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IEEE-USA: A Year in Review — The Challenge Continues

1999 IEEE-USA President Paul Kostek

My term as IEEE-USA President has been interesting, challenging and enjoyable. In 1999, IEEE-USA continued pursuing initiatives and activities that will enhance the careers of all IEEE members. In addition, IEEE-USA played an essential role in establishing U.S. technology policy.

Why Serve?

Many people have asked why I agreed to serve as IEEE-USA's President, and what things I have both enjoyed and sacrificed for this opportunity. The *why* is simple. I have been active in IEEE for many years, serving at the Section, Region and Society level. I also chaired and served on several IEEE-USA committees. Working in industry and hitting mid-career (20 years in industry), I felt I could represent and speak for a group not often heard from.

Having the time to do this job was an enormous challenge, along with balancing family and work commitments. With the help of my wife and professional colleagues, I tackled this challenge, and I would like to thank them for their support. I have also been fortunate to work with a board of directors committed to assisting members in developing their careers. Serving as IEEE-USA President is not a feat easily accomplished alone.

The positives of serving were the opportunities to meet with members in many Sections, including Rock River, Dayton, Hawaii, Oregon, and Seattle; share in 50th Anniversary celebrations with the Albuquerque and Virginia Mountain Sections; and even venture outside the United States to the Victoria, British Columbia Section's Annual General Meeting.

Continuing, New Goals

One of my goals this year was to establish a working relationship with industry. During last years' work on the H-1B visa issue, IEEE-USA and industry disconnected. It became important to us for companies, their associations and corporate leaders to understand why IEEE-USA took the position it did on this issue.

In 1999, we were successful in developing working relationships with several industry associations. These alliances have allowed us to increase awareness of the challenges that engineers face, and begin developing programs that will help our U.S. members to find employment — while industry finds the technical talent they need. The goal is to change the perception of engineers, and their roles from subordinates to partners.

Some matters from 1998 returned again last year. The H-1B visa cap became a highly visible issue once more. We continued our efforts to educate Congress and industry on the challenges mid-career engineers face, and the impact of technology changes on all technical professionals. The Cash Balance "Pension Program was a new issue raised in 1999 — a concern to many of our members. IEEE-USA publicized the impact of these types of programs on working professionals, and made our members' concerns known to Congress. And once again, the work of IEEE-USA's volunteers received recognition throughout the entire Institute in 1999. In response to requests from outside the United States, IEEE-USA expanded its employment assistance program to include members in Regions 7-10.

A Time for Reflection

Before concluding, I'd like to pause and remember some of those we lost in 1999: Mike Mulder, Wally Decker and Joe Wujek (volunteers) and Bob Walleigh, and Bill Anderson (IEEE-USA staff). These volunteers and staff members contributed many years to both IEEE and IEEE-USA, and they will be greatly missed. The best way we can honor their memories is to continue the efforts they began.

I also want to thank the members of the IEEE-USA Board, OpCom, volunteers, and staff for their continued support. In addition, I ask your support for incoming President Merrill Buckley and wish him the best of luck in 2000.

And finally, I want to thank all of the U.S. members for their encouragement, and for the opportunity to serve as your IEEE-USA President.

— *Paul J. Kostek*, **1999 IEEE-USA President**