

I Leave This Place

Last May, when my wife called me in at EXPO in Milwaukee to see how the CTAA Board had reacted to my announced resignation as the organization's Executive Director, she said, "Enjoy your stay in CTAA's suite at the Hyatt Regency because it may be the last perk like that you'll ever get." The truth is, it was never the benefits or the prestige that turned me on in this job. My satisfactions have always flowed from the meaningfulness of the work itself, from the righteousness of the struggle and from the fact that we've been able to measure our progress — to see our own footprints, so to speak.

For those of us who came of age in the 1960s, righteous struggles and fighting for justice and decency seemed like natural pursuits. We thought that poverty in America had just been discovered and would certainly yield to a combination of national attention and local community action. We saw opportunities to confront the dual evils of racial discrimination and war, and so we tried to build careers that would make a difference — that would help reduce injustice and human misery.

I've been very fortunate that for the last 30 years I have been able to bring about change by being actively involved in worthy causes. I've had the great good fortune to be able to indulge these passions for social change with work on real, tangible issues like equity for rural people, adequate housing for farm workers and reducing isolation through community transportation. Many times I've pinched myself with a mixed sense of guilt and pleasure over the fact that I could do just what I wanted to do and actually be paid well for doing it. "Que joya," my mother would have said. What joy!

Although I am resigning as CTAA's executive director, I'm not ready to move out to pasture. I am going to enjoy working with Dale and the staff. This is an exciting time for mobility advocates, and I want to remain of service to CTAA members and the people they serve in any way I can. I have received many gratifying expressions of kindness since the announcement about my departure was made in May. Thanks to all of you who wrote or called.

For most of the last 29 years, I have lived and worked in the Washington, D.C. area. I have loved the action inside the Beltway, just as I have loved the opportunity to visit, to learn from and to meet with CTAA members all over the country. Now, we are going to make a home in another place. Mila and I are moving to the Pacific Northwest where we can be closer to two of our three grown children and near our grandchildren. We do not know yet where we will live. Probably someplace near Portland, Ore.

Of course, I will miss the energy and frantic pace of CTAA's Washington office, and I know that at a personal level, I'll miss and be missed by the staff and friends here. You cannot leave a place you have made home for so long without feeling a deep sense of loss. But I hope to keep them close to me, along with the spirit and wisdom of those who have gone before me and from whom I have learned and continue to benefit so much. People like Clay Cochran, and Dick Margolis. George Rucker and Aaron Henry. Elizabeth Herring and Eleanor Eaton. Wherever I go, you will be with me, for our little crusade is not yet finished.

A couple of years ago, when sharing a head table at a Florida conference, Budd Bell introduced me to one of her husband Bill's favorite mantras — written during the struggle for India's independence by Mahatma Gandhi. They were such fitting and sweet words of advice that I thought I should share them with you now.

It's the action, not the fruit of the
action; that's important.

You have to do the right thing.

It may not be in your power, may not
be in your time,
that there'll be any fruit.

But that doesn't mean you stop doing
the right thing.

You may never know what results
come from your action.

But if you do nothing,
there will be no result.

- Gandhi

David Raphael