

Editor's Notes

A Carnival for Anesthesiologists

By *Stephen Jackson, M.D., Editor*

Owing to an illness, this year's ASA Annual Meeting was the first in three decades that I did not attend. It constituted a major disappointment for me, even though New Orleans holds a particularly negative emotional grasp upon my psyche. Indeed, two quite memorable, yet unpleasant, life events had transpired during previous ASA meetings in the "Big Easy." The first of these was two decades ago when the Loma Prieta earthquake exploded toward the end of the ASA meeting. I recall distinctly how I became aware of the quake: I had been demanding that the bartender change the channel on the big screen TV over the bar to show the San Francisco Giants-Oakland Athletics World Series game rather than the incessant panoramic view of smoke rising in a city and a crumbled freeway bridge. Neither he nor I could immediately explain why all the channels had the same aerial view. When, after a few minutes, I finally learned of the horrific explanation, I was fortunate to have been able to contact my wife by cell phone and was assured that all was well with my family, if not our house and its contents. The second disturbing incident occurred on the final day of a more recent ASA meeting in New Orleans when I was notified that my mother, residing with us in California, suddenly had become critically ill.



Still, placing this personal history aside, let's consider what the magnificent ASA Annual Meeting truly is: a huge gathering of anesthesiologists from around the world. And, when held in New Orleans, the ASA Annual Meeting (and any other large meeting held there) has been dubbed, appropriately, a "carnival!" Indeed, the anthropologist Lawrence Cohen considers conferences and conventions such as ours to comprise not entirely or even mostly scholarly goings-on, but rather carnivals—"colossal events where academic proceedings are overshadowed by professional politics, ritual enactments of disciplinary boundaries, ... tourism and trade, ... the care and feeding of professional kinship, and the sheer enormity of discourse." Indeed, the popular physician writer, Atul Gawande, in his book *Complications*, is of the same mind and comments "that [for] such national meetings ... some [surgeons in his case] had come just to be seen, others to make their name, still others for the spectacle of it all ... Yet, ... one still had the sense that the draw was deeper than mere carnival."

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Assuredly, the ASA Annual Meeting embodies much more for the thousands upon thousands of anesthesiologists gathered for the potpourri of choices offered to them. Without question, the sheer multitude of quality educational and scientific opportunities and offerings holds center stage for the vast majority of attendees. Yet organizational politics is a priority for others, and committee members interacting face-to-face (rather than electronically) certainly is the most productive format for advancing ongoing projects and assignments. But, to me, the overriding appeal of the Annual Meeting is the undertone of camaraderie, the incessant networking, the feeling of belonging, the sense of being among a group of people with like interests who have a commonality of professional accomplishment—the comfort of being surrounded by members of your “tribe.” Witness the immense popularity of residency reunions and the other renewal and revitalization of friendships otherwise faded by distance and the practical exigencies of our lives. As pointed out by Gawande, physicians “belong to an insular world, [and are] for the moment the healthy few who live among the sick. And it is easy to become alien to the experiences and sometimes the values of the rest of civilization. Ours is a world even our families do not grasp. ... Once a year, however, there is a place full of people who do know. They are everywhere you look ... our own nation of doctors.”

Please do remember the CSA's own spectacular educational programs in Hawaii and our own “homegrown” Annual Meeting. CSA offers at least three venues for ample quality educational hours coupled with alluring vacations: our Annual Meeting (this May in Newport Beach) and two Hawaiian meetings this January (Maui) and next November (Kona). Not quite “carnivals,” but educational colossi and most fulfilling in their own right.

And we'll conclude with Great News from the ASA Annual Meeting. In a contested race, Linda Mason, our past president, was elected to the position of Assistant Secretary of the ASA. Congratulations, Linda! Her duties will include assisting the Secretary in areas concerning membership, chairing the Credentialing Committee at the ASA House of Delegates and Board of Director meetings, chairing the Section on Representation (responsible for oversight of the activities of the committees in this Section), serving as the liaison for the Resident and Medical Student Component Societies, and most importantly, being a member of the Administrative Council, thereby participating in the highest level of leadership of the ASA.

With Dr. Mason's election, Dr. Mark Singleton, another past CSA president, ascended to become the ASA Director from California. This is a most prestigious position because the CSA is the largest component society within the ASA. Mark already is well known, well networked, and highly respected within the

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ASA, having served as chair of the Committee on Pediatrics, Co-Chair of the Task Force for the Practice Advisory on Anesthesia for MRI, and member of such high-profile committees as those on Quality Management and Departmental Administration, Professional Liability, and Practice Parameters. Mark is in private practice in San Jose, but he also has maintained an active academic role by serving as an Adjunct Clinical Professor of Anesthesiology at Stanford for over two decades. Frequently called upon to serve as spokesperson for the ASA, CSA, and CMA on a wide range of governmental (both legislative and regulatory) issues, his reputation in Sacramento and Washington is that of being a knowledgeable, personable, and articulate spokesperson for organized medicine. Congratulations, Mark!

Committee Appointments

Active and resident members who are interested in becoming more involved in the CSA and would like to start by serving on a committee need to contact Narendra Trivedi, M.D., President-Elect, at narentrivedi@hotmail.com or the CSA office at 800-345-3691 or csa@csahq.org by February 1, 2010, indicating interest in the following divisions and committees. For more information about the committees and the two divisions, call the CSA office or refer to the CSA Bylaws at http://www.csahq.org/pdf/csa_bylaws.pdf.

Divisions

Educational Programs Division
Legislative and Practice Affairs Division

Standing Committees

Committee on Bylaws
Committee on Finance and Administration
Committee on Peer Review
Committee on Public and Professional Communications

Special Committees

Committee on Physicians Health and Well Being