A New Age of Technology

In 1981, IBM sold its first personal computer, and the world took another step toward an age in which technology would become a major part of our lives both at home and in the workplace. At a time when career and technical education would seem to be more needed, the association found itself fighting again to retain federal funding.

In May 1981, Gene Bottoms, AVA's executive director, reported that, "The phones rang all day long at AVA headquarters the day after President Reagan presented a budget that would rescind $200 million in funding for vocational education."

Bottoms expressed concern that the prevailing federal budget philosophy in 1982 could eliminate all vocational education. He had often focused attention on the unemployment problem and saw career and technical programs as realistic solutions. In 1983, when the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) replaced the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA), it represented a new era of collaboration between public institutions and the private sector in providing job training and related services. And, although previous programs provided training to disadvantaged individuals, none had focused on job training as JTPA did in reaching out to special populations.

The 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk*, found the nation's K-12 educational system badly in need of improvement in academic areas. This report, along with the Task Force on Education for Economic Growth's report, *Action for Excellence*, referred to the goal of excellence for all programs for all students, but no mention was made of preparation for work—even though the "new basics" it called for included competence in reading, interpreting and using information in the performance of a technical task.

Under the directorship of Gene Bottoms, however, AVA had already begun working toward program improvement and an emphasis on excellence in career and technical education. The association also worked with the National Association of State Directors of Vocational Education, the state vocational associations and the Center for Occupational Research and Development on a series of conferences on high technology.

Gene Bottoms became executive director of AVA in 1977 and saw the passage of the Carl D. Perkins Act of 1984 before his retirement in 1985.

The ACTE Family

When the American Vocational Association was formed in 1926, it had six sections: Agricultural Education, Commercial Education, Home Economics Education, Industrial Education, Part-time Schools and Vocational Rehabilitation. These sections grew into what are now the ACTE Divisions.

Today, Home Economics Education is the Family and Consumer Sciences Education Division. The Industrial Education Division changed its name to Trade and Industrial Education in 1968. The original Commercial Education section became Business and Office Education, then in 1948 was separated into two divisions: Business Education and Distributive Education. Distributive Education took its current name, Marketing Education, in 1985.

Technical Education became a division in 1968, followed by the Guidance Division and the Health Occupations Education Division in 1969. The New and Related Services Division was formed in 1968 for interest groups with too few members to form a division.

The Manpower Division was established in 1972, became Employment and Training in 1981, and then in 2001 became Adult Workforce Development. The Administration Division was established in 1973 and the Special Needs Division in 1981.

At the 75th Annual Convention in New Orleans, the Technical Education Division was merged into the Adult Workforce Development Division.

Today, there are 12 ACTE Divisions.

- **Administration**
- **Adult Workforce Development**
- **Agricultural Education**
- **Business Education**
- **Family and Consumer Sciences Education**
- **Guidance**
- **Health Occupations Education**
- **Marketing Education**
- **New and Related Services**
- **Special Needs**
- **Technology Education**
- **Trade and Industrial Education**

In addition to ACTE's 12 Divisions, there are five geographic regions covering all 50 states and the Bahamas. ACTE members automatically become members of the regions of their home states when they join the association.

ACTE's membership is made up of a diverse group of individuals from a broad geographic area. Its members are involved in a wide variety of career and technical subject areas. But they share common goals of providing professional opportunities for those involved in teaching career and technical education and providing the highest quality of education for their students.

An Expanded Perkins Act

In the early 1980s, Carl Perkins continued his fight for career and technical education, and as a result, he achieved the passage of a new bill by the 98th Congress. The legislation provided for modernization and program improvement in vocational education and addressed the needs of special populations by ensuring access to quality programs for "individuals who are disadvantaged, handicapped, entering nontraditional occupations for their sex, adults in need of training or retraining, single parents or homemakers, individuals with limited proficiency in English and individuals who are incarcerated."

Shortly after Perkins died in 1984, President Reagan signed the bill into law, and it was named the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act. His son, Chris Perkins, calls it "a fitting testament to a man who believed in the primacy of education and the dignity of work."

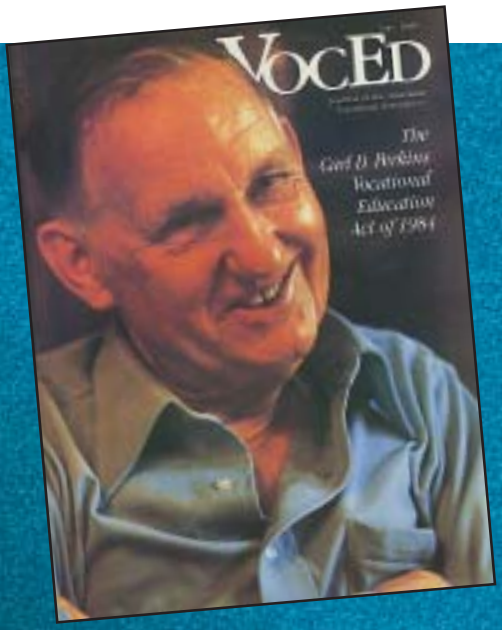
A Permanent Home

Today, the Association for Career and Technical Education is headquartered in Alexandria, Va., just across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C. The four-story brick building at 1410 King Street became the association's home in January 1986 and established a permanent presence for career and technical education in the nation's capital.

A building fund established in 1987 that was active until 1994 raised more than $600,000 to help pay the mortgage, and visitors who come to ACTE headquarters can see many plaques recognizing large state donations.

More Battles To Fight

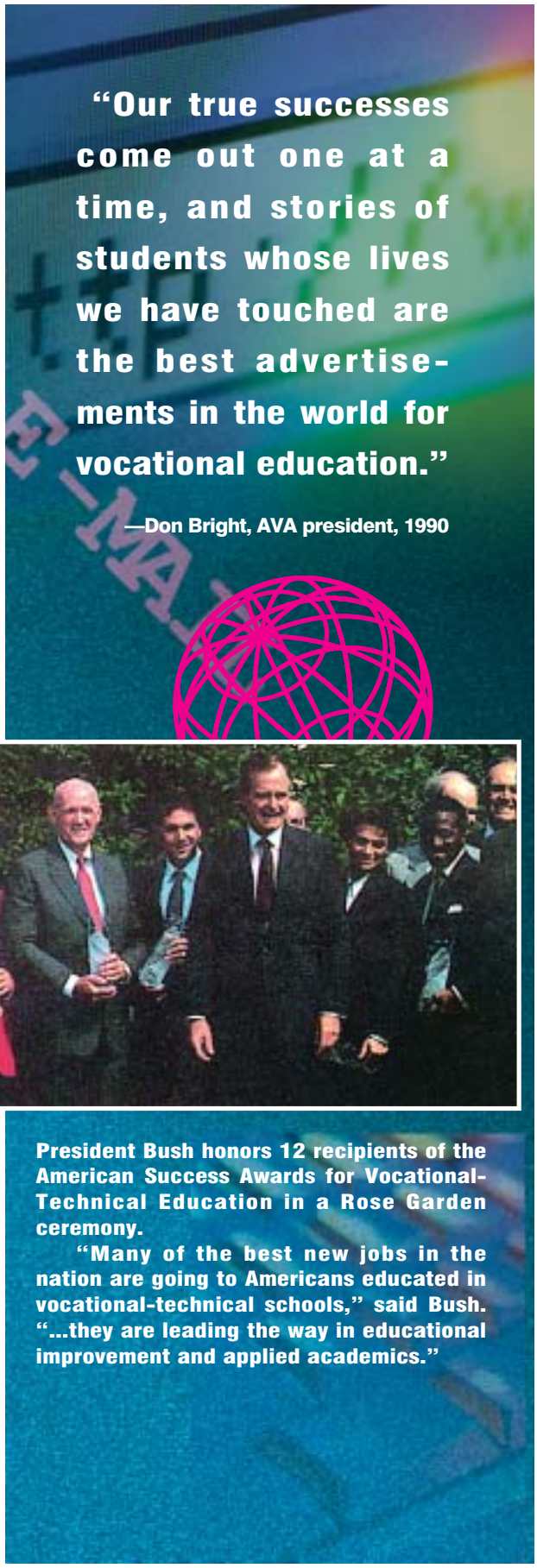
Among the difficult issues of the 1980s were unemployment, school dropouts, more welfare cases and higher crime rates. Career and technical education should have been seen as an important part of the strategy in dealing with these issues, but in 1987 the Reagan administration proposed cutting all new federal funding for vocational education in addition to a 50 percent cut in the appropriations that had already been approved. However, members of Congress rallied to our cause. Sen. Pete Domenici (R-N.M.) said, "When you give up on



Carl D. Perkins served in Congress for 36 years and devoted much of that time to working for vocational education. He wrote the bill that became the Vocational Education Act of 1963. The Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act became law in 1984, shortly after his death. Although it has been reauthorized several times since then, it still bears his name.

Executive Director Bret Lovejoy is joined by Board members (from left) Elizabeth Mowry-Harbstreit, Alice Karen Hite, Cynthia Lyon, Lyn Velle and Brenda Hurst in front of ACTE headquarters in Alexandria, Va.

After writing *The Neglected Majority*, Dale Parnell became known as the "father of tech prep."



President Bush honors 12 recipients of the American Success Awards for Vocational-Technical Education in a Rose Garden ceremony.

"Many of the best new jobs in the nation are going to Americans educated in vocational-technical schools," said Bush. "...they are leading the way in educational improvement and applied academics."

[vocational education programs], you also give up on people who are searching for a chance to do better and add to the economic power of our nation."

AVA continued its leadership role by developing a legislative proposal for reauthorization of Perkins. Through its mobilization of support and with testimony by AVA's president, Francis Tuttle, before the House Subcommittee on Appropriations and president-elect Edmunds before the corresponding Senate subcommittee, AVA helped secure a $30 million increase in funding for fiscal year 1988.

The association continued to work on public awareness of career and technical education with a newsletter from the AVA Public Information Network called *Image*. And when postsecondary vocational and technical institutes were barred from participation in the Bicentennial Campus program sponsored by the Commission on the Bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution, AVA intervened, and the exclusion was eliminated.

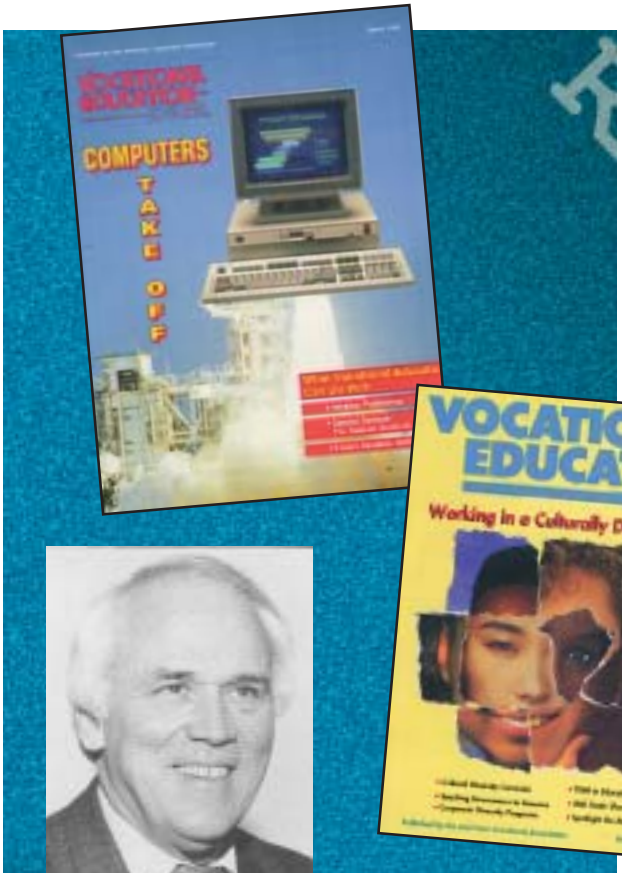
The field received some positive publicity in 1989, when *Fortune* magazine devoted five pages of its June 19 issue to an article titled, "The New, Improved Vocational School." Author Nancy Perry emphasized vocational education's role in alleviating skill shortages and dropout rates. "For industry, vocational education could be a godsend," Perry wrote. "Here's what vocational education can do: make academics more relevant, keep kids in school, encourage postsecondary education, provide jobs and retrain older workers."

1990 Legislation

On September 25, 1990, the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Act was signed into law by President George Bush with appropriations of $1.6 billion a year through 1995 for state and local programs that teach the "skill competencies necessary to work in a technologically advanced society."

In addition to amending and extending Perkins, the legislation initiated support for the concept known as tech prep—the cooperative arrangement that combines academic and technical courses at the secondary and postsecondary levels.

Also in 1990, President Bush signed the Americans with Disabilities Act barring discrimination against peo-



Charles H. Buzzell, AVA Executive Director, 1986-1994

President Bill Clinton signs the School-to-Work Opportunities Act.

ple with disabilities at work and school. When the major study on the status of vocational education by NAVE was concluded, it found that vocational education courses taken in high-skill occupations were growing and that vocational education was playing a major role in serving special populations.

Skills Needed

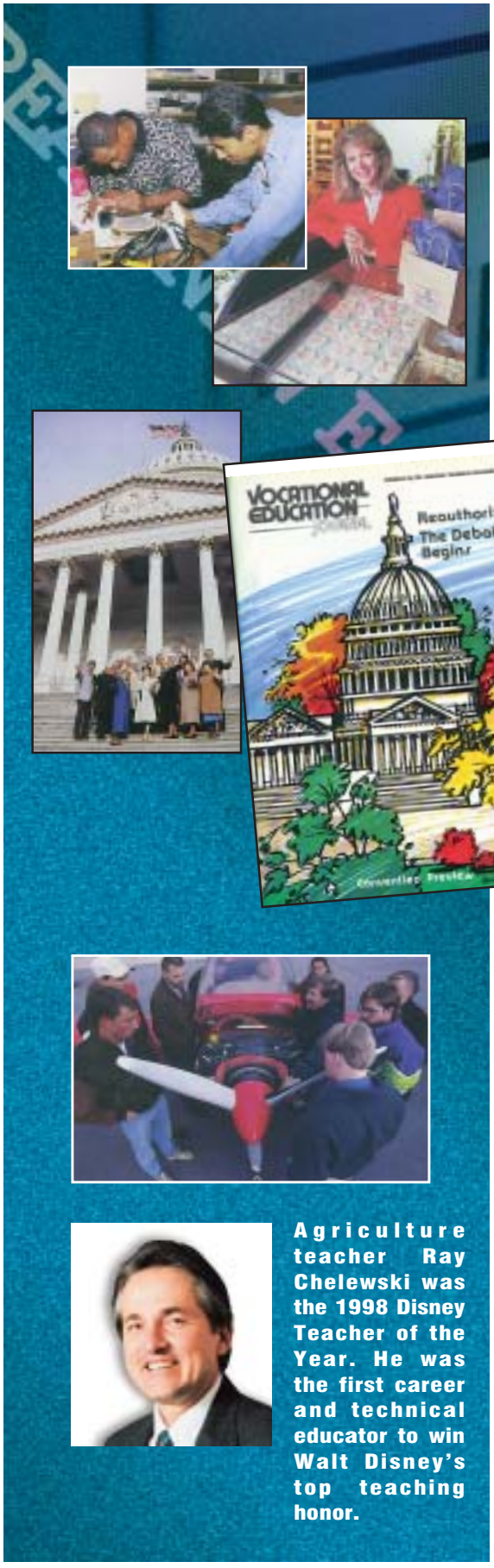
Two reports in the early 1990s emphasized the need for new skills in the high-tech workplace. *America's Choice: High Skills or Low Wages* outlined a plan for making Americans more competitive for high wages by increasing high skills. The Labor Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) issued a report, *Learning a Living: A Blueprint for High Performance*, which defined work-readiness skills and workplace competencies.

School-to-Work

The National School-to-Work Opportunities Act (NSTWOA) was signed into law in May 1994. Using seed money from JTPA and Perkins, it was designed to address the nation's serious skills shortage through partnerships between educators and employers.

The program components of School-to-Work included school-based learning, work-based learning and activities connecting the two. The internships and apprenticeships of school-to-work have long been aspects of career tech, so many career and technical educators were involved in school-to-career programs in their districts. And since the federal funding was only seed money, they are now working to maintain the programs.

President Bill Clinton's endorsement of the school-to-work concept dates back to his days as governor of Arkansas when his apprenticeship program was passed by the state legislature. In an article in the October 1991 issue of the *Vocational Education Journal*, Clinton wrote, "Today we are failing, miserably, our non-college-bound young people, because we don't have a real school-to-work system in America. We are laboring under the belief that our kids



Agriculture teacher Ray Chelewski was the 1998 Disney Teacher of the Year. He was the first career and technical educator to win Walt Disney's top teaching honor.

can get a high school education that is internationally competitive without working as hard as students in competitor nations."

As president, he continued his support when he called for the creation of a National Task Force on Preparing Youth for 21st Century College and Careers at the culmination of a three-day education conference on NSTWOA.

"School-to-Work helps students see the relevance of their studies for their futures, motivating them to attend classes and study hard, and has created thousands of new partnerships between businesses and schools," Clinton told the October 2001 conference.

A New Perkins

After four years of working on reauthorization of Perkins, Congress finally passed a new bill, which President Clinton signed into law on October 31, 1998. The legislation had been delayed numerous times while the higher education programs were being reauthorized and the nation's job training system was being reworked.

The new Perkins contained increased accountability with the need for states to adjust to new data collection and reporting requirements. There were also new funding formulas, with 85 percent of basic state grants distributed to local programs. Tech prep was strengthened through an emphasis on using technology in classroom instruction and the creation of a pilot program to open a number of tech prep learning sites at community colleges.

Nancy O'Brien, the AVA's assistant executive director for government relations, said that the new law met all of the association's highest priorities by giving career and technical education separate authorizing legislation, ensuring that educational authorities would oversee career and technical education, including a separate authorization for tech prep, and creating a 10 percent reserve of local funding that could serve rural or urban areas adversely affected by changes to the secondary within-state formula.

Our world was on the threshold of the new millennium, and it was time for vocational education to take a big step to prove that it would truly be education for the 21st century.