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A Letter from the President

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A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT:

The Michigan Reading Association is now completing its 25th anniversary year. It would seem appropriate, upon achieving such a milestone, to reflect a bit on our origin.

When Dr. Edgar DeForrest was elected as the first president, it would have been impossible for him to anticipate how influential that small group of educators would become. At the time of its inception, MRA was an organization of people from around the state who met once a year in Lansing to share ideas about reading. Our original purposes of promoting the art of reading has not changed, but the scope with which we pursue that goal has broadened increasingly with time. Dr. DeForrest will be amazed when he joins us at our Silver Anniversary Celebration to discover one of the largest professional conferences in the U.S.A. Our historian, Edna Townsend, has compiled memorabilia and information tracing the 25-year history of the association which will be published and distributed to our membership.

There have been many changes in our association from its original purpose of "putting-on a conference." Some changes are obvious: increase in membership, number of councils chartered, and publications for members. The scope of our involvement is less obvious. MRA has been influential in its interaction with the Michigan Department of Education. Our efforts for changes in certification are about to come to fruition, thus affecting all educators as well as state teacher-training institutions. Our publications and topical mini-conferences have widespread influence on administrators and educators throughout the state. Instead of a special interest group which "reacts" to others, we have become an assertive, professional organization that "acts" by issuing position papers and formulating policy.

"Twenty-Five Year of Excellence" is not achieved through accident, but only with dedicated leadership throughout the years. This year's Board of Directors has met the challenge of the 80's through programs and projects designed to serve you. One service is a bi-monthly newsletter. This publication is a vehicle for information. Betty Goss of Saginaw has been named the editor. If your council has activities and/or ideas to share, please let her know. Other projects include piloting of our parent training packet, planning a conference for administrators, and increasing membership.

The difference between our dreams and our goals is the planning. Your Board of Directors has been planning and working since elections last spring to produce those programs which make dreams a reality. Vice-President-elect Dr. Mary Bigler of Eastern Michigan University has designed a contest to produce a logo for MRA which can be used consistently throughout our publications. Dr. William Bergeson of Mt. Pleasant, Member-at-Large, and L. Helen Johnson of Grand Rapids, Representative from Region III, have served on the Budget Committee. In addition, Bill now chairs the Legislative Committee and Helen has completed the updating of our policies handbook.

Dr. Karen Urbschat, Region VIII Representative from Wayne I.S.D., is the chairman of the Membership Committee. She and Jane Blough, Co-Chairman from Lowell, assembled membership boxes for local councils which were distributed at our Delegates Assembly in Traverse City. Other new faces on the Board are Bob Weeks from Jackson, who fills the term of Aurelia Spengler, and Joy Muehlenbeck, West Ottawa, who was appointed Acting Secretary in the absence of Dr. Gerry Duffy.

Now we stand at the threshold of a new decade. It is exciting to see our plans becoming reality. It is exciting to face new challenges. It is exciting to be part of a vigorous, growing profession. It is exciting to be your President.

Merri Warren
President
Michigan Reading Association