

MEMBER PROFILE: Ed Kliegman

The world of accounting has changed over the past 75 years. For Ed Kliegman, he has not only seen these changes but he has gone around the world and made these changes as well.

Ed is a founding partner of Marcum & Kliegman, CPAs (now Marcum LLP). Upon graduating from City College of New York in 1946, he took a junior accounting position with a three-man CPA firm. The three partners covered the accounting spectrum, so he was able to learn how CPAs developed a practice. One partner had small, neighborhood clients for whom he did write-ups, the second partner had a mixture of small to medium sized clients who occasionally required audits and consulting, and the leading partner's clients included public companies that required SEC audits. Ed described the senior partner as "an exacting taskmaster" who demanded perfection in one's work, but "I enjoyed working with him."

The 1940s and 1950s were fascinating times for the CPA profession, recalled Ed. "The 'Big Eight' and the AICPA were the profession. There was little recognition of the flood of newly minted CPAs who, having served their apprenticeships, opted to start a practice of their own. These CPAs grew in numbers and as the population in New York City boomed, people started to move eastward towards Long Island, which was fast becoming the center of growth. These small practices were ordained to follow the rules and regulations that applied to public companies and the Big Eight.

As is the case with starting a new practice, CPAs accept whatever clients they can get. As the practice grows, they can become more selective and perhaps develop a specialty, and that was the case at M&K. "We had a wide variety of clients, everything from write-ups to SEC audits," Ed said. "Our principal goal was to help the client develop their full potential and learn how to run a successful business. We did a lot of long-range planning for our clients and ourselves, as well."

But during those days, firms grew very slowly. "Advertising was forbidden, as were marketing and soliciting," Ed said. "All you were allowed to do was accept referrals. So we tried to become known, joined organizations and networked."

In November 1952, Ed became a member of the New York State Society of CPAs (NYSSCPA) and the Nassau Chapter the following year, when it was chartered. "It was an exciting experience to be the first to be part of a new organization, participate in its growth and having the opportunity to meet other practicing CPAs, to learn how and what they were doing to build and develop business and to be able to discuss problems of practice with others in the same situation," he said.

Ed is currently active with the National Conference of CPA Practitioners (NCCPAP) and is an active member of the NYSSCPA and AICPA. He is a member and past chairman of the NYSSCPA Small Practice Management Committee and was a member and chairman of NYSSCPA's Furtherance Committee until it was dissolved. In 2005, he developed a Continuity of Practice Program for the NYSSCPA and NCCPAP.

In 1979, he organized and founded the Nassau/Suffolk Chapter of the NCCPAP and was elected its first president. Under his leadership, he developed a membership of over 500 CPA firms. In 1987, he was elected president of the national organization.

Within the community, Ed served as president of Temple Judea in Massapequa and a member of its board of directors. He was also the first CPA to be elected

trustee of the Village of Massapequa Park.

In 1991, Ed traveled to Russia to speak to accountants and business professionals about American business practices. He was invited to Leningrad in March of that year to speak to Russian entrepreneurs, directors of collectives and cooperatives and government officials on the subject of American business methods, procedures and the profit motive. Eight months later, he conducted seminars in St. Petersburg for accountants of joint ventures in Russia and focused on American business methods and reporting standards for financial statements, projections, cost controls and profitability.

Recognizing the potential for privatization and realizing the need for western style accounting in the new Russian economy, Ed Kliegman established the first privately held accounting firm in St. Petersburg. The International Consulting, Production and Accounting Corp. (ICPA) has grown to be one of the largest, most respected accounting firms in the area. He also conducted seminars in Estonia and the Ukraine.

In addition to being a CPA and a lecturer, Ed is a prolific writer on the state of the accounting profession. He has been published in Accounting Today, The Journal of Accountancy, The CPA Journal, The Practical Accountant and other publications. He has written 2 books: It's Been Fun, an autobiographical travelogue describing his family and travels around the world, and A Leadership Manual...for Presidents Who Want to Change the Future. He is also a consultant to accounting firms that require assistance in developing and growing their practices.

During his 40 years of leadership at Marcum & Kliegman, he implemented standards and procedures in the practice and provided a proper atmosphere for succession so that there was a smooth leadership transition after his retirement. The firm continues to thrive and has become one of the leading firms of the CPA profession.

Throughout his career, Ed has championed the cause of the small and medium-sized accounting practices, including sole practitioners. He has been in the forefront of events and changes in the profession and has written, lectured and conducted seminars to encourage others to practice public accounting in a manner that would bring honor and integrity to the profession.

"In practice, we believed it was vital to our growth to constantly find new and better ways to improve our procedures in the office and for clients," Ed said. "When new products were introduced, we examined them and usually got them. In 1960, when the first small computers came out, we got one. Colleagues thought we were nuts. We countered by indicating that we would be more efficient, give our clients better service and teach them to look to the future in their operations."

