

President's Letter

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Who knew serving on a Board could be fun?

When I was elected to the WAAC Board, I knew it was something I believed in and wanted to do, but I didn't realize how much I would enjoy working with the other Board members, or how proud I would feel about the way we are able to work together and accomplish good things for the organization. This year we continue to work out new ways to distribute an extra-special *Newsletter* (the September issue packed with emergency response information); we're planning a workshop to be held just before our Annual Meeting (Spot Tests for Materials Characterization, co-sponsored by AIC); and updating our website to be more useful to both the membership and the Board (most of this credit goes to Walter Henry). We're also paying attention to the WAAC finances, cutting costs where we can, including keeping our mid-year Board

meeting in January economical but enjoyable. The fun comes, I think, from the way we can work together to generate ideas, solve problems, and make decisions together--as much friends as colleagues. And though some of us have known each other for a long time, every year there are newcomers to the Board and individuals who may never have met before. I like to think of the collegial tendency of the Board as reflecting the friendly and inclusive -- as well as professional -- nature of our organization as a whole.

I've come to realize that not many WAAC members are very aware of the Board positions or what they involve -- indeed, it seems you only discover these things once you've been on the Board. With this year's Board nominations and election coming up, it seems a good time to discuss what the different positions entail.

The Board consists of both elected and appointed positions. Appointed positions serve indefinite terms and technically are appointed by the President; they may receive modest stipends to reward what otherwise appears to be a labor of love. These positions include the Treasurer (currently Tania Collas, but will be changing next year), Membership Secretary (Chris Stavroudis), *Newsletter* Editor (Carolyn Tallent), Web Editor (Walter Henry), Fulfillments Officer (Donna Williams), and Secretary (Teresa Moreno).

The Secretary position has evolved over the last few years; now serving for one year it is usually someone the President can work with closely in getting the Annual Meeting

together. The Secretary also fields questions from both members and the public, sometimes passing them along to other Board positions such as the Treasurer or President depending on the matter at hand. The Membership Secretary manages the membership database (an understatement--Chris created it and continues to improve its functionality) and generates the Directory. The Fulfillments Officer manages back issues of the *Newsletter* and other publications, filling orders as they come in and keeping the inventory up to date. Predictably, the *Newsletter* Editor is responsible for putting together the WAAC *Newsletter*; and the Web Editor maintains and improves the WAAC website. The Treasurer handles all money transactions and ensures that our organization continues, as is said, "in sound financial health."

Elected officers are the President, Vice President (VP), and four Members-at-Large (MaL). Each year, we elect two MaLs and a VP. After being VP for a year, that person becomes President. Each MaL serves for two years, so that every year we have two new ones and two continuing who are about to finish their term. All elected officers as well as the Treasurer are eligible to vote on matters before the Board; the other appointed positions can state opinions but do not vote.

The Members-at-Large are essential to the Board, but don't have many specifically defined duties. They participate and vote in Board discussions, both at the twice-yearly Board meetings and via our email conversations -- which sometimes become quite extensive. MaLs also help with specific projects as needed and asked by the President -- for instance, this year Scott Carrlee is the co-ordinator for the upcoming Spot Test Workshop (as well as being co-instructor) and Leslie Rainer was instrumental in organizing our mid-year Board meeting, which was hosted by the Getty Conservation Institute. And, of course, all of the Board members are available and helpful when it comes to getting the Annual Meeting put together and going smoothly. Mostly, though, I have found all our Members-at-Large to be essential to the decision-making process of the Board. They take their responsibility to the membership very seriously, give thoughtful comments to the issue at hand, and ultimately reach a consensus and/or vote on the issue, depending on the specific situation.

The Vice President comes to the Board with a lot on his or her mind -- because of the knowledge, initially quite intimidating, that in a year she or he will be President with all

President's letter, continued

that the position entails. For me at least, this pre-occupation made it a little difficult to concentrate at first on the very specific tasks of the VP, until I realized how important they are in their own right. I also realized that I had a year to observe and learn how to be President, actually just the right amount of time to prepare myself to assume the bigger job.

So what *does* the WAAC VP do? He or she is primarily responsible for editing the Regional News column in the *Newsletter*, naming and heading the Nominating Committee, and managing the annual election. All three are tasks essential to the organization but ones that few people outside the Board, or the VP position, give much thought to -- unless for some reason they aren't done.

To elaborate, when you open your *WAAC Newsletter* to the Regional News column (I for one count it as one of my favorite parts of the *Newsletter*), the news you see was gathered by the Regional Reporters (volunteers who deserve applause for their efforts!) and then sent by them to the VP for consolidation into the formatted column that you read. I understand this particular task has been made a great deal easier by computers and email -- often there is very little reformatting to be done whereas in the past they were often handwritten and had to be typed or entered onto the computer. I really enjoyed having this contact with the Regional Reporters -- and gained a new appreciation for what they do throughout the year to make that column happen. My only disappointment was that, once I got the *Newsletter*, I had already read one of my favorite parts!

Getting the election slate together was more challenging than I anticipated -- but then I think last year was just a difficult one when so many people were too busy to contemplate running for volunteer office. Even so, in the end I felt the Nominating Committee (myself, Jill Sterrett and Susanne Friend) achieved a good slate that certainly has produced excellent Board members. One innovation last year was a surprise success--the Nominations Postcard which generated much more response from the membership than we had ever had before.

The final thing the VP does is not official, but definitely necessary -- you think a lot about the meeting you will be planning for the next year, and likely go so far as to pick a location so that it can be announced at the preceding Annual Meeting. That's just the initial preparation, but it's a good way to get your feet wet before diving in to the Presidential year.

Besides the meeting planning, the President is responsible for writing three letters for the *Newsletter*, leading the Board meetings, fielding non-routine questions from outside the organization, and generally keeping Board discussions on track. Planning the meeting, though the largest task, is not as scary nor as much work as it sounds. The biggest problem, I think, is to keep track of all the details -- like in planning a big party, which is essentially what you're doing, with

a couple of days of talks thrown in. Once I had the location lined up, I decided to make a list of all the things that needed to happen and, with the help of the Board, organized it into a calendar. As this goes to press, we have registration and general Tucson information on the website, as well as materials about the Spot Test Workshop which will take place in Tucson the week prior to the meeting.

In short, being President and planning the meeting *is* a big responsibility, but it really isn't that bad. And once you're in the position you realize that you're not in it alone--there's an ample Board of your friends and colleagues ready to help spread the load, give you constructive feedback on anything you're not sure about, and to participate by discussing and voting on the occasional bigger issues. I feel honored and proud to be serving with our Board, as well as very grateful to the members. Working with them and for you, the WAAC Membership, has been much more enjoyable for me--yes, it's fun!--than it has been onerous.

So, if you've been a member for a while, enjoyed going to the meetings, maybe have already served as a MaL or Secretary, I hope you will consider running for Vice President. If you're not quite ready for that, perhaps for Member-at-Large. (In that case, though, remember that we often have half a dozen or more people running for just two positions. If winning matters, you have much better odds if you run for VP -- hint, hint!) And, if you're happy just being a WAAC member, I hope you'll come to the Annual Meeting in October to see some good professional talks and have some fun with a lot of friendly colleagues.