



# Richard Bloch—A Class Act

MPMA’s executive director draws rave reviews.

BY JERRY KATZ, DPM

*Act I, Scene 1*

*Setting:* (Sheraton Hotel-Columbia, Maryland. It is early evening and a cold, whistling wind is blowing. Sheets of rain are racing through the night, biting at any and all exposed flesh. The distant rumbling of thunder is heard. JERRY KATZ, DPM, the quite handsome, president emeritus MPMA, enters a well-lit corridor. RICHARD BLOCH, ESQ, executive director extraordinaire, stands amid a throng of podiatrists as he tells a joke. JERRY, whisking rain off his dark grey topcoat has a convivial expression on his face. He walks leisurely towards the corridor. RICHARD lifts his head as he breaks away from the crowd of member podiatrists. They laugh at his parting quip.)



Richard Bloch

RICHARD (with an air of mystery)  
Dr. Katz, good evening.

JERRY  
Yes it is, Richard, how are you?

RICHARD  
Er... well. When you have a moment... I have an important issue to discuss with you. (beat.) Please see me at your convenience.

JERRY  
(a quizzical look replaces JERRY’S aforementioned bright demeanor)

RICHARD  
(sotto voce) No one can know.

JERRY  
(now with a look of dread) Aaah, OK, what’s up?

RICHARD  
Later. (looks over his shoulder) Not here, not now. (Richard hastily departs exit stage right)

JERRY  
(voiceover, representing internal thought) What’s happened? Who has died? What am I to be charged with?

(JERRY now approaches the bar, addressing the BARTENDER)

JERRY  
Vodka tonic please...No, make that a vodka on the rocks. (beat.)

Actually, I’ll take it neat. (while imbibing his drink and speaking disconcertingly with fellow ASSOCIATION MEMBERS, JERRY’S voice comes from off stage in a soliloquy of inner thoughts)

JERRY  
No pending malpractice litigation, check. No skeletons in closet... check. Ankle law finally passes, check. No further perseverance necessary. (fortified by this knowledge, JERRY catches sight of RICHARD across the room. RICHARD touches his forefinger to nose in the traditional high sign, a gesture signifying danger, warning, or even approval. He nods his head over to a vestibule leading to a cavernous meeting room. They enter together, RICHARD, shutting the enormous wood paneled doors behind them. The closing doors make an ominous echoing bang resounding off the walls)

RICHARD  
Let me begin by saying you don’t have to do this... This must be kept in the strictest confidence.

JERRY  
(voice over) What could it possibly

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bly be? Does he know of my former work in NYC? He can't; besides, I haven't done that type of work in ages.

RICHARD

I could ask anyone of a multitude of others. You could say no to this and I know I can get someone to step up.

JERRY

Well, with that flattering introduction, who could say no? What is the request?

RICHARD

I am to be inducted into the *PM* Podiatry Hall of Fame. I would like you to write my induction article.

JERRY

(with an exasperated sigh of relief) Richard, what could I possibly say except it is my honor?

*END SCENE I*

Now to some this may be thought of as an anti-climactic ending to such a prolonged and pedantic beginning. However, to those who know Mr. Bloch, the lead-up and narration is half the fun. Richard is—if anything—a raconteur. He never flinches from recounting a story often told

BA in Public Affairs. He later went on to attend the University of Maryland, where he earned his juris doctor degree. He became a partner at Anderson, Coe, and King after four years of dedicated work. This was not to be a long drawn-out relationship as he decided to venture out on his own, as his individualistic lifestyle would

Richard has been a fixture of the Maryland Podiatric Medical Association (MPMA) for 35 years. When I refer to him as a fixture, I mean a stalwart ally, and staunch supporter playing roles of both mentor and cheerleader to a bevy of society presidents and executive committee members. He has been General Counsel to

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**Richard has fought our conflicts without reservation or compunction; it is always a labor of love.**

**He has been a proponent for the future and well-being of the state of Maryland and its podiatrists.—Katz**

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dictate. Richard started the firm of Shiling and Bloch where he still enjoys practicing general law, including specialization in health law as well as representation of healthcare practitioners before the various Maryland Boards of Examiners.

Richard balances his family life, hobbies, and work with the skill of any accomplished executive. He is an avid tennis player with a competitive weekly game of doubles. He normally plays his cards close to the vest in his poker game. However, his poker face cannot hide the affection when speaking of his wife Carol, their daughters Karen and Allison

the MPMA for over 35 years, with 18 of them as Executive Director.

For those of us who are privileged to know Mr. Bloch, he is not a man of few words. Yes, verbose he may be, except when it comes to singing his own praises—he has no traces of braggadocio. I literally had to fight tooth and nail to get some of the information located herein. As one can surmise, Richard has been around for much of the transformation of modern day podiatry in Maryland.

In 1982, he was present for the granting of hospital privileges to podiatrists. In 1997, he served as general counsel and executive director to expand the scope of podiatry to include more complex rear foot surgeries, specifically the arthrodesis of two or more tarsal bones, tarsal osteotomies, and the surgical treatment of the ankle, with the exception of acute ankle fractures. Yes, what is a non-acute ankle fracture? A cute ankle fracture? But, I digress.

In 2005, he once again led the fight to expand the scope of practice to include structures that attach to the foot and soft tissue procedures to the mid-calf. Richard got to serve the coup de grace this past year, after an arduous four-year battle. He led the fight against a vicious orthopedic opponent. He was helped with the aid of his executive committee and legislative advocates to pass legislature to remove the stipulation of “non-acute” from our scope of practice in

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with robust use of his vast knowledge.

I first met Richard when I was a resident some 25 years ago. I remember him possessing a frenetic—but directed—energy which was palpable as he discussed one of his favorite subjects: how to advance podiatry in Maryland. His intensity has not abated with time; in fact, due to our recent battles, it seems to have intensified.

Richard was born and has lived the majority of his life in the Chesapeake Bay region of Maryland. He began his academic career at George Washington University, receiving his

and respective husbands, Russell and Kevin. And there is no lack of pride when discussing his and his wife's grandchildren: Madison, Olivia, Eli and Ian. Many a time, he has shown or emailed pictures of them usually on his way to New York or L.A. for a visit. He is both bicoastal and blessed. You can hear him “kvell” (rejoice with pride) when announcing an upcoming trip to see his grandchildren. He embraces his family life and is capable of seamlessly blending all aspects of his lifestyle, a lesson from which we all can learn something.



*Richard Bloch (from page 152)*

the treatment of ankle fractures. To some this may seem trivial minutiae; however, this was a sticking point in regard to providing care in an acute setting. It was a grey area which needed clarification and a conflict he did not shy away from.

I was privileged to watch Richard work and see firsthand his capabilities. He is equally at ease speaking to Senators in the Hart building, or to department chairs in our prestigious hospital institutions, or even trading jokes in any one of his innumerable dialects at a hosted society dinner. Richard has fought our conflicts without reservation or compunction; it is always a labor of love. He has been a proponent for the future and well-being of the state of Maryland and its podiatrists. He has done this with respect to the wants and wishes of both his current constituency as well as incoming and future podiatrists who have benefited from our law changes. In fact, Richard always has the future of podiatry in view.

Alas, this play leaves no rest for

been sounding the alarm, knocking on any and all doors to push the initiative. He is a daunting opponent and I am proud to be a colleague in arms with him. There is no more

administrative, legal, and political activities of the association, for which the podiatric profession in the State of Maryland has greatly benefited. Nationally, he has been a significant influence and role

**Richard has played a major role in the administrative, legal, and political activities of the association, for which the podiatric profession in the State of Maryland has greatly benefited.—Taubman**

deserving person to be inducted into the *PM Podiatry Hall of Fame*.

The following are some tributes from Richard's friends and colleagues:

**Glenn B. Gastwirth, DPM, Executive Director & CEO, American Podiatric Medical Association**

Congratulations on being inducted into the *Podiatry Management Hall of Fame*. It is a great honor to be recognized by your peers and colleagues for the contributions that you have made

model to other state association executives within the ASPME organization. No matter what issue faces our great profession, Richard's opinion is always sought out and respected. His engaging personality and great sense of humor only add to the many attributes he possesses. Thank you, Richard, for all your contributions and friendship.

I was the President of MPMA when we hired him as Executive Director. Richard (and his partner Reuben) had long since represented MPMA both legally and as a lobbyist in Annapolis. We decided to let our then Executive Director go, and I turned to Richard to see if he would consider being our ED. He accepted enthusiastically (or at least that is how I am choosing to remember it!). The hiring of Richard has coincided with four different expansions to our scope of practice. Happenstance? I think not! Congratulations, Richard, on this well-deserved honor!

**Your leadership of the Maryland Podiatric Medical Association, and support of APMA's efforts to advance and advocate for the profession of podiatric medicine are noteworthy and greatly appreciated.—Gastwirth**

the weary. And fortunately for the state of Maryland, Richard has no design on retiring. Maryland is a waiver state—the only state with an all-payer system of hospital finance, which is overseen by the Health Services Cost Review Commission (HSCRC). This negates direct funding to residency programs. If this seems confusing, Richard is probably only one of three people in the state who can explain it succinctly and concisely while actually understanding what they're talking about. The result, Maryland hasn't a single non-VA residency program in a state which had upwards of twenty positions at one time. With his presidents and executive committee in tow, Richard has

in the course of a lifetime. Your leadership of the Maryland Podiatric Medical Association, and support of APMA's efforts to advance and advocate for the profession of podiatric medicine are noteworthy and greatly appreciated. I wish you the very best, and thank you again for your many and varied contributions to our profession.

**Ross E. Taubman, DPM, President and Chief Medical Officer PICA**

Congratulations to Richard on a terrific and well-deserved honor. I have had the pleasure of knowing Richard personally for over 50 years and professionally for the past 35 years. As Executive Director of the MPMA, he has played a major role in the admin-

**Kenneth L. Hatch, DPM**

I first met Private Rich Bloch September, 1968. We both had joined the USAR in lieu of the "real" Army. We went together in 1969 to Fort Dix, New Jersey for basic training. Rich was a law student at Maryland, and I was an undergrad at Towson after leaving Maryland Pharmacy School at Maryland. We went our separate ways; me to podiatry school in Philadelphia and Rich into practice as an attorney. About ten years later, we again crossed paths while Rich was working with the late Reuben Schilling, the lobbyist for the Maryland Podiatric Medical Association,

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Richard Bloch (from page 153)

who was Rich's partner for many years. Among some of the more memorable victories was our hospital

knowing Richard Bloch for about two decades. While both Richard and I are both quick to address issues brought up at our common meetings, Richard's answer is usu-

**Craig Friedman, DPM, Past President, Maryland Podiatric Medical Association**

The Maryland Podiatric Medical Association has earned a reputation as one of the most successful podiatric organizations in the country. The MPMA is strong, financially sound, and has developed many highly accomplished local and national podiatric leaders. MPMA enjoys an excellent relationship with many of Maryland's most prominent political leaders and lobbyists, and an incredible record of legislative successes. And guiding MPMA for years is one of the finest podiatric association executive directors in the country, Richard Bloch. He has worked diligently to keep MPMA a stable and viable resource for all of Maryland's podiatrists.

Richard's years of service to MPMA, unquestionable loyalty to the podiatric profession, and legal exper-

**Mr. Bloch has been indispensable not only to the MPMA but to the podiatric profession as a whole.—Leone**

bylaws change bill that opened the door for hospital privileges.

**Robin Shavitz, Chief Operating Officer, Government Relations Division, Alexander and Cleaver**

Congratulations on receiving this honor. It is richly deserved. I don't know anyone who has worked so hard and consistently and effectively for the podiatrists of Maryland. Please note that I didn't say MPMA. All podiatrists, whether they are dues-paying members or not, have benefited from your consistent efforts to improve the environment for podiatrists here. I have known you for a very long time and worked at your side to help pass laws and regulations that were beneficial for the profession we love to serve.

ally right. He analyzes problems not only in the light of current challenges, but with a view to the secondary and tertiary implications of the challenge and the decision. While everyone claims to have the ear of the legislature, Richard really does. He is a constant presence at our executive meetings, the House of Delegates, and the important state

**Richard's years of service to MPMA, unquestionable loyalty to the podiatric profession, and legal expertise in health policy have also helped him to become a leader among the other podiatric association executive directors.—Friedman**

**Enzo Leone, DPM, President, MPMA**

I am so pleased to have this opportunity to speak in support of Mr. Richard Bloch. Mr. Bloch's relationship with the Maryland Podiatric Medical Association spans 35 years, with his serving as General Counsel to the MPMA since 1979 and as the Executive Director of the MPMA since 1996. Mr. Bloch has worked tirelessly towards the advancement of podiatry as if DPM followed his own name. Mr. Bloch's visionary and passionate dedication to the podiatric profession has been pivotal in the successes of the MPMA over the years. Mr. Bloch has been indispensable not only to the MPMA but to the podiatric profession as a whole.

**Michael Davis, Executive Director, Pennsylvania Podiatric Medical Association**

I have had the pleasure of

functions. His opinion is sought by his peers and, once given, is respected by all of the parties to the discussion.

He delivers his opinions with concise factual summaries and indisputable logic, and he does this with a smile and a touch of humor that diffuses tension and leaves all of the parties to the issue with the confidence that he is right and that he is not advancing any hidden motive or undisclosed interest. There is no one in our small profession whose friendship I value more than Richard Bloch. This is a wonderful award and one which is well-deserved by a man whose personality would prevent him from seeking praise but whose character is deserving of that same praise. I am honored to count Richard as a friend.

tise in health policy have also helped him to become a leader among the other podiatric association executive directors. A devoted husband, father, and grandfather with a great sense of humor, Richard is liked and respected by all who have worked with him. MPMA is fortunate to have Richard as their executive director. Richard's dedication to MPMA and every podiatrist make him a great choice and well-deserving as an inductee into the PM Podiatry Hall of Fame. **PM**



**Dr. Jerry Katz** is past president of the Maryland Podiatric Medical Association