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Anita M. Hage

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Value of Membership

ANITA M. HAGE, *Los Angeles, California*

In times like these, all of us need to stop and consider the value of membership in organizations such as the American Woman's Society of Certified Public Accountants and the American Society of Women Accountants.

Association with women in the same profession strengthens each individual in her own business life. At meetings she can exchange ideas, give or receive advice on problems. New members often derive inspiration and stimulation from older members who are well established in this field. Then, too, there is nothing like a stirring speech by a prominent speaker to make one resolve to do a better job and use one's ability to the best advantage. Program chairmen have been amazingly successful in securing experts to analyze current legislation and untangle the difficulties and problems it creates. Expert advice in a sympathetic and friendly atmosphere that saves hours of tedious search and keeps us up-to-date on rulings, ignorance of which might be very expensive! Round tables provide a comprehensive knowledge of many subjects which otherwise would be impossible in these busy days and clarify hidden meanings by means of simple illustrations that are rarely found in technical articles.

Many of our members value the organizations for the friends they discover. Genuine friendships have always been precious assets to human beings but they have a peculiar and poignant significance in difficult times when our inner security is shaken and our lives disrupted by forces beyond our control. There are many types of friendship and we cannot hope to find even one person who would understand the complexities of our individual personalities. But the unselfish business friendship fills a very special need for it is based on something fundamental — common interests. Encouragement in our hopes and plans, sympathy with our frustrations and disappointments, and pleasure in our achievements are real and not merely polite expressions for that friend has the capacity to understand. If she is not in a position to help, she frequently knows someone who can. There are countless examples within these two organizations of the practical value of such friendships.

The pleasure and profit from such contacts in the local group are intensified and broadened in our organizations because they are national in scope. Isn't the thought exciting? Unquestionably the prestige of local groups is considerably enhanced if they are part of a national organization. Such an association widens the field for individual development, increases and strengthens one's resources. Such development comes from participation and both our societies not only encourage but expect active interest from each member.

Speaking of individual development reminds me of the great emphasis placed on personality in recent years. To the layman, accounting appears to be a very dry, uninteresting subject. We know that it isn't. But far too many accountants are so busy with the enormous amount of detail their work involves that they fail to consider themselves as personalities. Membership in an organization, participation in group discussions, meeting new people, and the acquisition of new ideas and new interests foster poise and assurance—qualities rather essential to success.

Belonging to a group develops an open mind and tolerance of others. To be a good member of any organization, it is necessary to be receptive to new ideas advanced by fellow members. After due consideration and possibly experimentation, we may not care to accept all of them but we can at least be tolerant of those who do. The ability to get along with others is a great asset and one that can be developed through society membership. As one prominent certified public accountant put it: "To serve best, we must have open minds, and be both willing and able to adapt ourselves to the methods which the new necessities demand. Courage of optimistic youth, faith in ourselves, faith in our fellow man, faith in our own profession are some needed essentials."

Every woman accountant, whether she be working in a public or private capacity either as an executive or in a routine job, should be anxious to further the interests of the profession as a whole. There is great satisfaction in knowing that in some small measure we can help to do this. Our organizations provide several avenues from which each member can choose the direction best suited to her tal-

ents and inclinations. For those with literary tastes and specialized knowledge, this very publication offers a means of contributing something to the literature of the profession. The field of public relations offers unlimited opportunities to those members who like to deal with human beings. Others who have a realistic conception of the world of tomorrow will find plenty to do in the field of education.

Many of our sex dislike women's organizations and are prone to overlook the real purpose of what we are working to accomplish. Most certainly we are *not* trying to duplicate any work done by other organizations. It is a matter of fact that with few exceptions the woman who wanted to work as an accountant faced innumerable handicaps. Social philosophies change as the centuries roll on but change slowly and progress is often stopped by periods of reaction such as we have witnessed in Europe. What is to be gained by waiting on the slow process of evolution? And human instruments have to start even that force in motion. No other group will help us understand the handicaps we encounter and teach us to overcome them.

Women have had a long struggle to attain any position in the field of Accountancy. Now the Golden Opportunity has arrived and it is up to us to use it. The steady development of our organizations lead to recognition of the fact that women are equally capable in this field. If that recognition is to be of permanent value, we must be willing to assume more and more responsibility not only in our work, but for other women. Circumstances brought on by the War are giving us a chance to assume positions we have longed to attain. If our jobs are really well done, the postwar world will find us partners of men instead of merely assistants or office domestics. We are on the upgrade, let's not slip downhill. And how can we attain our goal? The answer is obvious—by pooling our strength.

Some men and women feel that individual accomplishment confers an exclusive right to a place above the crowd from which they expect reverence. There isn't much sustenance to be drawn from a mountain top.

It is a matter of record that the schools of business administration throughout the United States advised their women students not to major in accounting because there was absolutely no opportunity in this field for them. The few certified women accountants in the country were so scattered that their existence

was practically unknown. Some of those who had vision formed an organization and through legitimate means taught the public that women could and did qualify. It belied the statement that it couldn't be done and although these women comprise but one per cent of the total number of certified public accountants in the United States, the business and commercial world in a remarkably short time has accepted the fact that there are capable women accountants. The young woman student who is seriously interested in accounting and has the native qualifications now receives the same encouragement as her brother. To the working woman has come reward and opportunity beyond her expectation. I cannot believe this is due solely to war. One wonders if such progress would have been as rapid or as complete if our organizations did not exist and those women had remained individuals only.

The value of helping one another toward a common goal was well illustrated recently at a large night gathering in a huge stadium. During the evening, all lights were extinguished. Then simultaneously everyone in the audience struck a match — the effect was breathtaking! One match alone would not have been seen but several thousand together produced that result. Combined effort with good leadership will bring us the things we need and add a vital contribution to the profession.

Lastly, organizations such as ours uphold the democratic way of life and make us better citizens. Under majority rule we are free to express opinions and control policies. Through organization and co-operation we can to a great extent mold the future of women in accounting while materially improving our individual status. But the democratic way carries responsibilities, too, responsibility to preserve, to create, to initiate. And like the democratic way of life, membership brings a great reward for very little effort.

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