

Outline of a Presidency

by Charleen Brown, Outgoing President of RVGS

In 1995, I joined RVGS and immediately took the training to be a librarian because I knew from my teaching experience that if you want to learn something, the best way is to try to teach it to someone else. I would learn the library by helping others with their research. I was elected Secretary in 1997 and then Vice-President in 1998. In September 1998, I became Acting President when elected President Jarvis went on a three-month research trip to Scotland. I felt very insecure because I knew very little about the actual operation of the organization.

Presiding over my first General Meeting was a challenge. I remember being very nervous and even though I had said the Pledge of Allegiance in my classroom every morning for years, I drew a blank and forgot the words. Somehow I stumbled through it hoping nobody heard me. They were kind because if they did hear me, they didn't make it known. In January 1999, re-elected President Jarvis resigned opting not to serve her 2nd term of office. I still knew practically nothing of how the organization functioned nor any of the requirements for operating a non-profit business. I was not alone because no one else seemed to know much about the big picture. Each person knew only how his or her specific position or project functioned. Being thrown into the fire, I quickly had to do the following tasks:

1. Learn the organization of the business: Who did what and how? Often the people involved weren't exactly clear on the responsibilities of their positions.
2. Begin dividing responsibilities between the Society and the Library. With the board, I spent several meetings sorting activities into the Library or Society category. Today these responsibilities have been neatly compiled into organization charts by Chuck Eccleston.
3. Using the by-laws as the basis, compose job descriptions for each elected officer and committee chair.
4. Ask each project chair to write a description of their project. In later years, all of this became what we affectionately refer to as "The Bible".

A set of Oregon Revised Statutes came into our possession and I spent many hours studying those pertaining to non-profits. I found those statutes to be very helpful. I also spent hours reading the minutes from past meetings from 1966 forward. I learned about the following:

- The lady and her daughter who visited the genealogy library looking for a gynecology clinic.
- The President from the college in Ashland who misunderstood the invitation to speak on "genealogy" and spoke on the "Geology of Southern Oregon."
- The split between two factions of the membership that eventually had to be resolved by a lawsuit.

- Fundraisers such as rummage sales and cutting Flav-R-Pack labels from vegetable cans to pay the rent.

By 2000 when I was actually elected for my first term as President, space was quickly becoming critical and parking downtown was impossible. I worried about our older patrons jaywalking across Central Avenue from the parking lot across the street. The only incident we ever had in that regard was after one general meeting one of our oldest members came hurrying back from the parking lot wanting to use our phone to call AAA. She was quite upset and said that she had locked her keys in her car. We could hardly keep a straight face when she said that she had been in such a hurry to make the meeting on time that she had also left the car running. It had been running for more than 2 hours. She must have had a pretty full tank because it didn't run out of gas.

2001 -- In February we moved into the 2800 sq. ft. building at 95 Houston Rd. in Phoenix. Everybody said, "NOW, we have lots of room to grow."

2003 – We reached our pledge drive goal, purchased the building and happily continued to grow.

2007 – Paid off the mortgage on 95 Houston in only 3 ½ years. We had planned to have a big ceremony and burn the mortgage but no one knew exactly where our copy was and by the time we got the original from People's Bank we had moved on to other things and forgotten all about it. Never did get the mortgage burned. We entered the technology age. In the 1990s we had one computer for office work. We started a Surname File Project in DOS. Later I set up the membership file in Microsoft Works. Now we proudly say we have nearly 20 computers for office work, presentations, projects and patrons and two websites: one for the society and one for the library. Genealogical research has truly advanced. What used to take months and years now takes minutes on the genealogy sites.

2012 – Purchased the 5000 sq. ft. building at 3405 S. Pacific Highway in Medford and after much remodeling we moved into our beautiful Library.

2013 – Celebrated our 1st year Anniversary in the new building in September.

Today, I am proud of where we came from, pleased with where we are and am excited about the future. But, I want to remind everyone that I didn't do this alone. I want to Thank You, the dedicated volunteers and members who made it happen. Thank YOU for working with me! We are ready for whatever the future holds and have elected a strong slate of officers to lead us forward. RVGS and JCGL will continue to LEAVE A LEGACY FOR THE FUTURE!