

Joan Michaels, CMA-A (AAMA) was a role-model, a mentor, an example, a dedicated member, a leader, a friend, an advocate, a teacher, a life-long learner, and most importantly of all she was a medical assistant. She was a charter member of NCSMA and the youngest AAMA President. She was devoted to AAMA and gave much to the organization she loved, but was the first to explain to anyone that AAMA and NCSMA had always given her more than she had given them. She was respected and loved by all who knew her. She was also a visionary, because she knew what AAMA and NCSMA could become even when it was not sure that the fledging organization would survive. She was independent and determined and each of us that knew her has at least one Joan story that we love to tell and retell with fondness and love.

Her commitment and devotion to NCSMA was recognized by her peers when she was awarded the Mary S. Grubb Award in 1999 honoring her as the Medical Assistant of the Year and in 2005 she was awarded the first and only Lifetime membership that NCSMA has bestowed. She not only served NCSMA as President (and in several other offices), but also as Parliamentarian for many, many years in which she dispensed advice and sage wisdom for the society and our leaders. She served as AAMA President in 1976-77 and was awarded the Spirit of Medical Assisting Award on the national level in 1998. She also served as Chair of the Certifying Board after she completed her term as AAMA President.

When Joan was installed as AAMA President in 1976 she likened our organization to a train and as engineer she vowed to lead the train of cars labeled youth, perseverance, experience, respect and wisdom down the rails of progress. She also used the following poem:

*I'm not allowed to run the train  
The whistle I can't blow...  
I'm not allowed to say how far  
The railroad cars can go.  
I'm not allowed to shoot off steam,  
Nor even clang the bell...  
But let the damn train jump the track  
And see who catches Hell!*

In her inaugural address delivered in Chicago in 1976 she stated: "I believe certification will be our saving grace. Such credentialing to identify those persons most likely to perform well is a common feature of all professions. You may rest assured that the time is not far away when we must exhibit proof of competency or simply find ourselves something else to do." This statement rings as true today as it did all those years ago.

Knowing her was a privilege and I am proud to say she was my friend and mentor. She always had an encouraging word and was always there to lend a hand or an ear. Her legacy lives on in all those members of NCSMA whose lives she has touched. She consistently encouraged new members and inspired many to become leaders. Joan was special and she will be remembered as a special light of NCSMA, that went out too soon. As one of our founding mothers, she became our Queen Mother whom we looked to for guidance. Our time with you was too short, Joan. We know that you are still looking out for us and will be there in spirit as we move toward the future, which we owe in large part to you!

*Rebecca Walker, BS, CMA (AAMA), CPC*

*NCSMA President 1999-2000*

*AAMA President 2006-2007*