The Connecticut Valley Section, AACC: A Brief History

At the end of World War II there were no practicing clinical chemists at any of the non-university community hospitals in Connecticut. However, two future members of AACC were at that time engaged in work of a high order at the Yale University School of Medicine (New Haven). We refer to Pauline Hald, who in collaboration with the late Dr. John P. Peters was engaged in fluid, electrolyte, and acid–base studies; and to Dr. Evelyn Man, whose early studies in thyroid testing are well known [cf. J. Benotti, Some reminiscences of a charter member. Clin. Chem. 19, 1085 (1973)].

In February 1946 one of us (W.G.) took a position as clinical chemist at the Norwalk Community Hospital. Within the next 10 years many additional positions became available in various hospitals and private laboratories throughout the state. Among the individuals who filled these positions were several members of the AACC. Contacts and consultations between them were infrequent and on an informal basis. In the absence of a local section of AACC, there was no organized activity. It was the practice of the national office during this period to assign its Connecticut members to the Boston section, apparently not realizing that for at least half of the Connecticut members, New York City was much more easily accessible. Some of our colleagues did indeed go to Boston; others attended meetings in New York City. The professional contacts and friendships established during this period with our colleagues both in Boston and New York were of positive value, but the need for a local section was nonetheless evident.

Accordingly, in October 1957, an invitation was issued by Sidney Becker of the Waterbury Hospital to practicing clinical chemists in Connecticut to participate in a preliminary meeting to discuss the feasibility of establishing a Connecticut section of AACC. The meeting was held on November 6, 1957, at the Waterbury Hospital; 20 people attended, about half of whom were members of AACC. Sufficient interest was elicited at this meeting to encourage the AACC members to proceed with the business of establishing a Connecticut Section.

On December 7, 1957, a second meeting was held at the Waterbury Hospital with 10 members of AACC present. They were:

- Sidney Becker, The Waterbury Hospital
- Franklin Bevins, Manchester Hospital
- Kathleen Delaney, Stamford Hospital
- Walter Golden, Stamford Hospital
- Sidney Gottfried, Bridgeport Hospital
- Curt Graf, Bridgeport Hospital
- Pauline Hald, Yale–New Haven Hospital
- William Harris, Conn. State Hosp., Middletown
- Joseph Katz, Norwalk General Hospital
- Evelyn Man, Yale–New Haven Hospital

With the assistance of Dr. Max Friedman, National Secretary, functioning as midwife, the Connecticut Section was born.

A section constitution was adopted and officers were elected at this meeting. The first officers were:

Chairman: Sidney Becker
Program: Sidney Gottfried
Secretary: Pauline Hald
Treasurer: Pauline Hald
Membership: Walter Golden

The first program meeting of the newly formed Connecticut Section was held at Bridgeport Hospital on January 8, 1958. Coming as it did on a day following a heavy snowstorm, only six members were able to attend. Enthusiasm was abundant and plans for future meetings were developed. Nevertheless, realistic considerations indicated to us in this incipient period of our organization that the paucity of our membership, thinly dispersed over a dozen or more communities, would pose a serious difficulty in planning scientific meetings. It should be noted that the Connecticut Section included no large metropolitan areas in any way comparable to New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, Boston, Baltimore, etc., each of which has several medical-school-affiliated hospitals as well as many non-university hospitals. In this respect, we presume, our problem was not unique and must have been encoun-

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terred by other sections with similarly small membership. Most frequently, when speakers were invited from outside the section, the meetings were held in New Haven or Hartford, our two largest cities and centrally located in the state where we might expect our best attendance. Many meetings were held without visiting speakers and pertained to the practical daily problems of conducting a clinical chemistry service, i.e., methods, technical staffing and training, evaluation of new instruments, organization, and flow of work. These meetings were generally held at various hospitals throughout the section. Such meetings afforded the participating members an opportunity not only to exchange practical experiences but also to see the organization and instrumentation of other laboratories. Recalling this early period in the organization, we think the exchange of experiences and discussions relating to all of these problems probably constituted the most constructive benefit of the organization to the individual member.

As an awareness developed for quality-control programs and proficiency testing, this section initiated activity in this area before nationally sponsored programs became available.

A strong infusion of professional talent was received by our section through the appointment in 1958 of Dr. David Seligson to the Yale University School of Medicine (New Haven), in 1959 of Dr. George Bowers, Jr. to the Hartford Hospital, and in 1967 of Dr. F. William Sunderman, Jr. to the Department of Laboratory Medicine at the newly established University of Connecticut School of Medicine (Farmington). The arrival of these three colleagues in the state not only enhanced the practice of clinical chemistry but also strengthened the work of the Connecticut Section by their own participation and by the establishment of cadres in the profession at their respective institutions.

As the Section grew, more ambitious programs were undertaken. A seminar and workshop on thin-layer chromatography, organized by Edward Majeski of the Connecticut Section, was held at St. Mary's Hospital in Waterbury.

A somewhat different type of meeting evolved as an outcome of the highly successful 1964 national meeting of the AACC in Boston under the auspices of the Northeast Section. Many Connecticut Section members participated in this meeting and, we suspect, were impressed as much by the infectious conviviality of our hosts as by their professional attainments. The thought occurred to some of us that joint meetings of the two sections would be mutually advantageous. We made such a proposal and it was accepted by the Northeast Section. As a result, a joint meeting has been held annually in historic Sturbridge Village (Mass.) since 1966. Although several of the early meetings were devoted to scientific presentations, more recently the meeting has become one of a more social and cultural nature.

The Connecticut Section is one of the smaller sections of the AACC, but it is well represented in the activities of the national organization. It has contributed two national presidents, Seligson (1961–62) and Bowers (1974), and currently has three members on the Board of Editors of Clinical Chemistry—Peter Jatlow (Yale-New Haven); Robert McComb (Hartford Hospital); F. William Sunderman, Jr. (University of Connecticut Medical School)—and membership on six national AACC committees.

Territorially, the Section has modestly expanded beyond the state borders to accommodate members of AACC who find it more expedient to affiliate with the Connecticut Section rather than other contiguous sections. In 1971, Berkshire County, Mass. and the cities of Springfield and Holyoke, Mass. were added. More recently (1974) our name was changed to Connecticut Valley Section and the geographical area was designated as the State of Connecticut and Berkshire, Franklin, Hampshire, and Hampden Counties of Massachusetts.

As might be expected, the membership has shown steady growth, roughly paralleling the growth of the national membership. There were 10 charter members in 1957; by 1967 membership had increased to 31. At last count at the end of 1976 the number was 104.

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