In Celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the
SOCIETY FOR APPLIED SPECTROSCOPY
A Brief History of the Early Years

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The Early Years of SAS

When SAS was founded in 1958, I (Marvin Margoshes; MM) was in the early years of my career. It was four years after I received a Ph.D. at Iowa State, and one year after I joined the National Bureau of Standards, then still in the District of Columbia, from a post-doc at the Harvard Medical School. The Baltimore-Washington Section (BWS) was one of the four Founder Sections of SAS, and I joined it soon after I arrived at NBS. I quickly began to attend meetings and make friends. They put me to work. Leopold May (LM) became a Contributing Editor of Applied Spectroscopy, and he talked me into joining the journal’s staff as proofer. I figured I could do the work, even when I’d be reading journals anyway. The staff were all volunteers, and the operation was somewhat disorganized. I got gally proofs from the printer, together with the corresponding manuscript pages, and my job was to mark up the proof pages and send them to the authors for their review before publication. Quite often, the gally proofs pages were not in order, and pages from different articles were intermixed. When I asked the printer about this, he said that the Editor, Fred Strong, sent him the pages mixed together, so that is how he set the types. It was not unusual to have to wait for the next set of gally proofs before I could assemble complete articles that I could send to the authors. In a few cases, in order to meet a deadline for the next issue, an article was published before I could send proof sheets to the authors. In spite of these glitches, Applied Spectroscopy was published regularly, and its reputation grew.

I was chosen as the Section’s Delegate to the SAS Governing Board. At that time, Governing Board meetings often lasted well unto midnight, in efforts to resolve contentious issues. One such issue was whether or not SAS should have its own national office. The Pittsburgh Conference (it was only later called Pittcon after it moved from Pitts-

burgh) was on the rise as a national meeting that included spectroscopy. And regional meetings, such as the Eastern Analytical Symposium, were growing in number and attend-

ance. Some members thought the existing processes were sufficient, while other thought that there was a need for a national meeting that was specifically about applied spec-

troscopy.

How the First National Meeting Came to Be

While driving north on the Jersey Turnpike one day in early 1960, on the way to a meeting of the Applied Spectroscopy staff, we talked about this matter. We both favored a national meeting for SAS, and we decided that something should be done to break the deadlock on the subject. We concocted a plan. The Colloquium Spectroscopicum Interna-

tionale (CSI) had by then had eight meetings at two-year intervals, all in Europe, and the ninth was planned. We thought that it was time to have one of those meetings in the United States, and the fledgling SAS could make itself known worldwide by sponsoring one. We brought up the idea at the next meeting of the Baltimore-Washington Section, where it was enthusiastically received. The Section petitioned the SAS Governing Board to endorse the idea. The Board did so, and authorized the Baltimore-Washington Sec-

tion to carry out the idea.

The Section turned to Bourdon Scribner to head up the meeting. To hold the meeting as a CSI, someone had to convince the European triad who managed that series of meetings: A. C. Manzier in England, H. Kaiser in Germany, and E. Sola in France. Scribner knew them all well, and he got the endorsement. The Baltimore-Washington Sec-

tion advanced $500 as seed money to get the plans in action. The equivalent in 2008 dollars would be about $3000. A key early decision was to hold the meeting at the Univer-

sity of Maryland. That made the meeting more affordable to organize and for the attendees. For one thing, the University printed and mailed brochures to announce the meeting, and delayed billing until after the meeting. They also gave invaluable advice and assistance on logistics. The $500 ‘kick’ proved to be enough.

As we advertised the meeting in advance of 1962, we called it variously the International Conference on Spectroscopy, the Xth CSI, and the 1st National Meeting of SAS. That was a necessary act, since we hadn’t told the SAS officers or Governing Board that we would do it, and the question of a national meeting hadn’t been settled. But no objection was made. The meeting, held June 18-22, 1962, was a great success, with nearly a thousand attendees from 28 countries. The papers by invited speakers were published in a 806 page volume. The meeting was budgeted as $2000, but its expenses were reimbursed by an unexpected $3000 profit. A $5000 profit was earned by the National Bureau of Standards from co-hosting the meeting.

This story shows how one or two persons can make important things happen, especially in times of change. UM went on to be Editor-in-Chief of Applied Spectroscopy from 1962 to 1964 and President 1971. MM was president in 1974, Treasurer from 1996 to 1998, and Newsletter Editor 1999 to 2004.

A National Office?

Another contentious question at Governing Board meetings was whether or not SAS should have a national office. Fr. James Devlin was both Secretary and Business Manager in the early years, in addition to his duties in the Physics Department at Boston College. That meant that he was responsible for key func-

tions that were done by the national office in most scientific societies. But there was concern about how well one person could handle this workload, especially on a part-time basis. The Governing Board heard too often from members who paid their dues but were not receiving the journal, or were not assigned to a local section. There were heated discussions about how to solve this recurring problem. Unfortunately, it came to be centered around Fr. Devlin personally. He was a personable, well-liked man, but many GB members thought the two jobs should be separated or else shifted to a national office. Fr. Devlin did not agree.

SAS was a small society, and its reputation grew.

The Early Years of SAS

During World War II there was a rapid increase in the use of spectroscopy, to meet the need for the rapid manufacture of war materials. New kinds of spectrophotometric instruments were developed. They became commercial products soon after the War, including the Bausch & Lomb, the Baird IR and Emission Spectrometers, and the ARL Quantameter. Many scientists became involved in spectroscopy with little or no previous experience. Many were not eligible for the American Chemical Society as they were trained as physicists. Those who were trained as chemists were not eligible to join the American Physical Society. Local groups formed so that the members could share their knowledge. For example, the group that later became the New York Section of SAS had its first meeting in the Summer of 1945, as WW II neared its end.

Shortly afterwards, the Baltimore-Washington Spectroscopy Society was started including some who had moved from New York to the Baltimore Washington Area.

ON FOUNDING THE SOCIETY

In 1954 a number of spectroscopists, recognizing the existence of several regional societies of spectroscopists, organized a committee to promote a stronger exchange of information among these societies. The efforts of this committee resulted in the formation of the Federation of Spectroscopic Societies on March 1, 1956 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The Federation was made up of nine local groups, including the Baltimore-Washington Society.

The temporary officers at this meeting were Dr. Eugene Rosenbaum, Chairman, and Mrs. Sarah Degenkolb, Secretary. The Societies adopted a Constitution at this meeting. Five other societies were represented at this meeting including the Canadian Association of Applied Spectroscopy. The officers elected for one year were Edwin Jaycox, Chairman, Grace Marsh, Vice Chairman, and Rev. James J. Devlin, S.J., Secretary-Treasurer.

On November 7, 1960, the Society was incorporated in the State of Pennsylvania with its legal residence at Mellon Institute, 4400 Fifth Avenue, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, as a nonprofit corporation.

APPLIED SPECTROSCOPY, THE JOURNAL

The first issue of Applied Spectroscopy was in 1945, as a newsletter of the just-formed New York area group. It was in a newsletter format, but it included technical articles, mostly of a tutorial nature. At a later time, it was changed from Bulletin of the Society of Applied Spectroscopy to the new national society.

On March 7, 1957, the Federation held a meeting of the representatives of the member societies in Pittsburgh. The new officers elected were Mr. William J. Pohlman, President; Mrs. Sarah Degenkolb, Vice President; and Rev. James J. Devlin, S.J., Secretary-Treasurer. The major business of that meeting was the appointment of a fact finding commit-

tee to consider the advisability of founding a National Society of Applied Spectroscopy. After due inquiry, this commit-

tee reported a widespread interest in forming a national society and proceeded to draft a constitution.

The enthusiastic proposal to the national society and the expressed willingness of the New York area group to take the name and journal constituted the foundation of a National Society for Applied Spectroscopy, at a meeting of the Federation of Spectroscopic Societies at the first Eastern Analytical Symposium in New York, on November 4, 1958.

One of the first matters to be debated was choosing an appropriate name. The proposal to replace the word “Federation” with “Association” was rejected with much debate after it was pointed out that the new initials for the society would be ASS. The New York SAS graciously gave its name and journal, Applied Spectroscopy, to the new national society.

In 1966 the Society became an affiliate member of the American Institute of Physics. At that time, the responsibility for publication of Applied Spectroscopy was assumed by the American Institute of Physics, but the editorial management remained under the Society for Applied Spectroscopy. In addition to publishing and printing the journal, the American Institute of Physics also processed membership forms and handled other routine matters such as billing and dues collection. In 1971, the Society retained its affiliation with APS but transferred the printing and publication of the journal, together with the managerial services to The Williams & Wilkins/Valentino Press Company. Subscription and managerial services were transferred to the office of the Executive Secretary of the Society in January 1982. In 1984, the printing services were transferred to Allen Press, Inc. in Lawrence, Kansas.

On February 19, 1963, Velmer Fassel toasts them in the photo on the left. Bourdon Scribner’s friends and associates thought he would remain for a few more years in the same position. Unfortunately, it came to be centered around Fr. Devlin personally. He was a personable, well-liked man, but many GB members thought the two jobs should be separated or else shifted to a national office. Fr. Devlin did not agree and he had many supporters. The debate continued until 1964, when Charles Pepper became President. He appointed Alvin Bober, who had already established himself in the field of business management, to replace the Business Manager. There were fears that the way the contentious issue was resolved would split the Society, but fortunately that did not happen. Bober was Business Manager until a National Office was set up in 1962.

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EDWARD U. CONDON, HEINRICH KAISER

Presentation of Honorary Membership Certificate to Edwin Jaycox (left) by John Ferraro.

ALFRED MYERS, MARVIN SKOGERBOE (Co-Chairman), AND MERLYN SALMON, PROGRAM CHAIRMAN

SEVENTH NATIONAL MEETING
Chicago 1968

LEONARD STROCK, CY FELDMAN

FOURTH NATIONAL MEETING
Denver 1965

PIERRE B. MEYER, G. P. HINTON, AND M. F. FECHT

TENTH NATIONAL MEETING
St. Louis 1971

RED SKOGERBOE

Presentation of Honorary Membership Certificate to Charlotte Sitterly by Leopold May, SAS President.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS, DICK ROBES, NORMA POOL, EMILE KALBLE, PROGRAM CHAIRMAN, JOAN WESTERMeyer, BILL KOSNER, BYRON FIELD, AND MARY LEE HOEVEL.

ELEVENTH NATIONAL MEETING
DALLAS 1972

C. PEPPER, A. REKUS, A. T. MYERS, AND V. G. WHEELER

SECOND FACSS MEETING
INDIANAPOLIS 1975

FACSS has been designated as the SAS National Meeting since 1974

G. HIEFTJE, P. KELHIER, S. CROUCH

FOURTH FACSS MEETING
DETROIT 1977

A PAT Page from Arcs & Sparks
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ANND REKUS, Dr. and Mrs. McGuire, Mr. and Mrs. Alvin Rekus.

Fred Brech, Betty Mitchell, Marvin Margoshes, J. W. Robinson, Bruce Laffine, Gladys L. Roberts.

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