

PRESIDENTIAL REFLECTIONS

This year, it has been an honor and a privilege for me to act as President of the Society. Last year, our past-president, Laurence Nafie, presented a list of activities and achievements of the Society. One item on the list acknowledged the enduring high standards set by our journal, *Applied Spectroscopy*. In addition, he pointed out the continuing internationalization of the society through the formation of SASEuro and the further development of our technical sections. Further, he noted our efforts to foster student activities at both the local and national levels. Through communication with committee chairs, I have tried to focus and consolidate the goals and achievements of Larry Nafie and prior presidents. It is through aggressively active committees that most progress is likely to be made to stem the tide of the decrease of our membership numbers and increase the visibility of the society. Hence, these reflections dwell, in one part, on the committees of the society, but in another part I devote space to our national meeting, which is organized by the Federation of Analytical Chemistry and Spectroscopy Societies (FACSS). In a final part, I reflect on our declining membership and I report on a few of the many pleasant activities in which I have participated this year.

Committees and Officers of the Society. It is my privilege to recognize some very active committees. The **Awards Committee**, spearheaded by Marc Boysworth, Chris Hassell, and Doug Shrader, is doing a really fine job of selecting awardees at all levels of recognition in our society, including the SAS Graduate Student Award. As with all committees, their reward involves a little more work (☺), as we are in the process of instituting an additional student award to be funded by the society and a third student award that will be funded by corporate sponsorship. These student awards will be in the form of travel funds for the students to attend our national meeting (FACSS). I thank the Awards Committee for its diligent work for the society in its efforts to recognize our leading scientists, our future scientists, and service to the society.

Another committee that deserves our recognition is the **Nominations Committee**, comprising Rachael Barbour, Jim Holcombe, George Havrilla, Dave Butcher, and Alex Scheeline. This committee selects nominees for officers of the society. The choice of candidates is absolutely critical to our future. This year we are particularly grateful to the committee for its timely accumulation of possible nominees and constructive discussion and selection thereof. The nomination process is fraught with potential difficulties in our busy world but, with care, really effective people can be selected to lead our society. Our present

committee is fulfilling these responsibilities with distinction.

The **Publications Committee**, under the chairmanship of Mike Morris, and ably abetted by our Editors, Joel Harris and Paul Farnsworth, is moving ahead on many fronts to fully place our independent journal, *Applied Spectroscopy*, into the forefront of electronic publications. Recent initiatives include ongoing activity to create an electronic back-file of *Applied Spectroscopy* stretching back to volume 1, as well as institution of a fully electronic manuscript submission and peer review process. The consolidation of our Focal Point articles onto CD is continuing, with the latest edition containing all the Focal Point articles so far. Further, Marvin Margoshes, our Newsletter Editor, has compiled a fascinating CD containing articles from our newsletter, "Spectrum", and "Arks and Sparks", that showcases "people, places and events in 20th century spectroscopy".

I envisage that the **Newsletter** should continue the wonderful growth and activity shown under the leadership of Marvin Margoshes, who is retiring from this position at the end of 2004. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Marvin for his dedicated, enthusiastic development of the newsletter since 1999. His wide variety of experience and interests has made a significant impact on the Newsletter and has set high standards for the future. Particularly, all of us have enjoyed the historical bent of many issues. I would like to see the Newsletter continue its development in such a way as to encourage the publication of student activities at the local and national levels. Dave Butcher takes up the Newsletter as its editor in 2005, and he has undertaken to encourage its use as a student voice in the society.

Our **web editor**, Stephen Bialkowski, has brought his calm insight and energy to our web site, and plans to add a "chat" facility to allow various types of discussions amongst us all. Right now, most of our communications are by e-mail, but a chat facility will bring order to our discussions and will allow for compilations of views that can be inputted into the formulation of our society's policies and activities.

The **Meggers Award Committee**, Vahid Majidi, Peter Chen, and Joel Harris, directed by its energetic chair, Eileen Skelly Frame, has redefined some of the committee's deadlines to ensure smooth interaction with the FACSS meeting in the organization of the Meggers Award symposium. The **Lester Strock Award Committee**, Mitch Johnson, Ramon Barnes, and Brian Smith, has done a fine job, too.

I would like to thank our **Student Representative**,

Debbie Serna, who has organized several very successful student social and career-oriented activities at Pittcon and FACSS. Other individuals who are worthy of note include the **Tour Speaker** coordinator for 2004, Gloria Story, who has done a really fine job of setting up one of our most exciting programs. The coordinator for 2005, Joe Sneddon, already has a program set up for that year, and is looking into the financial feasibility of an expansion of the program to Europe and Asia. Debbie Bradshaw, our Treasurer, and Marvin Margoshes deserve our thanks for manning our **booths** at Pittcon and FACSS, "selling" the society.

We have instituted a new level of recognition for members of the society, which is the status of "**Fellow of the Society for Applied Spectroscopy**". This honor was awarded in the first instance to our present honorary members, many of whom were presented with the award during the SAS Wine and Cheese Reception at FACSS in Portland. Those who were present to receive the award were John Ferraro, Gary Hieftje, Jim Winefordner, and Mitsuo Tasumi. Others who received the fellow status but were not able to attend included Freeman Bentley, John Bertie, Darcy Brent, Bryce Crawford, John Dean, Bill Fateley, Peter Griffiths, Wilburt Kaye, Jack Koenig, Roy Koirtjohann, Alan Marshall, Foil Miller, Kazuo Nakamoto, Richard Nyquist, Ted Rains, Harry Rose, Bourdon Scribner, Walter Slavin, and Vernon Wheeler.

FACSS. At the outset of the following discussion, I must emphasize that the SAS believes that FACSS continues to be one of the best available technical meetings on general analytical chemistry, and it occupies a pre-eminent position in the Fall conference calendar. This was borne out by the results of a questionnaire on FACSS that I promulgated in the summer of 2004.

The full set of results of that **questionnaire** can be found on the SAS web site at: <http://s-a-s.org/> The total number of respondents was 277, which is about 14% of our membership. We found that, in line with the well-known decline in FACSS attendance over the last decade or so, only a minority of our membership attends FACSS almost every year, even though a majority thinks that FACSS is useful. (The FACSS attendance figures have ranged from about 2400 in Chicago in 1989 to about 1400 in Providence in 1997, dropping to less than 900 in Portland this year.) A majority of our membership prefers oral symposia with a large minority preferring equal distribution between posters and oral. Also, there is a majority that is happy about moving the meeting throughout North America, and a majority thinks the registration is too high. Those who attend regularly are less likely to think the registration is too high compared to those who attend every few years. Written opinions of the respondents are on our web site. The results of this questionnaire highlight our members' lack of interest, finances, or time to attend the meeting. Lack of attendance forced the FACSS organization to reduce the number of oral presentations and increase the number of poster presentations at the recent FACSS meeting in Portland. These measures were taken to ensure that oral presentations attract a sizable audience, while simultaneously improving the perceived status of posters.

In the Spring, the SAS Executive Committee wrote to the 2004 Governing Board Chair of FACSS to express

our thoughts about the organization of FACSS and how FACSS serves the needs of SAS. The main tenet of the document was that FACSS is our only **national meeting**. If we had an independent national meeting, we would be able to require membership of SAS to attend the meeting, take profits from the meeting, boost the visibility of the society through such a meeting, and be materially involved in the planning of the scientific program. All these things have proved difficult or impossible because we cede our national meeting to FACSS. FACSS has been responsive to our concerns and the FACSS governing board has agreed to conduct regular "**retreats**" in which such issues can be discussed in an informal manner outside the formalities of FACSS governing board meetings. The first such retreat was held in Portland, Oregon, on Saturday, October 2, 2004. The format of the retreat was two separate meetings, with the first being between the SAS and FACSS executive committees in the morning. This meeting was successful in that SAS was able to fully air the issues of concern. The second meeting with the FACSS governing board, in the afternoon, was intended to discuss the future of FACSS, and it can be said that progress was made. The progress included an acknowledgment that regular retreats are useful and should continue, and plans are underway to feed funds from the non-member FACSS registration back to SAS to help recruit new members. This would mean that non-member FACSS registrants would have optional membership in SAS included in their non-member registration cost. Unfortunately, the afternoon meeting's format prevented your SAS delegates from being able to fully articulate SAS concerns to the whole FACSS governing board.

The SAS Executive Committee has proposed some **specific solutions** to address our concerns with the FACSS scientific program. The most important of these was to increase the continuity of the FACSS program committee by creation of new officers of the committee who would have longer terms than the present one-year term of the program section chairs. Already, FACSS has moved to give the program chair an official status for longer than the previous two-year term, and has added past program chairs as advisors to the program chair. However, there continues to be resistance to the concept of a program committee with longer-term members composed of people who actually organize the program. Also, the SAS executive would like to see more face-to-face planning meetings throughout the 18–24 month planning process for a FACSS meeting. In recent years the planning meetings have become short and infrequent. Finally, the SAS executive would like to see a more transparent nomination process for officers of FACSS, as well as intensive publicity efforts to raise awareness of the meeting throughout the scientific community.

Overall, the discussions with FACSS have resulted in some positive directions, and we expect that such positivity will result in benefits for the society, as well as in the quality of the scientific program at FACSS. The next retreat will be on the Sunday before Pittcon in 2005, where we expect discussion to continue in our interests, and in the interests of FACSS.

Declining Membership. Several reasons have been commonly advanced for our decline in membership. One is the Diaspora of applied spectroscopic expertise

amongst scientists. This means that scientists consider spectroscopy such an important tool, and so commonplace, that they all possess enough spectroscopic expertise to consider that their first allegiance is either to very large national societies, such as the American Chemical Society, or to topic specific societies that may have more direct relevance to their work. Another reason is that the workload of scientists is purported to have increased so much that the responsibilities of society membership have become low priority. Further, many companies, employees of which have formed the backbone of society membership in the past, are no longer providing travel funds to as many meetings as in the past, particularly our national meeting, or are no longer paying for their employees' society dues, both of which tend to reduce the incentive for scientists to belong to SAS.

In order for our society to continue to consider itself healthy and useful to scientists, we must carefully review our **visibility**, and our **activities**, to ensure that scientists recognize and value the role of the society. Our technical sections address one aspect of our activities, which is to focus on science of current interest, but there is a scarcity of volunteers. If you are interested in one of our technical sections, now is the time to step up to the plate!

Clearly, our excellent activities do us no good if they are not visible to the scientific community. Hence, one of my main conclusions is that our publicity efforts should be revisited. This includes our publications activity, and our visibility at FACSS and other venues, but it extends to activities such as our tour speaker program. It is no use to have a fine set of tour speakers if each seminar is not publicized to attract significant audiences. Our society will not be perceived to be attractive if publicity is insufficient to tempt people to those activities.

Some Pleasant Activities. The Society was pleased to be able to give special recognition to **Norman B. Colthup** on his 80th birthday. Cytec Corporation arranged a special symposium in his honor on July 14th at their technology center in Stamford, Connecticut. I was honored to be able to present a plaque to him on behalf of the Society. Norman Colthup retired from American Cyanamid in 1986, from which Cytec was spun off in 1993, but he continues to consult and train scientists at Cytec. The SAS plaque read "Recognition Award presented to Norman B. Colthup by the Society for Applied Spectroscopy on the occasion of his 80th birthday in honor of his dedicated service to infrared spectroscopy, 2004".

I attended a conference at the **Chemical Heritage Foundation**, Philadelphia, 20–21 May 2004, on "Leadership Initiative in Science Education". The society is a sponsor of the Foundation and has common interests with it. Amongst those interests is a definition of the science and technology professional for the 21st century, and the required skills of such professionals, and a definition of

the profile of science education for the 21st century in achieving scientific literacy and preparing young people for science and technology careers. The conference attracted distinguished speakers and defined some of the problems facing educators, industrialists, and professional societies as we serve the needs of this century. My main "take-home" message was that our society should seek ways to increase the visibility of applied spectroscopy in schools, universities, and in industry through our workshop, outreach, and award programs.

An important part of our activities is our relationship with the **Spectroscopy Society of Canada**. Over the years, we have exchanged speakers from each of our tour speaker programs, and I was privileged to visit three of their sections, in Toronto, Ottawa, and Montreal (June 6 to June 9, 2004). This was an outstanding, enjoyable, scientific and social visit. It emphasized to me, yet again, the strengths of scientific societies and the importance of our tour speaker programs in fostering good scientific relationships and exchange. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Canadians for their hospitality during my visit.

I thank the voting and non-voting participants in the **Executive** Committee and Governing Board of SAS for being such dedicated, charming, and patient individuals with whom to work. Your society is well-lead by people who have great concern for the society, who spend a great deal of time working on society business, and who adhere to a delightful level of civility in discussion and democratic decision-making. For lack of space, I can't mention all the names involved, but the individuals presently on the Executive Committee are listed on our web site.

Finally, for keeping the society running smoothly, I would like to thank our **professional staff**, Bonnie Saylor, Barbara Stull, and Victor Hutcherson. Barbara has just completed 20 years of service to our society, for which we offer our congratulations and deep gratitude. I heard it before I became president of SAS, but I will repeat, with feeling, that without these wonderful professionals the society would not run nearly as smoothly. We owe a great debt to them for this.

At the close of 2004, we face a new year for the Society, under the **leadership** of Cynthia Mahan, whom I know will do a really fine job of serving the society's interests. With equal enthusiasm, I welcome Rebecca Dittmar as our new President-Elect and Chris Hassel as Treasurer as we say thanks to outgoing officers Larry Nafie (past president) and Debbie Bradshaw (Treasurer) for their really outstanding service on the Executive Committee. Also, we welcome Paige Eagan, our erstwhile Student Representative, as our new Membership Coordinator.

ROBERT G. MICHEL
SAS PRESIDENT, 2004