



MARC PARKINSON

**CHAIR FOCUSES ON
GROWTH, OUTREACH
TO YOUNG CPAs**

CALIFORNIA'S LEADER

BY JERRY ASCIERTO

➤ IN 1979, CALCPA HAD 17,812 members, including 26-year-old Marc Parkinson, an entry-level accountant at Price Waterhouse in San Jose. Freshly graduated from UCLA's MBA program and studying for the CPA Exam, Parkinson never imagined he'd one day lead his new professional association. "I was just glad Price Waterhouse paid my dues," he recalls. "It used to be that the big firms automatically paid new recruits' professional dues. The Big Four and most firms will still do that, but now young professionals must ask."

Fast-forward 27 years. CalCPA approaches 30,000 members, and Parkinson's firm, Petrinovich, Pugh & Company, has more than tripled in size, thanks in part to his CalCPA involvement. And now, as CalCPA chair, he'd like to return the favor and help grow the ranks of CalCPA membership.

"For CalCPA to be as good as it can be, it needs to have strong membership growth," Parkinson says. "The more members we have, the more we can effectively advocate on behalf of the profession in Sacramento, and the more resources and benefits we can provide our members."

Since CalCPA was such a big part of his professional development, it's no surprise that reaching out to young CPAs is a

cornerstone of Parkinson's term as CalCPA chair.

"We need to do more to reach out to younger CPAs," Parkinson says. "We need to illustrate to them what a great profession this is, and how CalCPA membership is an integral part of it. They are the future of the profession and, CalCPA is a key to their future success."

EARLY YEARS

Marc Parkinson's journey to CalCPA chair is a travel agent's dream. He was born in Detroit and made stops in Havana, Miami, Panama City, Manila and Mexico City—all before he attended college.

This dizzying beeline was chartered by his father's career in the automotive industry. Jack Parkinson worked in finance for the Ford Motor Company, and then moved on to a similar position at Chrysler's international division, working his way up to a 20-year stint as president of Chrysler Mexico.

But in between Detroit and Mexico, Parkinson's youth was spent adapting to various cultures and languages—only to pack up and move again every few years.

In 1959, the family moved to Havana, Cuba where his father helped run an automobile factory—and where a civil war was fermenting in the streets of that capital city. In 1961, when Fidel Castro seized all American corporate interests, the Parkinsons were given 24 hours to leave the country.

"We could only take one suitcase each, so we left all of our furniture, most of our clothing, everything," Parkinson recalls. "We quickly packed up some keepsakes, my mom's jewelry, stuff like that, and boarded a ferry to Miami."

This turn of events started a chain reaction of transience for the Parkinson family. They spent a few months in Miami stocking up on supplies and waiting for the elder Parkinson to be re-assigned. The next stop was Panama City, Panama, a three-year stint, before the family moved to Mexico City when Marc was 10 years old. Three years later, the family packed up once again and moved clear across the Pacific Ocean, to Manila, Philippines.

Marc recalls that he and his two sisters, Ellie and Paula, always knew when they were moving, "my parents would bring us into their bedroom, sit us down on the bed and my mom would say 'your father and I have something to tell you.' And we'd say 'not again!'"

"It was difficult," Parkinson says. "It would take a little while to meet people and get adjusted, and then you have a group of friends and you finally have a comfort level and then you're moving again!"

After the Philippines, the family moved back to Detroit in Parkinson's junior year of high school. But after a year in Detroit, the family returned to Mexico City, where Marc spent his senior year of high school.

SILVER LINING

Though difficult, there were silver linings to his family's gypsy ways.

Parkinson learned to speak Spanish at an early age, as half of his school day in Cuba was taught in Spanish. He was exposed to

various cultures and cultivated an easygoing manner to adapt to his ever-changing surroundings.

Plus, he spent his senior year of high school in a country with no minimum drinking age and a great nightlife. "I don't think there's a better place in the world to be a high school senior than Mexico City," he says. "I really had a ball."

CHOOSING THE PROFESSION

Parkinson followed both of his sisters to Santa Clara University, where he received a bachelor's degree in economics in 1975.

As a sophomore at Santa Clara, Marc met his future wife, Linda, and it was love at first sight. "The first time I saw her, I told my buddy 'I'm going to marry that girl someday,'" Parkinson says. "But it took me another six months to be introduced to her, and then another 3 months to get a first date—we've been together ever since."

Meeting Linda also helped shape Marc's professional career. "The whole game plan at that point was to graduate from Santa Clara, get an MBA in finance and then follow in my father's footsteps and become president of a big company somewhere," Parkinson says.

But after meeting Linda's father, Parkinson reconsidered his path. "I'd go over to Linda's house, and her father would already be home from work or just back from playing golf in the middle of the afternoon" Parkinson recalls. "It seemed like a great lifestyle. So I asked Linda what her father does, and she told me he's a CPA."

Linda's father—James Petrinovich—was a founder of San Jose-based Petrinovich, Pugh & Company LLP. In addition to the CPA firm, Petrinovich owned two local restaurants and a bar. "I asked him about the profession and he told me that CPAs help businesses and learn about taxes and you gain a lot of information that can be used to develop your own business or for investing," he says. "And it intrigued me."

By the time Parkinson landed at UCLA's MBA program, he was sufficiently swayed to take the necessary accounting courses to qualify for the CPA Exam. He received an MBA in 1977 and began working with Price Waterhouse & Co., CPAs out of its San Jose office. He received his CPA license in 1980.

While the decision to become an accountant was in part hastened by his future father-in-law, there was another reason Parkinson chose the profession—stability.

"One of the things that I wanted to do with my family was to have them feel a part of a community, because I never really had



a message from the chair

Good movies sell out.

And CalCPA is a hot ticket if you use membership growth as an indicator. More new members joined CalCPA during the 2005–06 membership year than any of the past 15 years. The trend is continuing, too. In May 2006, we had the greatest single-month increase of new members on record, 436.

As CalCPA chair, I am making it my mission to see to it that CalCPA is nothing less than a blockbuster, delivering on its mission to our profession: to add value to our members, strengthen the profession and ensure its future viability.

GROW THE MEMBERSHIP

Our starting point is to grow the membership. At more than 29,000 members, CalCPA represented about 67 percent of all licensees based in the state. We can't expect that percentage to increase unless we can show our peers the value of belonging to CalCPA.

A huge opportunity for growth is with new licensees. Only about one-third of new licensees over the past five years are CalCPA members. So, this year—instead of waxing poetic for hours about where these new CPAs are hiding—we will expand our efforts to reach out to new licensees from the statewide and grassroots level so that they understand CalCPA membership is essential to their professional success.

Similarly, while CalCPA has more than doubled our number of candidate members to 2,200, that still represents only about one-third of the potential pool of individuals pursuing their CPA license in California. This is good news for CalCPA and the profession as we strive to fill open positions within our firms and businesses. These days, being a CPA is to a job in finance, what Tom Cruise is to box office receipts.

But, it's not all about merely increasing the numbers—it's about finding what CPAs in various segments of the profession need and want, and delivering it.



a message from the chair

DELIVERING WHAT YOU WANT

In January 2007, CalCPA will host a Young and Emerging Professionals Conference, which will be driven and designed by young and emerging CPAs. It promises to be a show-stopper.

To help meet the needs of student and educator members, CalCPA is heading back to school. Depending on where you are in the state, this may include holding chapter meetings on campus and inviting students, participating in career fairs, serving on advisory boards or boosting the visibility and reach of our scholarship programs. These activities attract students to the profession and a greater presence on campus will help members who are trying to recruit new college grads.

And key to any college outreach is our connection with Beta Alpha Psi. This past year, CalCPA stepped up its relationships with several Beta Alpha Psi chapters, including speaking engagements at the BAP National Conference and Western Region Conference. In 2006-07, we will continue to build on these successes, collaborating with BAP chapters on financial literacy activities, as well as providing scholarships, speakers and recruiting resources.

STRAIGHT FROM THE SOURCE

In the same way that an award-winning movie is tested with months of market research, so too, has CalCPA made it a priority to know what members think. We are building on recent research with CPAs statewide and managing partners of larger firms, and surveying our members in business and industry as well as conducting industry focus groups and interviews.

With new licensees being so important, we've also embarked on major research with candidates and CPAs licensed 0-5 years to better understand their wants and needs. The findings will be key to helping deliver the appropriate services to those new to our profession, as well as increase their presence within our membership.

When we look carefully at any one member segment we find ways to benefit all our members. For example, in business and industry, we have started to deliver benefits to members differently—audio conferences, webcasts, webinars and podcasts are some of the terms being volleyed about the B&I circles these days. And we will deliver on several of these new programs this year.

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that,” Parkinson says. “And I remember thinking, ‘what if I had my own firm? Nobody will ever be able to tell me that I have to move, and we’ll be able to grow up in this community’.”

After spending two years at Price Waterhouse, Parkinson decided to work for Petrinovich, who took Marc under his wing, introducing him to the client base and mentoring him on the finer points of accounting and client relationships. “In fact, many of the clients he introduced me to then are still our clients today,” says Parkinson.

Today, Parkinson keeps the family spirit of the firm alive, as he now employs his own son-in-law as an accountant there.

THE VALUE OF MEMBERSHIP

Early in his career, Parkinson became involved in the San Jose Chapter to further his education. “I thought that increasing my knowledge base was important, especially since I wasn’t a full-time accounting student as an undergrad,” he says. “For instance, I became active in the Real Estate Committee simply because they were learning things that I needed to know for our clients.”

CalCPA’s networking possibilities also revealed to Parkinson a community of firms that shared best practices and trade tips, a valuable resource for those just making their way in the profession.

“I met so many successful CPAs through CalCPA, and it was great to be able to bounce things off of them and see how they handled certain situations,” Parkinson says. “Especially since Petrinovich, Pugh & Company was a smaller firm, we didn’t have those resources to go to at the time.”

Marc enjoyed CalCPA’s networking opportunities so much that he served as a member and eventually chair of the chapter’s Attorney, Banker, CPA event, which

plans the popular annual networking event. Under his leadership, the event shed its stodgy dinner-and-speaker format in favor of the more fun, networking-focused event that so many enjoy today.

The relationships that Parkinson forged two decades ago at these and other chapter meetings resonate to this day.

For instance, Parkinson met John Dodsworth, founder, CEO and director of CAMICO Mutual Insurance Co., at a chapter committee meeting 20 years ago, before CAMICO was formed.

Now a CAMICO policyholder, Parkinson calls Dodsworth for advice when his firm has a particular practice management question. “In fact, I was just on the phone with him this morning,” Parkinson says. “That relationship has really taught my firm how to do things better, how to handle situations better—and all because I met John at a chapter event.”

But for Parkinson, the value of CalCPA membership goes beyond professional connections. “It’s the association with people, being able to use so many successful CPAs as sounding boards, not only professionally, but personally as well. I’ve made a lot of great friends through CalCPA,” he says.

LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

By the mid-90s, Petrinovich Pugh & Co. had more than tripled in size. Parkinson was a visible member of the local practitioner community, and when he was recruited and groomed by chapter leadership, he was eager to give back to the profession—and the organization—that had benefited him so much.

He became vice president of the San Jose Chapter in 1997, and served as president 1997–98. After serving on CalCPA Council for two years, Parkinson was elected to a council-at-large seat, and during his term, he was elected to the California CPA Education Foundation Board of Trustees.

Parkinson spent the next 7 years on the Education Foundation’s board, becoming president in 2002, a period of time that marked many challenges for CalCPA. “I feel a lot more confident handling issues of growth and re-organization in my own firm than I would’ve 10 years ago, and that’s because I’ve seen CalCPA successfully handle similar issues.”

For Parkinson, the leadership opportunities at CalCPA spoke to his sense of duty. “I believe everyone has an obligation to help in their community, and I also think you have an obligation to your profession,” he says.



a message from the chair

ENHANCE AND SUPPORT

In addition to expanding our reach in new areas, we need to support and enhance successful programs, such as the Leadership Institute, which allows CPAs to build their leadership skills for the betterment of their volunteer and professional activities.

CalCPA's government relations program can't be beat. In May, CPA Day at the Capitol put a real face on the profession; I found it very rewarding to explain to legislators the impact of specific legislation on my firm. We will have another CPA Day at the Capitol in the spring and I encourage all members to participate.

Key to many of our other efforts in government relations and with students is the support and growth of CalCPA Institute. Via CalCPA Institute, more than \$200,000 in scholarships were distributed this past year. Scholarships are key to establishing relationships with college and universities, as well as the future leaders of the profession.

Perhaps even more visible is CalCPA's financial literacy initiative, a program that is selfless, interesting and valuable. Riding on the success of the California Summit on Financial Literacy, we have increased the profession's visibility and raised awareness of our efforts. This year, CalCPA members delivered financial literacy programs to more than 7,500 high school students and 1,500 adults.

CalCPA's financial literacy initiative benefits the organization in many ways, including generating goodwill with legislators, increasing media visibility and awareness of CPAs in high schools, and providing a valuable public service.

When people ask me the secret of success, one of my favorite expressions is, "If you make a good enough movie, people will fill the seats."

And the seating capacity at CalCPA is truly limitless.

Together, we can highlight and enhance CalCPA's most compelling features, forging a must-see product that CPAs can't afford to ignore. And as our membership numbers grow, we can make this production—like a *Citizen Kane* or *Casablanca*—a timeless legacy to future generations.

“We need to do more to reach out to younger CPAs, we need to illustrate to them what a great profession this is, and how CalCPA membership is an integral part of it.”

But it wasn't just duty that propelled Parkinson into CalCPA leadership, it was also an appreciation of all the benefits he has received, which in part helped grow his firm. "You get a ton more out of CalCPA than you have to give back in," he says. "You can have a lot of fun, and learn best practices from many successful CPAs that you can take back to your practice."

Being at the fore of CalCPA also helped Parkinson become a better leader in his firm. In addition to leadership training opportunities when he was a chapter president, Parkinson was among the inaugural class of CalCPA's Leadership Institute. "Being involved in CalCPA leadership is empowering," he says. "The leadership training was just fantastic and has helped grow the firm and make it a better place to work."

GOALS, INITIATIVES

To bolster the membership ranks, Parkinson wants to reach out to young and emerging CPAs by making CalCPA a more regular fixture on college campuses; engaging in more outreach to Beta Alpha Psi Chapters; producing a Young and Emerging Professionals Conference in 2007; and increasing CalCPA's visibility with college professors.

Since CalCPA helped his professional development so much, he'd like to share his good fortune with the next generation. "We've got to reach out to new licensees statewide and at the grassroots level, to show them how CalCPA is central to their success," he says.

Central to this recruitment effort, Parkinson also lists the financial literacy program and the scholarship program as

two key areas of further development (for more on Parkinson's initiatives, see the Chair's Message in this section).

Parkinson also wants to reach out to veteran CPAs—CPAs in business and industry, as well as CPAs at the Big Four. While growing the membership will strengthen CalCPA's voice in Sacramento, it also will provide more resources for great programs that will benefit members. "We can continually add to member benefits as we grow because we'll have more resources to do more positive things," Parkinson says.

BRINGING IT ALL BACK HOME


Marc and Linda Parkinson have made their home in Los Gatos for more than 30 years.

The Parkinson's oldest daughter, Elizabeth, lives locally with her husband Andrew, who works for Petrinovich, Pugh & Co. Their son, Jon graduated from high school in June and will now crew for a PAC-10 school. And always close in their hearts and minds is their middle child, Lindsay, who lost her life in a car accident five years ago at the age of 19.

"Losing Lindsay was hard on all of us, but I never felt like my career took time away from my family," Parkinson says. "Being a CPA in a local firm allowed me to attend all my kids sporting events, and coach, and be with them. I have never had any regrets about time spent."

In addition to giving back to his profession, Parkinson is active in his community. He serves on the Board of Advisors and the Investment Committee at Sisters of the Holy Names, and on the Board of Fellows at his alma mater, Santa Clara University. He's also president of the Men's Club at Bellarmine College Preparatory, where his son recently graduated.

In the past, Parkinson has served on the board of directors for Achieve; on the school board for St. Mary's Parish; as a treasurer on the executive committee of the O'Connor Hospital Foundation; on the YMCA board of managers; and was a member of Kiwanis and Toastmasters International.

Through it all, Parkinson's enthusiasm for his professional community stands out. "Joining CalCPA was an important part of my professional development," he says. "And now I have a chance to contribute to CalCPA's success." 

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