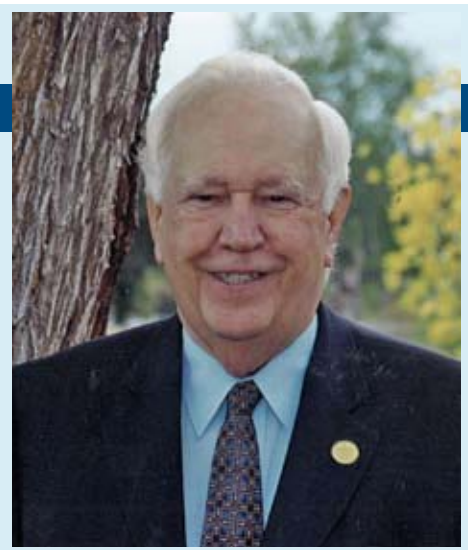


George Tanco

The More We Change, *the More We Stay the Same*



The question is: **How is The Society of Notaries Public of British Columbia different today from years gone by?**

To help answer the question, I reviewed a number of issues of the *B.C. Notary* and its successor, *The Scrivener*.

The Scrivener, Vol. 1, No. 1, Autumn 1992, contained a column by Stan Nicol, Secretary of The Society at the time. The column was a historical review of the position of Secretary of The Society.

From that column, I gleaned the following.

J. Eades Ward served as Secretary from 1927 to 1939. During his term, he presided over the first Examinations for Applicants, held in 1928. He also started the first educational program.

H. E. Warburton served from 1940 to 1952. He had been President of The Society for the previous 4 years.

Alex Matthews served from 1953 to 1968. He had also served The Society as a Director and Vice President. Alex was elected an MLA and sat in the Legislature for 13 years. His connections and standing in the Social Credit Party no doubt played a part in the formation of the new *Notaries Act* in 1956. The new Act gave Notaries a professional standing and they became part of a self-

governing professional body. Alex ruled with a firm and dedicated hand.

Bernard Hoeter followed Alex Matthews and served from 1969 to 1986. Bernard was asked to serve as the Acting Secretary of The Society until a replacement could be found. A replacement was not found and subsequently Bernard was appointed Secretary.

The role and work of a Notary Public was changing and so was the makeup of the membership.

It was to be a part-time position carried out from Bernard's Notary office, with the help of a part-time secretary. Part-time in his world would be, to most people, full-time. In the term of Bernard's leadership, he spearheaded a drive to have The Society function as a professional entity. During his time, the Legislature proclaimed a new *Notaries Act* on June 26, 1981. Society President Roy Bishop and Bernard led the drive for the new Act.

With the advent of the new *Notaries Act*, the committees became more active and Directors had more input into the workings of The Society, which was moving forward. With the advent of the modern-day Notary, public relations came to life and the Trusted Tradition of a Notary Public was presented through the media.

Educational articles and information were circulated to

Notaries through the *B.C. Notary*, an in-house publication. Gathering articles and columns for the magazine from members was always difficult. The void was often filled by Bernard, who wrote articles on current affairs, the activities of The Society, and columns on the historical background of Notaries Public.

The role and work of a Notary Public was changing and so was the makeup of the membership. Applicants were now coming from fields other than real estate and insurance. A greater number of women were applying for membership. They not only applied but became Notaries who played active roles as Directors, committee members, and participating Notaries.

Computer technology was becoming a reality. The workload of The Society could no longer be carried out on a part-time schedule—not even “Bernard-Style” part-time. Bernard retired as Secretary of The Society in 1986.

Moving into the modern-day era, **Stanley J. (Stan) Nicol** became the fifth Secretary of The Society of Notaries Public. Stan had previously served as a Director and as President from 1983 to 1985.

Many changes were to come. Committees were active with more meetings for the Secretary to attend. There were discipline matters to manage.

The office became computerized; staff increased and a suitable new office was leased.

Education remained a primary focus. Sally O'Sullivan became The Society's first Education Coordinator. Education for members and Directors took on greater importance. Members were willing to participate in the various continuing education programs.

The Society was vibrant. Public Relations to promote the work of a Notary Public and The Society became a high priority. The Society undertook a public promotion to show a Notary Public in the modern era. *B.C. Notary* became a top-flight, professionally produced magazine with a name change to *The Scrivener*. Today the magazine is widely distributed, not only to BC Notaries but to other professionals, as well.

All was not rosy, however. At the time of our renewal for our Legal and Liability insurance, our insurers would not provide coverage—also a problem for other professional organizations. Without insurance, we could not operate.

The challenge was met. President Larry Stevens, Stan Nicol, and Brent Atkinson led the drive to formulate a self-insurance plan. A Special Meeting was called for the single purpose of adopting self-insurance. The plan passed.

The wheel turns. It was again time, under President Rick Evans, to spearhead a drive to bring in a new *Notaries Act*. This change is a work in progress.

A milestone was reached—with great effort from Stan Nicol—to have the Legislature proclaim the *Notary Foundation Act*. The financial institutions were now required to pay interest on Notaries' trust accounts to the Notary Foundation. Stan Nicol retired as Secretary in 2001.

Wayne G. Braid was selected as Secretary of The Society in 2001. The Society grew. Wayne moved The Society to 625 Howe Street (Vancouver) to a fully computerized modern office and email communication to members became the norm.

Education became even more important. The education requirement

for notarial candidates was raised. A new education course for candidates is being developed in conjunction with Simon Fraser University.

A universal audit program for all members is now in place. Our self-insurance program prevails, with excess insurance provided by Marsh Canada.

The responsibility for self-discipline has been enhanced. Discipline matters conform to the requirements of administrative law and are carried out as expeditiously as possible.

The financial matters of The Society are under the guidance of the Finance Committee and a professional investment firm.

Pro-Suite, a computerized conveyancing software program, is available for members. Regular education seminars are held twice a year, with additional seminars for specific concerns such as fraud, new legislation, and other subjects as they arise.

Authentication of international documents has burgeoned with the growth of our diversified population. Membership in The Society has changed from a male-dominated group to a balance of men and women.

The administrative function of the Notary Foundation is provided through The Society office. Wayne Braid is Executive Officer of the Notary Foundation.

Wayne is administering The Society in the technological age and is facing greater demands from the membership at large. Responsible for the constant review of insurance programs, he administers our self-discipline program to ensure it conforms to current administrative law requirements.

Wayne capably represents The Society to the public and the Law Society of BC. He also acts for the Notary Foundation in meetings with financial institutions and organizations seeking grants.

It seems the more things change, the more they stay the same. One thing is constant—the role of a Notary Public as a Trusted Tradition . . . ▲

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