



A History of IPA: My Story

by Philip Laughlin, Ph.D.

Within the first year or two of IPA's activation a member was appointed as executive secretary. This was a volunteer position and was filled by a number of colleagues through 1982. Some of these held officer positions, such as secretary or treasurer, during their time in office. Some published the newsletter. Membership development and organizational support efforts were staples for the office. An exhaustive search for all of the individuals who served this function is beyond the scope of this brief paper, but a conversation with one of them, Ray Moore, found him providing membership development services as well as editing the newsletter. The association also hired a number of lobbyists over the years and, from time to time, gave serious consideration to folding the two functions into a single position.

During 1980-81 an ad hoc committee was formed by President Pat Sullivan to consider and make recommendations on a number of association functions and target a number of accomplishments in the future. One of these was the further development of an IPA executive office that would (1) process membership, (2) receive and transmit mail and information, (3) develop new membership, (4) coordinate Executive Council activities, and (5) serve as the legal address of the corporation. The Executive Council, in 1982 with John Tedesco as IPA president, gave this matter serious attention and coordinated a survey of the membership especially as related to "funding" for an executive director position. In all 75 members responded to the survey, with 44 favoring establishing the funded position and 31 opposed to the idea. There was also serious consideration given to folding the lobbyist function into the position. The upshot was IPA hiring its first funded executive director in 1983, Craig Rypma, and determining that the position would be funded out of association reserves as the operating budget was insufficient for such funding. A separate lobbyist was continued and funded for several years through the activities of the Iowa Association for the Advancement of Psychology. Bill Wimmer became the lobbyist during Craig's tenure in office and was retained until 1994.

Some enormous legislative accomplishments were achieved during Craig's tenure and by the end of 1986 the IPA treasury was completely empty. This writer assumed the executive director duties in 1987 and served through 1993, the first two years on a volunteer basis. APA was strongly advocating for viable state associations by this time and made many financial resources available to support such developments. IPA received two grants to support the executive office activities coupled with a third grant to fund a public relations person. IPA created Division I (Profession Practice) in 1988 and its dues provided the wherewithal to support the lobbying activity for the next dozen years. By the time this writer's tenure was completed, the IPA treasury enjoyed a substantial reserve that more than doubled during the next

executive director's term in office. Maureen Rank, who IPA originally hired as a public relations person, assumed the executive director position in 1994 and remained in that office through 1999. By all accounts she provided excellent services and allowed for continuing upgrading of the office's support to a variety of membership activities and further enhancement of the executive council's development and governance.

Bill Wimmer was replaced as the association's lobbyist in 1994. There were a number of interim lobbyists over the next few years that included at least two years of the function being provided, primarily on a volunteer basis, by IPA members. Division I dues continued to provide financial support for this function until the association chose to eliminate all divisions, commencing in 1999. There were a number of substantial budget shortfalls, beginning in 1999, because of the loss of the Division I revenue. This was finally corrected in 2005 with the commencement of the advocacy assessment supplement. Today, IPA probably enjoys the best lobbying support in its history.

Maureen resigned late in 1999 and so it was necessary to hire interim executive office support functions for 2000, until Carmella was selected to provide the services of the executive director. There were some problems in 2000 that included loss of some association records, but it appears that the association was able to overcome these and has continued progressing ever since. Current IPA membership is familiar with Carmella's gifts to the association and the outstanding job that she has done and continues to do up to the present. Perhaps this writer has a limited vantage point, but from it Carmella is the best thing that has happened to IPA and hopefully she will continue to experience the love, support, and appreciation of the association members, and its leadership, for many years to come. She and her two immediate predecessors have been recipients of the Division 31 (State Psychological Associations) outstanding achievement award by association executives, and the association's first executive director, Craig Rypma, was a recipient of the Hizer award, presented by APA to state psychologists who've performed in an exemplary fashion with things legislative.

WHY IPA

IPA membership committee chairs and members, as well as numerous association members, are sometimes confronted by questions related to the value of belonging to the state psychological association. In reviewing the history of the association it is interesting to note the fluctuations in the number of members. A raise in dues, whether tiny or large, seems to have been associated with a decline of membership of comparable size. From this it seems that if dues have to be raised, the raise should be substantial, if necessary, because the loss of members won't be any worse than if a small raise is put forward. It is also refreshing to observe the amount of volunteer hours that members have given the association, some over a few years and others over more than two decades. There have been varying estimates that a minimum of 1 to 2 full time equivalent persons are gifted to the association on an annual basis. The percentage of licensed Iowa psychologists that are IPA members is a little below 50%. This is commensurate with other states throughout the nation. There is a paucity of academic psychologists that belong, but many of those who do, or have, were tremendous contributors. Iowa has a very rich heritage of Psychologists and, in part, their contributions can be, and have been, supported, enhanced, and promulgated to the greater, at large, community by IPA.

One of Carmella's many gifts is her ability to articulate ideas. At the 2005 convention, her address focused on the opportunities provided by IPA membership. This writer is incapable of improving upon her presentation and, with her permission, ends this article with her presentation below.

"Good Morning.

"In a few months my 3rd daughter will be graduating from high school. Before she leaves for college next fall she'll get the traditional 'balance talk' from me. The balance talk is about keeping balance in her life and part of it will include the idea of investing herself. I'm going to talk to her about the importance of believing in something and then giving to it. Giving it her energy and her passion and sometimes her money. I'm going to tell her that when she does that she will feel a sense of ownership of something good and something bigger than just herself and that she will know she has made a difference and she will like that feeling.

"My talk with her is not un-like my feelings about membership in IPA. And sometimes I feel like IPA's mom and I want to say some of the same things I say to my kids! Membership in IPA is all about giving back. It's about believing in your profession and what it stands for and investing in it.

"Sometimes it's about investing a few minutes of your time in it. Sometimes we ask you for your money. Sometimes we are bold enough to ask you to commit big time and invest in the leadership of it.

"But like I will tell my daughter, investing in IPA is doing something that is bigger than just yourself. It's making a difference in a bigger picture. It's experiencing a feeling of ownership of more than your own practice. It's demonstrating commitment to the ideals you embraced when you were young and idealistic and had the vision that a new graduate launching their career has when they leave academia and enter the practice world. Because IPA is psychology at the state level, it is the instrument that can mobilize the energy and resources of a whole lot of psychologists to make a difference on a different level than the differences you make every day in your communities, and in your offices as you see patients come and go with sometimes vast and sometimes increments of visible improvements in their mental health.

"So today I am appealing to you to re-invest yourself in what you believe in. If you are a member of IPA re-energize and recommit yourself to public education, mental health advocacy, and the fight to erase the social stigma of mental health treatment. Work with us to recruit more of your colleagues to join IPA and share the vision that they will also enjoy the realization of.

"If you are not a member, but you are here at this conference because you believe in quality continuing education and you knew where you could find it. Or because you enjoy the camaraderie of being with your professional colleagues, consider becoming a member of your professional association and join in sharing the weight of the load and the benefits of the harvests. You know it took 19 years after it

was first agreed by the IPA Executive Council to make the pursuit of legislation for licensure a priority in 1956, before a licensing bill was implemented in July 1975. The final battle for women's suffrage was led by Carrie Chapman Catt, a daughter of the Iowa prairie, a teacher and a newspaperwoman educated right here at Iowa State University. In that final battle American women over a period of 50 years conducted 480 campaigns to get legislatures to submit suffrage amendments to voters. They conducted 277 campaigns to get state party conventions to include woman's suffrage planks. The numbers go on but the point is the bureaucratic wheels turn slowly. But they do turn. And we can't let up. We must not grow complacent even as we may grow weary in our advocating for the same issues for which we have been advocating for years. We have made progress and to abandon our convictions or our visions would be to lose everything we have gained in our movement to impact society and government. We must continue to fight for parity, for equitable treatment on insurance coverage on treatments we know to work, for prescription privileges if we decide to pursue them, and for the public acceptance for mental health treatment. We must continue the fight at the state level and to do that we must have the support of all of you as we represent your profession at the state level. Our strength will determine our success and your participation will determine our strength. We need your energy. We need your passion. We need your ideas. Bottom line? ... we need your membership. In the February issue of TIP I wrote about the least you could do. That is really what I'm talking about today. Give what you can to IPA but at the very least become a member, unite with us for the cause and share with us the vision.

"Thank you for the privilege of serving as your executive director. Please know that the IPA central office is your office and that I am at your disposal. You pay dues for the services we provide so take advantage of them and please hold us accountable."