Twenty-five years in the Editorial Board of the Journal of SICOT—International Orthopaedics

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It comes as a surprise to realise that one has been working in an organisation for 25 years; if that happens to be the journal International Orthopaedics and one can reflect that over that time, there has been a steady evolution and improvement in the publication, there comes a feeling of pride and satisfaction that, in some small way, one may have played a part in that process.

In his Foreword to the first issue of the Journal in 1977, Robert Merle d'Aubigne hoped that International Orthopaedics would act as a bond between specialists throughout the world by publishing high quality works selected for their instructive value on the international level by the Editorial Board. Prior to 1977 SICOT had only published the transcripts of scientific papers from the triennial congresses, which was apparently an expensive undertaking and considered to be, “only an aide-mémoire and neither the book of instruction nor of reference hoped for.” In the first volume there were 42 English articles and 12 French articles but all papers had an English Abstract and a French Résumé.

In 1987, I was invited to meet Paul Masse at the Munich Congress with a view to joining the Editorial Board. This was an exciting prospect for me, tinged with some sadness since the vacancy had arisen through the death of a dear colleague, Lester Lowe, who had died whilst traversing the Alps. Interestingly, from the very first Board meeting I was asked to take the minutes. In the 1980s and early 1990s the Board was greatly concerned about the cost of the journal, which was felt to be too high. However, the Executive Committee told us (through their financial adviser) that the costings were correct. When Paul Masse retired as editor we had to decide between two candidates for his replacement: they were Frank Horan and Toni Trias. Unfortunately the Board was equally split between the candidates, even after two votes, but happily the dilemma was settled when the candidates, who had become bored with standing outside, returned to announce that Toni Trias would be Editor and Frank Horan would chair the Board meetings! Toni Trias investigated the financial aspects of the production of the journal and sought estimates from different publishing houses, eventually presenting the Executive Committee with a proposal to change our publisher at the Triennial Congress in Seoul in 1993. This caused considerable consternation for two reasons: firstly, we would have broken a long established link with our publisher, and the second was that Maurice Müller, our highly respected Past President, was a personal friend of the Managing Director of the Company, and even more disturbing, he had brought the Managing Director to the Congress in Seoul as his personal guest. The Editor and the Board spent a few nervous and shamefaced days before learning that a new contract had been negotiated which was taken, word for word, from the contract that Toni Trias had brought with him, thus vindicating our position. At the Triennial Congress in Seoul I was elected Secretary General of SICOT. Sadly, once again, my election followed the unexpected death of a friend, Jacques Wagner, a charismatic character much loved by the Society.

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The normal tenure of a member of the Editorial Board was six years but the Secretary General was a member *ex-officio* so I continued to attend the Board Meetings and take the minutes for the next nine years! The Editorial Board always meets in Paris in November immediately after the SOFCOT meeting and enjoys the privilege of using the SOFCOT Offices, but in the spring the meeting is hosted by one of the members of the Board. One year the Italian member was Ernesto de Santis who invited the Board to hold their meeting in Sardinia. There was much amusement when some members of the Board turned up very late at our hotel not having realised that Sardinia is the second largest island in the Mediterranean and had chosen to land at Calgari airport in the South only to find that they had a journey of several hundred kilometres in their hire car ahead of them to reach our venue in Sassari. Toni Trias was delighted to discover some Sardinian fishermen speaking his native Catalan in a small harbour apparently following some historical migration of seafarers. I asked Toni what language he spoke at home and he replied that he and his Canadian wife usually spoke French or English but that if his children wanted something from him, they asked in Catalan; however, if he refused, they spoke Spanish! In 1998 Toni Trias died quite unexpectedly and the production of the journal could have been thrown into turmoil had it not been for the steady hand of Kjeld Skou-Andersen who had already been nominated to succeed as Editor. Kjeld was slightly more computer savvy than most of us and dragged us into the electronic age. No longer was it necessary for me to print out faxes of all the galley proofs and correct them by hand before faxing them back to Springer (I still have a piece of paper with all the mysterious signs required to correct the texts!).

Jean-Pierre Courpied took over from Kjeld Skou-Andersen at about the time when there was a sudden increase in the number of articles submitted to the journal. At this time the journal was bimonthly and the Editorial Board and the reviewers had to be constantly reminded to be much more stringent about accepting papers, but even so a considerable backlog of accepted articles built up. Despite these difficulties, the Impact Factor rose under Jean-Pierre's careful stewardship and the journal reached the rank of 27th in the tables of orthopaedic journals. Jean-Pierre introduced the concept of Special Issues of the journal with guest Editors chosen from the Board to select submissions in a particular specialist field. The first of these issues dealt with Bone Tumours and was edited by Miklos Szendroi and the second concerned the

Biological Regeneration of Bone edited by Marko Pecina and Slobodan Vukicevic.

Marko Pecina took over as Editor in 2009 and worked tirelessly to reduce the backlog of papers and improve the production time from submission to publication. One method was to publish articles on-line once they had been corrected for publication. As soon as they appear on-line the papers can be cited and the author may include them in his CV. In addition, Marko was able to persuade the publishers to increase the number of pages for one year in order to eliminate the backlog of accepted but unpublished articles. It became clear at this time that there would have to be more issues of the journal per year to accommodate all the papers. The Editorial Board was also concerned that the Impact Factor of the journal was still not sufficiently high to satisfy the requirement of many European and American Universities, and partly to address this problem it was decided, despite strong resistance, to drop the French *Résumé* from the articles. Special Issues proved to be very well received and were continued under the new editor covering: Osteotomy about the Knee, edited by Thami Benzakour; Hip Endoprotheses, edited by Jean-Pierre Courpied and Jacques Henri Caton; Spinal Infections, edited by Luis Lopez-Duran Stern and Carlos Leon Serrano; and The Knee Joint in Sports Medicine, edited by Albert van Kampen. (There are more special issues in the pipeline: Foot and Ankle—Karl Knahr and Wolfgang Schneider; Knee Arthroplasty—Francesco Falez; Regenerative Orthopaedics—Marko Pecina and Slobodan Vukicevic; The Shoulder—Marius M. Scarlat). After all these changes and innovations, the Impact Factor rose and the number of submissions reached new heights. Output was increased to eight issues per year for one year and the following year, 2011, marked a special milestone for the Journal with the change to 12 issues per year and an Impact Factor rising above two for the first time in our history. Constantly looking for ways to enhance the journal, Marko has recently introduced a monthly article on our orthopaedic heritage dealing with the contributions of some of our illustrious predecessors.

This year, to the delight of everyone on the Editorial Board, the Impact Factor has risen to 2.319 and the Journal is now ranked 14th in the table of orthopaedic journals and fifth of the general orthopaedic journals. Thus we find ourselves in the first quartile amongst orthopaedic journals. It is clear that *International Orthopaedics* is destined to go from strength to strength thanks to the dedication and hard work of its Editor and his editorial board and I shall therefore quit whilst I am ahead. I plan to record my last editorial board minutes in November 2013.