical Writers Association accurately reflect its activities and history, as is appropriate for an organization of professional communicators. However, even long-time members



First cover of the redesigned *Journal*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 1998.

might not readily recognize the range of documents that AMWA currently publishes.

The *AMWA Journal* (quarterly magazine)

*Biomedical Communication: Selected AMWA Workshops* (textbook)

*Essays for Biomedical Communicators: Volume 2 of Selected AMWA Workshops*

Freelance Directory (list of member consultants)

The *Membership Directory* (yearly listing of members, with Constitution and Bylaws)

*The AMWA Key* (yearly listing of chapter and national officers)

*The Executive Committee Handbook* (guidelines for national officers and administrators)

*The Job Sheet* (monthly listing of full- and part-time employment opportunities)

The annual conference program

Guidelines for fulfilling specific AMWA offices and tasks (such as chapter officers and regional-conference chairs)

Special-interest brochures and announcements

Chapter newsletters

The AMWA Web site, [www.amwa.org](http://www.amwa.org)

The importance of those items is their role as the only means of interaction among AMWA officers, administrators, headquarters, and members. Through this medium, which is more retrievable than word-of-mouth exchanges, experienced AMWA members transmit their collective wisdom to newer medical communicators and to those entering new fields. In AMWA's Long-Range Plan, begun in 1995 and completed in 1996 under the leadership of Thomas A. Lang, the *Journal* was cited as the best information vehicle of the organization. Although the annual conference is our finest networking, educational, and fund-raising opportunity, only about 800 of our more than 4,000 members attend. In contrast, every member receives the *Journal*, as well as the *Membership Directory*, *Job Sheet*, and special-interest announcements. The *Journal* now reports AMWA's financial status and includes a statement from the president—important links between the organization's administration and the members who pay the bills.

In 1995, we inaugurated the *AMWA News*, a tabloid-sized newsletter, as a response to members' requests for quick, organization-wide reporting on the Annual Conference. For the first time, summaries of the Executive Committee's action items appeared publicly. Our attitude was that every member is entitled to know the issues confronting us and that having such information encourages participation. Many recipients voiced such strong appreciation for this publication's informal tone that three more issues were published; all were under the editorship of Robert P. Hand. Both the newsletter and its editor then became part of the *Journal*. However, in the year 1995, AMWA members enjoyed six serial publications (three *Journal* issues and three newsletters), the Long-Range Plan's recommended number for the *Journal* itself.

AMWA's first effort at textbook publication came in 1994 with the appearance of *Biomedical Communication: Selected AMWA Workshops* (Phyllis Minick, Editor), which presented chapters written by 25 of our workshop leaders. Now that the second printing of this volume has sold out, work will soon begin to revise and update its contents. Planning for a second volume began in 1995; and in 1997, AMWA published *Essays for Biomedical Communicators: Volume 2 of Selected AMWA Workshops*. The editors of its 30 chapters were Florence M. Witte and Nancy Dew Taylor, Ph.D., and they will jointly revise Volume 1. The importance of these volumes lies beyond their content; they constitute AMWA's first entry into the textbook market and the first public documentation of our workshop leaders' exceptional skills.

The economics of AMWA publications seems to be a rather unknown subject to the membership. For example,

the *Journal's* high cost caused its curtailment twice in the last 20 years, but its worth is indisputable. Our two textbooks, which are purchased by their users, have profited AMWA financially, and the *Job Sheet* offers direct monetary gains to members.

The immediate future is represented by AMWA's Web site, an asset that will continue to grow. For the print medium, the *Journal's* stunning redesign and well-focused contents are state-of-the-art, under editor-in-chief Robert Jacoby. In years to come, the extent to which AMWA uses these vehicles to communicate with its members, their employers, and our professional community at large will bear a direct relationship to the financial success and status of members and to AMWA's growth.



## AMWA JOURNAL AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

Robert Jacoby, Editor-in-Chief

My motivation for working on each issue of the *AMWA Journal*, from the beginning of my appointment as editor in 1997 to now, is to showcase the very best our association has to offer its members. What the "very best" of our association *is* depends on many people, of course.

The very best, at its core, depends on individual members' becoming involved in their profession (what one does) and their journal (expressing to colleagues what one does), and not waiting for "the other guy" to step forward. Perhaps because we are an association of writers (whose primary task it is to open their veins on the blank page for all their colleagues to see how they *really* bleed) and editors (whose primary task it is to spy out with great delight and no mercy any number of errors that occur within the written word), I find that seeking out publishable material is my most exquisitely painful, challenging, and rewarding task.

The very best of our association also depends on an entire team of people involved at various stages in the publication process. I managed the complete redesign of the *AMWA Journal* in 1997 with a superb graphic support staff and with a supportive and (mostly) enthusiastic Executive Committee, which understood the need for our association's publication to enter the 20th century. Along the way I built up the *Journal* staff of manuscript reviewers. There are now more than 10 AMWA members on the Journal Editorial Review Board (JERB) (a past president and I shared an e-mail joke about renaming this group the Journal Editorial Review Kommittee [JERK] because authors probably can't help but think: "That JERK said *what* about my paper?!"). A member of the JERB has the important job of

performing peer review of manuscripts submitted to the *AMWA Journal*. Early on I drafted an instruction sheet for reviewers, and now the reviewers (whether experienced or new), with a typical AMWA sense of completeness, duty, and collegiality, offer their comments to authors for improving manuscripts for publication. If the manuscript is found unsuitable, even with heavy reworking, I'm sure that some part of the author's brain at some point wants to bark back: "That JERK said *what* about my paper?!"

Once an article is accepted for publication, then this very best of our association gets further treatment from manuscript editors, copyeditors, and proofreaders. Since 1997 I've waded through several rounds of searches to find those AMWA souls who understand how to complete their task in the method most applicable at the time, be it vicious, gentle, mordant, supportive, or a combination of these. These characteristics are a rare combination of skill, experience, and bravado and are not easily found.

At layout, the very best gets treated to the skilled hands of our production staff, then our proofreaders (once again), and the ever watchful eye of our executive director, Lillian Sablack.

Since 1997 several new features have been introduced and continue to be showcased in the *AMWA Journal*. One suggested by the final report of the Long-Range Plan was the "From the Trenches" column, deftly written by Robert Hand. Other features that I thought would provide valuable insight for readers included interviews and roundtable discussions with leading figures in AMWA and the field of biomedical communication. Roundtables have included educators, freelance writers, and employment gurus; interviews have focused on leaders in our association and plans for the future. This issue of the *Journal* will mark the introduction of our new Multimedia Review column, with column editor Stan Goldman, Ph.D., an experienced scholar and publications reviewer.

The "very best" does not rest. At least, not easily. If you've studied issues of the *AMWA Journal* since 1997 you've noticed the use of a variety of graphic and text tools to deliver messages. Call-outs, sidebars, fonts, screens, figures, graphic elements, minireports: it's all part of the mix to enhance your experience when you pick up your copy of the *AMWA Journal*. One of my current goals is to obtain a Viewpoints submission from the president of a well-known research company on the controversial nature of his company's business and impact on society. I'm always open to suggestions for a Viewpoints column, which serves as an open forum for any topic of interest to members of the biomedical communication profession.

Drop me a line if you believe you have something interesting to contribute. I'd love to hear from you, and so would our readers.

The Vol. 14, No. 3, Summer 1999 issue was a milestone for our *Journal*. Beginning with that issue, we began to be selectively indexed in the *Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature* print index, the CINAHL database, and the *Cumulative Index of Journals in Education*. The research and application process was not a simple one, but the benefits our association would appreciate over time would prove to be worthwhile, I believed, for the wider audiences we would be able to reach.

And speaking of reaching wider audiences: pass your issue of the *Journal* on to a non-AMWA member who might be interested (and interested in becoming a member). I've coordinated special mailings of past issues (notably the Vol. 13, No. 1, 1998, issue with the Educators Roundtable, which was sent to 200 professionals involved with communication programs around the U.S.) and might do so in the future, but word of mouth remains the surest method of our future growth.

Word of mouth is one way to receive feedback from readers. Reader survey forms are another (more effective) method. The most recent survey was conducted in 1998. Those results yielded many suggestions for improvements and many supportive comments to keep going in certain directions. It may be time again soon to ask for the

opinions of readers, so if you see a form in an upcoming issue, don't pass it by. Your comments do count.

What would I say the future holds for the very best that AMWA can produce? If the last few issues of the *Journal* are any indication, I would say plenty of everything: from "how to" articles to "my experience" articles to research articles (see the paper by Ancker on page 24 in this issue). It's been my pleasure (and sometimes pain) to labor over, shape, and package what you have to offer, and I'm looking forward to a while of it.

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