

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS  
"AS I SEE IT"

In preparing for this presidential address of the 87th year of our Society I read every prior address that was available for the past twenty-five years and this in itself was an interesting exercise. It was fascinating to see how our Society has grown and matured. So many men much wiser and erudite than I, had preceded me. All of the golden words of wisdom seem to have been spoken. What was left for me to say? What could I possibly add that would be of interest? All of the past Presidents had very ably covered the progress of our Society and specialty, historically. All of the great men had been properly credited. Twenty-five years from now, would some future President read my address and what would he think of it? These thoughts kept going through my mind as I searched for some common theme that I might dwell on; something that perhaps would stimulate and not bore. I realized that I must not attach too much importance to my words since it was highly unlikely that they would be remembered as most words are written in the sands of time, disappearing quickly with the vagaries of the wind.

The more I thought about it, the more I realized that I had lived my professional life through the developmental years of our specialty. From 1899, when the American Proctologic Society was established in this country with Joseph Matthews as its first President to the mid 1950's our specialty, and that is synonymous with our Society, remained small and rather obscure. Our interest was primarily proctologic. A small group of proctologic surgeons kept the specialty together. Itinerant and questionable practitioners abounded and gave the specialty a poor

reputation. This began to change in the fifties and the past 30 years have seen tremendous advances in our field; colonoscopy, sphincter saving procedures, and ileoanal anastomoses to name just a few. These procedures have all been developed during my professional lifetime. They have increased the breath and scope of our field rather dramatically. Matching these new technological advancements has been our own personal development as a specialty; the establishment and final recognition of our Board, the change in requirements for certification, the introduction of our own journal, the change of our name, the increase in our stature and, with it, representation in the AMA and ACS. And, finally, we are slowly obtaining recognition from the University Medical Centers as they seek our members for their expertise. I have had the privilege to serve 2 years as a member of the Council of this Society, 5 years as its Secretary, and now 2 years as the President elect and President and I have also had the privilege to see these changes slowly come about. This became readily apparent to me as I interviewed applicants to our residency training program last summer and fall. These were not the occasionally marginal candidates that I had seen in the early seventies when I was honored to be on the Board. These candidates were all superbly qualified and all had excellent training. It was difficult to make a choice, with so many fine applicants. All, in due time, would eventually become certified in Colon and Rectal Surgery as well as general surgery. They would have, as we like to say "all the tickets" when they become Fellows of our Society.

It is to this group, those graduates of our residency training programs in the past 10-15 years that I would like to address my words, because it is this particular group, those in their third and fourth decades that will take over and cement and solidify the gains we have made.

We are thus entering, what I would like to refer to, as the maturation period of our Society and specialty. Now where do we go from here? Or better put, where do you go from here? There is a common saying that it takes three generations to go from "shirt sleeves to shirt sleeves". Colonic procedures are fascinating and demanding. The intricacies of the various pouch procedures be they J, S or W have held our attention and rightly so for the past several years. The colonoscope and all of its applications have brought our specialty to new dimensions. However, don't let the stars dazzle you and don't forget your humble beginning. An anoscope is still a must and we must not forget how to use one. Our specialty was founded on our expertise with the anorectum. We must never deny our heritage and more importantly, never let go of it! The ability to perform a good hemorrhoidectomy or carefully execute a fistula procedure or a sphincteroplasty certainly rivals, if not surpasses, the ability to carry out a colonic resection. The consequences of the failure to expertly perform these procedures is just as dire as it is when a colonic resection is done inaptly. Our knowledge of the anatomy and physiology of the anorectum and the ability to handle its problems should mark us above all others. Our "flirtation" with the gastrointestinal tract should end at the ligament of Treitz. A "gastrointestinal" surgeon sounds nice but once we take that step, we lose our identity. Let others choose to be what they want to be. We should remain as Colon and Rectal Surgeons and be known as such. There is challenge enough for all in that title, maybe more at times than we might like. Wise men have brought us to the pinnacle. It is up to you to see that we stay there. If we lose our expertise with the anorectum, the slide down the slope will come rapidly!

The future of our specialty rests in you and in our residency training programs. You must do everything in your power to keep them strong and viable. It is your great privilege to share your knowledge with others. Be involved in teaching, for therein lies the greatest gratification that you will ever experience. It is important that you continue to add to our numbers and continue to increase our residencies and strengthen and maintain the quality of those that we have.

In closing, I would like to thank all the members of Council for their cooperation and effort. It has been a unique experience working with all of you. I would also like to thank the chairmen of the various committees and their members. It takes many people working together to make this Society "go" and since we are all small in numbers, we need the cooperation of all. I would especially like to thank my program chairman Dr. Sam Labow for the fine job he has done.

Finally, I would like to tell the members of this organization that I would never have accepted the job of Secretary and then President without the superb administrative staff that the Society has. Miss Harriette Gibson and I "joined" the Society at the same time. She, along with her assistants run a "tight ship". We are fortunate to have them. Fellow members, it has been a great year. Thank you for letting me be a part of it.