HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES OF THE OREGON
SOCIETY OF ALLERGY AND IMMUNOLOGY

Presented at the 25th Annual Meeting of the Society,
December 4, 1981 at the Hilton Hotel, Portland, Oregon

FELLOW MEMBERS:

Dr. Thomas Saddoris, our president, has asked me to spend a
few moments and reflect on the origins of our Society on this,
our 25th anniversary. I will draw on the address of Dr. Frank
Perlman to the Western Society of Allergy and Immunology in 1971,
the historical review of Dr. Sheldon Cohen on the American
Academy of Allergy’s origin (JACI 64:332-465, 1979), and a
collage of thoughts and anecdotes from our founding members.

The premise I’d like to discuss with you today is the fact
that this Society has its roots in the earliest attempts to
organize our specialty in this country. There is good reason to
believe it is the spin-off of the oldest allergy society in the
United States, i.e. the Western Society for the Study of Hay
Fever, Asthma and Allergy Disease. That Society was formed in
1923 by three western pioneers of allergy - Grant L. Selfridge,
George Pines and Albert H. Rowe.

Each of these men started their careers in allergy in the
state of California. Selfridge was a San Francisco
otolaryngologist who was introduced to allergy by his association
with Joseph Goodale in Boston. Impressed by the impact of
allergic disease in railway workers, Selfridge involved Professor
Harvey Hall of Stanford to collaborate in the collection of pollens for diagnosis and treatment of seasonal allergy. With the help of a Southern Pacific Railroad grant, he and Hall conducted the first botanical and pollen survey of the railroad's right-of-way in Utah, Nevada, Oregon and California.

George Piness was thrust into allergy fresh out of medical school when he was coerced to collaborate with I. Chandler Walker of Boston who was working with bacterial vaccines in the treatment of asthmatic patients. He eventually settled in Los Angeles, and after a series of assistantships, developed a lucrative practice in anesthesiology. However, in about 1919 he became disenchanted with his work and started a new career in allergy. He developed some innovative techniques in the preparation of allergens and was also instrumental in evaluating a variety of drugs in the treatment of asthma.

Albert H. Rowe completed his studies under the famous internist, Herbert C. Moffitt, in San Francisco and went East to the Massachusetts General Hospital to work in the chemistry laboratory of David Edsall where he learned a great deal about isolation of human plasma proteins. He also worked with Elliott Joslin developing techniques to produce insulin. He returned to San Francisco and worked initially as a diabetologist. As such, he described some of the first allergic reactions to insulin. His own illness with regional ileitis drew him closer to food as a possible source of allergens, and his subsequent work on food allergy became quite well known.
Each of these men had his own style of practice with unique interests and, between 1916 and 1917, practiced allergy without knowledge of each other. Selfridge gave a paper on his pollen work at a local medical meeting which was attended by Piness and Rowe. This was the beginning of a mutual friendship and an exchange of ideas that would result in the creation of the Western Society for the Study of Hay Fever, Asthma and Allergic Disease in 1923. The Eastern Society for the Study of Asthma and Allied Conditions did not form until a year later; the amalgamation of these societies in 1943 led to the formation of the American Academy of Allergy.

The first meeting of the Western Society was at the St. Francis Hotel in San Francisco on June 25, 1923. The three founders gave papers as well as several other individuals including William Duke of Kansas City, Orville Brown of Phoenix and Robert Benson of Portland. Benson became president of the Western Society in 1941. Our lineage to the Western Society is linked with Robert Benson.

Benson also studied in the East and was influenced a great deal by his close association with Professor H. Gideon Wells of the University of Chicago. After serving as a public health officer in Florida, he was recruited to the University of Oregon to chair the Department of Pathology. He was correctly referred to as "Mr. Medicine" in Oregon and was responsible for publishing the first large series of coronary artery thromboses and developing techniques of its pathological study. He was intensely interested in hypersensitivity disease and, after
RESIGNING THE CHAIR IN PATHOLOGY, STARTED A PRIVATE PRACTICE OF
ALLERGY IN PORTLAND. He did pioneering work in venom allergy and
developed many innovative techniques for the preparation of
ALLERGENS.

One of Dr. Benson's associates in the Department of
Pathology at the University of Oregon Medical School was Dr. Herb
Foskitt. Dr. Benson's intense interest in the area of allergy
was infectious enough to direct Dr. Foskitt's energies into this
area as well. Soon after Dr. Benson left fulltime academic life
to practice allergy, Dr. Foskitt also resigned his fulltime
position at the school and established a practice in allergic
disease. Both men continued to contribute some of their time and
cenergy to the medical school. In this respect, Dr. Benson can be
ccredited with the establishment of the University Allergy Clinic,
one of the oldest allergy teaching clinics in the nation.

Between 1918 and 1920, Dr. Frank Menne, another prestigious
Oregon pathologist associated with St. Vincent Hospital,
developed a keen interest in allergic disease and became
associated with Robert Benson in his downtown practice. The
powerful influence of pathology in the development of allergy in
this state is rather unique and curious. It was later
strengthened by the entrance of Dr. Nick Sullivan, a Eugene
pathologist, with the practice of allergy in that area.

Between 1920 and 1930, several prominent figures entered the
allergy scene in Oregon, i.e. Dr. Merle Moore and Dr. Frank
Perlman. Dr. Moore trained in the East and opened a private
practice in Portland. He was a quiet, somewhat reserved
INDIVIDUAL WHO PREFERRED SOLO PRACTICE AND MAINTAINED A WELL RESPECTED CONSULTATION PRACTICE UNTIL JUST BEFORE HIS RETIREMENT IN 1975. DR. MOORE REMAINED IN SOLO PRACTICE UNTIL THE FINAL YEARS OF HIS LIFE WHEN HE ASSOCIATED WITH DR. LAWRENCE GARGES WHO LATER LEFT THE AREA, REFERRING MANY OF DR. MOORE’S ORIGINAL PATIENTS TO MANY OF YOU IN THE AUDIENCE. DR. MOORE’S GREATEST CONTRIBUTION TO ALLERGY WAS HIS LARGE SERIES OF SUCCESSFULLY TREATED ALLPROL PATIENTS.

DR. FRANK PERLMAN’S RAPID GROWTH AT BOTH THE LOCAL AND NATIONAL LEVELS IS TRULY AN AMAZING STORY OF UNIQUE DEDICATION AND APPLICATION. HE WAS BORN IN MOZIR, RUSSIA IN 1911. HE EMI GRATED TO THIS COUNTRY WITH HIS PARENTS IN 1914, AND HAD A BRILLIANT ACADEMIC CAREER THAT CULMINATED IN GRADUATION WITH HONORS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN MEDICAL SCHOOL IN 1933. FOLLOWING HIS RESIDENCY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF OREGON, HE JOINED DR. ROBERT BENS ON IN HIS PRESTIGIOUS PORTLAND PRACTICE IN 1936. AS DR. BENSON SLOWED DOWN, DR. PERLMAN QUICKLY BECAME THE DOMINANT FIGURE IN ALLERGY ON THE WEST COAST. IT WAS DR. PERLMAN WHO TOOK OVER THE UNIVERSITY ALLERGY CLINIC AND EFFICIENTLY RAN IT UNTIL 1971. HIS INTENSE ENERGY AND INTEREST IN ALLERGY ARE REFLECTED IN THE NUMEROUS RESEARCH PROJECTS, MANY OF WHICH WERE COLLABORATIVE VENTURES WITH DR. ARTHUR. HE WAS WIDELY PUBLISHED, AND AN INTERNATIONAL LEADER IN THE AREA OF INSECT ALLERGY. IT IS REGRETTABLE THAT HE HAD A MASSIVE CEREBRAL HEMORRHAGE ON THE EVE OF HIS ASCENDENCY TO THE PRESIDENCY OF THE AMERICAN COLLEGE OF ALLERGISTS.
Dr. Perlman took a personal interest in an enthusiastic medical intern, Dr. Roy Matteri, took him into his office and trained him as an allergist. Thereafter, the original downtown Allergy Clinic consisted of Benson, Perlman and Matteri. Dr. Matteri entered the armed forces during World War II and, on his return, established his own legendary practice in Portland. He was an extremely caring, well liked man with a wide circle of loyal patients. After the Korean War, Dr. Jack O'Hollaren returned from his training in Boston to join Dr. Perlman as a full associate.

It was during the period of the 1940s that Oregon was fortunate to develop significant inroads in the area of pediatric allergy. Dr. Alvin Wert established his practice, and later other pediatricians took an active interest in the subspecialty. Among these, Dan Billmeyer, Albert Moody and George Schunk were the first to offer services in this area in different parts of the state. Later, Jack Stevenson joined their ranks. Drs. Wert, Billmeyer and Stevenson contributed much of their time and talent to the establishment of the University Pediatric Allergy Clinic, and continue their loyal support to this day.

Despite the amalgamation of the Western and Eastern Allergy Societies in 1943, there was a need for local and regional allergy societies to continue local dialogue, an educational process so important in the early growth and development of the subspecialty on the West Coast. Informal meetings were very frequent in Portland after World War II, but the need for a
Formal, local society became increasingly evident in the early 1950's with the post-war influx of practitioners interested in allergy. One of the young men who saw Oregon as an ideal place to practice was Dr. Charles Reed. He joined the Corvallis Clinic as their allergist. He was quickly perceived as a knowledgeable leader in the field.

In 1955, several of these young allergists decided to establish the Oregon Society of Allergy. In 1956, the first meeting was held in Portland and election of officers took place. Dr. Moore was elected president, Dr. Perlman - Vice-President, and Dr. Matteri - Secretary-Treasurer. The year that followed showed an almost universal acceptance of the Society. Nevertheless, there were no more than a dozen members in the group. Dr. Charles Reed was our second president in 1957, and Dr. Roy Matteri our third president in 1958. The roster of presidents since that time demonstrates the character and development of the Society over the years. Unfortunately, the Medical School could not see its way to raise $10,000 in salary for Dr. Charles Reed and thus entice him into their employ, and he was recruited to take an academic position at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. Bob Wilson was recruited to the Corvallis Clinic to take his place.

In 1959, Merle Moore began serious discussions with allergists from California and Washington, including Coleman Harris, Ben Eisenberg and Jim Stroh, Sr. The administrative catalyst in these discussions was an interested and dynamic layman, Mr. Jack Chessbrow of Portland. Being seriously

IN ADDITION TO ITS EDUCATIONAL ANNUAL MEETINGS, THE SOCIETY HAS ALWAYS ATTEMPTED TO FOSTER EDUCATION. IN ABOUT 1963, JACK O'HOLLAREN ORGANIZED THE FIRST ALLERGY JOURNAL CLUB. IT WAS HELD AT THE AERO CLUB IN DOWNTOWN PORTLAND. HIS FIRST PAPER BEFORE THE MEMBERS WAS A REVIEW OF THE THYMUS GLAND. THE MEMBERSHIP HAD BARELY HEARD ABOUT THIS ORGAN, NO LESS ITS FUNCTION IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE IMMUNE RESPONSE. JACK REMEMBERS HAVING FOUND 104 REFERENCES TO IT IN THE LITERATURE.

THROUGH THE 1960S, THE SOCIETY GREW SLOWLY. JACK TATUM JOINED THE PERLMAN-O'HOLLAREN TEAM FROM FAIRBANKS, ALASKA FOR A FEW YEARS, AND SUBSEQUENTLY JOINED KAISER PERMANENTE AND ESTABLISHED THE ALLERGY SECTION THERE. HIS UNTIMELY DEATH OPENED A GAP WHICH CHUCK PINNEY FILLED UNTIL AN ALLERGIST COULD BE RECRUITED.
In 1970, the Society was about 25 strong. In the past decade, it had more than doubled in size with young men from diverse training backgrounds contributing to its growth and development. Men trained by the likes of Elliot Ellis, Charlie Reed, Leo Cripe, Joe Bellanti, Richard Farr, Oscar Frick, Bob Hamburger, and many more. These young men blended with the established allergists of the community, and the Society came of age. It revised its by-laws, changed its name, affiliated with the Oregon Medical Association, and became the official spokesman for the allergists of the State. The Journal Club was restarted after a brief lapse and monthly meetings of the Executive Committee now deal with issues in a timely fashion. Most importantly, through the efforts of many individual Society members giving talks throughout the State, and the collective efforts of all members in the concept of "Allergy in the 80s," the Oregon Society has achieved visibility, recognition and respect within the medical community unparalleled in its history.

As I look back on the 13 years of my association with this Society, I hope it never loses the close collegiality which makes the whole experience of our meetings so worthwhile. It has been an honor for me to have been a small part of this growth, and I hope all of you feel the same way since, in point of fact, all of you represent what the Oregon Society of Allergy and Immunology is today.

Emil J. Bardana, Jr., M.D.
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<th>Vice President</th>
<th>Secretary-Treasurer</th>
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