

As the Presidents See It ...**The Halfway Mark****Harry Leamy, 1983 MRS President**

In writing this retrospective, I find myself unable to limit my remarks to the year 1983. Not only has my personal record of events in that year been long since discarded but, as Russ Chianelli pointed out in his remarks, the MRS presidential experience is a protracted one. In my case, I can only refer to an MRS-intense period of roughly five years, during one of which I happened to hold the office of president. From this vantage point, around a decade later, I find myself struck by how much our Society has changed and by how little it has changed. Let me explain.

In 1983, MRS was animated by a rebellious spirit that was fueled in many of us by the absence of a proper forum for the discussion of our work. The disciplinary societies had no scheduled sessions that attracted the people with whom we wished to converse, and the recognition we sought for our own achievement from our educational cohorts was typically not forthcoming. At that time, only the Gordon Research Conferences represented the sort of gathering we sought. The desire for intellectual intercourse had led originally to the *creation* of MRS, a story best left to earlier presidents to tell. The *spirit* of the society just a decade ago, however, was still one of rebellion and power. MRS was, in 1983, very much an adolescent society. It possessed no institutional infrastructure and only one annual meeting, and was entirely a volunteer organization; workers were motivated by the opportunity to do things in a different and better way than was being done elsewhere.

The concept that all symposia should be topical, for example, was crystallized in 1983. Previously, they had been topical simply because the Society hadn't the support organization to do it any other way. Leaving all decision-making in the hands of individual symposium organizers was a necessity whose intrinsic power really manifested itself as the Boston meeting became increasingly spirited, and as it addressed a wider range of topics. At this juncture, I confess that Rustum Roy had probably *always* known that this was the best way to ensure technical vitality. Rusty was among the early MRS leaders who believed strongly in the "loose federation

of interests" structure that is still visible today. Indeed, 1983 was the year in which a great debate over the wisdom of securing permanent staff for the Society was taken up seriously, with Rusty in the opposition. The institutionalizers prevailed, of course, and the Society was able to rise to new levels of capability with staff support. What has remained the same is the constant renewal that is still afforded by our practice of decentralized decision making regarding topics, formats, and agendas. This is, in my opinion, MRS's most important contribution to its membership.

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The *MRS Bulletin* in 1983 was still being composed and edited in my den with the help of Tim Middleton, a great writer and my brother-in-law. Having some years earlier accepted the task of producing a newsletter for the Society, I engaged Tim on the basis of friendship to

help me. We produced copy from my memory, scraps of paper, and E-mail from colleagues. This scenario continued until, at the end of 1984, a real magazine with articles of technical interest finally emerged. Many people contributed to the ongoing job of creating a community among materials researchers via the *Bulletin*. The need for such a vehicle was seen most clearly by Elton Kaufmann, who took responsibility for its assembly when I flagged. Today, the *Bulletin* is quite professionally produced, but serves the same function: to bring the materials community together via a voice that is uniquely its own.

In 1983, anyone who wanted to work on MRS projects was welcome to do so. Work was plentiful. Ideas were also plentiful. Indeed, MRS attracted people with ideas for "experiments" in scientific communication and education: Symposium X, Short Courses, the Spring Meeting, a European MRS, and Government Interactions all were being proposed at this time. Eventually, each was implemented because someone simply assumed responsibility and did the job. The MRS's Woody Award is testimony to the value placed on performance. Named for the indefatigable Woody White, who served as president of the Society following my term, it honors those who assume responsibility, and acknowledges the value that we place on work for our profession. This willingness to work is the hallmark of MRS. It was present from the beginning, assured the Society's growth, and remains the Society's unifying characteristic today.

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MRS—Past and Future

Clyde Northrup, 1982 MRS President

The Materials Research Society has grown in size and scope since 1982 because of (1) inspired scientists and engineers who want to solve real materials problems, and (2) their enthusiasm about receiving help, even from sources outside their traditional disciplines. This combination has given the Society its singular personality and created "lively" discussions at MRS meetings, particular-

ly among people with differing jargons. In at least one symposium, it was rumored there was a call for a "Sergeant at Arms" at future meetings to maintain decorum and protect the attendees!

In the late 1970s, Dick Schwoebel (Sandia National Laboratories) and I pondered the need for an unbiased forum where the Scientific Basis of Nuclear Waste Management (SBNWM)