

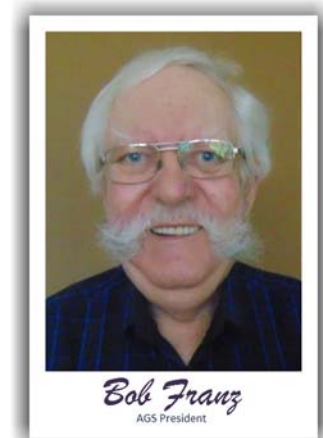


The President's Message

November 2016

"I sent in an idea but I was told it was stupid."
 "I wrote to 'the board' but 'they' did not respond."
 "We spent two-and-a-half hours talking over coffee and we don't know what the Directors are thinking."
 "If the bullying does not stop, [fill in the blank] is going to leave."

These are a few of the comments I have heard since I last wrote. In my last message I talked about one's monkeysphere and the importance of members of a group being in the same monkeysphere. Thanks to those who have contacted me and expressed their opinions on the issue. Since I wrote the last message we have had the Board of Directors annual Retreat and I have had the opportunity to attend the Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon for Edmonton Volunteers, and to have an informal discussion with some of the Edmonton Branch executive, all who have now become a part of my monkeysphere.



At the Retreat six issues were identified by the Board for further discussion. Most of those issues related to board governance and that is what I wish to raise in this message. As I noted at the Edmonton luncheon, we are a society of volunteers, from myself as the President of the organization to the group who meets annually to stuff envelopes. We are volunteers because we have a passion for genealogy and we want to associate with others who share our passion, who are part of our monkeysphere. We put our names forward to sit on the Board or to serve as Chairs or on committees because we have a particular interest or we have a particular skill that we think can benefit others in our monkeysphere. Almost everyone who has talked to me or emailed me has begun by telling me how much they care about AGS.

However, one needs more than a passion, or an interest, or a skill when one takes on a leadership position. One must be acutely aware of one's role in that position. As the President of the Brooks and District Branch I also serve as a Board Director. As a Director I share my personal knowledge and express my personal beliefs regarding how AGS should be managed. As a Director I also represent the Brooks Branch and am responsible for determining and communicating the opinions of the members of the Branch, all members, even if they are not my opinions. As a Director, I also represent the AGS board and am responsible for communicating the decisions of the Board back to the Brooks and District Membership so they are not only informed of decisions, but understand how and why those decisions

were made. I may not have agreed with a particular decision, but that should play no part in my role, nor in my communication.

I can argue my position, and that of the Branch, with the Directors at the Board table, and I should, but when a decision has been made, as a Board Member, I am expected to support that decision. That is referred to as the Board speaking in one voice. My opinion, and the opinion of my Branch, are subordinate to the opinion of the governing Board as the decision by the Board was made for the betterment of the entire Society, and I should believe that is so and be prepared to support it, and to defend it, from the discussion leading to that decision.



The quotes I opened with are not indicative of leaders who understand their role nor of a Board that speaks with one voice. One does not label an idea as stupid, or even suggest it. One does not ignore a message, even if it is stupid. One should not be spending two-and-a-half hours discussing something that could be, and should have already been, answered by asking someone involved in the decision. And the last quote sounds a lot like a bullying statement to me even though the person denied that it was. It is also an indication of fractionalization, but that is a topic for another day.

I would like to close with a paraphrase of an often cited John F. Kennedy quote, “ask not what your society members are doing for you, but what you are doing for your society members.” That applies to each and every one of us, from envelope stuffers to Presidents. This is your society.

This is Bob. Let me know what you think.

Robert "Bob" Franz
AGS President