

# Guest Editorial

## FIVE DECADES — WHERE HAVE THEY GONE?

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*Editor's Note:* Dr. Wesley J. Dunn became the editor of the *Journal of the Canadian Dental Association* in August 1953.

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One half-century. Five decades. Fifty years. For the age of the universe, it is but the blink of an eye; in human terms, a professional lifetime.

In 1953, Canada's Prime Minister was Louis St. Laurent. Dwight Eisenhower became President of the United States and Tito assumed the presidency of Yugoslavia. Queen Elizabeth II was crowned in Westminster Abbey. Josef Stalin died and was succeeded by Nikita Khrushchev. Dag Hammarskjöld became Secretary-General of the United Nations. Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay reached the summit of Mount Everest. Jonas Salk's polio vaccine was formally certified. Francis Crick and James Watson discovered the double helix structure of DNA. The first open heart surgery was performed in Philadelphia. *The Globe and Mail* cost five cents and Swanson sold its first TV dinner.

The Canadian Dental Association occupied a stately house on Saint George Street in Toronto. Dr. Don W. Gullett was the General Secretary, while also serving as Registrar/Secretary-Treasurer of the Royal College of Dental Surgeons of

Ontario and Secretary-Treasurer of the Dentists' Legal Protective Association of Ontario. He was aided by two administrative/secretarial assistants for his CDA responsibilities and by one secretary for the other two organizations. There was one bilingual receptionist, who also served as the CDA librarian. The newly appointed editor, then in full-time practice, spent one-half day a week at headquarters, but edited articles, wrote editorials, proofed galleys and made up page proofs on his kitchen table. Not exactly state-of-the-art!

For the 15-year period following 1953, CDA was in the forefront, encouraging the creation of five new dental schools — thus doubling the number of dental educational institutions. Other contributions by our national organization are legion — support of fluoridation, submissions to the Hall Royal Commission on Health Services, opposition to the taxation of dental benefits, development of CDAnet, promotion of dental insurance, conduct of the Dental Aptitude Test, establishment of the Seal of Recognition, and effective liaison with the federal government on a host of important issues. And as a 'gathering place' for a healthy profession, the *Journal* has had and has a role to play, the importance of which cannot be overstated.

The content of this entire publication could be given over to the developments in dentistry during this past half-century. In periodontics, the main improvement is related largely to biological research and newer knowledge of the tissues and the microbes inhabiting pockets. The direct bonding of brackets in orthodontics has had a major impact. There have been significant advances in orthognathic surgery, digital radiography, and root canal treatment with rotary instruments. New impression

materials were developed, as well as new stress control and tissue design philosophies for removable partial dentures. The appearance of dental implants has been a quantum advance. It, in turn, has generated developments in bone and soft tissue surgery. Dentistry's historic interest in and promotion of the prevention of dental and oral disease have continued unabated.

Let me contend that not all we have witnessed has been professionally acceptable progress. Since the Supreme Court of Canada, in 1990, essentially struck down advertising restrictions, what now appears in the Yellow Pages, on TV and radio, in newspapers and magazines, on roadside billboards, in 'value pack' savings' coupons, and in the circulation of 'newsletters' to other than dentists' own patients, is professionally demeaning. It is readily acknowledged there is an important — indeed essential — business aspect to the practice of dentistry. But we are *not* commercial competitors. The crude, promotional methods of the marketplace should have no home within a respected health profession. One cannot fault the provincial governing bodies. No one, as yet, has been able to draft an enforceable bylaw bearing on a definition of 'good taste.' There is a lot of 'bad taste' out there, inimical to dentistry, which historically had to struggle from an itinerant craft to a highly respected profession.

I am not even remotely prescient to foresee what the next 50 years will hold, but I'm confident CDA and the *Journal*, both of which serve the profession so magnificently, will continue to have a major impact on dentistry's future.

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Editor  
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