

2

1995 TWA Membership Application

The Ombudsman

A S S O C I A T I O N

5521 Greenville Avenue, Suite 104-265, Dallas, Texas 75206

(214) 553-0043

February 10, 1995

Dear Fellow Ombudsman,

From the very first days of The Ombudsman Association in 1985, we have been dedicated to the highest standards of conduct. Two years after our incorporation, we published a handbook which became the standard text for our profession. In 1991 The Ombudsman Association developed the first formal training program for the new ombudsman, Ombudsman 101. Today we are offering this program twice a year, and have added Ombudsman 202 and 303. Our Newsletter and Bulletin provide important information about the profession on a regular basis.

Our profession has become highly visible. The result of all this is the need to provide consistency to how we practice. Confidentiality and neutrality -- things we used to take for granted -- are being challenged, in some cases by our own management. Some of us have already been to court, others are facing subpoenas as I write.

Your Board of Directors feels strongly that our first line of defense is to persuade legislatures in the United States to pass shield laws protecting us from those who would challenge the confidentiality of the Ombudsman office. This is a far more productive use of our organizational resources than having to fight individual court case after case. As I mentioned in an earlier letter, we have joined forces with other Ombuds associations to pursue this.

The key to this campaign will be how legislatures perceive our profession. If they see a group of people who practice consistently, who adhere to a code of ethics and conduct, then we have a chance to gain support for protection. But if they see a profession that has no defined approach, no uniform standards of practice, the likely question will be -- "What is an ombudsman?" "How can we grant privilege when there are so many different species?"

We at TOA have to step up to our share of this issue. It is important that TOA's members:

- Strictly adhere to our Code of Ethics
- Make confidentiality and neutrality the cornerstone of our practice
- Not hold other functions that would compromise -- or be perceived to compromise -- the Ombudsman profession

A very large percentage of our present membership meet these criteria. There is no reason, however, for present members who do not meet these criteria, to lose the networking and benefits of The Ombudsman Association. We have created a new level of membership -- Associate -- and we invite those who do not practice to Code to become Associates of the organization. We ask only that you support and affirm the Code of Ethics as it pertains to practicing ombuds.

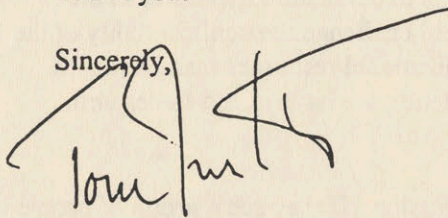
If you have been a member and now qualify as an associate, you will hardly see a difference. Members and Associates will receive all newsletters and bulletins, and the handbook when they join. They will be eligible for Ombuds 101 and 202 training. Associates will not be eligible to attend 303 and they will not receive limited financial support from TOA in the event of a subpoena. In the latter case, if they are not practicing to Code, this should not be an issue.

We want to retain all of our former members, either as members or associates. We value your contributions and your friendship. Please help us to determine your role by completing and returning the enclosed application. We encourage you to answer all questions candidly and accurately.

I look forward to seeing you in New Orleans.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Furtado", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right above the name.

Thomas Furtado
President, The Ombudsman Association

Enclosure (1)



Department of Distinctive Collections
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
77 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139-4307

libraries.mit.edu



The remaining contents of this folder have been redacted.

If you would like to see the full folder, please email the

Department of Distinctive Collections at

distinctive-collections@mit.edu