

THE CONGRESS LEGEND

EVERYONE AT THIS DINNER IS PART OF THE CONGRESS LEGEND THAT BEGAN MORE THAN FIFTY YEARS AGO.

PROFESSIONAL MEETINGS IN THE 1940s AND 1950s WERE PRIMITIVE AFFAIRS COMPARED TO THE MEETING YOU STAGED AS PRESIDENT OR THIS EVENT IN SAN ANTONIO.

THE NEED:

SOON AFTER WORLD WAR II THERE WAS AN ACCUMULATED MASS OF YOUNG NEUROSURGEONS THAT CRAVED THE COMPANY OF THEIR PEERS.

THEIR NEED WAS URGENT BECAUSE NEUROSURGEONS WERE SPREADING OUT IN COMMUNITIES THAT NEVER HAD A NEUROSURGEON BEFORE AND THEY NEEDED TO TALK WITH OTHER PROFESSIONALS THAT SPOKE THE SAME LANGUAGE.

TRAINING PROGRAMS WERE BULGING WITH VETERANS FINANCED BY THE GI BILL OF RIGHTS – NEW TRAINING PROGRAMS WERE PROLIFERATING – SOME NEUROSURGEONS HAD BEEN TRAINED IN THE ARMED FORCES – AND IT WAS STILL POSSIBLE TO LEARN NEUROSURGERY AS AN APPRENTICE.

THE EXISTING NEUROSURGICAL SOCIETIES WERE APPALLED BY THE NUMBER OF APPLICANTS FOR MEMBERSHIP.

THE LOCKOUT:

THESE EAGER NEWCOMERS FOUND THEMSELVES LOCKED OUT BY THEIR PEERS.

THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION WAS DOMINATED BY GENERALISTS AND THE AMERICAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS WAS DOMINATED BY GENERAL SURGEONS – NEITHER ORGANIZATION HAD DISCOVERED THE SURGICAL SPECIALTIES.

THE TWO NEUROLOGICAL SOCIETIES VIEWED NEUROSURGEONS AS A THREAT AND DID NOT HIDE THEIR HOSTILITY.

ONE OF THE OLDER NEUROSURGICAL SOCIETIES PROTECTED ITS MEMBERSHIP BY ACCEPTING ONLY NEUROSURGEONS AFFILIATED WITH AN ACADEMIC MEDICAL CENTER.

THE NEWEST SOCIETY CONSISTED OF A SMALL GROUP OF NEUROSURGEONS THAT OPERATED TRAVELING SEMINARS CONVENED AT THE SITES WHERE MEMBERS PRACTICED. THEY MADE THE SURPRISING DECISION TO FREEZE ITS MEMBERSHIP.

THAT BRINGS US TO THE HARVEY CUSHING SOCIETY THAT WE WERE ALL EAGER TO JOIN – BUT THERE WERE SOME PROBLEMS.

IN ORDER TO APPLY FOR MEMBERSHIP IT WAS NECESSARY TO BE BOARD CERTIFIED – IN ORDER TO APPLY FOR BOARD CERTIFICATION WE HAVE TO BE IN PRACTICE FOR TWO YEARS – THUS THREE OR FOUR YEARS ELAPSED BEFORE WE COULD JOIN.

NON-MEMBERS WERE NOT ENCOURAGED TO ATTEND THE HARVEY CUSHING SOCIETY MEETINGS – IF FACT NON-MEMBERS HAD TO BE APPROVED BY THE BOARD BEFORE AN INVITATION WAS EXTENDED.

WE WERE LOCKED OUT – AND WE TALKED ABOUT IT ESPECIALLY AT SESSIONS OF THE INTERURBAN NEUROSURGICAL SOCIETY.

THE INTERURBAN NEUROSURGICAL SOCIETY STORY:

CHICAGO BASED ADRIAN VERBRUGGEN AND HAROLD VORIS OPERATED AN ANNUAL MEETING AT THE CHICAGO UNIVERSITY CLUB.

ANY NEUROSURGEON LIVING NO FURTHER AWAY THAN AN OVERNIGHT TRAIN TRIP FROM CHICAGO COULD ATTEND.

THERE WERE NO OFFICERS, NO DUES, NO COMMITTEES AND NO PUBLICATIONS. IT WAS A MAILING LIST SOCIETY.

TWO TOPICS WERE DISCUSSED – THE MEETING LASTED ONLY ONE DAY – A SATURDAY – WE SHARED OUR PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES BOTH GOOD AND BAD – WE LOST VERY LITTLE TIME FROM OUR PRACTICE.

THE CONGRESS IDEA WAS GENERATED IN SMOKE FILLED ROOMS OF CHICAGO HOTELS DURING THE INTERURBAN NEUROSURGICAL SOCIETY WEEKENDS.

THE CONGRESS IDEA:

THE FOUNDERS POOLED THEIR EXPECTATIONS OF WHAT AN IDEAL PROFESSIONAL SOCIETY SHOULD BE AND THEN DESIGNED THE ORGANIZATION.

THE SCIENTIFIC PROGRAM:

IN THE 1940s AND 1950s SOCIETIES CANVASSED THEIR MEMBERS FOR PAPERS TO BE READ – THE RESULT WAS A HODGE-PODGE OF TOPICS WITHOUT THEME OR FOCUS.

THE CONGRESS ASSUMED CONTROL OF THE PROGRAM – SELECTING THE SUBJECTS WE WANTED TO LEARN MORE ABOUT AND THEN SEEKING OUT THE BEST AUTHORS TO MAKE PRESENTATIONS.

OUR PROGRAM BECAME FOCUSED AND RELEVANT TO THE DAILY PRACTICE OF NEUROSURGERY.

THE SPOUSE STORY:

WE OBSERVED THAT SPOUSES ARE AMONG THE MOST NEGLECTED MEMBERS OF THE NEUROSURGICAL TEAM – SO WE ENCOURAGED THEM TO TRAVEL WITH US TO THE ANNUAL MEETING.

OUR TARGET WAS TO ACHIEVE AN ATTENDANCE LEVEL OF 75% FOR SPOUSES AT THE ANNUAL MEETING – IT WAS ACHIEVED!

THIS MOVE MEANT FEWER LATE NIGHT STAG PARTIES FOR TIRED MEMBERS, MORE REST, MORE FUN AND LESS SPOUSE ISOLATION.

WE EVEN ENGAGED IN THE DANGEROUS PRACTICE OF DISCOURAGING STYLE SHOWS AND OTHER TRIVIA FOR SPOUSES IN FAVOR OF ART, HISTORY, LITERATURE AND OTHER INTELLECTUAL PURSUITS.

THE MEMBERSHIP STORY:

FIFTY YEARS AGO THERE WAS MUCH HOMELESSNESS AMONG NEUROSURGEONS. BESIDES THOSE WAITING TO TAKE BOARD EXAMINATIONS, THERE WERE NEUROSURGEONS TRAINED AS APPRENTICES, SOME WHO HAD REPEATEDLY FAILED BOARD EXAMINATIONS, A FEW WHO IGNORED THE BOARD IDEA, AND FOREIGN NEUROSURGEONS WHO DESIRED ASSOCIATION WITH AMERICAN COLLEAGUES.

WE WELCOMED ALL REPUTABLE NEUROSURGEONS TO ATTEND OUR ANNUAL MEETINGS AND BE CONSIDERED FOR MEMBERSHIP.

WE ANTICIPATED THAT OUR INCLUSION POLICY WOULD ONE DAY CAUSE THE CONGRESS TO BE THE LARGEST AND MOST SIGNIFICANT EDUCATIONAL FORCE IN OUR BUSINESS.

STARTING FROM A BASE OF 22 FOUNDING MEMBERS THE CONGRESS HAS GROWN IN FIFTY YEARS TO OVER 4000 MEMBERS.

PROTECTING OURSELVES:

WE RECOGNIZED THAT THE PERFECTIONISM THAT NEUROSURGERY REQUIRES OFTEN RESULTS IN OUR BEING CONVERTED INTO A WORKAHOLIC.

SO WE LIGHTENED THE PROGRAM BY SCHEDULING A HALF DAY OFF, INCLUDED RECREATIONAL EVENTS, AND PLANNED A POST MEETING TOUR TO SOME INTERESTING AND RELAXING PLACES.

THE MEETING STORY:

MEETINGS IN THE FORTIES AND FIFTIES WERE OFTEN IN DISARRAY DUE TO FAULTY EQUIPMENT, LACK OF PLANNING AND POOR MANAGEMENT.

THE CONGRESS PRODUCED A MEETING MANUAL AND FOLLOWED IT.

OUR ANNUAL MEETING ORGANIZATION, MANAGEMENT, AND STYLE CONTINUES TO BE THE MODEL OTHER SCIENTIFIC SOCIETIES STRIVE TO MATCH.

ATTENDANCE STORY:

A MEMBER WAS PLACED IN CHARGE OF EVERYTHING WE DID AT THE ANNUAL MEETING.

IN FACT, HERE WERE SO MANY MEMBERS DOING SO MANY THINGS THAT IT WAS EASY TO ACHIEVE OUR GOAL OF 75% MEMBER ATTENDANCE AT OUR ANNUAL MEETING.

AT THE ANNUAL MEETING IN MONTREAL (1996) THERE WERE 428 CONGRESSMEN SERVING ON SIXTY COMMITTEES IN ADDITION TO THE 23 OFFICERS AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS. THE CONGRESS QUALIFIES AS A "LEADERSHIP FACTORY"!

INTERNATIONAL SCOPE:

IT WAS NO ACCIDENT THAT THE FIRST THREE HONORED GUESTS WERE FROM SWEDEN, GREAT BRITAIN, AND CANADA.

WE WELCOMED ATTENDANCE AND MEMBERSHIP BY FOREIGN NEUROSURGEONS.

WE EXPECTED THAT ONE DAY OUR NAME WOULD BE CHANGED TO THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF NEUROLOGICAL SURGEONS.

THE WFNS STORY:

THE NAME CHANGE NEVER HAPPENED.

INSTEAD SEVERAL CONGRESS PAST PRESIDENTS WERE PART OF THE TEAM THAT ORGANIZED THE WORLD FEDERATION OF NEUROSURGICAL SOCIETIES.

PAST PRESIDENTS SERVED ON THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, EDITED THE BYLAWS, AND EVEN PROPOSED THE NAME THAT WAS ADOPTED – THE WORLD FEDERATION OF NEUROSURGICAL SOCIETIES.

CONGRESSMEN WERE CALLED ON TO ASSIST WITH THE MANAGEMENT OF THE WORLD FEDERATION AT ITS MEETINGS IN WASHINGTON (1961) AND IN NEW YORK (1969).

OUR FOREIGN COLLEAGUES ARE WELL ACQUAINTED WITH THE CONGRESS!

TELL THE SIR JEFFERY JEFFERSON STORY AND THE GEORGE PICAZA STORY!

INFILTRATION:

CONGRESSMEN SOON INFILTRATED THE HARVEY CUSHING SOCIETY.

IN THE EARLY DAYS OF THE CNS WE WERE NOT TRUSTED TO BE THE PRESIDENT, VICE PRESIDENT, OR SECRETARY.

BUT WE LEFT THE CONGRESS BRAND ON THE ARRANGEMENTS, SCIENTIFIC PROGRAM, PUBLIC RELATIONS AND MEMBERSHIP FUNCTIONS.

YOUR SPEAKER WAS CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE THAT CHANGED THE NAME FROM THE HARVEY CUSHING SOCIETY TO THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF NEUROLOGICAL SURGEONS.

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THAT COMMITTEE CONSUMMATED THE MARRIAGE OF THE CNS AND THE AANS BY DESIGNATING THE AANS AS THE SPOKESPERSON FOR NEUROSURGERY AND PLACING THE CNS IN THE LEAD POSITION FOR NEUROSURGICAL EDUCATION.

MEMBERS OF THE CONGRESS HAVE ENERGY AND IDEAS TO SPARE SO WE BECOME LEADERS IN MANY OTHER NATIONAL, STATE, REGIONAL, AND LOCAL MEDICAL SOCIETIES.

THE CONGRESS IS A SIGNIFICANT "LEADERSHIP FACTORY" FOR GLOBAL ORGANIZED MEDICINE!

PLANNED SPONTANEITY:

YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT AN ORGANIZATIONAL TECHNIC THAT SERVED US WELL IN THE EARLY DAYS OF THE CONGRESS – A TECHNIC WE CALLED "PLANNED SPONTANEITY".

WE APPOINTED ABOUT TEN MEMBERS AS SECRET RESPONDERS FOR EACH OF THE SCIENTIFIC SESSIONS.

THESE "SECRET AGENTS" WERE PROVIDED WITH A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE SPEAKERS, A BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR THE TOPICS TO BE PRESENTED, AND INSTRUCTIONS TO MOVE TO A FLOOR MICROPHONE AS SOON AS QUESTIONS WERE CALLED FOR – TO MAKE A COMMENT OR ASK A QUESTION.

THEY WERE TOLD TO FADE AS SOON AS NON-SECRET-AGENTS BEGAN TO GET INTO THE ACTION.

WE PRODUCED SOME EXCITING AND EXPLOSIVE SCIENTIFIC SESSIONS USING THE "PLANNED SPONTANEITY" TECHNIC.

YOU ARE THE FIRST TO KNOW THAT THIS SUBVERSIVE TECHNOLOGY WAS APPLIED TO SOME OF THE EARLY CONGRESS MEETINGS.

WE USED THE SAME IDEA FOR SOCIAL EVENTS – SIX COUPLES RECEIVED SECRET INSTRUCTIONS TO SEEK THE STRANGERS. THE NEWCOMERS, THE SHY ONES AND STIR THEM INTO THE CROWD

FEW MEMBERS KNEW WHY CONGRESS SOCIAL EVENTS WERE SO FRIENDLY AND DIFFERENT!

MEETING SITES:

THERE WAS A TREND IN THE FORTIES AND FIFTIES FOR PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES TO HOLD THEIR ANNUAL MEETING IN REMOTE PLACES LIKE FRENCH LICK SPRINGS, SANTE FE, AND HAWAII.

THESE SITES WERE BARRIERS FOR YOUNG NEUROSURGEONS – TRAVEL NIGHTMARES AND VERY EXPENSIVE. IT WAS AN EFFECTIVE MEANS OF CONTROLLING ATTENDANCE.

AS CHAIRMAN OF THE MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE OF THE HARVEY CUSHING SOCIETY IT WAS MY DUTY TO ATTEND BOARD MEETINGS.

AT ONE MEMORABLE MEETING TAHITI WAS PROPOSED AS THE SITE FOR THE NEXT ANNUAL MEETING.

ARGUMENT ONE: NO MEMBER OF THE GOVERNING BOARD HAD EVER BEEN THERE.

ARGUMENT TWO: IT IS SO HARD TO GET THERE AND SO EXPENSIVE THAT MAYBE ALL OF THOSE YOUNG TURKS MIGHT STAY HOME AND WE WOULD HAVE THE MEETING TO OURSELVES.

THE CONGRESS SCHEDULED ITS MEETINGS IN PLACES WITH EASY TRAVEL ACCESS AND WHERE NEUROSURGICAL RESIDENTS MIGHT ATTEND.

POSTERITY:

THOSE OF YOU WHO FOLLOWED THE FOUNDERS AND EARLY PRESIDENTS HAVE ADDED TO THE CONGRESS LEGEND BY MOVING THE ORGANIZATION TO HIGHER LEVELS OF ACHIEVEMENT YEAR AFTER YEAR.

WE WERE CONSCIOUS OF THE FACT THAT THE CONGRESS IS A GREAT ORGANIZATION, BUT YOU HAVE FAR EXCEEDED OUR EXPECTATIONS.

THE Y2K CHALLENGE:

SOMETHING SHOULD BE SAID ABOUT THE CHALLENGES OF THIS NEW CENTURY AND NEW MILLENNIUM.

WE ARE GRIPPED IN A HISTORIC STATE OF CHANGE AS SIGNIFICANT AS THE RENAISSANCE AND THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION (THAT JUST HAPPENED TO COINCIDE WITH A CHANGE OF CENTURY AND MILLENNIUM).

THERE IS DISENCHANTMENT WITH THE STATUS QUO. OUR CHERISHED SOCIAL STRUCTURES LIKE RELIGION, EDUCATION, GOVERNMENT, THE JUSTICE SYSTEM AND THE HEALTH SYSTEM ARE UNDER SIEGE. REFORMS ARE CALLED FOR!

WE ARE IMMERSSED IN A WORLD CULTURE, LIVE IN A WORLD ECONOMY, AND ARE EXPERIMENTING WITH WORLD GOVERNANCE.

POLITICAL CHANGES MAY BE IMMINENT!

THE CONGRESS OF NEUROLOGICAL SURGEONS AND ITS RELATED SCIENTIFIC ORGANIZATIONS ARE EXPECTED TO NEED CONTINUING FINE TUNING DURING THIS NEW CENTURY.

IN THE Y2K THERE IS AN EVEN LARGER CHALLENGE FACING CNS MEMBERS – TO ASSIST IN TRANSFORMING THE WHOLE HEALTH SYSTEM.

WE MIGHT START USING THE CONCEPT WE FOLLOWED FIFTY YEARS AGO WHEN WE FORMED THE CONGRESS – BY POOLING OUR EXPECTATIONS OF WHAT AN IDEAL HEALTH SYSTEM SHOULD LOOK LIKE FROM THE PROSPECTIVE THE PEOPLE WE SERVE – THE PUBLIC.

NEUROSURGEONS ARE CONDITIONED TO PERFORM DIFFICULT TASKS.

NO PROFESSIONALS ARE BETTER PREPARED THAN THE MEMBERS OF THE CONGRESS OF NEUROLOGICAL SURGEONS TO TRANSFORM THE HEALTH SYSTEM DURING THE NEXT DECADE OF THIS CENTURY!

HAPPY 50TH ANNIVERSARY!

GOOD LUCK IN THE NEW CENTURY!

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