The 50th Annual Biological Safety Conference concluded October 10, 2007 in Nashville, Tennessee. It was a great conference overall. The Scientific Program Committee put together a diverse and interesting program; the Local Arrangements Committee did a marvelous job of planning, and the hotel was beautiful—and huge! Our ABSA Office staff worked constantly at the conference; I would like to acknowledge the excellent work they do for us year-round. Thank you to everyone who worked hard to make this meeting a success. Once again, we broke records: there were approximately 750 attendees at the conference, and 28 pre-conference courses with 1,611 seats. ABSA is now 1,642 members strong, including 267 new members (half from North America and half from other countries around the world). Overall, 33 countries are represented among our membership.

For many of us, the highlight of the conference was the historical roundtable held Wednesday afternoon. The members of the panel were Jerome Schmidt, Emmett Barkley, Mary Ellen Kennedy, Byron Tepper, Diane Fleming, Jonathan Richmond, and Donald Vesley. Also invited, but unable to attend were Manny Barbeito, Joe Songer, and Jerry Tulis. Manny and Joe were interviewed prior to the meeting and videotapes of their interviews were shown. Those members who were able to attend the roundtable witnessed a truly remarkable and memorable event. Each panelist recounted experiences in their biosafety careers, and then entertained questions from the audience. It was very moving to have these great biosafety professionals gathered together all of whom have contributed to our careers in one way, or another. Our heartfelt thanks go to the panelists for making this session special for all of us. Thank you so much to the Historical Committee for having the idea for such a gathering at the 50th Biological Safety Conference and for working so hard to make it a reality!

I am truly honored to serve as President of ABSA. All presidents say that, but it is true, and I do not know how else to express it. This organization has been very important to me professionally and personally since I joined in 1993. The professional contacts I’ve made in ABSA have enhanced my career in many ways. Just as importantly, I have made many lifelong friends in ABSA. The knowledge and experiences shared by the members benefit each of us professionally. This is truly a remarkable organization.

In 2004, we began a strategic planning process that changed the way we do business. In the spring of 2008, the Council will be meeting for a two-day planning session. We will assess what we’re doing right, what needs improvement, and where we should go from here. Prior to that meeting, all team leaders and committee chairs will be interviewed and their input used in our planning session. If you have ideas or input for any of us on any topic relating to our organization, please communicate your ideas to your favorite chair, team leader, or Council member!

I’d like to highlight some accomplishments of the last year. One was to establish an historical archive of biosafety-related documents and equipment. This archive was established in the National Agricultural Library under an agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Another was to produce an animal biosafety DVD with funding from the Elizabeth R. Griffin Research Foundation. This DVD was produced under the leadership of Ben Fontes and will be provided to members of ABSA and American Association of Laboratory Animal Science (AALAS). ABSA is in a period of growth due to several factors and we need to continue to enhance our educational offerings via various media. I believe that we need to play a role in public, collegiate, and secondary education regarding biohazards in this changing world.

I have always felt that ABSA is a welcoming and inclusive organization and we must ensure that this atmosphere continues as we grow. I’d like to encourage involvement of as many members as possible in order to achieve our goals. Please let me know if there is something you would like to do in that regard! As your President, I will assure that ABSA continues to serve you and to enhance our profession.

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