

Academy History

A History of the Academy of Gold Foil Operators

Chapter II

What is notable about this piece of dental history is the names of the players—Plummer, Smith, Stibbs, Markley, Stebner, Spears, True and Myers. Clearly, their actions laid the groundwork for thousands of dental professionals who have since followed their leadership. Their vision and dedication to excellence has left a legacy that remains in the major operative dentistry academies of today—AAGFO, AOD, ABOD and the ARVTSC. It is interesting to also note that the number of members claimed in 1952 (397) has remained nearly constant—the 2007 membership of the AAGFO is 244. Clearly, this nucleus of dedicated people has kept that mission alive.

As stated in Chapter I, the Adele Room of the Chase Hotel in St Louis was the scene of the formative meeting of our Academy on September 11, 1952. A vote of confidence was given to Dr Bruce B Smith and Dr Ralph E Plummer by the men present, and they, together with Dr Gerald D Stibbs, were empowered by the group to proceed to set up the machinery of the organization. Dr Plummer kept the minutes of the St Louis meeting and recorded the many fine suggestions made by those present.

There were many influential thoughts which came out of this meeting. After some discussion regarding the name of our organization (we met under the title “International Society of Gold Foil Operators”), it was moved by Dr Lester E Myers and seconded by Dr Miles R Markley that the name should be “The American Academy of Gold Foil Operators.” The name was adopted.

Elections were held with the following results: Dr Bruce B Smith, President; Dr Charles M Stebner, Vice-President; Dr Avery M Spears, Treasurer and Dr Gerald D Stibbs, Secretary.

A committee on constitution and bylaws was appointed by the president. The committee, consisting of Dr Miles R Markley, Dr Ralph E Plummer, Dr Gerald D Stibbs, Dr Harry A True and Dr Lester E Myers, Chairman, unknowingly faced a two-year task. They consulted constitutions from many national and international dental organizations. They also requested and obtained adequate legal advice during this organiza-

tional period. This committee, with the assistance of the Executive Council, spent many hours, covering in detail, the many articles and sections of the constitution and bylaws.

On January 30, 1953, the records of the first meeting were turned over to Dr Stibbs. Manuscripts of the papers presented in St Louis, including one by Dr Victor H Ernst, were also filed for future reference.

The first rubber dam committee was appointed in 1953. The membership consisted of Dr Rex Ingraham, Dr Lester E Myers, Dr Robert J Nelsen and Dr Charles Stebner, Chairman.

On February 18, 1953, a progress report and questionnaire were sent to those on the current mailing list and to those whose names had been suggested. A total of 707 letters were mailed. In April of the same year, the members of the Academy of Restorative Dentistry were also invited to support and to note our aims.

After contacting the 17 study club men in Oregon who had not been previously notified, a total of 847 letters were mailed. The Secretary, Dr Stibbs, with the assistance of Mrs Stibbs, set up a complete cross-indexing system of files and records. His report also showed that the organizational work had been very time-consuming. The secretaries who helped Dr Stibbs spent 1,040 hours or the equivalent of 130 eight-hour working days from January 1953 through October 1954. The efforts were rewarded, for approximately 400 replies were received with the following results:

Those definitely interested.....	370
Those expressing good wishes, but not wishing to participate actively	12
Definitely not interested.....	13
Expressing definite disapproval or opposition	2
Total responses	397

The distribution of those actively interested in membership and participation was as follows:

Eastern United States	37
Midwestern United States	91
Southern United States	16
Western United States.....	179
Hawaii	1
Canada	34
Great Britain	4
Europe	3
West Indies and South America.....	5
Total.....	370

Special mention should be made of the activities of Dr Robert J Nelsen and his insignia committee of Dr G Colgan and Dr Harold E Nelsen. The letterheads and Academy certificates all bear a design, which they worked out with a talented artist. It took Dr Nelsen several trips to Bethesda to complete the work, which continually changed, as ideas became reality. The resulting design was hailed by all to be very well thought out in symbolism and artistry.

Plans were then made for the second meeting to be held in Cleveland, Ohio. This meeting was very unusual in many ways. Our good friend and fellow member, Dr James M Courtney, was our only contact in Cleveland who really seemed to care about gold foil. Dr Courtney helped with local arrangements and recorded the meeting on sound tape. The meeting was attended by many outstanding dental figures, among them Dr George Paffenbarger, Dr G Ratte, the President of the Canadian Dental Association, Dean Harold Noyes of Oregon and Dean Ernest Charron of the Faculty of Dental Surgery of the University of Montreal.

The meeting started at 8:00 p.m. and lasted until 1:00 a.m., and nearly all were present at the close of

the meeting. Dr Herbert D Coy, Dr Ralph E Plummer and Commander Robert B Wolcott presented informative papers. Commander Wolcott also reported on rubber dam training aids at the Navy Dental School.

During the same year, Dr Ralph A Boelsche took over the Treasurer's post due to the serious and soon fatal illness of his friend, Dr Avery Spears. The Academy unanimously elected Dr Spears Honorary President and the secretary notified him of this action.

One of the final acts of this meeting was to extend a vote of thanks to Dr James M Courtney for the excellent manner in which he handled the local arrangements.

It is not possible to mention all the fine acts of the men who partook in the formation of our Academy. Many are in our memories but still others are recorded faithfully in our minutes, and it is strongly recommended that you turn to them for an hour of sincere pleasure. You will find there a history of the unselfish attempt to unite our efforts toward finer dentistry by men from all parts of the United States and Canada. Some of the men were great when they came to our Academy; others have since achieved prominence. But, it is our belief that the dentist who does gold foil work believes and practices better dentistry, for he is familiar with the finest margins known to operative dentistry.

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Every man has two educations—that which is given to him, and the other, that which he gives to himself. Of the two kinds, the latter is by far the most valuable. Indeed, all that is most worthy in a man, he must work out and conquer for himself. It is that that constitutes our real and best nourishment. What we are merely taught seldom nourishes the mind like that which we teach ourselves.

—Jean Paul Richter