

THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF ANESTHESIOLOGISTS A CENTURY OF CHALLENGES AND PROGRESS



Douglas R. Bacon, M.D., M.A.
Professor of Anesthesiology and History of Medicine
Mayo Clinic College of Medicine
Rochester, Minnesota



Kathryn E. McGoldrick, M.D.
Professor and Chair
Department of Anesthesiology
New York Medical College
Valhalla, New York



Mark J. Lema, M.D., Ph.D.
Professor and Chair of Anesthesiology
University at Buffalo, SUNY
Roswell Park Cancer Institute
Buffalo, New York

Editors

Park Ridge, Illinois
The Wood Library-Museum of Anesthesiology
2005

Published By
Wood Library-Museum of Anesthesiology

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Library of Congress Control Number 2005927988

ISBN 1-889595-15-2

Printed in the United States of America

Published by:
WOOD LIBRARY-MUSEUM OF ANESTHESIOLOGY
520 N. Northwest Highway
Park Ridge, Illinois 60068-2573
(847) 825-5586 / FAX (847) 825-1692
WLM@ASAhq.org

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DEDICATION

To all members of the Long Island Society of Anesthetists, the New York Society of Anesthetists, the American Society of Anesthetists, and the American Society of Anesthesiologists who struggled and who continue to persevere in their quest to improve the "art and science" of anesthesiology we dedicate this book.

CONTRIBUTORS

Douglas R. Bacon, M.D., M.A.

Professor of Anesthesiology and
History of Medicine
Mayo Clinic College of Medicine
Rochester, Minnesota

George S. Bause, M.D., M.P.H.

Honorary Curator
Wood Library-Museum of Anesthesiology
Park Ridge, Illinois

Ines Berger, M.D.

Associate Professor of Anesthesiology
Medical College of Georgia
Augusta, Georgia

Selma Harrison Calmes, M.D.

Professor of Anesthesiology
U.C.L.A. School of Medicine
Oliveview–U.C.L.A. Medical Center
Sylmar, California

Timothy B. Curry, M.D., Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Anesthesiology
Mayo Clinic College of Medicine
Rochester, Minnesota

James C. Erickson, III, M.D., M.Sc.

Professor of Anesthesiology, Emeritus
Northwestern University Medical School
Chicago, Illinois

Adolph H. Giesecke, M.D.

Emeritus Professor
Former Jenkins Professor
and Chairman
Anesthesiology and
Pain Management
University of Texas
Southwestern Medical Center
Dallas, Texas

Alexander W. Gotta, M.D.

Clinical Professor of Anesthesiology,
Emeritus
University at Brooklyn, SUNY
Brooklyn Medical Center
Brooklyn, New York

Glenn W. Johnson

Executive Director, Emeritus
American Society of Anesthesiologists
Park Ridge, Illinois

Sandra L. Kopp, M.D.

Assistant Professor of Anesthesiology
Mayo Clinic College of Medicine
Rochester, Minnesota

Erwin Lear, M.D.

Professor of Anesthesiology, Emeritus
Albert Einstein College of Medicine
New York, New York

Mark J. Lema, M.D., Ph.D.

Professor and Chair
Department of Anesthesiology
University at Buffalo, SUNY,
Roswell Park Cancer Institute
Buffalo, New York

Peter L. McDermott, M.D., Ph.D.

Lecturer in History
California Lutheran University
Thousand Oaks, California

Kathryn E. McGoldrick, M.D.

Professor and Chair
Department of Anesthesiology
New York Medical College
Valhalla, New York

J. Gordon Morrow, M.D.

Assistant Professor of Anesthesiology
Emory University School of Medicine
Atlanta, Georgia

CONTRIBUTORS

John B. Neeld, Jr., M.D.

Director of Anesthesiology
Northside Hospital Medical Center
Atlanta, Georgia

Babatunde Ogunnaike, M.D.

Assistant Professor
Anesthesiology and
Pain Management
University of Texas
Southwestern Medical Center
Dallas, Texas

Bradley E. Smith, M.D.

Professor of Anesthesiology, Emeritus
Vanderbilt University School of Medicine
Nashville, Tennessee

John E. Steinhaus, M.D., Ph.D.

Professor and Chair, Emeritus
Department of Anesthesiology
Emory University School of Medicine
Atlanta, Georgia

Charles C. Tandy, M.D.

Clinical Professor
Anesthesiology and
Pain Management
University of Texas
Southwestern Medical Center
Dallas, Texas

Mark A. Warner, M.D.

Professor and Chair
Department of Anesthesiology
Mayo Clinic College of Medicine
Rochester, Minnesota

FOREWORD

History of the American Society of Anesthesiologists

A benchmark anniversary such as the American Society of Anesthesiologists (ASA) Centennial is an occasion to assess where we have been as individuals and as an organization. The editors of this book have compiled a series of articles to remind us that our profession and the ASA have not always been as we know them. It is only through the dedication and commitment of those who came before us that our specialty enjoys its current stature and respect. During the past century each succeeding generation has built on the achievements of its predecessors to such a remarkable extent that our practices bear little resemblance to those of a generation or two ago.

Today we routinely care for patients who in the past would have been considered unacceptable risks. We guide them safely and comfortably through surgery that would have been unimaginably complex to anesthesiology's pioneers. I am confident that our current generation will continue to build on past achievements and that future anesthesiologists will regard prospective improvements in patient care with equal admiration.

On behalf of all ASA members it is my privilege to commend the editors and chapter authors for this excellent collection of articles that highlights the multiple areas in which the ASA and our profession have grown and changed.

Eugene P. Sinclair, M.D.
ASA President, 2004-2005

PREFACE

This book chronicles the history of the American Society of Anesthesiologists during the past century. Beginning as a small group interested in overcoming some of the challenges confronting the anesthesia community, the original nine members saw their society grow into a national organization that now boasts more than 40,000 members. Over the 100 years there were countless fascinating stories to be told, of triumphs and tragedies, of good ideas that were brought forth before their time, of conflict, strife, and eventual success. Through the years, however, the recurrent theme is the desire of the physicians of the Long Island Society of Anesthetists, the New York Society of Anesthetists, the American Society of Anesthetists, and the American Society of Anesthesiologists to advance the "art and science" of anesthesiology.

This book has many contributors, and reflects the voice not only of current scholarship in the field of the history of anesthesiology but also of the many members who lived through some of the events described within these pages. As editors, we are thankful for the diligence and dedication of all our authors, some of whom have labored over their manuscripts for the past three years. For several authors, this is their first foray into writing history; it is our hope that they will continue to pursue this new endeavor. Many voices help bring the past forward, blending their cadence to produce the intricate symphony that is anesthesia history. Without their efforts, this book would not have been possible.

We would also like to thank the tireless professionals at the Wood Library-Museum (WLM) of Anesthesiology. Mr. Patrick Sim, the head librarian, remains a constant source

of inspiration, kindness, and knowledge. There is no task Patrick will not undertake, no fact that he cannot check, all done with amazing alacrity and good humor. Ms. Karen Bieterman, the assistant librarian, follows closely in Patrick's footsteps. Her attention to detail, expertise, and cheerful attitude have made the task easier for all of our authors. Ms. Judith Robins, the WLM collections supervisor, has helped resurrect and organize many of the papers referred to within these pages. She, too, possesses Patrick's "can do" attitude with an eagerness that makes working with her a rewarding experience. This book is all the richer for the various documents that provide first-hand knowledge of the events of our shared history.

Finally, we would like to thank the officers, Board of Directors, and House of Delegates of the American Society of Anesthesiologists for their support for this book. They have imposed no restrictions upon us, and have encouraged the publication of this book at every turn. To our families and co-workers, who have suffered through the birthing pains of this book, we express our gratitude. Without their love, support, and understanding completion of this volume would not have been possible.

It is our hope that you will enjoy reading this book as much as we have enjoyed creating it. Happy 100th Birthday to the American Society of Anesthesiologists! We sincerely hope another generation will consider our book a resource for beginning their celebration of the 200th anniversary of the ASA!

Douglas R. Bacon, M.D., M.A.
Kathryn E. McGoldrick, M.D.
Mark J. Lema, M.D., Ph.D.

THE CREATION OF ANESTHESIOLOGY

Douglas R. Bacon, M.D., M.A.

Have you ever wondered why many medical specialties have a journal whose title begins the “*Archives of*” and wondered why there is no *Archives of Anesthesiology*? The story remains one of the more obscure yet fascinating sagas of the 1930s as the New York Society of Anesthetists (NYSA) transformed itself into the American Society of Anesthesiologists (ASA). It has all the elements of a grand drama, with accusations of paper “stealing” and isolationist overtones so common to the era. The creation of the second United States journal in anesthesiology was a long struggle in which the old order in anesthesiology was overturned by the “upstart” young physicians. The decision to ask the American Medical Association (AMA) to publish the journal, and create an “*Archives of*” was difficult owing to the convoluted relationship organized anesthesiology had with older, competing organizations. The outcomes of decisions made during the 1930s remain with us today.

Francis Hoeffler McMechan¹ was the editor of the first journal devoted to the specialty of anesthesiology in the world, *Current Researches in Anesthesia and Analgesia*, which began publication in 1922.² Until at least 1930, organized anesthesiology was content to allow McMechan to run organized anesthesia. Yet, when the need to certify physicians as specialists became acute as the Great Depression wore on across the United States and the world, and McMechan turned away from the AMA and their proposed certification process for all specialties, voices began to be heard in opposition to

McMechan. The successful silver anniversary meeting of the NYSA thrust the society into a new role as a possible rival to the old order in organized anesthesiology. Along that line, the NYSA agreed with McMechan

“...to make no publication until such time as [*Current Researches in Anesthesia and Analgesia*] should not be published or some other individual is Editor. In the same manner we promise to hold no congress as long as the International and the Associated societies held theirs.”³

So, why were the leaders of the NYSA and later ASA willing to spend years planning and discussing a second journal in the specialty?

A FORMAL STUDY⁴

In March of 1935, John Lundy contacted Morris Fishbein, the long-term editor of the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)* and the individual who controlled the approval of AMA-sponsored publications. Lundy asked if the AMA was interested in sponsoring a second journal in anesthesiology. His goal was simple: to increase the scientific merit of the articles published. His question, however, reflected an attitude about current publications in anesthesiology. Lundy also felt that the specialty had grown enough in America to support a second journal. Fishbein was skeptical and asked that the anesthesia community be polled to see whether there was support for a second professional publication. Lundy wrote to 55 of the most prominent anesthesiologists in the United States and Canada including Francis Hoefffer McMechan, the editor of *Current Researches in Anesthesia and Analgesia*,⁵ asking their opinion about whether or not a second journal should come forward. The responses were mixed and interesting.

Arthur Guedel wrote back on July 5, 1935 saying, "In some ways, I believe such a journal would be a big help to anesthesia," but he further went on to say, "rather than hurt McMechan, I am willing to see our union with the AMA held off a while longer to keep supporting McMechan."⁶ Ralph Waters, professor and head of the first academic department of anesthesiology in the United States, had a very different opinion. "I see no reason why it would not be an excellent idea for the AMA to publish a quarterly journal on anesthesia. I think there

would be at least two or three papers from here each year of sufficient worth to be a credit to such a journal."⁷ The department at Madison was capable of producing far more than two or three excellent papers a year.

Harold Griffith wrote late in the process on September 24, 1935, "I believe the journal sponsored by the AMA would be a valuable publication. Nevertheless, I would not want to belittle the standing of the journal which Frank McMechan worked so hard to create."⁸ At this time, *Current Researches in Anesthesia and Analgesia* was being sent across the world to every member of the International Anesthesia Research Society.

Lundy reported to Fishbein that 46 replies had been received of his original 55 letters. Thirty were for the journal, 8 were for it but unenthusiastic, 3 were mildly opposed, and 5 were strongly opposed. Lundy conceded that a second journal was probably not in the AMA's best interests,⁹ but he was concerned that somehow McMechan had skewed the results. Before Lundy wrote Fishbein, Lundy took the responses and listed the authors and whether or not they held an office in McMechan's organizations to try and prove that McMechan had influenced the results.¹⁰ Lundy was unable to verify if McMechan had tried to sabotage his efforts. The respondents were much more concerned that McMechan, who had organized the specialty in the United States and the world, continued to have an income since his rheumatoid arthritis had rendered him unable to engage in clinical practice.

THE MCMECHAN PROBLEM

McMechan tried to obtain the best papers for *Current Researches in Anesthesia and Analgesia*, occasionally without regard to where the manuscript should be published. In May of 1935, Morris Fishbein wrote John

Lundy about a paper from Sir Francis Shipway that was read at the June meeting of the AMA. When Fishbein requested the paper for possible publication in *JAMA* he was told that the paper had been promised to McMechan. Fishbein wanted Lundy to explain to Shipway that *JAMA* had the right of first refusal.¹¹ Lundy, who was attempting to get AMA recognition of anesthesia as a medical specialty was furious. He wrote to Wesley Bourne, the head of the Magill anesthesia program, enlisting his aid in correcting McMechan. Lundy wrote, "Will you try to get McMechan straightened out on this point? He must know that the AMA has prior rights to papers read by invitation on their program."¹² Lundy informed Fishbein that he would set things right.¹³

As the NYSA grew, and included more and more members from across the country interested in becoming Fellows, a communication gap grew. In order to keep the membership apprised of the recent developments in the organization, Paul Wood mimeographed the minutes of the meeting, including the scientific papers presented, and sent it to the membership.¹⁴ McMechan, as a member, received these minutes. As Secretary of the ASA, Paul Wood wrote McMechan in April of 1936, requesting that these minutes not be listed as a publication, and since the minutes were not copyrighted, the papers were confidential and the property of the authors not the society. Indeed, the issue of copyright had been investigated and it was felt by several publishers that since the minutes did not go to libraries, medical schools, or clinics, but solely to members in good standing of the ASA, it was not a "publication."¹⁵

In 1937 a further incident occurred that raised the ire of Emery A. Rovenstine, the Chairman of Anesthesia at Bellevue Hospital

and a leader within the ASA. As part of the agreement that employed Rovenstine, all papers that were published and indexed in the medical literature needed to be passed through an editorial board at the hospital and the associated university. Presenting papers at the ASA meeting and having them published in the mimeographed minutes was not considered, by Rovenstine's editorial board, to constitute a publication. Thus, the ASA was free to send the information to all members. A problem arose, however, when McMechan abstracted two of these papers from the ASA's minutes and published the abstracts in *Current Researches in Anesthesia and Analgesia*, which was indexed. Thus, it appeared to the editorial board at Bellevue that Rovenstine had violated the hospital's policy.¹⁶

In attempting to resolve the problem, Wood again wrote to McMechan. Wood explained once again the nature of the ASA's minutes, and how the request had been made to not include abstracts of the papers in *Current Researches in Anesthesia and Analgesia*. Furthermore, Wood stated that the two articles in question were given lengthy reviews, but no author or institutional attribution was given to the work.¹⁵ Wood further noted, "This caused an unfortunate situation for the Society and for the authors whose papers were abstracted or reviewed. Permission for such abstracting would no doubt have been granted had it been requested."¹⁵

THE BIRTH OF A NEW JOURNAL

In the March 6, 1937 letter to McMechan, Paul Wood mentions a "special editorial committee" of the ASA. Membership was limited to Wood, Thomas Drysdale Buchanan, and Philip Woodbridge.¹⁵ The committee most likely was appointed to focus the society's

efforts at organizing a new publication. Further evidence suggests that this committee was soliciting support for the possible future publication of their journal. Wood wrote to Ralph Waters requesting

“...data to start definite proceedings toward the securing of a journal for The American Society of Anesthetists. In this respect would your organization at Madison be willing to assume responsibility for two “scientific” papers for such a magazine, per year, for the present? ...I should also like to have some definite remarks concerning the size, form, and general makeup of such a journal. Would you kindly state your opinion as to the number of issues per year, and also send us the names of any individual research workers who might be interested in assisting us with this work.”¹⁷

Waters’ reply was interesting. He felt that the journal should be published six times a year as did Wood. However, Wood informed Waters that five other responses to his letter suggested a quarterly publication. Wood lamented in his personal conversations and correspondence that no one could agree on an editor.¹⁸ Wood further stated:

“...Your idea of the editor in Philadelphia strikes me personally as the happiest of all. Too many did not wish to have the “Mayo Clinic stamp” on the editing, but it must be admitted Tuohy has many facilities much to be desired. In addition, Tuohy has a good form of his own. He is young, intelligent, and I believe, capable. He would have the supervision of John [Lundy] and would have the editorial backing of the Mayo Clinic, which I do not particularly crave

for our journal....I cannot very well, under the circumstances, put Rovey [Rovenstine] or one of his immediate associates in charge of editing.”¹⁸

Wood discussed the reasons for a new journal. He felt that the new journal would fill in the gaps between a totally clinical journal like *Current Researches in Anesthesia and Analgesia* that McMechan edited, and “...the ultra-scientific type that some are desirous of seeing”.¹⁸

Waters commented upon some of Wood’s remarks in a return letter. Waters felt that McMechan’s effort, especially with *Current Researches*, was international in scope. Waters further noted that the papers published covered the international anesthesia community very well. The new ASA journal should be a national one, covering the American scene. As Waters further commented, “Looked at in this way and talked about in this way, we could doubtless avoid some hard feelings and some misunderstandings.”¹⁹ Several months later Waters forwarded to Wood a series of points that were essential, in the minds of those interviewed, for the establishment of a top-flight journal. Many of the comments concerned the responsibilities of the editor-in-chief, others dealt with negotiations with the publisher. Finally, Waverly Press was recommended by one of the interviewees.²⁰

JUNE 29, 1939

On June 29, 1939, Francis Hoeffler McMechan died. The world of anesthesiology changed, and during the next several years McMechan’s organizations would fade into oblivion and the ASA would become the voice of anesthesiology in the United States. McMechan’s death released the ASA from its agreement not to publish a journal,

and apparently Waters' suggestion of a Philadelphia editor had been accepted since several members wrote Henry Ruth to discuss the journal. Philip Woodbridge, an anesthesiologist at the Lahey Clinic in Boston, discussed with Ruth the possibility of the amalgamation of the various McMechan societies and the ASA, and publishing one journal.²¹ Ansel Caine of New Orleans further discussed the differences between the ASA and the McMechan organizations, lamenting the fact that politics had divided them. Caine desired a solution that was good for all, including supporting Laurette McMechan, Francis' wife, through the journal. Caine closed his letter by saying "If you smell anything *especially* bad, up there, it is the odor of *our* politics..."²²

Brian Sword, then President of the ASA, appointed a committee to study the possibility of amalgamation and report back to the society at the October 1939 meeting.²³ Part of the goal of the group was to arrange for the publication of one journal by the new society, or continue forward with plans to establish a new journal. Woodbridge was in favor of publishing the new journal immediately, others cautioned to see if the negotiations could create one society and one journal.²⁴ The concern was Fishbein's old one; was there enough support in the anesthesia community to pay for two journals?

The negotiations over consolidating the McMechan organizations and the ASA dragged on for various reasons.²⁵ At the October 12, 1939 ASA Meeting, held at the World's Fair in New York City, the Journal Committee gave its report. The group had found strong support for a second anesthesia journal amongst physician anesthetists, librarians, medical schools, and hospitals. They felt that by including advertising, combined with subscriptions, the publication

would be self-supporting. Finally, in anticipation of the formation of a Section on Anesthesia within the AMA, the committee felt that if the AMA wished to publish the journal, arrangements could be made.²⁶

The report was approved unanimously. The journal *Anesthesiology* now had official endorsement. The report included the concept of an editorial board with an editor-in-chief, two associate editors, and a managing editor. Henry Ruth was named to the top role, while Drs. Tovell and Rovenstine were designated associate editors. Paul Wood was chosen to be the business manager.²⁶ On October 20, 1939, Wood wrote to Ruth suggesting a number of individuals for consulting and contributing editor positions.²⁷ A round robin letter went out approximately two weeks later, seeking suggestions for these positions from the editorial board. Ruth further delineated the policy of the journal with regard to articles. Ruth wanted three basic types of material: research manuscripts, clinical papers, and review articles.²⁸

By February of 1940, editorial policy had been worked out amongst the editorial board. Letters were sent to those consulting editors outside of the ASA soliciting their cooperation.²⁹ By April 30, 1940 most of the concerns about policy and the look of the new journal were resolved. In a four-page memorandum to the editorial board, Ruth described not only the editorial policy of *Anesthesiology*, but what the first issue would look like. The journal would be published by Lancaster Press, with the names and titles of the entire editorial board published on the inside front cover. The inner rear cover was devoted to the editorial policy. Each article was to start at the top of a page. The final page of the memorandum considered the articles to be published, and Ruth noted, "We are still in need of material

Douglas R. Bacon, M.D., M.A.

for future issues, even though we have plenty of material at hand at present for the July first issue.”³⁰

JULY 1940

The first issue of *Anesthesiology* appeared to the world in July of 1940 (Fig. 1). It contained 120 pages of text and 16 of advertising. Authors in the first issue included several well known names in anesthesiology. Arthur Guedel published an article titled “Cyclopropane Anesthesia.”³¹ Emery Rovenstine with Ernest Doud reported their findings in an article titled “Changes in Velocity of the Blood Flow During Spinal Anesthesia,”³² and John Lundy and Lloyd Mousel discussed “The Role of the Liver and the Kidneys from the Standpoint of the Anesthetist.”³³ The journal was off and running.

CONCLUSIONS

Anesthesiology was created from a need perceived by the NYSA at least five years before it saw the light of day. Rivalry with the McMechan organizations and their journal, *Current Researches in Anesthesia and Analgesia*, along with the complex relationship organized anesthesiology had with the AMA, made the mere appearance of the journal somewhat miraculous. The issues that the NYSA and later ASA were concerned with, specifically the lack of coverage of United States anesthesia or the more international flavor of *Current Researches*, the “stealing” of papers that were clearly not available for publication, and the desire to have a platform for publication of basic science research, still continue to be discussed. In 2005 *Anesthesiology* has a distinct international flavor, but remains dedicated to the original idea of presenting the three types of articles (basic science, clinical, and comprehensive

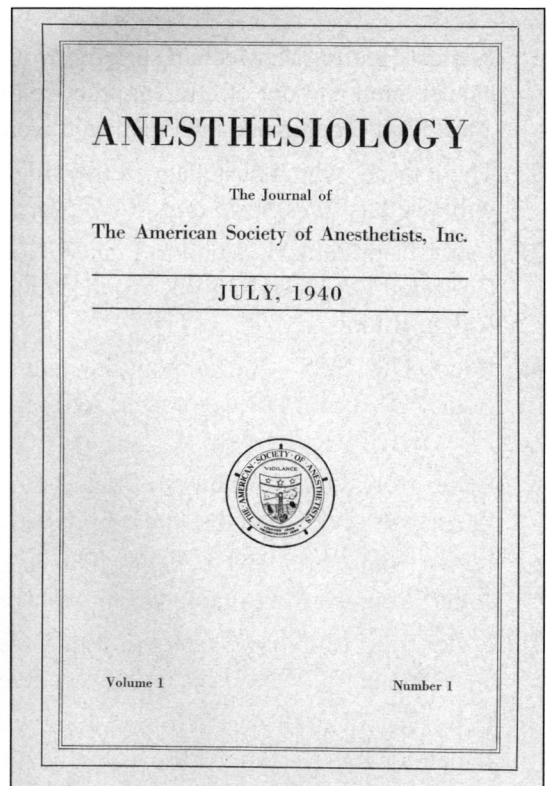


Figure 1. Front Cover of *Anesthesiology*.

review topics) that the original editorial board decided upon more than 60 years ago.

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