



Nancy Winters
A.F.A. Executive Director

esprit de corps

by Nancy Winters
Santa Monica, California

Why on earth would anyone want to pay a membership fee to join an organization, and then spend countless hard-working hours donating his/her time and talents to help make it a success?

Any given minute of day or night, instead of basking in the sun, playing golf, attending a luncheon or relaxing by their television sets, a very large segment of the American population will be out fundraising for some cause, soliciting new members for their organization, manning the booths at charitable events, be on the phone "telemarketing" an urgent need, or even be jogging for dollars in a 10K event.

Did you know that one in three Americans does volunteer work on a regular basis for a cause of his/her choice? Why we do so is because we find great rewards in this kind of service. After all, there must be some "payoff" or why would anyone do it?

Surveys have shown that these rewards cover a varied range. They are:

1. Strong interest in being of service to a cause.
2. To use time more constructively.
3. Perceived positive attitude of a spouse or closest friend.
4. Prestige, social power, clout.
5. Volunteer's perceived effectiveness of the organization.
6. Feeling of belonging, shared goals and interests.
7. Social enjoyment and contacts.
8. Media exposure.
9. Other self-serving interests.

Since so many of us are involved, it is frightening to even contemplate what

might happen if these 70 million citizens would stop their volunteerism! Its more profound impact would be on the fundraising and development programs within the non-profit organizations such as AFA, and would carry dire consequences.

These "little deaths" occur, sometimes unnoticed, within a non-profit organization when members are not *regularly* actively involved in financial and membership development programs — a serious situation soon develops, and often becomes a matter of measures "too little, too late."

Certainly there are rewards enough for volunteer service and it cannot be stated often enough: volunteerism is VITAL to a non-profit organization because IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR PAID STAFF TO ACCOMPLISH ALL THAT IS NEEDED.

The AFA is in a very critical stage of its existence. We have enormous potential for growth and real impact in the fields which are so important to each of us: legislative monitoring, conservation, research and education, BUT...our membership roles are *not* increasing.

Some memberships are always lost through natural attrition... people move away, get out of "birds," lose interest, whatever. However, if there is no ACTIVE, ONGOING, PLANNED MEMBERSHIP, FUNDRAISING and PUBLIC RELATION EFFORTS, our revenues, our impact, our ability to fulfill our goals is SEVERELY THREATENED!

At this time we are unable to expand or even maintain certain administrative

necessities or the urgent promotional, public relations projects we need to start upward growth.

The cost of publishing the *Watchbird* requires much of our membership revenues. (Actually, in most non-profits, a membership fee *alone* is usually \$20 or more; it is extremely rare to have a membership *and* a magazine of *Watchbird* quality *both* for just \$20!)

In the end, this all filters down to a financial base which is inadequate in giving our members the best service or in fulfilling the purposes for which we exist.

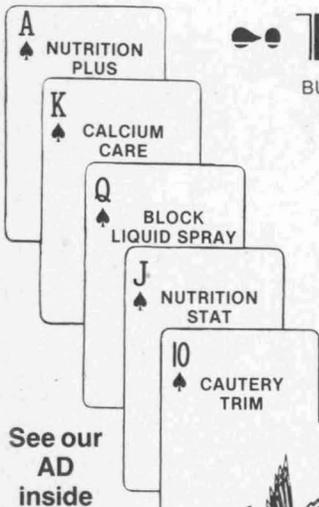
It may not surprise you to know that the AFA IS NOT A MAGAZINE! As trite as that may sound, I have been amazed at how many members believe that we exist to publish a magazine. Yes, the *Watchbird* is a vital part of the AFA, but first and foremost we are a NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION WITH A MISSION STATEMENT TO FULFILL, as stated in our bylaws.

That does not diminish our pride in the *Watchbird*; it is indeed *superb*, but there are reasons to join the AFA completely apart from the *Watchbird*, and we will be reviewing these in this column in the next issue.

If you need refreshing about our mission statement, please turn to the first few pages of the *Watchbird* where the club members are listed. There at the top you will read: "AFA: Dedicated to the conservation of bird wildlife through encouragement of captive breeding programs, scientific research, and education of the general public." In addition, the AFA has always been the chief monitor of legislation regarding birds.

These goals all require active VOLUNTEER MEMBERS with specific tasks, participating on committees and task forces to make all this happen! Publishing a magazine alone CANNOT achieve program goals.

Although it might seem evident that members should simply come forth and volunteer their time, talents or treasures to an organization, many do not because, quite simply, no one ever asked them. To eliminate that problem we are taking the first step in this very issue of *Watchbird*. Refer to the insert titled "Volunteer Corps." Please fill it out as completely as possible and return it to the home office. This body of data will be an invaluable aid in coordinating and orchestrating the myriad talents of our many members. It is a first step in strengthening and upgrading of our own non-profit, volunteer organization — the AFA. ●



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