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5th AAHB President (2005-2006)

When did you attend your first Academy annual meeting? The first meeting was held in Santa Fe, NW. I don't remember the year. I was a member of the first Executive Committee which was comprised of Elbert Glover, Chad Werch, Molly Laflin, and myself. We made up the first Program Committee and were session chairs at the first meeting. I responded to a call from Glover and 3 of us beside himself shared his vision.

What attracted you to AAHB? The emphasis on research and presentations by the best behavioral science researchers in the country. The opportunity to meet and converse with the best in public health and other disciplines and to meet federal funders. The opportunity to network and to share information and to set national agendas. The opportunity to meet and stay at some of the nicest resorts in the country and to enjoy the scenery, environment, and to relax. The fact that no meetings were scheduled in the afternoons so we could get to know each other. The fact that the group was small enough that we could meet in 1 large room for all sessions so we could hear the same thing. I loved that I came away with many intellectual "nuggets." Nuggets were something I rarely got at large meetings such as SHAPE, APHA, APA, and the Society of Behavioral Medicine. I really cherished the friendships that developed, the openness in communication, and the comradery. I met in person many people I didn't know and did know me. I was trained in behavioral epidemiology, behavioral medicine, and entered with a psychology background. I was trained by Bandura so not many people knew me immediately. Another thing I liked was meritocracy. We didn't care about politics regarding becoming a fellow. We cared about your record.

What do you value about the Academy and why did you choose to be involved as President? The reasons above where why I became involved. I had been the chair of NCHEC and two other organizations. I was an Army Military Colonel and I retired after 37 years, 7 months, and 15 days. I commanded everything from Company to Brigade level. I am a graduate of the US Army War College where Eisenhower and Bradley attended. I thought I might have something to offer in the way of leadership skills is why I ran for President. I lost the first time by 1 vote because people did not know me, but was elected the second time. I guess it pays to persevere.

What was your vision for AAHB when you assumed the role of President? My vision was to "professionalize" the organization. For example, we developed a strategic plan, modified bylaws necessary for the operation of any organization, discussed ways to increase membership and generate income, asked Board members to sign an ethics and conflict of interest statement, generated guidelines for selecting Laureate recipients, decided on retention of the AAHB Logo, and encourage white papers, and too many other things to mention.

What was your biggest accomplishment as President? I think the desire to professionalize the Board. We went from long discussions to passing motions. Nothing was debated unless there was a motion on the floor. Consequently, we got a lot done.

Each Board member led a committee so we got more done and got a lot more people involved. The people who were on committees are now some of the leaders of the Academy today such as Lisa Benz Scott.

Where do you see AAHB in the next 10 years? We proved our staying power. Many of the larger organizations and leaders of the organizations thought we would fold and many were threatened. I see the Academy's role is staying focused on the "best" in research and supporting the acquisition of grants. We have to encourage science and the best science. If you think about the history of Psychology in the '70s, it was not highly regarded and was kin to witchcraft. Now we know it as Departments of Psychological Science. This is because they devoted themselves to research and identified "best practices." Well before medicine, they were the first field to identify the best practice of systematic desensitization and its efficacy in about 78% of the cases. This is what we need to do, in my opinion. Stay focused on the translation of research to best practice and be committed to accountability. We need to continue to ratchet up. Technology must be a part of present and future. We have to remain inclusive and not become too narrow. We need to include topics such as preparedness and homeland security and promote research in these areas as part of our mission.

Do you have any advice for students and early career researchers? Join the academy and learn from the best. Learn and have the courage to think outside the box. Have a strong work ethic. Collaborate so you can become better than what you are by yourself. See the value in others. Join forces, yet be very aware of what you have to offer in the professional mix. Sign contracts about order of authorship. Always do more than your part. Learn new skills as you progress and realize that the half live of your education is declining.