You know, being AVMA president is sort of like sky diving without a parachute…it’s a once in a lifetime experience. Over the past 2 years, I have logged close to 200,000 air miles, attended 28 different state executive board meetings, 13 allied group meetings, and visited 9 different countries, plus Texas. Through it all, I have had the opportunity to meet, listen, and interact with literally thousands of veterinarians, veterinary technicians, and other individuals associated in some way with our profession.

Now, with apologies to the recently retired David Letterman, I’m going to give you my top ten list of “What I Learned as AVMA President.”

10. The bigger and fancier your hotel room the less time you will be able to spend in it. And, even the most luxurious hotel is not home.

9. No matter where Becky and I traveled, we found that veterinarians are genuinely wonderful people. Veterinarians are caring, thoughtful, ethical individuals, and as a profession, we are a dedicated group – we are dedicated to our clients and their cherished pets and production animals; we are dedicated to the science of veterinary medicine and to public health on both a local and global scale; we are dedicated to being stewards of the
environment; and I believe that we are all dedicated to leaving this profession better off than how we found it.

8. Having a loving caring partner to be your confidant and to share your travels makes everything easier, more worthwhile and more fun. Thank you, Becky – The best part of us has always been you!

7. We have a serious wellness problem in this profession. This situation, which is not new, brings a sadness of heart that begs for open discussion. As a profession, we must do more to understand this agonizing problem and to develop the solutions needed to help those of us, who are affected. I am particularly happy to see that our current class of Future Leaders has embraced this topic and is helping AVMA to spread awareness.

6. AVMA must do a much better job of member outreach and communications and we certainly need to listen more carefully to what our rank and file members have to say. However, you our members must also understand that this is your Association and it is the responsibility of every member to keep an eye on what AVMA is doing. If you have questions or concerns, speak with your representatives in the House or on the Board. By the way, IMHO, the single most important function that the HOD can fill is to serve as a communications conduit to and from your constituents – this Association must find ways to help you better accomplish this.
5. During banquets and other meals, it is best not to ask what’s on the plate, just eat it and smile – and that holds true whether you are in China, Thailand, or Texas.

4. Personal hygiene is not a high priority for many airline passengers. Some people will wear flip-flops anywhere/anytime.

3. In order to keep a positive perspective on life and its happenings, you have to always keep a sense of humor and definitely don’t take yourself too seriously.

2. The members of AVMA and our profession comprise a community and for any community, especially one as small as ours, to prosper, thrive, grow, and endure, we must realize that success is based upon the relationships we create, the bonds we form with one another, and our desire to work together for the greater good. Further, successful relationships depend upon our creating trust and trust depends upon keeping one’s word and treating people with respect and openness. Without trust, we have nothing.

1. Our veterinary medical profession is at a crossroads. We find ourselves at a convergence of professional and societal challenges, in terms of veterinary economics, veterinary education, and professional engagement.
No matter how you look at it, it is important for those of us who serve the AVMA to have the information and wisdom to make critical decisions and the fortitude to take those actions required to meet today’s challenges and to provide for the needs of our members, now and into the future.

I have also noticed during my presidency, that there are some people who seem to thrive on being negative, there are those that seem to enjoy stoking the flames of discord and those who want to tear down what others have built – I give them little credence. While open debate is both good and appropriate and should be encouraged, we must never allow our discussions to divide us, thereby turning AVMA into a dysfunctional Association.

I steadfastly believe that this is still the greatest profession, and that our best days are ahead of us.

Since we are not far from Concord, Massachusetts and Walden Pond, I want to leave you with a quote from philosopher Henry David Thoreau, whose simple words have profound implications. Thoreau said, “What lies behind us and what lies ahead of us are tiny matters, compared to what lives within us.”

Thank you to…AVMA Staff – Predecessors – BOD – HOD – Business Partners/Associates – Family
Thank you for the opportunity to have been able to serve as your president!

Now since you’ve been such a great audience, I want to give you a Bonus Point - The world’s best martini is made by Raymond at the Hilton, Miami airport, and the worst by the bartender at TGI Friday’s in Beijing.