

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.