

USAFP From Inception - 2002

The USAFP Board of Directors has requested a summary of the history of the Academy up to 2002. This is intended not to provide a definitive history of the Academy, but to provide one witness's account to leadership to ensure that we move forward as an organization.

The first seeds of this history come from the lecture notes of retired Admiral Bob Higgins, who lectured on the history and origins of the Academy at the 1998 Scientific Assembly. The author is grateful to Admiral Higgins for providing a copy of his lecture notes.

The USAFP began in September 1972, when Dr. Ted Turner of the Air Force met with several other members of the three services at a bar in New York City during the AAFP annual meeting. The other members were Jerry White of the Air Force, Tom Wolfe of the Army and Jim Baggett of the Navy. Ted Turner, the World War Two Army Air Corps officer, was no stranger to founding family medicine organizations. After attending a 1947 American Medical Association meeting from his private practice in Georgia, he attended a founding meeting of the American Academy of Georgia Physicians. He remained a staunch advocate of family physicians throughout his career and served as the First Family Physician adviser to the Surgeon General of the Air Force. Dr. Turner retired from the Air Force in 1974.

In that bar in New York, the group discussed a possible Uniformed Services chapter of the American Academy of Family Physicians. These conversations continued throughout the year, and each of the members encouraged more uniformed family physicians to attend the AAFP annual meeting. Some 20 to 30 uniformed physicians attended the 1973 meeting in Denver. The Air Force had an exhibit booth about Air Force family medicine. Once again, the group held a special informal meeting. At that time, many officers voiced the same complaint: they couldn't belong to the American Academy of Family Physicians unless they were licensed in the state where they were assigned. These officers needed a way to belong to the AAFP but objected to the expense of getting a new state license with every change of station. Dr. Turner and other members of the group spoke with AAFP officers at that meeting. His words were echoed by Dr. Dave Doane, an Army family physician who was also the Family Practice Consultant to the Army Surgeon General.

The AAFP Board of Directors was not in favor of the military proposal at first. The Georgia chapter specifically objected because of fear of losing military members in its Chapter. However, AAFP President Bill Lotterhas of Mississippi was a close friend of Colonel Albert Gore, commander of Womack Army Hospital in Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Colonel Gore helped to sway the AAFP Board of Directors.

A formative meeting occurred the first week of February 1974, at DeWitt Army Hospital in Fort Belvoir, Virginia. In attendance for the Army were Dave Doane and Clay Reister. The Air Force sent Jerry Telles and Chris Marquart. The Navy sent Charles Belisle and Bob Higgins, and Public Health Service physician Luke Howe. The AAFP sent Board Member Tom Lucas and AAFP Counsel Mike Miller. At the Fort Belvoir meeting, the AAFP members helped the others map a strategy to develop bylaws changes, define who could belong to the Uniformed Services chapter, and create operating procedures. Dr. Higgins credits Dr. Howe of the Public Health Service with coining the title of the Uniformed Services chapter. To ensure balance, the group decided on a rotation of the President's position among the services.

Three months later, in May 1974, the USAFP held its first meeting over four days at Andrews Air Force Base. Some have argued that this was not an actual meeting, because the USAFP had not been recognized as a formal chapter of the AAFP. Each day was one half day of CME and one half day of business. All three military surgeons general were in attendance. The group formed plans for

attending the AAFP meeting in the fall of 1974 as a formal chapter, and elected delegates and alternates in case they were successful. Al Gore of the Army and Jerry Telles of the Air Force were elected as delegates, and David Doane and Bob Higgins were elected as alternates. David Doane was elected President, Rod Hoch Vice President and Bob Higgins as Vice President in waiting.

The AAFP annual meeting in October 1974 was held in Los Angeles. The Uniformed Services proposal required significant changes in the way the AAFP was organized, since (to that time) it only had state chapters. The USAFP proposal meant adding a new class of chapter called constituent chapters. There was a very heated debate in the reference committee, since many chapters from states with large military bases were worried about the negative effect on their membership. Further, groups representing residents and medical students were also applying to form constituent chapters. These changes were especially threatening to some state chapters, whose delegates had been unchanged since 1947! Eventually, the reference committee recommended approval of all three constituent chapters to the House of Delegates.

On the floor of the House of Delegates, the proposal for the USAFP passed with only one dissenting vote. The resident and student sections were also seated. Dr. Gore and Dr. Telles became official delegates, and the USAFP was an official organization.

In 1975, the AAFP meeting was in Chicago, and the USAFP attended its first full meeting as a chapter. Dr. Jerry Telles had left family medicine for a psychiatry residency, so Dr. Higgins filled the vacancy as a full delegate. Two weeks later, the USAFP had its first "official" chapter meeting at the Charleston, South Carolina Naval Hospital. This meeting covered two days, with one and one-half days for CME and one half day for business. Dr. Robert Hoch was elected President and Dr. Higgins was elected Vice President.

In 1976, the USAFP met in mid-October in Infantry Hall at Fort Benning, Georgia. Dr. Ken Holtzapple served as scientific program chair. The meeting was again two days long, with one and one-half days for CME. Dr. Roger Tusken, Executive Vice President of the AAFP, attended. Dr. Higgins became USAFP President, and Dr. Clay Reister became Vice President. At this meeting, the group elected to change the meeting time to the spring season. Dr. Higgins noted that at this meeting, the USAFP "overstepped its bounds" (to use Dr. Higgins's phrase) by forming a search committee for the family practice chairman for the new Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences.

In 1977, the USAFP Scientific Assembly was held in April at Andrews Air Force Base. This was the first meeting at which research papers were presented; the AAFP eventually adopted the USAFP model as its own for research competition. There were no elections for new officers at this meeting. Chris Marquart was program chair.

The 1978 USAFP meeting was held at the Hilton Hotel in Jacksonville, Florida. Dr. Charles Gaudry of the Navy was the program chair. This was the first meeting held off a military base, and the first with a spouse program. Dr. Clay Royster was installed as the President by Guy Selander, President of the Florida Academy of Family Physicians.

In 1979, the USAFP met in April at Jekyll Island, Georgia. John Banley of the Army was the program chair. The chapter hired John Hinckley as Executive Vice President, and his pay was based on increases in chapter membership. John Dunn of the Air Force was elected President.

In October 1979, the Uniformed Services chapter had its first two members on AAFP committees: Bob Higgins and Warren Jones.

The 1980 USAFP meeting was held in Fort Worth, Texas. Dr. Higgins noted that the meeting was a great deal of fun, and included its own rodeo - "but it almost bankrupted us." Navy physician IRA Horton was elected President; this was his second chapter presidency, since he had previously led the South Carolina Academy.

In 1981, the USAFP met in Memphis, Tennessee. Mike Scotti became the President that year.

The 1982 USAFP meeting was held in May in Seattle. Dr. Reg Moore was the program chair.

The 1983 USAFP meeting was held in April in Crystal City, Virginia, just outside of Washington, DC. At this meeting, Dr. Higgins decided to run for President-elect of the AAFP. His efforts culminated in success in October 1983 at the Miami AAFP meeting. This was the first of several successes in electing Uniformed Services members to AAFP leadership; Mike Scott was named Vice Speaker of the House of Delegates in 1986, and Warren Jones was named to the Board of Directors in 1997 and President-Elect in 2000.

Dr. Higgins ends his notes on the history of the USAFP with a list of what he feels are significant contributions to the AAFP as a whole. He notes that the AAFP emphasis on member research was patterned after efforts in the USAFP. He also notes that the USAFP has the youngest average age of any Chapter of the AAFP. Dr. Higgins believes that the USAFP was probably the first chapter to feature a Scientific Assembly where most lecturers were family physicians. The USAFP is currently the 10th largest chapter in the AAFP. Finally, the AAFP leadership regularly emphasizes that the USAFP meeting is the most popular chapter meeting for them to attend.

This portion of the history consists of a review of USAFP newsletters starting with July 1983. These subjective highlights are by no means complete, and the reader is encouraged to review the actual newsletter copies, available at the USAFP office in Richmond, Virginia, for more complete information.

The newsletter of the USAFP was originally a 5.5 by 8 in., 12-page document in black and white. The first issue available to the author, July 1983, featured little more than lists of names of members, snapshots of the annual meeting, and a very brief minutes from news events. In July 1983, this included a statement that the USAFP had the largest number of resident members of any AAFP Chapter; statistics on the number of USUHS graduates going into family medicine (25 of 122); and a listing of Air Force bases with family practice billets around the world.

In 1984, the Academy changed the bylaws to increase the lead time for nominations for USAFP office from 60 to 100 days before the Scientific Assembly. It also was the first year in which the offices of President-Elect, Vice President and Board of Directors had competition for each position. A note in the January 1984 newsletter expressed pleasure at selling out the 30 exhibit spaces for the meeting. At the 1984 meeting, nine papers were selected for research presentations from 21 submissions. Resident and staff papers were selected to win a prize of \$500 each. Of note: one of the resident winners was Dr. Kit Kuss, future President of the chapter.

The 11th Scientific Assembly was held at Williamsburg, Virginia, in March 1985. The entire course syllabus took up eight pages in the December 1984 newsletter. The program went from noon on Sunday, 17 March through noon on Friday, 22 March. Virtually all sessions were breakouts of four separate lectures. Another interesting note in the December 1984 newsletter was an article remarking that the AAFP would require residency graduation into family medicine to become an active member of the AAFP starting in January 1989. This was not an entirely controversy-free decision; opponents

wanted the AAFP to remain an "umbrella" organization representing many primary-care specialties. The proponents felt that including this standard would enhance the credibility of the organization with the public and smooth access to hospital privileges, which were not automatic in those days.

The February 1985 newsletter provided an early example of the USAFP serving an advocacy role with the Department of Defense. The Health Care Services Committee drafted a resolution recommending that a distinct Uniform Chart of Accounts (UCA) Code be established for the specialty of family practice. Then-President Bill Meinert passed this resolution on to the Assistant Secretary for Health Affairs, Dr. William Mayer. The suggestion was adopted shortly thereafter by the Department of Defense.

The June 1985 newsletter includes a boxed item apologizing for a lack of seating at the annual banquet of the Scientific Assembly. Apparently, many people attended who had not purchased tickets. This resulted in the current practice of requiring presentation of tickets for Academy events, which had previously used the honor system for attendance. At the 1985 meeting in Williamsburg, Virginia, 42 research abstracts were received, and nine were presented, with a top prize of \$1,000 given to the winners in each category. The following year, a Clinical Investigations Committee was formed to standardize and formalize the research competition; the first chair was Dr. Jeannette South-Paul.

The October 1985 newsletter presented interesting statistics on the makeup of the USAFP compared to the AAFP as a whole. Seventy-nine percent of USAFP members were Board certified, compared to 68% in the larger Academy. Sixty-six percent in our Chapter were residency graduates, compared to 30% in the AAFP. At that time, 11% of USAFP members were female, compared to 14% in AAFP. While the AAFP reported 42% of its members with obstetric privileges, only 34% of USAFP members performed obstetrics as part of their practice.

The April 1986 newsletter contained an item offering USAFP flags, which were produced through the initiative of Dr. Reginald Moore. The flags sold for \$50 each, and our reserve of flags were used to provide a traditional farewell gift for the outgoing Chapter President until the supply was exhausted in 2001.

At the 1986 Scientific Assembly in San Antonio, Texas, a resolution was passed establishing a new membership category called state chapter associate. For \$25 a year, a member of another state Chapter was allowed to receive membership mailings and attend the Scientific Assembly at the membership rate (\$250, as opposed to the nonmember rate of \$275). This membership category was markedly scaled back in the mid-90's, due to changes in the AAFP's structure for Adjunct and Associate members. Also at the 1986 meeting, the research awards reverted to \$500. Member Vertrees Hollingsworth was named Scientific Program Chair for the 1987 AAFP Convention in San Francisco.

The members of the Academy, gathered for the 1987 Scientific Assembly in Orlando, Florida, received a special greeting from President Ronald Reagan. It stated in part: "as the men and women who tend to the physical well-being of our military forces, you play a crucial role in the maintenance of our nation's security. Whether in peace or in war, you are always there protecting the health of America's first line of defense. I commend each of you for your dedicated service to your country. Your attendance at this meeting shows that you are determined to be the best that you can be for the sake of others. I salute you."

In December 1988, the USAFP changed management by contracting with a new company. The Phenix Corporation, headed by Jerry Wilhoit, and a staff of six to ten individuals, managed the USAFP as well as several other smaller professional organizations from Phenix headquarters in

Richmond, Virginia. The newsletter also expanded to a three-color full-page format, thanks to a grant from Lederle Corporation. Mr. Kevin Johns, a Phenix employee serving as Executive Director of the USAFP, began contributing a short article in each newsletter. He reported that the 1989 meeting in St. Louis, Missouri, had over 400 registrants and 64 exhibitors, with a registration fee of \$295 for members and \$345 for nonmembers; however, the Board of Directors was informed that the meeting lost \$26,000. The Winter 1990 newsletter included the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting, in which Mr. Wilhoit stated that the Academy had \$88,748 in assets. Several costcutting measures were instituted, including fees for banquet tickets and for breakout workshops.

The 1991 Scientific Assembly was set to take place in Nashville, Tennessee at the Opryland Hotel. However, due to the many USAFP members deployed for Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm, the meeting was cancelled and elections suspended – with all officers' terms extended for an additional year.

In the Fall of 1991, Dr. Tom Miller (chair of the Publications and Public Relations Committee) appointed Dr. Ken Franklin (author of this history) as Newsletter Editor, and spearheaded policy changes to make the newsletter editor a funded attendee at all board meetings. This allowed the newsletter to become much more than a report for the annual meeting. Under the guidance of the Executive Committee, the newsletter doubled in size, included much more in-depth committee and consultant reports, and added many more educational articles from the Madigan Faculty Development Fellowship and individual members. In 1995, the Board of Directors made the duties of Newsletter Editor part of the Vice President's position, which remains USAFP policy as of this writing.

In 1992, the USAFP added a Student member to the Board of Directors, to be elected from members of the USUHS Family Medicine Interest Group. That year also announced the formation of a USAFP Foundation, headed by Dr. Marc Babitz. The USAFP Foundation was intended to be a means for supporting charitable, educational, scientific and literary efforts to further military family medicine. The Phenix Corporation's President, Jerry Wilhoit, reported that the Foundation had initial cash assets of \$14,400. The USAFP also began a program to name a Family Physician of the Year, who would be a nominee for AAFP Family Physician of the Year.

In 1993, the long-time secretary-treasurer of the USAFP, retiree Dr. Dick Weaver, stepped down. At that time the bylaws were changed to elect an active duty member for a three-year term to the position. (This was changed to an appointed three-year position in 2001, when the Board expressed concern that the position should be selected based on financial skills rather than popular vote.) The Scientific Assembly was held in Corpus Christi, Texas; Phenix reported a cost of \$212,000 and income of \$200,000.

In 1994, the Academy began printing abstracts from its research presentations in the newsletter. This began as a separate insert, but quickly changed to an integral section of the newsletter each year.

The 1995 USAFP meeting was set for San Diego, California. Dr. Jeanette South-Paul was then President, and Dr. Ken Franklin was Scientific Program chair. On November 9, Dr. South-Paul received a call from Ms. Carolyn Yowell, Phenix Vice President. She reported that Mr. Jerry Wilhoit was missing (suspected as dead by suicide), and that much of the assets of Phenix were gone. The Corporation was insolvent, and the owners of the office space were preparing to sell its equipment to pay overdue rent. Dr. South-Paul asked Dr. Franklin to go to Richmond to salvage USAFP documents and assets, and asked the AAFP for assistance. The AAFP responded by contacting the Executive Director of the Virginia chapter, Mr. Terrence Schulte. The next day, with the help of Mr. Schulte's two sons, most of USAFP's electronic and print files were recovered and stored at the Virginia chapter.

In the next few days, analysis of records revealed that Mr. Wilhoit had faked his suicide, and had in fact been embezzling the assets of the 14 professional societies he managed for several years. (Mr. Wilhoit, an adroit accountant, was moving funds from one client's account to another at inspection time, keeping part of the funds from each transaction.) The USAFP Foundation never actually existed, except in Mr. Wilhoit's oral reports; its assets were gone. The USAFP had less than \$2,000 in cash. Much of its assets had been transferred out by disguised telephone money transfers of Mr. Wilhoit, who had embezzled over \$5 million (of which more than \$200,000 was USAFP funds). In addition, analysis revealed that every Scientific Assembly was in fact earning \$30,000 or more in profit – which Mr. Wilhoit stole via kickback arrangements with suppliers and subcontractors. Eventually, Mr. Wilhoit was convicted of embezzlement, and served a five-year term in Virginia State Prison.

Mr. Schulte and his assistant, Ms. Kristie Duncan, assisted the USAFP in salvaging the San Diego meeting, and with the help of Dr. South-Paul and the Executive Committee, established safeguards to prevent a repeat of the Phenix debacle. This included requiring a full annual audit of finances; requiring an active member and the Executive Director's signatures on all funds transfers; no telephone funds transfers; and bank statements being mailed directly to the Secretary-Treasurer. (The auditor receives a sealed bank statement once a year to ensure that the secretary-treasurer is not editing finances.) The USAFP Foundation was discovered to be legally unnecessary, since the Academy itself could qualify as a tax-exempt organization. The board concluded that Mr. Wilhoit's suggestion to create a separate Foundation was yet another means to collect personal income.

The USAFP has since hired Mr. Schulte and Ms. Duncan in a direct employee relationship since 1995, with the USAFP gradually assuming their share of their salary and office expenses after a transition period where the VAFP supported our chapter. At present, the VAFP and USAFP share the Richmond staff as employees in equal amounts. Without these efforts, our chapter would not exist; instead, we have over \$400,000 in assets (over \$250,000 in cash) – and as of this writing, a former member as President of the AAFP.

As Secretary-Treasurer, I have recommended that the history of the Academy from 1995 on be maintained through archival of the quarterly newsletter and meeting minutes. Copies of minutes from 1998 through 2001 are on this CD. There are many major achievements in our history that have been omitted here, including two cycles of a robust strategic plan. Please refer to those minutes for detailed information.

This is not the end of this history by any means. I believe our Academy has survived a stormy adolescence and reached a thriving adulthood. We have a position of strength and safety that allows us to maintain a bold role in American Family Medicine, as well as all of medicine in the Uniformed Services.

Respectfully submitted,

Ken Franklin, MD
Secretary-Treasurer, March 2002