



## **History of the Virginia Biomedical Association**

### **In the Beginning**

As we get ready for the 10th Annual Meeting of the VBA, I have been told it is time to reflect upon our origins. Like many of us old folks, my memory is not what it used to be. So I have spoken to many of my colleagues in order to refresh what few brain cells I have left. Fortunately, of the 175 first year members, 48 that are still current members. It is this ability to network with other members that has made this a great organization.

The VBA was not the first Biomed Society in Virginia, but I hope because of our success, it is the last. This did not happen overnight or by a few individuals. My recollection is that it took about a year and the efforts of about 3 score of people. Many of these were corporate sponsors.

From my perspective, this is how it all started.

Back in the 80's there was a group called CAMES, the Capital Area Medical Equipment Society, located in Northern Virginia. I was the last president of this group that failed for several reasons, the most important of which was that the motivating core group was too small. As with most careers, people change jobs and move to new locations around the country. When a few of these essential individuals moved away, the society stalled and collapsed from lack of support.

In the early 1990s, there were several Biomedical Engineering department managers from several Mid-Atlantic States meeting as a group. This was a VHA (Voluntary Hospital Association) supported group put together by Tim Ganous of MACE (Mid-Atlantic Clinical Engineering). This group met quarterly, mostly at Rockingham Memorial in Harrisonburg. Many in this group from Virginia felt that we needed to expand beyond the VHA hospitals and we talked.

I shared that in 1993, I had met with Rylan Paxton at Henrico Doctors Hospital in Richmond. We had a couple of exploratory meetings about developing a Central Virginia group based around Richmond and Fredericksburg areas. It did not look promising because we did not have enough key people. Ben Clark shared that at the same time he and Steve Haupt were trying to put together a Biomed group in the Roanoke area. In addition, Virgil Smoot informed us of a failed Tidewater Instrumentation Society, of which he had been a past president.

Tim Ganous and Virgil Smoot met with Mary Frye (now Coker) and invited her to one of our VHA-MACE meetings. At this meeting in Harrisonburg there was a consensus from the Virginia members to form a statewide organization.

Nothing happens without money. This means corporate sponsors, and to our rescue was Larry Gasparini of Hewlett Packard. With Larry Gasparini's support Mary Coker set up a one day preliminary meeting at Wintergreen in February 1994. In a room upstairs, crowded with 75 Biomed Technicians, we had a splendid lunch. We listened to Mary Coker who expounded on the benefits of a statewide organization. We also heard from Greg Johnson the President of the NCBA, who advised us of a few problems with starting up an organization. In addition, we heard from several others who anxiously volunteered their support. With that, a steering committee formed called the Organizational Committee.

How many individuals do you recognize from the original Organizational Committee? Chuck Almarey, James Anderson, Thomas Barnes, Mike Carlton, Lis Carroll, Ben Clark, Mary Coker, Rick Davis, Mark Freeman, Larry Gasparini, Steve Germaine, Steve Haupt, Frank Insley, Ryland Paxton, Virgil Smoot, Keith Southworth, Ralph Woolridge, Tom Wright were all working on various aspects of setting up this new organization.

The first training class sponsored by the VBA was a Power Quality Workshop presented by Pro-Active Technology held on April 21, 1994, at Mary Immaculate Hospital in Newport News. At this workshop Mary Frye Coker presented us with a problem, we needed corporate officers. In order to set up a state organization we needed to file documents with the State Corporation Commission. It was decided between Mary Frye Coker, Steve Haupt and myself that I would be the Secretary. In addition, a coin flip would decide between Mary Frye Coker and Steve Haupt who would be President. I had the honor of flipping the a quarter, Steve lost and became Treasurer, and Mary became the first President and with that, we had our first official acting corporate officers. The Organizational Committee confirmed this on June 13, 1994.

Several meeting of the Organizational Committee took place where various details needed to be worked out. Several committees were formed to deal with issues, such as the creation of the Bylaws. The Bylaws were a modified version of the NCBA Bylaws. Why recreate the wheel? Mary Frye Coker was dealing with problems of incorporating with the state as a tax-exempt group. Mark Freeman was putting out the Newsletter and working on a web presence. And multiple other problems.

All this work was leading up to the next planned event, the First Annual State Meeting of the VBA, which was held on August 5-6, 1994, at the Jefferson Hotel in Richmond. This was very special in that the VBA membership would be created and would then be charged with adopting our proposed By-laws, electing our first board, selecting our new logo. Several vendors supported this meeting, including Critikon, Hewlett Packard, Ohmeda, and Marquette Electronics. Again, nothing happens without money.

The meeting went smooth, a new Board was elected, the Bylaws were passed and a logo was selected. The new Board was James Anderson, Mike Carlton, Lis Carroll, Ben Clark, Rick Davis, Mark Freeman, Mary Frye (Coker), Steve Haupt, Ryland Paxton and Virgil Smoot. The new Bylaws were adapted as proposed. And a new logo was selected via a contest to win a Hewlett Packard 10B Business Calculator. Might not seem like much of a prize now, but back then it was a handy little device. Unfortunately, the winner was Sidney McAlister of Hewlett Packard. Apparently he already had a few, because he turned it back in so we could give it to someone else. We keep the logo though.

At the end of the Annual Meeting the new board met to appoint the corporate officers in accordance with the Bylaws. These were President Mary Frye (Coker), Vice President Ben Clark, Treasurer Steve Haupt, Membership Secretary James Anderson, and Recording Secretary Mike Carlton.

The new board now began tackling such issues as communication with the membership, developing training classes, refining of our Bylaws, increasing our membership, developing the Newsletter, developing vendor resources and last but not least another ski trip. Several formal committees were also setup in accordance with the Bylaws to spread the work around.

Now as we approach our 10th Annual Meeting of the VBA, I look at what success we have had in having so many individuals working so hard over these past years. This includes Biomed Techs and their Managers, Vendors, and nonmember Volunteers.

This is a big story with so many names too numerous to list here who have supported this organization. But, I hope you know who you are and thanks for all your efforts. I hope to see you at the 10th Annual Meeting, it will be a blast!

James Anderson  
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