



## Growing Up in the 90s

by Jane Anderson & Maureen Rank

The Nineties were a decade of change for IPA - we saw the transformation of the organization's focus from internal to external. We did things we never thought we could. Our sleepy group became a tiger.

In contrast to the prior decade, many women were movers and shakers, not all of them middle-aged (see the last issue of TIP), with ideas and interventions that changed the organization for the better. As IPA Presidents in the Nineties, Joan Laing, Ruth Ann Johnson, Cathie Siders, Mary Johnson, and Jane Anderson (and four guys - Dick Whittlesey, Mike Rosmann, David Christiansen, and Jim Marchman) managed some cataclysmic changes in the association.

Winds of change blew hard and often from different directions. We dealt with the growing impact of managed care. The onslaught of new rules and regulations challenged us to respond knowledgeably and persistently or die as a profession. We said goodbye to the fantasy of being able to work on our own without outside influence. The world was changing, and we had to keep up or become irrelevant (and unpaid).

These pressures forced us to take greater ownership of the organization along with empowering the organization to respond on behalf of all of us. Several factors contributed to our progress:

- \*Change in the position of Executive Director
- \*Assaults on our profession
- \*Reorganization of IPA and the demise of Division I

### **CHANGE IN POSITION OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

As you read in the last issue of TIP, Phil Laughlin as Executive Director created the infrastructure of IPA and helped turn it into a well-organized and well-administered professional association. Because of the demands of the association, much responsibility was given to Phil. "Let Phil do it because he is so good, and we don't want to do it anyway" was a prevalent attitude. Phil performed his duties diligently and, for several years, without pay.

Maureen Rank was hired in 1993 as Public Relations Coordinator, and she became Executive Director in 1995. With the coming of a non-psychologist like Maureen, the Executive Council had to assume more responsibility for the leadership of IPA activities. Rather than relying on Phil, the Council "stepped up" and took charge while Maureen provided the necessary staff support in addition to all the other stuff she did.

Maureen brought her interpersonal and organizational skills to her work as well as a well-honed sense of humor and a high tolerance for ambiguity, skills necessary for working with psychologists. She was (and is) a strong advocate for psychology. Her efforts were recognized nationally as well as locally. She was voted Executive Director of the Year by APA in 1996. Maureen's knowledge of how groups work made her very effective in helping us change. (Jane wrote this part)

## **ASSAULTS ON OUR PROFESSION**

In the Nineties, Iowa psychologists faced threats to the practice of psychology and to our very livelihoods. Although the academics and University-based practitioners among us had some guarantee of autonomy and support, most of us were in private practice. We were very vulnerable to the machinations of managed care companies. We took the bit in our collective teeth and ran with it - we took a more aggressive stance with those who would stand in the way of our doing our work and getting paid for it.

Knowing where the power was, we developed yearly advocacy workshops. With the help of our state legislators, such as the late Elaine Szymoniak and Ro Foege, we learned how to be effective advocates for our cause. We developed lobbying skills. We learned how to make effective phone calls. We wrote checks. We got focused and purposeful in our relationships with state legislators and Congressional folks. We learned lots of new things, including how to work with the press. On one memorable Advocacy Day, Cathie Siders taught us techniques for taking on managed care folks effectively (and without making asses of ourselves). She also instructed us about how to find new applications for our clinical skills outside hospital or office settings. Mary Johnson formed an Advocacy Oversight Committee to provide long-range direction to IPA's advocacy efforts.

And we found other places to fight for our profession. For example, without the intervention of Iowa City psychologists at a meeting, the responsibility for "triage" for University of Iowa employees seeking mental health services would have been managed by the Department of Psychiatry, well-known to be dismissive of psychotherapy as an effective intervention. The ability of psychologists to do psychotherapy with University employees and be paid for it would have disappeared.

Second, IPA took ownership of grassroots lobbying rather than expecting our paid lobbyist to do all the work. The Central Office established Practice Fax with monthly legislative updates and user-friendly instructions about how to do what needed to be done on our behalf. For some of us who hated to get our hands dirty, it was a new experience. But we learned how to be effective.

We became better at taking responsibility for reaching out. We discovered how effective it was to participate in the activities of related organizations. Deb VanSpeybroeck's inclusion of IPA in a booth for Race for the Cure in the Quad Cities is one example to joining with others. We were seeing ourselves as people in a profession worth fighting for, and we were much better prepared for the fight.

Some of it wasn't easy. This shift in tactics did not come without misgivings. For example, APA saw Greg Ganske as a strong advocate for our issues and wanted IPA to support him in his run for Congress. We

were asked to raise funds for a big dinner for Dr. Ganske. Some sent in checks even as they admitted that this was not a match made in heaven for them. But they did it anyway, and we learned to advocate for the profession, not just our personal issues. Progress does indeed make strange bedfellows.

Managed care, licensure for Master's level psychologists, hospital privileges - we hit them head-on. We took aggressive ownership of our agenda. We were learning how to be effective advocates for ourselves and to bring about change.

## **REORGANIZATION OF IPA AND THE DEMISE OF DIVISION I**

A huge event in the decade of the 1990's was the reorganization of the association and the dissolution of Division I. Out of a long painful time came a different way of advocating for our needs and sharing the financial responsibility of our drive for change. It was obvious that the association had to step up and be proactive politically or we would be left in the dust by the medicalization of psychotherapy and the onslaught of managed care. With our autonomy threatened, we had to develop a new perspective and different techniques for bringing about change. This was a scary time for the association, and the stakes were high.

It soon became clear that advocacy costs money. And members of the association were not sharing the load equally. A few were paying for the changes that were to benefit many. People were justifiably angry. In ways not characteristic of us, we wasted valuable time with infighting until we saw the light.

A survey of membership yielded startling results. We learned that only 103 of 271 licensed members were members of Division I. This meant that 38% of licensed members were footing the bill with extra dues and doing the heavy lifting for the other 62% (168 members) who were along for the ride. The solution was obvious - reorganize! We voted for a new model - eliminate Division I and become one big happy family. This way, everyone would contribute to the costs of lobbying and other expenses necessary for moving forward.

This was a cosmic change. With great effort, we were able to defuse anger. We learned to move from assigning blame to focusing on the fight ahead. As a solid bloc, we took possession of advocacy without overly relying on our lobbyists and the few members willing to contribute to the cause. This new way of doing things was fair and inclusive. We could go forward as a group without extensive internal squabbling and divisiveness.

In the Nineties, our organization morphed from an internal to an external focus. We moved effectively into the battle for our profession. We took a more aggressive role as psychologists with the unique resources that only psychologists could bring.

We were also able to bring our expertise to catastrophic events occurring in the state. When the shootings occurred at the University of Iowa in 1991, killing five people, teams of psychologists took over the care of survivors and community members and provided emotional safety. We orchestrated responses to the

needs of flood survivors during and after the 1993 floods (and did it again in 2008). We had unique skills to offer, and we were good at it. Psychologists left the security of offices to go where action was and to make a difference. This trend of helping where needed continues to the present time.

In the 1990's, we became a unified force to use our power and influence at a different level. Deb Van-Speybroeck taught us that we must tell our story. "We need to learn to market psychology, and we must understand the need to do so. We have to leave the purity argument behind." The old adage of "provide good services and they will come" did not work any more.

So these are the three big stories of the Nineties. Other big things happened to us as an association, but we decided to focus on these three as defining the decade for IPA. As members we had to build a strong infrastructure, reorganize ourselves in a more equitable entity, and look outward, not inward. Many people have contributed to IPA's success, including five women presidents - a good trend in our estimation. (Of course, there were also four men presidents.) We can be justifiably proud of this story.

And we've had fun - Shrinks on Links, Beth Lonning leading us in line dancing, Jim Marchman getting busted at the Highlander in Iowa City for bringing wine to celebrate the end of an Executive Council "season" are only a few. There have been many other good times, some perhaps not apt for presentation in a professional newsletter but important just the same. So many people contributed to IPA's success and progress during the Nineties. To list them all would run the risk of leaving someone out. You know who you are.

We learned to manage change - not always by choice. And to stay ahead of the oncoming train, we learned to outrun it and get there first while trying at the same time to find the right tracks.

We made tough choices - we could hide our collective heads in the sand or we could get active. We chose the latter - we stepped up, learned new skills, and accepted new challenges. Some of us did things we never knew we could do - lobbying, confronting when we had to, and taking on those who would relegate us to second-class status.

It has been fun to tell this story from our perspective after a decade. It is our impression of the Nineties - others may see that time differently, and we welcome their stories. We look forward to reading about the last nine years in IPA - with Carmella and the new millennium.