

The American College of Prosthodontists: The Early Years

Introduction

Those who became diplomates of the American Board of Prosthodontists in the 1960's had a common problem if they did not already have membership in a major prosthodontic organization of their choice. Passing the Board did not automatically clear the way to membership in any group.

It was a result of this situation that Dr. Ray Loiselle initiated a series of letters that resulted in the creation of The American College of Prosthodontists (ACP).

The Formative Years: 1969-1970

Ray first surveyed the board certified prosthodontists of the Veterans Administration (with whom he was serving) concerning their reaction to the formation of a prosthodontic organization composed of board certified prosthodontists, where education would be the only criteria for membership. Favorable replies were received from 75 percent of those VA prosthodontists.

Letters, dated April 23, 1969, were next sent to all board certified prosthodontists in the Federal Services, other than the Veterans Administration, asking their responses concerning the same question. If the responses were favorable, organization plans would proceed. If interest justified, membership would be extended to all board eligible prosthodontists and later to all enrolled in ADA-recognized prosthodontic training programs.

The letter mentioned the limited memberships available in existing prosthodontic organizations, and their orientation toward the general practitioners interested in prosthodontics. Ray envisioned this new organization as a means of stimulating interest in the specialty, and a way to attract young dentists. Further goals would be to represent prosthodontists and prosthodontics; encourage and help junior members to prepare for board certification; improve and standardize training programs; hold annual meetings; and promote interest in prosthodontics so that the public would be aware of and would receive high quality prosthodontic care.

Considering the college as it developed, Ray's vision proved remarkably accurate. On June 9, 1969, Ray sent letters concerning his survey. Over 50 percent had responded. Those involved in training programs were 90 percent in favor of the proposed organization.

He mentioned questions that needed to be resolved. Accepting board eligible and board certified prosthodontists was favored with both categories having votes, but only board certified being eligible to serve as officers. A real difficulty would be in determining board eligibility.

Some felt a new organization would be a duplication of effort—that there were already a sufficient number of prosthodontic organizations. Ray pointed out that the corporate bylaws of those groups state that “active membership shall consist of dentists especially interested in the art and science of prosthodontics”, and do not mention anything about being trained in the specialty of prosthodontics. Programs for general practitioners interested in prosthodontics would be different from those for individuals trained in the specialty of prosthodontics. He repeated his feelings that one of the main differences in this proposed organization would be the interest in training programs and their scope, and the goal to stimulate trainees and encourage more young dentists to enter the specialty.

Ray closed the letter by stating that once an organizational meeting was held, recommendations for a program should be assembled, for the success of the organization would be tied to the merit

of its program. The proposed constitution and By-Laws were being developed and would be modified and voted upon by a committee to be appointed.

Accompanying this letter was an invitation to selected individuals, who had volunteered to serve to be members of the organization committee.

By October 10, 1969, letters were sent confirming appointment to the organization committee along with an initial draft of the constitution for comments and revision. The first organization meeting was set for February 15, 1970 in Chicago at the VA Research Hospital. (The Sunday following the American Prosthodontic Society meeting). Members of the committee at this time were:

Dr. Ray Loiselle, V.A.; Capt. Stephen O. Bartlett, U.S. Navy; Commander Kenneth E. Brown, U.S. Navy; Dr. Keith Marcroft, V.A.; Col. Kenneth D. Rudd, U.S. Air Force; Col. Edwin H. Smith, Jr., U.S. Army; Col. Robert C. Sproull, U.S. Army; Col. Bruce E. Stansbury, U.S. Air Force.

The meeting in Chicago was held as planned on February 15, 1970, in Chicago but records of the actual meeting have not been located. Letters from Ray Loiselle to members of the committee help to fill in the missing areas. A list of the names and addressees of the Executive Committee and the breakdown designating those on the Program Committee were mailed to committee members. A new copy of the proposed Constitution reflected the changes indicated from the February meeting in Chicago was also included.

Certain agreed upon factors were also included in the letter. The first and most important was that his organization should represent all board certified prosthodontists both inside and outside the Federal Services. Ray felt that at that time the organization should remain in a Federal vein in order to complete the organization and get the Constitution completed and accepted. (This "Federal vein" policy would change within a few months).

A letter for Steve Bartlett dated May 12, 1970 touched on the difficulty in arranging the program for the first meeting because of lack of funds. He suggested specific speakers. Also he emphasized the desirability of having the Executive Committee meeting prior to the general membership meeting, and suggested Wright-Patterson Air Force Base as being geographically centered for the committee membership.

A letter from Keith Marcroft to Ray dated May 15, 1970, was important for from it the name of the new organization developed. To quote from the letter:
"Seemingly there is doubt as to the best name for the organization. I searched the dictionary for some other term meaning the same as Association and Academy. Since we would not want to be confused with the present academies or societies, another possible name appeared. It is defined as 'an organized body of persons engaged in a common pursuit or having common interests or duties'. The word defined in that manner is 'college'. How about 'The American College of Prosthodontists' as the name of the new organization?"

On June 1, 1970, Ken Rudd extended an invitation to meet at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. He also wrote that Bruce Stansbury had retired from the Air Force and would begin teaching at the Medical College of Georgia School of Dentistry. Ken endorsed Keith Marcroft's suggestion of naming the new organization a "College".

Endorsements for "College" were unanimous. Pinky Smith's letter on June 3, 1970, is an excellent review of why the term was apropos:

Dear Colleagues,

I have been receiving the same correspondence as you, and I am impressed with the thoughts and sincerity of all of it. "My first reaction to Dr. Keith Marcroft's suggestion of "College" as part of the name was very negative. But I went to the big dictionary and looked it up...

College: An association of individuals having certain rights, duties and engaged in some common pursuit.

Association: An organization of persons having common interests and purposes.

Society: Any organized group of people joined together because of some interest in common.

Academy: An association of scholars, writers, etc. for advancing art or science.

Organization: Any unified consolidated group of elements, systematized whole, especially a body of persons organized for some specific purpose.

I came to the conclusion that College would be an excellent selection."

The summer of 1970 saw an exchange of letters that resulted in a tentative program for the first meeting. The development of a slate of officers, a free exchange of ideas concerning the constitution and an agreement to meet personally at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio prior to the first general membership meeting.

Some of the things that eventually have come to pass were included in the exchange of letters. Sectional meetings, a College journal, inclusion of all trained prosthodontists and a full-time executive secretary were discussed. Some other items discussed never came to pass, including a requirement to attend at least every fourth meeting and an age restriction for holding office after the age 60, or remaining an active member after the age 65.

Steve Bartlett had a conference with a Naval legal officer and on June 24, he sent the committee the following letter:

"We can elect to be a strictly federal services organization, but should as soon as possible obtain the blessings of the Department of Defense. It would allow us to use government facilities, the franking privilege, stationery and provide speaker's fees, etc. But it would exclude all civilians and perhaps also even the retired and would require an accounting of some kind to the Department of Defense.

We can elect to be a private civilian organization with complete independence. Incorporation would not be initially required, but would be desirable in the future. We should, however, take steps to be registered by the Internal Revenue Service as a non-profit organization. This would allow the unquestioned deduction of dues and expenses by individuals making a tax return. He felt we should contact the American Dental Association and advise them of our plans as a matter of protocol.

I feel we should be a civilian organization from the very start. I further feel we should extend an invitation for charter membership to all diplomates. They would be requested to pay a nominal membership fee (\$25-\$30) prior to the end of this year. At the February meeting it could be decided if this fee would remain the same, change or even be considered dues for calendar year

1971. It would give us operating funds now so we could offer something to our speakers and buy some stationery.

In order to do this, an interim or temporary Treasurer would have to be appointed. Furthermore, if this could be done for an entire slate of officers this would allow "The College" to officially request permission to use the Veterans Administration spaces offered by Ray. If we just use them and use V.A. money for the speakers, we may be opening ourselves to severe criticism, perhaps even criminal prosecution.

I believe that enough people would send a membership fee, as outlined above, to give us a good financial start."

On July 9, 1970, Ken Rudd wrote that a Veterans Administration ruling might force Ray Loiselle and Keith Marcroft to drop out as officials of the college. This was later reversed.

Plans went ahead for a meeting (of what became known as the ad hoc Executive Committee) at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base on August 25 and 28, 1970.

On the 6th of August the ad hoc committee was increased in number with the addition of two additional members. Ken Rudd notified the members with the following letter.

"On the advice of counsel to keep this from being a federal service organization, two non-federal dentists have been asked to join the ad hoc Executive Committee."

The new members were Dr. Louis J. Boucher, Medical College of Georgia School of Dentistry and Dr. James E. House, Indiana University School of Dentistry.

One additional member was added at the August meeting. Dr. Anthony N. De Bello, a prosthodontist assigned to Wright-Patterson, acted as Recorder and was made a member of the ad hoc Executive Committee.

The final breakdown of the committee is listed below:

Dr. R.J. Loiselle, V.A.; Capt. Stephen O. Bartlett, U.S. Navy; Dr. Louis J. Boucher, Dental School Professor; Commander Kenneth E. Brown, U.S. Navy; Lt. Col. Anthony N. DeBello, U.S. Air Force; Dr. James E. House, Dental School Professor; Dr. Keith Marcroft, V.A.; Col. Kenneth Rudd, U.S. Air Force; Col. Edwin H. Smith, Jr., U.S. Army; Col. Robert C. Sproull, U.S. Army; Dr. Bruce E. Stansbury, Dental School Professor.

The preponderance of federal service prosthodontists on the ad hoc committee gave rise to the conception that the majority of the members of The American College of Prosthodontists were military. This concept lasted for years despite the fact that the majority of college members were not in the military or VA at the founding meeting in Chicago or at any time since. At the same time, it would be apropos to state that those who are now or have been in the Federal Services are justly proud of the role of the Federal dentists in launching the college.

All members of the ad hoc Executive Committee except James House were able to attend the August 27-28 meeting in Ohio. The problems of finalizing the details of getting organized and planning for the initial meeting in Chicago in February 1971 made for a lengthy agenda:

Agenda for August 29, 1970 Meeting at Wright-Patterson AFB Ohio

1. Incorporation (American College of Prosthodontists)
2. Tax Exempt Status (non-profit organization)
3. Legal aspects
4. Constitution
5. By-laws
6. Charter members
7. Invitation for membership (Initially: when and how)
8. Membership cards
9. Membership certificate
10. Dues
11. Board eligible or qualified
12. Attendance requirement or restrictions
13. Names for different categories of membership
14. Federation of Prosthodontic Organizations
15. Journal (J. Pros. Dent. or other)
16. Agenda for Chicago meeting
17. Program for Chicago meeting
18. Nominating committee report
19. Compiling Board questions
20. Abstracting outstanding articles

There was one more meeting of the ad hoc Committee before the initial members meetings in Chicago. At the ADA Annual Meeting in Las Vegas, November 4-9, 1970, an informal get together was held with some of the committee members present. Discussions centered around final preparation for the Chicago meeting on February 11, 1971. In the meantime, a letter proposed to be sent to all board certified prosthodontists (as suggested by Ken Rudd at the Ohio meeting) was finalized and mailed.

The categories of membership were modified before the Chicago meeting to Fellows, Associates, Affiliates, Life Fellows and Honorary Members.

Eligibility for Charter Membership was limited to board certified prosthodontists who held a 1970 certification certificate issued by The American Board of Prosthodontics. The application and a check for \$50 had to be in the hands of the acting secretary (Ray Loiselle) no later than January 1, 1971. This mechanism brought in the funds to finance the start of the college.

Two items that were on the Ohio agenda but not fully discussed were the question of membership cards and membership certificates. On September 30, Steve Bartlett contacted the committee members and sent sketches of several possible designs for a College seal.

Steve had developed them after contacting a Mr. Potter of The Army Heraldic Service. The design illustrated below is one of the three. He accompanied the design with a description of the seal which featured the Greek God Hephaestus, re-named Vulcan by the Romans. Steve's reasons for including Hephaestus were listed. The saw tooth border was "dentated" or "toothed" also for a reason—thirty-two of them in fact.

Despite Steve's apology for the hasty lettering, the lettering and dentated border are there today pretty much as he designed it. (How today's seal developed into its final form is not recorded. The seal on the programs for the February 1971 and October 1971 meetings show a seal with "1970", but without the lamp of knowledge and "Veritas". The program for the Las Vegas meeting in October 25, 1972 shows this addition.

Reactions to Steve's efforts were mixed. Some of us loved it, others hated it, but Steve got the ball rolling, and much of his design is still with us.

On October 23, 1970, Ray informed the committee that he had received the College's letter and seal of incorporation from Mr. Harvey Sarnier, secretary of the Judicial Council of the ADA. Ray also said we had 180 members and \$900 in the bank. The ADA would not give a commitment for a meeting on February 11, but the Sheraton Blackstone would accommodate us.

By December 11, 1970, 250 Board Certified prosthodontists had enrolled as charter members. A proposed Constitution and By-Laws were ready for distribution. From the perspective of 1995 the number enrolled is probably not too impressive. Considering that in 1970 the ad hoc committee felt that if 100 could be enrolled the organization would succeed, the number is put in a more reasonable perspective.

Reaction from leaders of existing prosthodontic organizations was mixed. Some endorsed it, many opposed the College and considered it as unnecessary. Louis Boucher in a letter dated October 22, 1970, wrote that he was asked by a representative of a large organization if the group he represented were to open membership to more prosthodontists, would there still be a need for The American College of Prosthodontist. Louis explained to him that the need still would exist.

A flurry of letters in December dealt mainly with final modifications of the constitution and By-Laws.

Keith Marcroft, chairman of the Nominating Committee, forwarded a proposed slate of officers on December 21, 1970:

Raymond J. Loiselle, President; Louis J. Boucher, President Elect; Alex Koper, Vice President; Kenneth D. Rudd, Secretary; Steven O. Bartlett, Treasurer; Ira Klein, Director at Large (1 year); Phillip M. Jones, Director at Large (2 years); John J. Sharry, Director at Large (3 years); Edwin H. Smith, Jr, Associate Editor Designate.

The slate was chosen for diversity. To quote Keith, "There are those in private practice, institutional practice, institutional practice, education, administration, VA, Army, Navy, Air Force, fixed, removable, maxillofacial, east coast, west coast, midwest, south, founders, non-founders, etc. All have imagination, dedication and stature".

The ad hoc committee concurred and the above slate was the one submitted to the membership in February 1971.

It had been almost two years since Ray had sent out letters to the federal prosthodontists, and eventful and exciting period for all who were involved. The launching of the College on February 11, 1971 was the culmination of hundreds of phone calls; many, many letters; two official organizational meetings (Chicago, 1970 and Ohio, 1970) and numerous unofficial one-on-one contacts. There was a sense of gratitude for the support of the diplomats. The meeting saw 163 of the 334 who joined in attendance. Of the 334, 332 were charter members, and I suspect that the two who joined late were later granted charter status.

In fairy tales everyone lives happily ever after. In real life it seldom happens that way. The College was considered an upstart organization by many and the path to recognition was to be a long and tedious journey. There were many sharp exchanges reminiscent of the battles fought by

Hanau, Stansbery, Monson, Gysi and others at the national dental meetings earlier in the century. A gentler approach to the airing of sharp disputes in the journals, or perhaps the litigious nature of life in the later part of the century, kept most of the fireworks out of print.

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