

FOUNDING OF
THE SOUTHEASTERN SOCIETY
OF PLASTIC AND
RECONSTRUCTIVE
SURGEONS

by John R. Lewis, M.D.

FOREWORD

This brief history of the evolution of the Southeastern Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons must of necessity be told from one viewpoint, that of the writer, and I make apology for any errors in information or opinions expressed beforehand. My information was obtained as best I could from talking and writing to the various members of the American Society of Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery who live in our Southeastern States and who had the ideas and the energies for making the other plastic surgeons of the area interested in forming a local sectional group. A number of us were aware of and interested in the sectional groups of plastic surgeons such as the California Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons.

In October 1957 Dr. McCarthy DeMere wrote a letter to a number of the plastic surgeons throughout the southeast in which he said the following:

“For a number of years we who are practicing plastic surgery in the South have realized that there are many problems that are insignificant in other parts of the country and fortunately they have been many which we do not have. The solutions to our problems have been difficult because we are few in number and separated by great distances and have not had the opportunity to assist each other.

“Last Spring I made a tour of much of the South and was surprised at the similarity in problems and the desire to do something about them. The fee schedules for Vocational Rehabilitation, Crippled Children’s Services, Blue Cross, Medicare, and other insurances were just as mixed up as they were in Memphis and we all seemed to see red when the question of square inches and number of stitches came up. Also, the medico-legal problems were similar and each wondered if his insurance would be cancelled by the first of the year.

“After talking to a large number of our plastic surgeon brothers, the one thing that all agreed upon was the we definitely needed to get together, discuss our problems, work out fee schedules etc., and then we could have some authority in dealing with others.

“I am firmly convinced that when we do meet, the mutual benefit will be so evident that a Plastic Surgery Society for the Southeastern States will be come a permanent organization.

“We do not want to be in any competition with the other societies and certainly are not “seceding”, but this sectional meeting is going to become a necessity. We do not want to function as a fraternity and every practicing

plastic surgeon who is Board Certified can be an active member, and if Board Qualified can be an associate member for a limited period of time. In this way the decisions and recommendations of the Society will carry weight and dignity.

"A one day meeting seems to be the consensus of desire with the program emphasizing discussions and lectures on fee schedules, medico-legal problems, insurance, investments, etc. We will assume that our members are already excellent plastic surgeons and try not to teach them anything about routine surgery, but new developments and surgery in our area will be added.

"We plan to meet for a few minutes in my hotel room at the Fairmont in San Francisco at 5:45 p.m. November 4 for cocktails, a very short exchange of ideas and a decision on a time and place for the Meeting. Try to be there. It will not interfere with any other plans you may have for that evening."

At the 1957 meeting of the American Society of Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery in San Francisco in November 1957 an organizational meeting was held and it was decided upon the invitation of Doctors Neal Owens and Bob Meade that the first meeting would be held in New Orleans, Louisiana, April 17-18, 1958, at which time the organization would get under way with election of officers and the setting of sights and the making of plans.

The following letter was written by Dr. McCarthy DeMere to the Plastic Surgeons in the Southeastern States who were unable to be at the preliminary meeting in San Francisco to bring them up to date on the latest developments.

"I have written recently to most of the Plastic Surgeons of the Southeastern States regarding the outcome of our get together in San Francisco and the possibility of organizing a new society. To the ones who haven't heard the latest developments, here is a short summary:

"We had a very satisfactory turnout for the meeting in San Francisco, having about twenty-three men participating. Of this group, the great majority was very much in favor of organizing a sectional society. No one wanted to take the full responsibility for the initial move and I certainly had no axe to grind so we left the status such that we would again get together and have a discussion next year at the American Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Meeting. However, since that time there has such an influx of letters into my office strongly urging that some move be made right away because several new problems have arisen and most of the men felt that if even a small group became the first members that there would be a

great benefit derived and the others would more than likely want to join later, so there has been a spontaneous and probably somewhat unorganized effort made by a group to have a first meeting. A nucleus of enthusiastic men have acted as counselors and a time and place has been set that appears to be satisfactory.

"We thought that New Orleans would be an excellent place for the meeting because it is centrally located and will offer other diversions following the meeting. April 17-18 does not conflict with other meetings and if you desire to stay over, Saturday and Sunday can be very enjoyable spent in New Orleans. Dr. Bob Meade is in charge of hotel reservations and if you are planning to come to the first meeting, please write him for your reservations at 2223 Carondelet Street, New Orleans. Dr. Robert Hagerty is in charge of the program and it appears that we will have a very enlightening and profitable two day schedule.

"The first day is to be devoted mainly to economic subjects and Dr. Neal Owens has procured some of the most outstanding men in New Orleans for these lectures. Also Dr. John Reese of Philadelphia is coming down for the meeting and his talks are always excellent. The afternoon of the first day will be devoted to problems which we all have and to organizing the society. Dr. Grover Austin is formulating a Constitution and By-Laws to be voted upon. The second day is to be devoted completely to the scientific subjects and Bob Hagerty has an excellent idea in presenting the extremely unusual things that we encounter and if you have an interesting case report or paper you would like to present, write to him in care of the Medical College of South Carolina, 280 Calhoun Street, Charleston, South Carolina. Greer Ricketson, Tony Marzoni, Neal Owens and I are the remaining counselors and we are going to do everything possible to make your trip to New Orleans both instructive and enjoyable."

Dr. Robert Meade very generously gave of his time and energies making our hotel reservations at the St. Charles Hotel for the meeting in April 1958, and Dr. Neal Owens and Dr. Meade had arranged with Dr. Robert Hagerty who was in charge of the program to have a very interesting program on April 17th at the International House. The program included talks by Mr. Robert W. Elsasser, Business Analyst, Mr. A. A. Wegman, Certified Public Accountant, Mr. Maurice Hartson, Insurance Agent, Mr. St. Clair Adams, Jr. Attorney; and after lunch an interesting talk on the PRINCIPLES OF SKIN GRAFTING by Dr. John D. Reese, followed by a business meeting of the Society. At the business meeting were discussed the principles and aims of

the Society and discussions as to its purpose and mutual problems to be shared and worked out by the plastic surgeons in the Southeastern States having mutual interests. The program was an excellent one as presented by the business men who attempted to assist and advise concerning the many mutual problems faced by surgeons in the Southeastern area.

On the following day on April 18th at the International House, there were six twenty minute papers followed by twenty minute discussion periods, including the following papers.

- 9:00 a.m. - Retinal Anlage Tumor of the Mandible
Francis A. Marzoni, M.D.
- 9:40 a.m. - Surgery Following Weight Loss in the Very Obese
John R. Lewis, M.D.
- 10:20 a.m. - Plastic Repair of a Male Pseudohermaphrodite
Anthony P. Jerome, M.D.
- 11:00 a.m. - A Method of Repair of Hyspospadias
Greer Ricketson, M.D.
- 11:40 a.m. - Orthopedic Problems Involving the Crippled Children's Program
A. Scott Hamilton, M.D.
- 12:20 p.m. - Rotation in the Reconstruction of Defects of Head and Neck Cancer Patients
Claude C. Coleman, Jr., M.D.
- 1:15 p.m. - Lunch
INTERNATIONAL HOUSE
- 2:30 p.m. - Animated Flexible Models - Demonstration
Beverly Douglas, M.D.
- 3:00 p.m. - Discussion of the correction of lop-ear deformities to be led by Neal Owens, M.D. Topics to be considered will include, use of buried sutures, maintenance of antihelical fold, dressing, incidence of infection, incidence of keloids.
- 4:00 p.m. - Discussion of the treatment of plantar warts to be led by McCarthy DeMere, M.D. Topics to be considered will include non-excisional therapy, excision and primary closure, flap rotation of bilobed flap, excision and application of full thickness graft, metatarsal arch support, associated surgery of the metatarsals.
- 5:00 p.m. - ADJOURNMENT

There was a good turn-out for all the papers and very interesting question and discussion periods. There were thirty-one men attending the meetings including twenty-eight members of the Founders Group and three guests. The following men attended this first meeting in New Orleans.

Anthony P. Jerome, Memphis, Tennessee
McCarthy DeMere, Memphis, Tennessee
Gertrude L. Waite, Madisonville, Louisiana
Bernard L. Morgan, Jacksonville, Florida

L. C. Mickell, Orlando, Florida (guest)
Robert J. Meade, New Orleans, Louisiana
Robert Hagerty, Charleston, South Carolina
James H. Hendrix, Jr., Jackson, Mississippi
Jack Coleman, University of Virginia
Lorenzo Adams, Memphis, Tennessee
Grover Austin, St. Petersburg, Florida
George Robertson, Miami, Florida
Richard W. Vincent, New Orleans, Louisiana
Carl Wahl, New Orleans, Louisiana
Thomas Zaydon, Miami, Florida
James Stucky, Little Rock, Arkansas
Donald Kapetansky, Detroit, Michigan (guest)
Charles E. Horton, Norfolk, Virginia
J. E. O'Malley, Orlando, Florida
C. C. Snyder, Miami, Florida
Neal Owens, New Orleans, Louisiana
Henry Brobst, Roanoke, Virginia
Tony Marzoni, Birmingham, Alabama
John R. Lewis, Jr., Atlanta, Georgia
Greer Ricketson, Nashville, Tennessee
J. L. West, St. Petersburg, Florida
Kirkland Todd, Jr., Nashville, Tennessee
Beverly Douglas, Nashville, Tennessee
John Crosby, Mobile, Alabama
James Cox, Knoxville, Tennessee
Russell Hadley, Hollywood, Florida (guest)

A photograph of this original group of founding members of the Southeastern Society of Plastic & Reconstructive Surgeons is attached and was generously provided by Drs. Neal Owens and Bob Meade.

Among other things discussed at the meeting was the official name of the organization which was changed from the initial tentative name of "Southeastern Society of Plastic Surgery" to "Southeastern Society of Plastic Surgeons." A shield was discussed for the Society and a committee was appointed to select an appropriate one to be made the official seal of the society and to be put on the official stationery of the society. (Ricketson, Snyder, Hagerty). Details of the meeting were, of course, recorded by the newly elected secretary Dr. Robert Hagerty, of Charleston, South Carolina. Other officers elected at this initial meeting were Dr. Neal Owens, of New Orleans, Louisiana, to be our first President, Dr. Greer Ricketson, of Nashville, Tennessee, President-Elect; Dr. McCarthy DeMere, of Memphis, Tennessee, to be Vice-President; Dr. Grover Austin, of St. Petersburg, Florida, Treasurer; Dr. John R. Lewis, Jr. of Atlanta, Georgia, Historian. Trustees: Dr. C. C. Coleman, Jr., Charlottesville, Virginia, one year, James H. Hendrix, Jackson, Mississippi, two years, Beverly Douglas, Nashville, Tennessee, three years.

All in all this first meeting was a complete success from the standpoint of the business meeting of the first day and the scientific program of the second day, and a vote of thanks was extended by the Society to the lay speakers

whose contributions were so valuable to us. The attitude of this meeting was one of complete cooperation by all members and everyone left the meeting with an attitude of enthusiasm for our new Society.

A letter is attached from Dr. Neal Owens, our New President, representative of the letters sent to each member of our organization, in which he expressed his appreciation for the confidence in the members in electing him as the first president of the new organization. We considered ourselves fortunate that Dr. Owens would accept this position in view of his stature, his experience, and his enthusiasm.

“Again I want to take this opportunity to tell you of my sincere appreciation for your kindness and the expression of confidence which you implied in electing me President of our new organization.

“I am sure that you will agree with me that it was an outstanding meeting, as evidenced by the enthusiasm and overwhelming response. I think that the inclusions of four papers by laymen was of tremendous importance and added much. I am sure you will agree with the feelings expressed by many that such papers should be included in all of our programs. I would appreciate an expression from you on this.”

“Whereas I know that we voted that the Secretary would send a letter of thanks to the four lay speakers and also to other speakers on the program, I would consider it a favor if you would drop each man a personal letter telling him of your individual response to his talk. I am enclosing the names and addresses.”

“Please be assured that I stand ready to do all that I can toward the development of this organization and to pursue the problems which are pertinent to us, and will welcome any suggestions or requests.”

“With kindest regards and best wishes,”

At the business meeting the time and place for the second meeting of the Society in 1959 were discussed and a vote was taken, it being decided that the second meeting would be held in Charleston, South Carolina in April 1959 with Dr. Robert Hagerty and his committee in charge of arrangements and Dr. McCarthy DeMere and his committee in charge of the program. The program was scheduled for March 20-21 at the Fort Sumter Hotel in Charleston, South Carolina.

In the meantime an executive committee was held in St. Petersburg, Florida in February 1959 with all the officers attending except the Historian to work out final plans for the meeting in March 1959. The meeting was held at the Tides Hotel, February 13-14-15. The problems of the Society were discussed and final plans for the March meeting worked out.