As My Journey Ends . . .

Rose C. Gibson, PhD, Editor-in-Chief

This issue marks the end of my tenure as Editor-in-Chief of The Gerontologist. I have enjoyed the voyage.

The contributions of many have maintained The Gerontologist's reputation as the premier multidisciplinary journal of applied research in aging. I thank Bettie Donley, Director of the Gerontological Society of America's publications, for her superb skills and administrative ability in turning out issues of which we all could be proud; and Eve Herold, GSA's Publications Coordinator, for patience and fortitude in the copyediting process. I express gratitude to the three section editors — Bob Binstock, Nancy Wilson, and Andrea Nevins, for developing and maintaining Book Review, Practice Concepts, and Audiovisual sections par excellence. I salute the distinguished members of my editorial boards, the dedicated reviewers, and the contributing authors who collectively were responsible for the high quality manuscripts published over the past four years. Finally, I thank my University of Michigan staff, headed by Lesa L. Ball, for the day-to-day operations which kept the review and publication process running smoothly.

I set three personal goals for my Editorship. The first was to increase the diversity of disciplines, methodologies, and substantive topics published in The Gerontologist — a variety that would speak to the interests of all four sections of the GSA and to the diversity in the journal's readership. I am pleased with the outcome in the following respects: (1) Published authors over the past four years were physicians, biologists, sociologists, anthropologists, historians, psychologists, economists, social workers, and nurses, to name just a few. (2) Several of the published symposia were interdisciplinary collaborations. (3) Article topics were as diverse as biological theories of aging; critical gerontology; semantic memory; cognitive functioning; scales, measures and constructs in aging research; physical health and health care; productive activity; demography of aging; mental health; autopsy; data for applied aging research; mortality crossovers and selective survival in human and nonhuman populations; maximum lifespan; geriatric medicine; and systems of inequality, again to name only a few.

My second goal was to nudge applied aging research beyond single-causation social problem-centered studies toward more inclusive models of the aging process, while remaining mindful of social problems and their solutions. The result was more published manuscripts which looked at the aging process (1) from a life-course perspective, (2) as heterogeneous, (3) not as inevitable decline, and (4) as stamped by membership in overlapping systems of inequality — race, ethnicity, gender, and class. Cover illustrations carried out these four themes.

Ample evidence indicates that to be effective — practice, policy, and applied research in aging should be based on bodies of integrated knowledge. At the heart of such integration lies cumulative theory-building. Cumulative theory-building requires in turn more focused perspectives and collective efforts among researchers to set clear research goals, state theoretical issues, reach consensus on basic constructs, and produce research paradigms that can be revised, clarified, or discarded through a systematic process of replication. Thus, my third goal was to champion the importance of theory as a foundation for good applied research, practice, and policy. The prominence of articles and symposia on extant aging theory over the past four years reflected this effort.

Other accomplishments over these four years included complete computerization of TG's review and publication process and the introduction of a column on new technology and the Internet. But not all my goals were met. I would like to have published more policy analyses and integrative review articles. Apparently, these genres require more aggressive action on the part of an editor; this is a task for the new editor.

Vernon Greene, the incoming editor of The Gerontologist, has a long and impressive history with the journal. He has been a valued reviewer, editorial board member, and contributing author. I am serene, for The Gerontologist has come safely to port with a good captain waiting to continue the journey.