



Complete Coverage of the MBNA 2005 Monument Industry Show

Paving the Road: MBNA's Incoming President Debbie Dalton

1992
Lee Longstrech
Madison Memorial
Louisville, KY

1994
Jim Smith & Kim Whalen
Campbell Monument Co. Ltd
Bellefonte, PA

1996
John K. Muller
I

1998
Dorothy J. Cunningham
I

2004
Jeffrey J. Anderson, CM, AIA
Ballston Memorial

President's Message

Thank you for giving me the honor of being your MBNA president.

I have been personally involved with MBNA since 1989, but my company, The Greeley Monument Works, has been an MBNA member since 1951. I did not have the opportunity to learn from my grandfather because I never intended to work in the monument business. I was an artist and did not see the artistic value of memorialization. My dad, John Dalton, tells me my grandfather always saw the importance of belonging to a trade association. Our company has been involved in MBNA and Rocky Mountain Monument Builders since the beginning of my family's involvement in the business. My husband, Mike McBride, CM, AICA, and I owe our level of success to following their lead.

I am grateful to many people who influenced and educated me over the years. I had a wonderful mentor in the monument business: Twyla Thomas. She saw my potential and made me realize that women have a lot to offer our industry. Her son-in-law, Ted Witt, is still on the leading edge of moving our industry forward. My start came when Bob Youngs, CM, invited me to sit by him in an MBNA meeting in 1989. Today, he and I still discuss the challenges and opportunities of our industry. Another longstanding relationship I have benefited from is with Rolly Johnson II, who goes back with my family many, many years. Tripp Johnson, CM, and I are the best of buddies and continue to work together for our industry.

I cannot even begin to mention all the business connections and wonderful friends I have made due to my involvement in MBNA and the monument industry. Our association is one of relationships. We create business partnerships and build friendships that help us invest in our businesses and benefit our lives.

As we spiral through life these relationships become the foundations of our work lives. We make a collective difference when we take ownership in our association. As members of MBNA we are also owners, and the volunteer leadership and paid staff must be accountable to the owners for results and membership

value. Our businesses and our personalities may differ, but as memorialists our message is the same and it can't be spread alone. Don't assume that just because we know the importance of memorialization the consumer does, too.

Past President Glen Whitener, CM, AICA, told me he thinks what I can bring to MBNA is love and peace. I quickly took that as my mantra. Past President Paul Aiello, CM, AICA, warned me that wouldn't be so easy to achieve. During my year as president-elect I learned the meaning of his words. But with Paul's encouragement I embraced this responsibility as an opportunity, not a challenge. Past President Bruce Fuerstenberg, CM, Bill Minozzi, CM, and President-Elect Ruth Bell, CM, AICA, are three of the most inspiring people I know. I have received such positive encouragement from so many people that I have no doubt I made the right choice to be president of MBNA.

I assure our membership that I, along with the Executive Committee, take our responsibility as your volunteer leadership to heart and want to build and improve MBNA and create even more value for your membership.

MBNA can serve as the collective forum for all sides to discuss challenges and set a direction that can turn into opportunities. At the very least, MBNA can provide a medium where open communication begins.

Again, thank you for placing a bit of your faith in me and giving me this opportunity. I remember my camp counselor Charlie Hunt's wise words: Let's realize the POWER OF NOW!

Love and peace,



Debbie



Debbie Dalton

Paving the Road:

MBNA's Incoming President Debbie Dalton Makes Plans

By Sarah Hendershot

At the MBNA 2005 Annual Convention in Memphis, Tenn., new MBNA President Debbie Dalton stepped away from a circle of friends and associates clustered around the Greeley Monument Works booth to chat about her new role in the association, her plans for the future and the serendipity of it all.

New MBNA President Debbie Dalton will be the first to admit that she had no intention of being MBNA's president, or being in the memorialization industry at all, for that matter. Armed with a degree in fine art from the University of Northern Colorado, she intended to be an artist. One door led to another, and she became a graphic artist for a small design and printing company. Before she knew it, she got in on the ground floor of typesetting, served as the editorial artist for a newspaper, *The Greeley Tribune*, in Greeley, Colo., and soon after was an advertising manager for a retail store, Joslins, which is now Dillard's, in Greeley. Her direction changed once again when she had to make a decision to relocate to Denver or continue on her own as an artist. This new direction resulted in a romantic, dual existence; an artistic existence, one might say. Debbie lived in the country and raised dairy goats, started her own graphic design business and taught graphic design at Aims Community College in Greeley. At this same time, Debbie met her husband, Michael McBride, when he moved in with her and a girlfriend as a roommate (remember this was the 70s!). That year, 1983, was another time of change when Debbie and Mike decided it was time to make a life commitment to each other, bought their first property together and moved into Greeley.

"The people who are left behind after a death will always need love and care. Monuments are for them, the people who are alive."

Life as she knew it completely changed when Debbie entered her thirties, and also entered the monument business. Her family entered first, though, when her mother's father, Ralph Hollister, came from Lincoln, Ill., to work at the Greeley Monument Works in 1935 and bought the company in 1951. The company was founded in 1909

and already enjoyed a long and healthy legacy. Greeley and Weld County are agriculturally based with limited industry, but like all of Colorado, growth has skyrocketed. Her father, John Dalton, became president of the Greeley Monument Works in 1971, and was active with Rocky Mountain Monument Builders. In 1989, he persuaded his daughter to join him at a RMMB meeting. Debbie was surprised by what she found. The organization "had great leadership. I was inspired," she remembered.

Through her attendance at the Rocky Mountain Monument Builders meetings she met Twyla Thomas, who served as a professional and personal inspiration. Twyla also participated in MBNA's MYTTE (Monuments Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow, Evermore) Committee, and eventually encouraged Debbie to attend. And thus began her involvement in MBNA, also in 1989, as District 3 Trustee. Her family have been members of MBNA since 1951, and in 2001, Greeley Monument Works, Inc., was named a 50-year member.

Debbie never hid behind the scenes as an MBNA member. "I'm a person who, if I'm not involved, I'd rather not do it. Just to do something is very important," she explained. Since 1989, she has served many terms as a trustee, on the marketing committee, chair of the membership committee and vice president for three years. Although she wanted to give her time to the board, she didn't actually intend to serve as president.

"After the transition to SmithBucklin, I wanted to see what would happen. We needed new leadership. I was asked to stay but [initially] said no. 'Someone new needs to get in here,' [I thought], but was persuaded. I decided stability might be good," she said.

Since deciding to accept the role as MBNA president, Debbie hasn't looked back. Despite traveling a long, winding road to get where she is today, Debbie clearly exudes contentment. She confided that her husband Mike McBride was behind her "100 percent. Here we are and I've been so happy that I made that choice. I'm a total believer that you are where you are when you need to be. If you bring love and peace to the association [it will flourish]. Our members and suppliers want our industry to grow," she maintained.



She added, "I'm a proponent of SmithBucklin. If we can get the best we should get the best."

The State of the Association

Debbie has a lot to say about the future of MBNA and the monument industry as a whole. In fact, acceptance of change is perhaps the most definitive characteristic of her outlook on the future. We must "realize we are always going to be a changing entity. We might have to look at other avenues to continue in the future, like becoming educators [who will] get information to consumers and empower people so they don't have to be led," she explained.

"We have to promote memorialization, not just monuments at the cemetery. The focus should be on memorialization."

With a view on the immediate future, too, Debbie's first goal as president is to simplify MBNA's committee structure. She stated that she wants to clarify who does what and how in order to help committees, and MBNA by extension, accomplish tasks more efficiently. Increased efficiency translates to a more effective volunteer leadership, and also a more effective staff, she explained.

Perhaps this is an example of teaching people how to fish rather than just giving them a fish. If so, Debbie prefers to streamline and coordinate processes and communication with an eagle eye on efficiency. Efficiency is key because, like most people, Debbie's time is limited. "I won't sacrifice my company's future for MBNA. My company is small, and I have a lot of work to do day-to-day. For the time I give to MBNA, I hope we create an efficient and lasting forum for communication," she explained.

Another example of Debbie's openness is her choice of words. She stresses *memorialization* over *monuments* when talking about the industry. "We have to promote memorialization, not just monuments at the cemetery. The focus should be on memorialization," she asserted. This acceptance open doors for companies who serve the industry with diverse products and services, but who may not have been classified as monument builders in the past. Many such companies exhibited at the industry trade show in Memphis.

A Tip of the Hat

Needless to say, many aspects of MBNA don't call for change. Leadership, for example, has been and will continue to be strong. When asked to name something she learned from Past President Bruce Fuerstenberg, Debbie, without skipping a beat, laughed and pounded her fist on the table, proclaiming, "We have to run a tight ship!"

She quickly added, "I've learned a lot from Bruce, especially that it's important to communicate from one echelon of leadership to the next. It's going to be easier for me and Ruth because we will talk about things. Two female presidents in a row might shock the membership, but we are going to open the avenues for others."

Paving roads and opening avenues are reoccurring themes for the new president. And being open to change in the industry is essential. Debbie cited green cemeteries in Colorado that do not permit markers, not even flat markers. MBNA will have to pay attention to these trends as they come and go. Debbie visited one of these cemeteries and saw "some piles of sticks, but in the future no one will see those sticks," she observed.

However, trends and changes that seem foreboding are sometimes a blessing in disguise. Cremation is an example of a trend that increasingly will affect the memorialization industry, but not as negatively as some think.

"Whatever the memorialization product of the future, MBNA can be the source for it. It doesn't have to be a monument in a traditional setting. Cremation is growing, the rate is increasing. However, permanent memorials for cremations are also increasing. People are less satisfied with

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remains being scattered in a river. The [increasing popularity of] cremation should be considered an advantage because it gives us more opportunities," she posited.

Besides death, what will never change? This is an easy question for Debbie. "The people who are left behind after a death will always need love and care. Monuments are for them, the people who are alive. It's all about us," she said. Remembering the living may be the most important thing a monument builder can do.

New Generations

Debbie's face lit up when she discussed the New Memorialists meeting she attended during the convention.

"My enthusiasm for the promise of quality that people bring to our association and industry was renewed after attending MBNA's New Memorialist meeting, which was hosted by Trustee Shelley Rogers, CM," she remarked.

With her attendance at the new memorialist meeting fresh on her mind, she expressed confidence in younger

generations of MBNA members. "The energy is there. The New Memorialists meeting was inspirational," she said.

What did it inspire? Debbie cites new initiatives to education, especially a new idea of a mentoring program, which would utilize one-on-one exchanges with New Memorialists and Certified Memorialists. "That mentoring program could be good. So many people want to teach and talk about what they know. There's so much knowledge within our industry. It's always going to be changing. We have to be on top of what is happening and be involved in it now," she said.

The themes that Debbie continually revert to have to do with action, thinking in the present and feeling positive. "The energy of a busy spring business season is in all of our futures. Think positively and remember our purpose: to create memorialization and do it to the best of our abilities," she vouched.

Surely this way of thinking will serve MBNA well for years to come. It promises to be an interesting road with Debbie Dalton in the driver's seat. ■

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