

Quill

Spring 2001



Volume 7, Issue 2



President's Message



Hello to everyone! I am honored to be serving as the AMWA Mid-Atlantic Chapter president for the 2001-2002 term. I look forward to a productive year, including two core curriculum workshops in June, the Annual Conference in October, and chapter meetings throughout the year that will offer exciting presentations and/or venues.

I'm pleased to welcome one new officer to our chapter, President-Elect Susan J. Atlas, of Columbia, Maryland. (Got an idea for a location or a presentation for a chapter meeting? Contact Susan at sja25@cornell.edu, 410/740-0086).

Eleanor Mayfield has been settling into the role of immediate past president, although she's still involved in a variety of chapter activities (for which I am thankful!). Susan R. Farrer and Cindy W. Hamilton are new general board members this year; continuing board members are Nancy S. Wachter as secretary, Maryalice Ditzler as treasurer, and Bill Glitz (who is also our membership coordinator) as general board

member. Michael S. Altus will continue to coordinate the chapter's e-mail list.

As you know, the AMWA Annual Conference is in Norfolk, Virginia, this year, beginning on October 24 and running through October 27. Your Mid-Atlantic Chapter is the host chapter for the annual conference, although I'm quick (and very grateful!) to point out that the Hampton Roads area members of our Mid-Atlantic Chapter are doing an excellent job of taking care of the local arrangements that are an important part of such a large gathering. The task of organizing these arrangements from afar (most of the chapter board members live between Baltimore and Washington) would have been ... well, I can't even imagine it! So when you see those dedicated Norfolk-area AMWA'ers in October, be sure to thank them profusely. And of course if you'd like to help out with any of the local arrangements, please contact Cindy Hamilton at cindy@hamiltonhouseva.com, 757/481-2799.

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Mid-Atlantic Chapter Board Members

President		
Donna Savage	301/942-2447	IntFingers@aol.com
President-elect		
Susan Atlas	410/740-0086	sja25@cornell.edu
Secretary		
Nancy Wachter	410/528-4315	nwachter@lww.com
Treasurer		
Maryalice Ditzler	800/257-5529	ditzlerm@cadmus.com
Board Members		
Susan Farrer	301/588-6560	susanfarrer@erols.com
Bill Glitz	703/532-3797	wglitz@aol.com
Cindy Hamilton	757/481-2799	cindy@hamiltonhouseva.com
Immediate Past President		
Eleanor Mayfield	301/681-8977	elmayfield@radix.net

Save the Dates

July 28, 2001

Bowie Baysox vs. Akron Aeros
Mid-Atlantic Chapter Outing
(see page 7)

October 24-27, 2001

Reserve these dates for the
61st Annual AMWA Conference in
Norfolk, Virginia. Look for more
information in your mailbox
this summer.

Mid-Atlantic Chapter Web Site: www.amwa-midatlantic.org

Highlights of the AMWA National Board of Directors Meeting

Donna R. Savage and Susan J. Atlas were the Mid-Atlantic Chapter's delegates at the AMWA National Board meeting, which was held March 23-24, 2001, in Baltimore. For more details about any of the items discussed below, contact Donna at Infingers@aol.com, 301/942-2447, or Susan at sja25@cornell.edu, 410/740-0086.

New Executive Director

AMWA headquarters is searching for a new executive director to replace Lillian Sablack, who is retiring after 28 years. An executive search firm has identified 10 candidates, of whom four will be selected to be interviewed. The national board hopes to select a new executive director by about June 24, 2001. The new executive director will overlap a little with Lillian's tenure, which will end after the annual conference, where Lillian will be awarded an Honorary AMWA Fellowship.

Bylaws Change

Currently, each chapter is allowed one delegate to the AMWA National Board of Directors and one additional delegate for each 100 chapter members beyond the first 100 members (the Mid-Atlantic Chapter currently is allowed 2 delegates). The board unanimously passed a change to one delegate for each chapter and one additional delegate if the chapter has 400 members or more. This change was proposed to reduce the potential size of the board of directors and to alleviate the possibility of the larger East Coast chapters dominating the voting.

President's Message (continued from page 1)

And be sure to register for the annual conference when registration materials arrive at your doorstep in late August; it will be the best annual conference yet! A total of 84 workshop presenters have been invited to facilitate workshops on a wide variety of relevant topics. Note that the 2002 conference will be in San Diego and the 2003 conference in Miami, so our total cost to attend the 2001 Annual Conference is reduced considerably because we can actually DRIVE to it!

Susan Atlas and I attended the semi-annual national AMWA Board of Directors meeting in Baltimore on March 23 and 24. This meeting was a great chance for us to talk with chapter board members from all over the

Mentoring at the Annual Conference

A survey of participants in the mentoring program at the 2000 annual conference (the first time mentoring was offered) will result in an improved mentoring program at the 2001 conference. "Mentees" are new AMWA members and first-time annual conference attendees who request a mentor (an experienced AMWA member and conference attendee). Anyone interested in being a mentor should contact Lois Baker, AMWA membership coordinator, at ljbaker@buffalo.edu, 716/645-6342.

Dues Increase

The National Board voted to increase AMWA annual dues from \$95 to \$120, beginning in January 2002. Chapter rebates will increase from \$14 to \$18 per member. Reasons for the increase are increasing costs for salaries (especially for the executive director), rent, printing, health insurance, fuel, and the annual conference. Individuals who are members of AMWA for 10 consecutive years or more and who are 70 years of age or incapacitated may request a dues reduction; a more formalized dues reduction was voted down.

Salary Survey

AMWA is planning to conduct a salary survey to identify the current "going rates" for medical writers in different parts of the United States. The last salary survey was conducted in 1994. The format is likely to be an online survey, with some other way devised to reach the small number of AMWA members without e-mail.

country. Topics discussed during the various sessions included AMWA headquarters' search for a new executive director to replace Lillian Sablack (who is retiring after 28 years), guidelines for chapter Web sites, lots of information about the Annual Conference, a dues increase from \$95 to \$120 beginning January 2002, and an upcoming salary survey that will characterize the "going rates" for medical writers in different parts of the U.S.

I look forward to meeting and talking with you during the next year. Please feel free to contact me with ideas or questions about our chapter, at Infingers@aol.com, 301/942-2447.

Welcome, New Members!

The Mid-Atlantic Chapter extends a warm welcome to our newest members:

Dave Cureton joined AMWA in December after nearly a year of covering congressional hearings and other events for www.cancerpage.com, where he also worked briefly as acting assistant Web editor. His main reasons for joining AMWA were its educational opportunities and job postings. Dave's background is in broadcast journalism. He is currently substitute host of a pair of network radio shows, *America in the Morning* (Westwood One) and *First Light* (NBC Radio), as well as a voiceover freelancer. Hobbies include barbershop singing. (Yes, really.) Dave and his wife live south of Alexandria, Virginia.

Ramie Leibnitz is a native of Washington State and now lives in Washington, DC. She earned a PhD in immunology and, for a time, happily pursued the default research career. After a stint at the Basel Institute for Immunology in Switzerland, she followed her scientist husband to the NIH, only to realize science communication (not benchwork!) was her career interest. She works part-time as a lecturer at University of Maryland College Park and as a science writer at a Bethesda company. Her husband had a similar epiphany and started his own immunology consulting company, Immunarm, Inc., for which Ramie is the main science writer. Projects have included compiling an EPA report on the effects of environmental toxicants on the developing immune system and developing Web content for an NIH institute.

Ailish Hopper Meisner is a part-time writer, editor, and producer for New England Research Institute, where she works on patient education and continuing medical education materials. She writes lay abstracts and organizes and contributes to interactive CD-ROMs and Web sites. She also teaches writing at Anne Arundel Community College. Ailish has been doing this combination of writing, editing, and teaching for about six years. She is a published poet, working on her first book of poems, and in her free time is either writing or gardening with her husband, Dan.

After having worked as an analytical chemist in the pharmaceutical industry for seven years, **Christine "Teena" Nunn** is now a technical writer for Heritage

Information Systems, Inc. in Richmond, Virginia. Her job duties encompass a broad spectrum of writing styles ranging from more technical formats (SOP manuals and business proposals) to more creative ones (client newsletters and web development). Through joining AMWA, she hopes to perfect her writing skills via core curriculum coursework and association with other professionals in this very diverse field. "Non-writing" time is spent with daughters Melissa and Jessica.

A former health care manager with a master's degree in health administration, **Gina Rollins** pursued her lifelong dream of being a writer nearly four years ago, and has never looked back! A freelance writer based in Silver Spring, Maryland, Gina specializes in health care communications for both business-to-business and consumer audiences. Her clients include health-related associations, marketing communication firms, physicians, and both print and on-line publishing companies. After spending much of the past year out of the area helping care for a sick loved one, she looks forward to meeting colleagues and being able to participate in Mid-Atlantic chapter events.

Nancy Smith is the associate editor of Center Publications at the Johns Hopkins University Center for Communication Programs in Baltimore. Her job entails editing and publishing research done by CCP staff in developing countries on behavior change communication. Nancy has combined her college studies in journalism and science by working in both fields during the past 24 years. She began as an editorial assistant/designer for the U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings* magazine, then went on to become a physician assistant. She worked clinically in pediatric oncology and hematology at Johns Hopkins Hospital while completing a Master of Public Health degree. After freelancing for a year, Nancy worked as an assistant professor at the Essex Community College Physician Assistant Program. Prior to assuming her current position, she was medical editor for the Center for Limb Lengthening at the University of Maryland's Kernan Hospital. Nancy joined AMWA to continue learning about medical writing and networking with other kindred spirits.

Jessica Waugh was a patient advocate, writing patient-focused medical literature, for 13 years before going back to graduate school to obtain her master's

(Continued on page 4)

Tidewater Area Subchapter Meeting

On March 28, 2001, members of the Tidewater Area Subchapter met at the Norfolk Yacht and Tennis Club for their first meeting of 2001. Marilyn Mendelson, Gayle Scott, Cindy Hamilton, and Elena B. Haveles were joined by Tom Enright, president of Proforma Hampton Roads and Rhonda Forgey, also of Proforma Hampton Roads.

Proforma is a company that specializes in promotional products and printing, business documents, and multimedia/CD ROM products. The intent of Proforma is to provide their customers with printed material that will catch the attention of clients and potential clients. We then discussed types of business cards and letterhead stationary. Tom encouraged us to be bold and to try something different, as long as we feel comfortable with it. However, be discriminating and coordinate looks when it comes to the stock, color, and texture of your letterhead and business card. What we found most interesting was that the highest quality papers are not that expensive.

We then spent some time talking about clients. Discussion centered on getting to know clients by researching them, reading trade publications, and showing them how you can provide them with a valuable service. Lastly, we were encouraged to invest in our clients' successes, to include purchasing small amounts of stock if this is an option.

Part of the lunch time discussion focused on the upcoming AMWA annual conference that will be held in Norfolk. Area chapter members are helping to coordinate this event. We are all very excited about the AMWA meeting and the chance to show off Norfolk.

— *Elena Bablenis Haveles, PharmD*

Annual Conference

Planning for the 2001 AMWA annual conference in Norfolk, VA, October 24-27, is in full swing. A total of 84 presenters have been invited to present required, advanced, and noncredit courses workshops in the areas of editing/writing, freelance, pharmaceutical, public relations/advertising/marketing. To receive a copy of the current listing of special forums, plenary sessions, and breakfast and luncheon roundtables, contact Susan Atlas or Donna Savage with your fax number. (See their contact information in the box on page 1.)

Mid-Atlantic Hospitality

Our chapter will organize and staff a hospitality table at AMWA's 2001 annual conference in Norfolk. We will offer directions to local restaurants, convenience stores, and attractions and, in general, be there to assist conference participants with their various requests. As we learned at the 1995 conference in Baltimore, our presence as a source of information about the host city is much appreciated by conference participants. If you plan to attend the conference and would like to volunteer an hour or two of your time, please contact Linda Kesselring at 410/328-7449 or lkesselr@som.umaryland.edu.

New Members (continued from page 3)

degree in bioethics. After graduation in 1995, she began to write continuing medical education pieces for the Medical College of Virginia, gradually expanding her client base on campus to include the Schools of Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmacy, and Business. She writes and edits a variety of materials, including grants. Recent projects include the editing of two university Web sites and a book due out at the end of the summer, chronicling the experiences of 21 medical students from the first day of medical school until graduation.

If you are a new member of our chapter and would like to introduce yourself here, but have not been invited to do so, please contact the column coordinator at lkesselr@som.umaryland.edu.

— *Compiled by Linda J. Kesselring, MS, ELS*

Top 10 Reasons to Come to Norfolk for the 61st Annual AMWA Conference, October 24-27, 2001

1. Easy to get to! Fourteen airlines fly into Norfolk International Airport. You can also get there by car (about four hours from Washington, five hours from Baltimore), or even by boat.
2. Affordable digs! The conference hotel, Norfolk Waterside Marriott, has a great location and will not require a mortgage for your stay. Other alternatives will be available.
3. Smorgasbord of dining options! From fabulous seafood to excellent steak to quick deli to fast food, there are more than 20 eateries within a two-block radius of the Waterside Marriott.
4. Great weather! Bring a light jacket or sweater and you're set. Daytime highs average about 70 degrees, and October is our sunniest month with sunshine on more than 80 percent of days.
5. Incredible October sunsets! The Waterside Marriott is within a block of the Elizabeth River and Town Point Park. The view is free.
6. Going nautical! You can cruise the Elizabeth River to the Chesapeake Bay and check out coastal wildlife, US Navy ships, merchant marine traffic, and the world's largest natural harbor on a river ferry, tall sailing ship, or power yacht. Within two blocks of the hotel, Nauticus, The National Maritime Center, is a multi-level maritime showcase with more than 150 computer and video interactives, commerce and military-related displays, exotic aquaria, and other exhibits. The museum's newest exhibit is the battleship, USS Wisconsin.
7. Shopping! The area's newest mall, MacArthur Mall, features three stories of shopping with great stores like Nordstrom's and an 18-screen theater Megaplex, all within a block of the Waterside Marriott. A block in the opposite direction takes you to the Norfolk Waterside, which was designed by the architect who was responsible for Baltimore Harborplace and features shops, boutiques, and restaurants.
8. Art! Within blocks of the hotel, you can see the huge whale mural by D. Land that covers the side of a building and the d'Art Center, a working art gallery where visitors are invited to watch 30 local sculptors, painters, jewelry makers and textile artists. A longer walk or a short cab ride will take you to the Chrysler Museum, home of a world-renowned glass collection, as well as paintings, sculpture, and drawings by Renoir, Cassatt, and other famous artists.
9. History galore! A two-block stroll will take you to the MacArthur Memorial Museum and historic St. Paul's Church, which predates the Revolutionary War. A 60-minute car ride will take you to Williamsburg, Yorktown, and Jamestown.
10. More excursions! If you have wheels, you can reach the Norfolk Zoo in 10 minutes, the Norfolk Botanical Gardens in 20 minutes, Virginia Beach in 30 minutes, and Busch Gardens in 60 minutes.

AMWA members who live near Norfolk compiled this list. More details can be found at <http://www.norfolkcvb.com/>.



Carpool to Norfolk

Reduce gridlock--ride to the AMWA annual conference in Norfolk, VA, with one or more fellow AMWA Mid-Atlantic Chapter members! Margot Fromer has agreed to coordinate carpooling by linking people who are willing either to be a passenger or to carry one or more passengers. She will need to know:

- ◆ where you live;
- ◆ the dates you plan to arrive in and leave Norfolk;
- ◆ whether you prefer to be a driver or a passenger, or are willing to be either; and
- ◆ for drivers, how many passengers (with luggage) your vehicle can carry.

Of course, many people will not know their arrival and departure dates until after the annual conference registration brochure is published in August. However, if you're interested in principle in participating in a carpool, contact Margot at 301/585-8827 or margotfromer@erols.com.

The Human Genome Project: Beyond the First Draft

The timing was perfect. Completion of a draft version of the human genome sequence had just been announced. On February 24, 2001, an eager audience of about 40 Mid-Atlantic Chapter members and friends learned what this breakthrough means, how it may change our lives, and what is likely to happen next.

The distinguished and engaging speaker, Eric Green, MD, PhD, chief of the Genome Technology Branch and director of the NIH Intramural Sequencing Center at the National Human Genome Research Institute, conducts research in the mapping and sequencing of mammalian genomes and in the isolation and characterization of genes that cause human disease. Using colorful, well-designed slides, Dr. Green explained the process involved in sequencing the human genome. Humans have two copies each of chromosomes 1 to 22, plus the X chromosome (one copy in males, two copies in females) and the Y chromosome (males only). The DNA used for sequencing was obtained from white blood cells of several anonymous donors.

From 1990 to 1997, contiguous segments (“contigs”) of human chromosomes were assembled using yeast artificial chromosomes (YACs), making multiple copies by DNA cloning and then checking for overlaps to determine the order of the clones relative to the human chromosome. During 1998 and 1999, higher-resolution contigs were assembled with smaller clones called bacterial artificial chromosomes (BACs). The BACs were then sequenced by automated methods using fluorescent dyes, lasers, optical detection systems, and computer analysis. Gaps and uncertainties in the working draft sequence are now being filled in to improve the data quality (“sequence finishing”).

Throughout the process, the groups involved in the project continually deposit the data into sequencing databases via the Internet; see <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/genome/guide/> (click “Map Viewer”).

Five centers, called the G5, were involved in determining about 85 percent of the human genome sequence: Baylor University, Washington University, the Whitehead Institute at MIT, the Joint Genome Institute in California, and the Sanger Centre in England. A private corporation, Celera Genomics, based in Rockville, MD, and headed by Craig Venter, PhD, used the Human Genome Project’s data as well as its own data to also determine the sequence of the

human genome.

The human genome contains three billion base pairs and 30,000 to 35,000 genes, twice as many genes as are found in worms and fruit flies. Only one to two percent of the human genome codes for proteins. Bacterial sequences have been found in both the human genome and the genomes of apes. There is a one to two percent difference in genome sequence between humans and chimpanzees and approximately a 0.1 percent difference (three million base pairs) between one person and another.

Microbial genomes are being sequenced at the rate of about one per week. The genome sequence of a worm, *Caenorhabditis elegans*, was reported in 1998. Sequences of the genomes of the fruit fly, *Drosophila melanogaster*, and of a small weed called mustard cress, *Arabidopsis thaliana*, were reported in 2000. The sequencing of the rice genome is nearly completed. Sequencing of the genomes of mice, rats, and corn are well underway. Many other vertebrates, including chicken, fish, cow, cat, dog, and pig, are under consideration for genome sequencing.

Further work on the human genome will include improving the accuracy of the sequencing, cataloging genetic variants (called polymorphisms), and identifying portions of the sequence that code for proteins, regulate gene expression, and dictate the structure and function of the chromosomes. Comparison of the human genome with those of other organisms will indicate which DNA sequences have been conserved during evolution and therefore may be of special importance.

DNA sequence information will also be used to facilitate gene therapy, to synthesize proteins in vitro, and to better understand the genetic causes of diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, mental illness, and cancer. Knowledge of a person’s genetic predisposition toward disease may lead to changes in health care and life style. The ethical, legal, and social implications of genomics research are also being carefully studied.

Throughout his excellent presentation, during lunch, and for several minutes thereafter, Dr. Green answered wide-ranging questions from attendees. The chapter board thanks Dr. Green for his excellent, informative presentation, and former board member Alex Politis for arranging the meeting venue and luncheon.

— Linda Winsor, PhD, chapter member

Bring the Family to the Ball Game!

Come out to the ball game! Bring the family to the AMWA Mid-Atlantic Chapter's group outing on Saturday, July 28, 2001, to see the Bowie Baysox play the Akron Aeros at Prince George's Stadium in Bowie, Maryland.

We have reserved box seats close enough to the action to call balls and strikes or umpire close plays at the bases. Game time is 7:05 p.m.

The Baysox are an AA affiliate of the Baltimore Orioles. The evening's fun will also include a cow-milking contest featuring players from both teams.

If our group consists of 25 people or more (including children), the price per person is \$9.50 for AMWA members and their guests. (If we can't muster 25 people, the price goes up to \$12 per person for members.) Children under 5 are admitted for free.

If you'd like to join the fun, please fill out the registration form below and mail it, with your check, to the address on the form. The deadline for registering is Saturday, July 21.

Directions to the ball park will be posted on the AMWA Mid-Atlantic Chapter's Web site, www.amwa-midatlantic.org. Or check out the Baysox Web site, <http://www.baysox.com/index.php>.

Registration Form

AMWA Mid-Atlantic Chapter
Bowie Baysox vs. Akron Aeros
Saturday, July 28, 2001

Name: _____

Company: _____

Address: _____

Daytime phone: _____ E-mail address: _____

NOTE: If the person registering is an AMWA member, everyone in his/her party (spouse, children, friends, etc.) pays the member price.

I would like ____ tickets at \$9.50 per person (AMWA members and guests)

I would like ____ tickets at \$11.50 per person (Non-AMWA members and guests)

Deadline for registration: July 21, 2001

Make check payable to: AMWA Mid-Atlantic Chapter

Send form and check to: Susan Atlas, 5487 Ring Dove Lane, Columbia, MD 21044

Questions? Contact Susan Atlas (410/740-0086; sja25@cornell.edu)

Writers needed!

The *AMWA Journal* welcomes articles on topics of interest to medical writers. See the submission guidelines on the inside back page of the journal, or contact *Journal* editor Robert Jacoby (410/552-5065; rjacoby@jhuccp.org) to discuss an article idea.

The *Quill* needs writers to submit articles or volunteer to write assigned articles. Contact newsletter editor Karen Harrop (410/296-1737; kharrop@erols.com)

Newsletter design and layout by Lori Ferro
215/884-8501, lferro1@localnet.com

Chapter Database Manager

For the last couple of years, Mid-Atlantic Chapter member Abbe Lynch, has been doing the valuable task of managing the database of Mid-Atlantic Chapter members. Abbe is ready to pass the job on to a new volunteer. Thank you for your efforts, Abbe!

Member Rich Kapit has volunteered to take over as chapter database manager. Thank you Rich!

Letter to the editor:

Regarding the "In Memoriam" for Sue Feinman printed in the last issue of the *Quill*:

Thank you for sending us the Winter 2001 edition of the *Quill*. Sue's daughters and I appreciate your honoring Sue's memory.

Best wishes,
D. Feinman

✓ **Check Out the Mid-Atlantic Chapter Web Site at**
www.amwa-midatlantic.org

Karen Harrop
8105 Pleasant Plains Rd.
Baltimore, MD 21286

