This is the 100th issue of GEARS Magazine; the official publication of the Automatic Transmission Rebuilders Association (ATRA). It spans more than a decade, and the evolution of the magazine in many ways mirrors the changes within the industry itself.

For the majority of those 100 issues, it’s been my privilege to have written a great number of articles, as well as edit what sometimes seemed to be a continuous stream of copy, that made its way into print. I’m particularly amazed by that fact, since I’ve never even pretended to know a blessed thing about transmissions. On many an occasion, when interviewing one of the many successful (and invariably colorful) people in the industry, I would simply confess my technical ignorance at the very beginning of our talk. Without exception, when the conversation turned technical, I was spoon-fed the information I needed to know, without being made to feel like the uninformed neophyte I obviously was. To me, few other indicators show the level of class and character typically exhibited by “The Good Guys” in this association.

I began writing for GEARS over 10 years ago as a personal favor to then-managing editor Cheryl Nicholson. Admittedly, I struggled with the concept of writing for a publication when I knew nothing of its core product. Fortunately, that’s not what Cheryl wanted.

Cheryl knew I had been writing professionally for awhile (in a different genre), and had integrated some of my writing with my practice as a psychotherapist. In addition to working with individuals, I was also working in the area of organizational psychology.

Cheryl asked that I write management pieces based on concepts of organizational psychology, industry profiles of people and businesses, human-interest pieces, and articles that address common personal and organizational problems. It was a wide range of...
assignments, and for a time, included a fictional series about – imagine this – a family-owned transmission business with all their trials and tribulations. What it all did was introduce me to a world of people I would never have otherwise known; a serendipitous event that has been a very interesting journey.

Just as the transmission industry has changed, so has GEARS. Cheryl was the guiding force that shaped a newsletter into an international trade magazine, and, along with Frank Pasley, established an advertising base willing to take a chance on a fledgling trade journal. In my estimation, those businesses that purchased ad space in the early issues of the magazine made a tremendous investment in not just the future of GEARS, but in the industry as well.

A few years back Rodger Bland took over the helm as Managing Editor of GEARS, and Dennis Madden became Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of ATRA. There was a re-dedication among those at GEARS to better define what it was that association members and readers of the magazine needed to know … even when and if they weren’t aware they needed it. Frequent surveys told us what readers needed and wanted to hear, and gave us a “report card” of sorts. We redoubled our effort to bring the readership the best in technical and management information we could produce.

On occasion, we tackled subjects that we knew would be a bit on the prickly side – but sometimes the information we need to hear the most, is the information we want to hear the least. By all indications, our efforts have been successful. The magazine as a product – layout, text, graphics and balance of contents (thanks in large part to Jeanette Troub and Julia Garcia) – has been used by the publishing house as a sample of the type of product they are capable of creating. The content of GEARS has garnered – prestigious International Automotive Media Awards (IAMA) – Gold, Silver, and Bronze medallions – for both technical and management articles in just the past two years alone. No other magazine in GEARS’ class is even close to that level of international recognition.

Still, even with that level of peer recognition, we haven’t lost focus on what we consider to be our primary mission: bringing timely, usable and informative literature to our readers. To keep the necessary channels of communication open between readers and the magazine, GEARS, including an electronic library of past issues, is readily accessible through ATRAOnline. Authors whose work frequently appears in GEARS are also available for contact by e-mail or a phone call to the International Business Office (IBO).

No one at GEARS is content to rest on our collective laurels, or to think even for a moment that we’re as good as we can get. We intend to work hard to bring you what you need, when you need it. We also intend to continue to serve as a tool that invites and initiates discussion on any number of pertinent topics. All we need is your help to make it happen. Because if you’re a member of ATRA, GEARS is your voice.

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