

English and Theater

By Dennis Odlum, CMA, CFM



Dennis Odlum, CMA, CFM, is the accounting director of The Connection, Inc., an NFP agency in Middletown, Conn.; president of IMA's Hartford Chapter; and a member of the Stuart Cameron McLeod Society (SCMS). You can reach him at dodlum@theconnectioninc.org.

Accounting will be in his future was prophetically part of my high school yearbook profile. I also remember why it was there. As a senior, I still had absolutely no idea of a career path—none. A trip to the guidance office solved that problem. Browsing through the career brochures, I saw “accounting” first, nicely situated before “actuary” and “acupuncturist,” so I had my yearbook career lined up.

Off to the University of Connecticut I went and quickly forgot about paragraph 1. I selected English as a major and theater as a minor. After two years of reading, acting in, and directing Tennessee Williams plays, I took an accounting course as an elective and shortly after weighed the pros and cons of being an unemployed actor in New York City, waiting on tables, or pursuing my true career—“*accounting will be in his future.*”

Interrupted by active duty in the U.S. Army, I eventually finished college with two bachelor degrees, one in finance and one in accounting. In 1985, while I was working as a cost accountant, two mentors, Robert Lowery, a member of the Hartford Chapter, and Vern Stockman, a member of the Waterbury Chapter, introduced me to IMA®. Two or three of us (all non-IMA members) would alternate going to either chapter's meetings. I joined IMA in 1993, affiliating with the Hartford Chapter because that made the most sense geographically and socially because I usually drifted to its meetings and was familiar with many more of its members.

Then I earned the CMA® in 1998 and the CFM in 2007. I am really proud of the CFM. I took the exam December 31, 2007, the last day it was offered—a true meaning of pass or fail! Both certifications have served me well, and I take the responsibility of keeping them current very seriously.

I became a member of the Hartford Chapter's board of directors in 2004 and was elected president in 2009. Although very little is the result of the president's initiatives, I am very proud of the chapter because after a ninth-place finish in the Stephenson Division in 2009, it moved up to seventh place in 2010. This is by far an entire chapter award.

Chapter meetings, council meetings and conferences, and the Annual Conference are my outlet to talk shop about debits, credits, retained earnings, net book value, accruals and deferrals—topics that usually solicit a great big “Huh?” from people in the other half of our lives. The five Annual Conferences I've attended (Nashville, Boston, Las Vegas, Phoenix, and Orlando) were a treasure chest of knowledge, friendship making, networking, esprit de corps, and just good fun. The North East Regional Council conducts its own fall conference in New England on a much smaller scale but with always the same outcome: knowledge, friends, and fun.

Attending a variety of IMA functions and serving on my chapter and council board of directors has been a rewarding, enjoyable, and fulfilling way to supplement my accounting career. Yes, accounting was definitely in my future! **SF**