

AMCA PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS MARCH 9, 1998

IS THE AMCA READY FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM?

GARY G. CLARK

*Chief, Dengue Branch, Division of Vector Borne Infectious Diseases, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,
2 Calle Casia, San Juan, PR 00921-3200*



Gary G. Clark

This Presidential Address is dedicated to some of the many people and friends in our field who have influenced me and are to some extent responsible for me being here today. This group includes Telford Work, Tom Monath, William Horsfall, Charlie Bailey, Doug Watts, Duane Gubler, Paul Reiter, Tom Scott, Gil Challet, and the late George Craig. On the 10th anniversary of George's Presidential Address, I am pleased to announce that beginning next year, the American Mosquito Control Association (AMCA) will be giving the "George B. Craig, Jr. Young Investigator Award."

The theme for the 64th Annual Meeting is "Sparks Will Ignite the Future of Mosquito Control." I did not help select this theme but will use it to review our recent history and discuss the future of the AMCA. I would not be so melodramatic as to say that we have been at a critical crossroads recently, but I do think that someone needs to review what has happened to the Association in the 1990s and place events in perspective.

From the moment that I became President in Salt

Lake City, I have begun every invited presentation with this statement, "Seek first to understand then be understood," from *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (Covey 1989). In following this powerful concept, I have increased my understanding of the AMCA and its members and attempted to improve communications about and within the Association. As my term as President comes to an end, I just about understand the Association and want to share my findings.

In addressing the title of my presentation, "Is the AMCA ready for the new millennium?" I will talk about the AMCA as I see it while answering the following questions: What is the AMCA?, Who are we?, Where have we been?, What are we doing?, and What should we be doing?

Throughout this presentation, I will emphasize what I think is the AMCA's most important resource: the people . . . its members. They are all volunteers and for volunteers to act there must be programs and benefits. Beyond our members, what is our greatest strength as an association?—our diversity. What is our greatest potential weakness?—our diversity. Our great diversity is seen in the geographic distribution and regional uniqueness of our members as well as the distinct background, experience, and professional specialties of our members. Clearly, we must make optimal use of this 2-edged sword.

WHAT IS THE AMCA?

Our educational and other materials indicate that we are "an international association of individuals and organizations interested in mosquito and other vector control." Our mission is "to provide leadership, information and education leading to the enhancement of health and quality of life through the suppression of mosquito and other vector transmitted diseases and the reduction of annoyance levels caused by mosquitoes and other vectors and pests of public health importance." Two important aspects of our mission that have evolved in recent years are our international emphasis and our broadened focus that includes vectors other than mosquitoes.

The AMCA is currently organized into 8 geo-

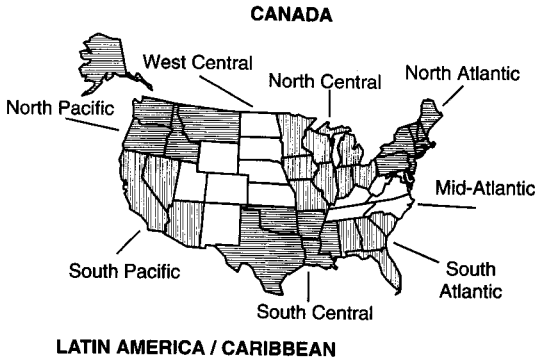


Fig. 1. AMCA members by state, September 1997.

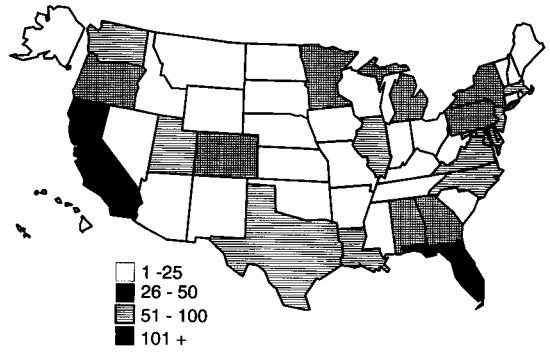


Fig. 2. Geographical representation of the AMCA regions.

graphic regions in the United States and 2 international regions, Canada and Latin America–Caribbean (Fig. 1), which defines part of our geographic and cultural diversity. Each of these regions elects a director to represent it for a 3-year term. The board also has an Industry Director who represents the private sector’s participation within the Association (i.e., the producers of the equipment and insecticides that are used in control operations).

WHO ARE WE?

The AMCA has members in all 50 states (Fig. 2). The states with the greatest number of members are California and Florida. The diverse specialties represented in the Association are reflected by the professions of the Presidents who have provided leadership to the AMCA in the past (Fig. 3). We are a unique association in this respect and in 1999 will have our first President from Industry, a reflection of our professional diversity.

Although the AMCA provides national and international representation, our members participate in numerous state and regional associations that fortify the mosquito control profession in the United States. While traveling 36,000 miles, I attended 9 state and regional meetings. I met many of the AMCA members who protect their constituents from disease vectors and the nuisance mosquitoes that cause such great DIS-EASE in many parts of this country.

WHERE HAVE WE BEEN?

I will cover this point very briefly and emphasize the administrative management during the 1990s. We began the decade with part-time/interim executive directors. In September 1991, the AMCA hired its first Executive Director who did not come from within the mosquito control profession. This situation lasted 1 year, after which the Association returned to a part-time/interim Executive Director. The AMCA then hired its next full-time Executive Director, also from outside the mosquito control

profession, in mid-1994, who served until September 1996. Since then, affairs of the Association have been handled by a Business Manager, Ms. Pamela Toups. In January 1997, the Association hired its first professional, salaried government relations specialist, Dr. Warren Stickle, to represent the AMCA in Washington, DC.

In view of the turbulent waters that we traveled during this decade, we have demonstrated our durability and resilience. Moreover, the response during this period once again reflects the AMCA’s resolve to survive and overcome adversity.

What have we tried to do in the last 18 months? I believe that we did several very specific things, that had we not done them, I would not be here with the positive outlook for the AMCA as we enter the new millennium that I bring to you today. These began by improving our communications to the membership when financial or administrative problems were identified. We explained what the problems were and why they occurred. We then took specific actions and communicated to the membership what we were doing to resolve them and prevent them from recurring. These steps included improved fiscal oversight and improved administrative procedures. Other actions are mentioned later.

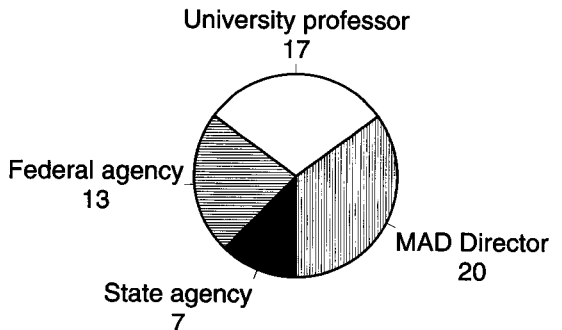


Fig. 3. Affiliations of AMCA Presidents 1935–1998.

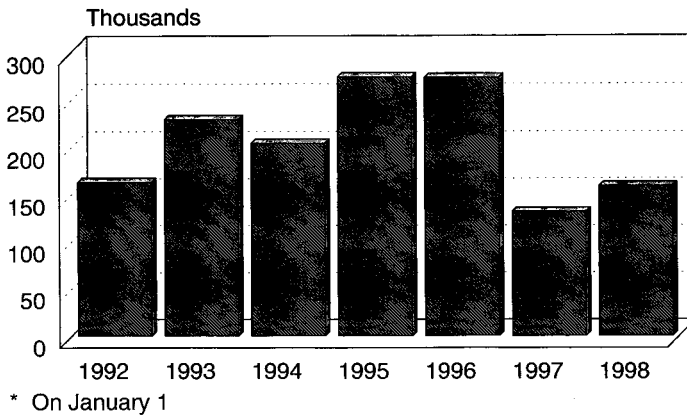


Fig. 4. Financial reserves of the AMCA.

WHAT ARE WE DOING?

When I became AMCA President in Salt Lake City, I indicated that I would focus on 4 priority areas: financial stability, improved communications, legislative advocacy, and public relations and education.

Throughout this year, I have insisted on utilizing the committee structure that was adopted by the AMCA about 2 years ago. This structure promotes greater involvement of Board members as liaisons between their assigned standing committee and the board. They bring reports, recommendations, and information about committee activities to the board, and carry board charges back to their assigned committee for action. They also provide supervision and follow-up for board decisions. This fortifies the AMCA infrastructure, adds muscle to the skeleton, and strengthens our association.

Since 1995, there has been a slight upward trend in our membership and in March 1998, we had 2,120 members. In conjunction with these strong membership numbers, we have made efforts to increase our financial reserves (Fig. 4). Although our financial situation faltered in mid-1996 as part of Association management practices during that period, we have begun to restore our reserve to its previous level. To ensure future financial stability, we are operating with a balanced budget and expect to realize a \$13,000 surplus for calendar year 1997 (= fiscal year). For 1998, a \$7,000 surplus is projected. To cover increased operating costs, especially for our professional government relations specialist, 1998 dues have been increased for regular, corporate, and sustaining members. The fiscal year will also be changed from the calendar year to July 1 to June 30 in order to measure and better monitor our financial health at a time of the year when cash flow is relatively calm.

It is important for our members to understand how the AMCA currently finances its programs and services. In 1997, the principal revenue sources were the annual meeting, the *Journal*, and mem-

bership dues. The major expense categories were the annual meeting, the *Journal*, operating costs for the Association, and personnel. This reflects the importance of the annual meeting as a source of funds to support AMCA programs and services. In the projected budget for 1998, the major income and expense categories remain the same.

Significant positive changes in our communications activities have occurred since we met last year in Salt Lake City. With the announced retirement of Robert Washino as Editor of the *Journal of the American Mosquito Control Association*, Bruce Eldridge has been selected to succeed Dr. Washino. Following recommendations from the Publications Committee and the Editors of the *Journal*, the board voted unanimously to change the name of the *Journal*. The initiative to change the name was made to enhance the *Journal* by broadening the scope of the Association activities and to acknowledge the international nature of the membership. The topic of name change is currently under consideration by the Board of Directors. In addition, the board proposed a change to the Bylaws that will enable the Association to change the name of the *Journal*, if needed in the future, without changing the Bylaws. Page charges for authors have also been reduced to encourage additional submissions to the *Journal*.

Following the retirement of Jimmie Long, Clark Wood was named to succeed him as Editor of the *AMCA Newsletter*. The newsletter will return to its prior format, be produced 6 times per year, and be produced in-house. Costs for its production during 1998 have been underwritten by industry members.

An agreement between the Florida Mosquito Control Association and the AMCA was signed in September 1997 to produce *Wing Beats* as an official publication of the AMCA. This magazine for operational articles is edited by Dennis Moore. J. Lyell Clarke III is the AMCA liaison and Jim Webb, Richard Berry, Bob Lowrie, and Bob Kent from the AMCA represent the Association on the

Editorial Board. Advertising revenues for the 1998 volume are set and there is substantial interaction between the Editor and the AMCA Business Manager. In March 1999, discussions will be held to review the financial situation of this publication and discuss sharing of surplus revenues.

Progress has also been made with other association communications. For example, the AMCA has an address on the Internet (www.mosquito.org) thanks to Christine Musa, who chairs the Cyberspace Committee, and others. The important publication, *Identification and geographical distribution of mosquitoes of North America, North of Mexico* (Darsie and Ward 1981) is in need of a revision and the AMCA has accepted a financial advance from the Florida Mosquito Control Association to Dr. Richard Darsie, Jr. to revise this valuable key to mosquitoes. The Central Office is also revising the Directory of Mosquito Control Agencies. Another pillar of our excellent communications program is the Annual Meeting.

My 3rd area of emphasis was legislative advocacy, where there has been much activity and progress this year and which was previously handled almost exclusively by volunteers. The late Dr. William Hazeltine and George Wichterman were the key players in this area. The AMCA is now supporting its government relations specialist with in-house funding. Progress has been made in the implementation of the Food and Water Quality Protection Act, which was signed into law (P.L. 104) by President Clinton in August 1996. This has required substantial interaction with agencies within the Department of Health and Human Services (e.g., National Institutes of Health, Food and Drug Administration, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). The AMCA has been actively involved in the development of House Bill 1420/Senate Resolution 1059, which dealt with mosquito control on and adjacent to federal wildlife refuges. Letters stating our position were sent to several key senators and we have had substantial interaction with officials of the Fish and Wildlife Service.

The AMCA has also been designated as a partner in the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Pesticide Environmental Stewardship Program (PESP). This important recognition was achieved in large part due to the dedicated efforts of Doug Carlson. During the year, the AMCA was alerted by Doug Johnson from Montana about proposed changes in the label of certain insecticides, as related to usage near bees. As a result, we were able to submit proposed language that would enable certain insecticides to be used under specific conditions. We continue to associate with the Minor Farmers' Crop Alliance, a large group of small associations, which seeks continued support for minor use pesticides.

Incoming Vice President David Dame has developed a list of AMCA members with specific expertise who are willing to testify or provide con-

sultation when requested. This resource list enables members to call upon fellow members when a question arises that they cannot answer.

Last year, I attended the Education/Public Relations Committee meeting and asked that the committee take action to establish a National Mosquito Control Awareness Day. Much to my pleasure the committee, headed by Dreda McCreary and composed of Christine Musa, Fran Krenick, Becky Cline, and many others, came to the board and proposed National Mosquito Awareness Week. The week was to be held during the week of June in which June 26 occurs, in recognition of the date in which the New Jersey Mosquito Control Association was founded in 1935. Although we sought a U.S. Senate Resolution proclaiming this week, time did not permit us to obtain this recognition in 1997. Across the country, the response to this initiative was good and a considerable amount of positive feedback was received. Following the successful "week" in 1997, plans are well underway to conduct this activity again in 1998 and we are optimistic that a U.S. Senate Resolution of support will be obtained.

Another issue that I have promoted this year has been increased visibility for the AMCA. The Association has or will cosponsor several courses or meetings on various topics in Florida, Georgia, Virginia, and Monterrey, Mexico. This initiative should be continued so that more people learn about the AMCA.

In response to significant issues that needed attention during the last year, I appointed 3 ad hoc committees. These were the "Future of the AMCA" chaired by Chuck Beesley, the Cyberspace Committee chaired by Christine Musa, and "Prevention and Management of Insecticide Resistance" chaired by Janet McAllister.

Many of you may be familiar with television star David Letterman's Top Ten List so I developed my own, which summarizes and highlights some of our excellent programs and initiatives. They are

1. Annual meetings: Field day, AMCA in the Sparks Schools, excellent symposia, Spanish Language Symposium.
2. Solid financial management.
3. Quality of written and cyberspace communications.
4. Strong, effective legislative advocacy.
5. Good relations with federal agencies (for example, Doug Carlson received a letter from Dr. Robert Rose at the EPA which stated, "For a fairly small national organization, the AMCA impact has been much greater in this area than ESA [Entomological Society of America], for example. I think EPA sees AMCA as having its act together and a respected partner in the decision [making] process, but we can never rest on our laurels around here and [AMCA] must keep up the effort."

6. PESP program—partners (Florida, California, and New Jersey) and grants (California and New Jersey).
7. Positive interaction with Industry. We have developed a menu of options that is sent to our commercial sponsors one time a year and indicates what activities or programs need financial support and allows them to decide what they want to support.
8. The strategic planning retreat that was held in September in conjunction with the Interim Board meeting. Thirty-five participants came to this hotel and one of the outcomes was the membership survey that I will mention later.
9. Strong infrastructure as reflected by the new organizational chart.
10. Strong public relations/education program.

Many of these issues are summarized in the March 1998 issue of *Pest Control Magazine*.

WHAT SHOULD WE BE DOING?

To help us deal with this topic, a strategic planning retreat was held prior to last September's Interim Board meeting. It was facilitated by Dr. Charles Beesley. In addition to Board members, several other AMCA leaders past and present were invited to participate. We spent one day reviewing recent problems and successes, identifying reasons that these occurred, and developing a list of priority areas. An important outcome of the retreat was defining the process that we are trying to follow. This process involves planning, accountability and oversight, follow-up and reporting, and periodic review and redefinition of priorities. We concluded that 3 priority areas needed attention. These were membership services, legislative advocacy, and public relations/education. I think that the current board agrees that this type of activity is valuable and critical in reviewing the progress and setting the future course for the AMCA. It is an ongoing, dynamic process and should occur annually.

In order to provide the best services and programs for our members, Martin Chomsky prepared the first draft of a survey instrument, which was modified and used to survey members earlier this year. The survey form was mailed to 1,300 members in the United States; because of time constraints it was not mailed to our international members. Of these, 295 responded (23%), of which 236 were regular members and were from 37 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. I will provide a few highlights from that survey.

- The overall level of satisfaction was good. This is very important in that 4 (80%) of 5 respondents indicated that their level of satisfaction was excellent or good. Obviously, we should not rest on our laurels but strive to improve the level of satisfaction for all members.
- Members were polled on their preferred manage-

ment option. Almost 80% were in favor of the current arrangement, whereas just over 40% felt that an Executive Director should be recruited in the future. Only 20% favored recruiting a professional management company for the AMCA.

- Members were asked if the current location of the Central Office met the needs of the AMCA. The response was very clear in that almost 80% felt that the present office location in Lake Charles, LA, met the AMCA's needs.
- Members were asked about their utilization of AMCA services. Almost 80% of respondents attended the annual meeting. Both attendees and nonattendees rated the quality of the annual meeting high. Over 90% of respondents utilized the *Journal* and both groups rated it high. Almost all respondents (97%) utilized *Wing Beats* and those who used it rated it very high. The *Newsletter* was utilized by 96% of the respondents but ironically the 4% who did not utilize it rated it higher than their peers who used it. Over 80% of the respondents utilized the membership directory, whereas only 60% utilized special publications from the AMCA.
- Members were asked if they favored changing the name of the Association. Although there was some interest, 77% did not favor a name change.

These are only a few of the highlights of the survey. There is a lot left to do in terms of analyzing what our members know about the AMCA and want from it. The responses to the programs and services that we offer or should offer must be reviewed and analyzed so that existing programs and services are improved and new ones are initiated. Based on the number and quality of the responses to the survey, we have a good association and our members are interested in it.

I would like to thank the members of the current Board for their dedication and contributions to the AMCA this past year. I appreciate the support, confidence, and patience that they afforded me. I also congratulate them for their role in helping make the AMCA what it is today. Together, we have fulfilled one of my goals: that people have greater pride in the AMCA than they did a year ago. I would also like to thank Pamela Touns, our Business Manager, and Marlene Comeaux, our administrative assistant, for their service to AMCA and their patience with me this year.

What will it take to make the AMCA a more vigorous organization? Volunteers who have the following characteristics: vision, discipline, competence, dedication, motivation, integrity, and trust, all working together in an environment where open, honest dialogue takes place. To paraphrase Benjamin Franklin, "We shall hang together or we shall surely hang apart." For the AMCA to be strong, regional differences must be minimized and we must look for areas of agreement, and forget and forgive the past where disagreements may have oc-

curred. Although we would like to have unanimous support for every action, we should not wait for this before making changes. If we wait for unanimity as a signal for action, the AMCA will be stifled and become paralyzed.

We need to develop a greater sense of trust and get on with the business of the profession and this association. Basic to our future success is effective, open communications, a 2-way street on which there cannot be too much traffic.

Although I have given a positive overview of the AMCA, there are certain to be challenges in the future. Some of these include: availability of insecticides—curtailed by regulations or resistance in the field; personnel—who is training our successors?; funds for field research; development of our international role; and maturation of the new AMCA. Some of these were mentioned to us last year by Past-President Robert Novak (Novak 1998). I am sure you may have others in mind and could add them to our lists.

So what is my prognosis for the AMCA? As a member of AMCA for almost 25 years, a member of the Board for 4–5 years, and now President for 1 year, I think the prognosis for the future is good. However, the answer is really in the collective efforts of the membership. If each of us makes a commitment to actively participate my opinion will be validated. That participation can range from joining the excellent legislative advocacy program, which affects you and other AMCA members, to bringing your special interest or need to the forefront and becoming a champion for the cause.

Finally, what I am promoting here is an AMCA where our acronym also stands for an organization in which All Members Contribute Actively.

I would like to conclude my presentation by asking you to assist me in a demonstration of the potential strength of this organization. I would like for Bob Novak, Dan Ariaz, Bill Zawicki, Chuck Palmisano, and David Dame to please stand. Here is your immediate past and future leadership. These are the gentlemen who will lead you into the new millennium.

Now, I would like for the rest of the Board of Directors to stand. Here we increase the elected leadership to about 15 people. To this group, I

would like to add the chairs of the standing committees. And if you are on any AMCA committee, please stand now. What we have now are about 50 people to lead a volunteer organization with over 2,000 members.

Finally, if you are a member of AMCA, please stand. You are the AMCA of the next millennium.

When you leave here today and you see the letters A M C A, I hope that you will focus on the “M” and think of mosquitoes and members. These are the words that bring us together—without them we are nothing.

Para terminar. A mis amigos de America Latina, gracias por su apoyo, sus presentaciones, su ánimo y participación en AMCA. Espero que haya valido la pena y haya sido de mucho valor para ustedes. Mi corazón está siempre con ustedes.

In conclusion, I think it is clear that we have a strong membership. The greatest challenge that we face is to fully exploit the volunteer spirit and vitality of that membership. In my opinion, the organization and infrastructure are stronger than they have ever been since we were formed in New Jersey in 1935.

Dan, Bill, and Dave: I wish the 3 of you the best of luck as you lead this association into the new millennium. Each of you should be aware that the position that you are going to accept will require (in my opinion) more time and energy than that required to lead other organizations that many of us belong to, including the Society of Vector Ecology, American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene, and possibly even the Entomological Society of America. Ladies and gentlemen, these fellows deserve and merit your full support.

Finally, only time and your actions will answer the question of the day, Is the AMCA ready for the new millennium?

REFERENCES CITED

- Covey, S. R. 1989. The seven habits of highly effective people: restoring the character ethic. Simon and Schuster, New York.
- Darsie, R. F., Jr. and R. A. Ward. 1981. Identification and geographical distribution of mosquitoes of North America, north of Mexico. Mosq. Syst. 1(Suppl.):1–313.
- Novak, R. J. 1998. The AMCA—review, update, and future course. J. Am. Mosq. Control Assoc. 14:1–4.