

# Bob Hertzka, M.D., President of the California Medical Association

*By James T. Hay, MD, Vice-Speaker of the CMA House of Delegates*

## Hertzka

It's just Hertzka. Madonna, Beckham, Arnold ... Hertzka. When Medical Student Craig Swanson gave the "seconding speech" to complete Bob Hertzka's nomination for President-Elect at the California Medical Association's (CMA) House of Delegates meeting last March, Craig reminded us that few people are so respected and universally recognized that they are known by a single name. His background and credentials to become CMA President are legion. I am a family physician and privileged to present a personal view of the man who has been a fellow Trustee and fellow officer of the CMA, "co-conspirator" in the leadership of San Diego County Medical Society (SDCMS), and, best of all, a close personal friend of mine over the past decade. I've watched Bob grow from a reticent (believe it or not) junior member of CMA's Board into one of the dominant thinkers, and certainly the dominant political guru and public speaker in all of the CMA.

## Politics

Bob is all about politics and students now, but his career in organized medicine began with a complaint about an issue relating to "scope of practice." In that instance, as with so many others, he ended up being appointed chair of a CMA committee to deal with the problem. Hertzka has been extraordinarily skilled in following opportunities like that one with outstanding performances, which in turn, created other opportunities, in this case, an election to the CMA Board of Trustees. Locally, for 12 years, he chaired the SDCMS Legislative Committee and also led his large anesthesia group's Political Action Committee (PAC). Both made him the most known and respected of San Diego physicians to San Diego legislators and would-be legislators. While a longtime member of the Republican business-oriented Lincoln Club, and vocally partisan where appropriate, Bob calls himself "a bipartisan problem solver." The respect he has from both sides of the aisle in Sacramento and Washington attests to the truth of that self assessment. He wrote the book on how to deal with legislators, literally educating an entire generation of San Diego physicians in the etiquette, "the dos and the don'ts," of lobbying. He taught us all to evaluate political candidates not by their party, but rather, to evaluate them based on whether a

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particular candidate viewed physicians as part of the solution or as part of the problem.

That kind of leadership created another opportunity for Bob on the California Medical Political Action Committee (CALPAC) Board. He recently completed an unprecedented two terms as CALPAC Chair. Now Bob will continue this work on the national level as the chair of the American Medical Association's PAC (AMPAC). Every city, county, state and federally elected official in San Diego knows Bob, as do many from other counties and other states. Those outside of San Diego who don't yet know him now, soon will. You can bet on that!

### **Students**

There are few things that Bob is more passionate about than exposing medical students to the realities and the benefits of participation in the political process. He advocated for—and then established—just such an elective class for first year students at the University of California, San Diego, one that he has taught the past 10 years. Wildly popular with the students, Bob mentored many who have become leaders in organized medicine as students and as residents. Craig Swanson, Denise Green and Jeannette Lin are just a few recent examples. Jealous of the good fortune of their counterparts in San Diego, students from all over the state have invited Bob to speak to their classes. As much fun as it is rewarding, for years Bob and I have sponsored students' attendance at CMA's annual Legislative Day in Sacramento, including dinner the night before. It is no accident that in the past five years while CMA membership declined statewide, student membership has been climbing.

### **San Diego County Medical Society**

In spite of being ten years my junior, Bob has preceded me in many things, including his term two years before mine as President of the SDCMS. At that time, his retreat for the leadership team, which is held every January, was exceedingly productive. Because of his focus and enthusiasm, and with the help of a professional facilitator, we set goals and created a vision that is still central to our work here in San Diego five years later. Key among those goals was to make our SDCMS "the source" for health policy information for the entire community. Thanks to Bob, we are. He is as well known with the media as he is with the legislators, and he is invariably the one to whom we turn to handle the most difficult or most important media opportunities. I joined him for the one hour talk radio program in March 2000, during which a local hospital system CEO was attempting to answer our questions about why his plan for

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hospital control of physician groups was so unpopular. The CEO resigned soon thereafter!

### **The Man**

Bob's phenomenal memory and his apparent unlimited energy are just two of the reasons why he has been so successful. Many of us are certain he "owns" Starbucks. He is rarely without his favorite caffeine source, and he conducts many political candidate and business interviews at his "other office." I guess he believes the old saying "no pressure, no diamonds." He puts more into his waking 20 hour days than anyone I know, and there are lots of "diamonds." He truly is "sleepless in San Diego."

Bob has many passions outside of Medicine, too. He enjoys describing his early years at Venice High School and its rough neighborhood. Ask him about his teenage experience as a robbery victim. In fact, he enjoys describing lots of things, colorfully and humorously. Hertzka is a professional talker. He has always been a baseball fan and still gets together for an annual spring weekend with his high school friends to choose their fantasy baseball teams. He can quote more current and past baseball statistics, players names, and team histories than I've ever even read, much less remembered. He and Roxanna are friends with Jerry Coleman, the beloved Padres radio announcer. He controls six of the best season tickets for Padres games, right behind home plate. Tricia and I are frequent beneficiaries of that good view. In fact we and Bob's friends are recipients of his and Roxanna's generosity and hospitality often, at baseball games, University Club dinners and parties, and at political events. Bob is one of the most giving people I know.

In spite of his "beer crowd" love of sports, his favorite drink is tequila. Don't bother offering him Cuervo Gold, only the best Azul or Reserva de la Familia will do. And those who've known him over the years can see how much time the "pumped up one" spends in the gym. Any wonder why he liked Arnold for governor? (What about Hertzka for Congress? Or Senate? Hmmm?)

### **Family**

In addition to everything else, Bob is a father and husband, and there are few things Bob cares more about than his family. He is so proud of his boys, Andy and Dan, who live with their mother.

In May 2002, Bob married Roxana, the only human on earth who can keep pace with him. She is an amazingly energetic and dynamic person, too, a former Chair of the County Republican party, for example. In fact, I'm not

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sure he can keep up with her. His first Doberman, “Dose,” (short for Lethal Dose—only an anesthesiologist would name a puppy that) really was a loveable, if huge, addition to the family. Then last year they acquired a second Doberman whose name is “Tres,” of course.

My wife, Tricia, and I were the very lucky couple who read them their vows as our gondola floated under the Bridge of Sighs in Venice (no, no—Italy, not California). We toured Venice together for three days and met up again for a fantastic dinner in Rome near the end of their honeymoon. There never was any doubt that Hertzka enjoys the finer things in life, as can be attested to by their suite at the Cipriani and, in fact, their entire trip. What a marvelous opportunity it was for us to share this special part of their lives. And what a marvelous friend Bob has been to me.

### **In Closing**

In Mike Krzyzewski’s book, *Leading with the Heart* (he is the highly successful and respected men’s basketball coach at Duke University), former player Quinn Snyder is quoted describing his coach to prospective Duke players as one who embodies “commitment, toughness, honesty, integrity, collective responsibility, pride, love and friendship.” Hertzka is all of that, and, indeed, he leads with his heart. Many leaders command respect. Few command as much love as this man. He is tireless, he pulls no punches, and he never sleeps. Coach K says, “The people on your team expect you to be upbeat, positive, confident, and certain they can win.” In 2004, Anesthesiology, Family Practice and all of Medicine will be certain winners with our new CMA President—Hertzka.