



Personal Sacrifice

APCO's Leaders Give Their All

~ BY CRAIG JORGENSEN

I was honored when President Smith asked me to provide my reflections of APCO from when I served as your 50th president. As one would expect, a lot has changed in the association, its focus and its membership.

APCO has moved from an association steeped in technology and regulatory issues to a more generalized association with a greater focus on direct citizen service through critical communications networks. Today, the association appears to recognize the potential opportunities of leveraging today's technology platforms with tomorrow's broadband services.

Since the 1980s, we have moved from an organization led primarily by men to an association of leaders of both genders. In the '80s, our association and its chapters began to reflect the vision and dedication of the women behind the consoles who were serving both their citizens and their field officers while working to lead and improve local chapters.

The dedicated members I worked with, who served on engineering, regulatory, technical and operational committees, were supported by many of our talented, dedicated and committed legal counsels who successfully shepherded numerous regulatory changes through the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), industry and Congress. As members, we have seen projects such as Projects 13, 16 and 31 change the shape of the service and technologies on which we depend. In addition, our community has been a partner with industry in standards efforts such as Project 25, automated frequency coordination and the predecessor of broadband, Project MESA, which changed our vision of future technologies in North America and Europe.

I have had the opportunity to work with many APCO leaders who have dealt with difficult organizational and personnel issues that weighed heavily on them as ethical professionals and often placed a burden on their employment. Most have worked hard and unselfishly to promote their vision and that of our members. With each step forward, APCO members and leaders have carefully and critically analyzed the potential costs, benefits and liabilities. Most of us work to ensure APCO is there to serve its membership, and not our own self-serving interests.

The Internet, along with our volunteer leaders and professional management teams, has provided the opportunity to exchange ideas, concerns and visions in a way that many of the previous leaders and members never had. APCO's active members have been a part of the association, sharing the burden of regulatory issues and responses among other public safety organizations and associations.

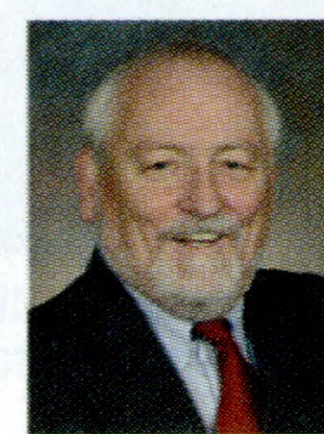
APCO's members have benefited over the last 30-plus years from a number of leaders and professional staff members who had the foresight and the strength to fight for their visions on behalf of those they served. And yet even today, most of our members are ill-prepared for the personal, financial and agency organizational cost of a volunteer leadership position. Few know of the specter of a president having to terminate an executive director that many revere, or the pain of recognizing and reconciling a bad personnel decision. The recognition that our public persona is sometimes different from reality can be quite traumatic.

These and many other difficult personal and organizational struggles of equal or more importance to the

members have been borne and, in most cases, resolved by your leaders in the best interest of the association. Those who seek to lead as a volunteer must always recognize that their sole purpose is to serve the membership as a whole. While it is a very high honor to be elected to serve as an APCO officer, it is neither a royal position nor an escalator to future fame and fortune. It is what it should be: a temporary position to serve and work for the membership of APCO as a whole. It is a commitment to carry both your employer's and APCO's work home every night, every weekend and on vacation. It is, as it should be, a 24/7/365 commitment to APCO's members. And lest you forget, it requires the full support of your family, agency and peers at home and in the office who, by necessity, must carry a large part of your paid responsibilities. Finally, it can and often is a stress factor between you and your management.

As public employees and volunteers, we have an opportunity to improve the level of service we provide to the citizens we serve and our most precious assets, our children and grandchildren. In the end, the responsibility for a strong and successful association does not rest with our leaders; it rests with us as members who can either actively participate in bringing about the changes we want, or passively enjoy the ride.

Finally, I want to express my personal appreciation to my wife, family and the agencies I worked for as well as the association, our members and leaders who served before and after me. **||PSC||**



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