

## **Calvin Messersmith**

Period of Presidency: February 1997-February 1998

There were three major activities and initiatives during my tenure as WSSA President. Some initiatives were of my choice and some were placed in my lap by virtue of office.

Reorganization of WSSA committee and board of director meeting structure. I observed the WSSA board of directors meeting in Seattle, WA, on Sunday and Monday as vice-president-elect before the annual meeting in 1995. As I was aware before directly observing a meeting, the board meetings started early and ran very late each day, and often the meetings continued into the scientific meeting time. It was a busy and rushed time for board of director members; I felt there had to be a better way.

As I recall, WSSA had a board of directors of 19 members and over 50 committees and sub-committees. Prior to each meeting, all board members receive copies of all committee reports, but each board member was assigned oversight of 2 to 4 committees, with responsibility to report initiatives requiring board action for their assigned committees. A major problem was that most board members felt it was important to discuss their committees, even when “you have the report” was all that was needed, i.e., valuable time was used unnecessarily.

I reviewed all committees and felt that most committees could be assigned to four broad categories; Finance, Publications, WSSA Internal (e.g., awards, membership, placement), and WSSA External (e.g., Washington liaison, liaison with other scientific societies). Then four board members were assigned to each oversight committee, with the President, President-elect, and Secretary being unassigned due to their other responsibilities. Each board of directors meeting opened with traditional order of business, such as announcements, minutes of the last meeting, and treasurer’s report. Then the whole board recessed so that each oversight group could meet to review their assigned committees and create a list of issues that should be brought to the whole board. When the board of directors reconvened, only issues requiring board action were discussed. All reports that didn’t require board of directors action were approved as a consent agenda item, i.e., via a single motion for approval.

I prepared a committee realignment report and presented it at the summer board meeting in 1995, which was my first meeting as vice-president. I expected the board to take the proposal under consideration for approval at the next winter board meeting in February 1996. To my surprise and pleasure, the board rather promptly adopted the proposal, and it was initiated for the next winter board meeting. And as intended, this revised procedure greatly reduced the length of the board of directors meeting because discussion of the whole board mostly focused on issues requiring board review and action. While nothing is ever perfect, the late night and early morning meetings were either eliminated or at least reduced to a reasonable length.

Transfer of society publications and administration. As I understand, Dr. Fred Slife, University of Illinois weed scientist, supported by his wife, served as executive secretary for the WSSA. As the work load grew, they contracted with the American Dairy Science Association, Champaign, IL, to provide administrative and publication services. One ADSA employee, Robert Schmidt,

who had been leading the WSSA services, created his own management firm to provide executive secretary services for WSSA (also the North Central and Southern Weed Sciences Societies). It became apparent that leadership by a single person left the society management vulnerable to illness or accident, plus technology adoption for membership and publications services was not keeping current with technology advances.

The WSSA board discussed our status and decided to evaluate the requirements and alternatives for services that WSSA needed. Dr. Steve Duke, as incoming President, asked me, as incoming President Elect, to lead a committee for this purpose. Other committee members that I remember included Ann Legere, Editor-in-Chief, Dan Hess, vice president, and Horace Skipper, Chair of the Constitution and Operating Procedures committee. A report on the current status and needs of WSSA was prepared, and a request for proposals was submitted to circa 10 to 12 organizations that were perceived as potential and compatible groups to provide WSSA management.

During the summer of 1996, site visits were made to the American Phytopathological Society, St. Paul, MN, American Society for Horticultural Science, Alexandria, VA, American Society of Agronomy, Madison, WI, Allen Press, Lawrence, KS, and a small firm, for which I don't remember the name, in suburban Kansas City. Based on services and costs, it was decided to contract with Allen Press for publication and its division, Allen Marketing and Management, for association management, which are relationships that WSSA maintains to this day.

Allen Press began producing WSSA publications with the 1997 calendar year and management began shortly thereafter. Mr. John Breithaupt was the initial executive manager, but he accepted another career opportunity after a few months, so Joyce Lancaster moved into that position by the February 1998 annual meeting and continues that function today.

Visioning for the future. The aforementioned transfer of administrative services lead to an informal discussion of whether there should be additional coordinated services of all regional societies and WSSA. Thus the summer 1997 WSSA board meeting included a "visioning" day, which was facilitated by a leadership development expert from Syngenta. The WSSA board plus at least two representatives for each regional weed science society participated. I recall that a few ideas discussed included Washington liaison activities, opportunities for joint use of management and publication services, and needs for continuing education. I don't remember specific goals that were developed, but the consensus was that it was a useful activity for the affiliated societies.