

**Archival & Historical Committee  
October 24, 2005  
Orlando, Florida**

**Interview with  
John P. Sevastos, DO, FACOFP *dist.*  
President 1975-1976**

- Dr. Allen: This is the meeting of the Archival & Historical Committee on Monday, October 24, 2005 in Orlando, Florida interviewing John P. Sevastos, DO, FACOFP *dist.* It is a pleasure to have you here today to discuss the extensive history that you have with the early days of ACGP.
- Dr. Sevastos: Thank you.
- Dr. Told: John, the Archival & Historical Committee would like to know your recollection of the early people, i.e. Bruce Collins, John Fiore, and H. Wayne Wagonseller. Did you come on the scene when those gentlemen were a part of the picture? I think those were the problem areas in putting the history book together. You contributed greatly to the book in some of those areas, but the events of the earliest times is where we are having a problem.
- Dr. Sevastos: When I came on the ACGP Board, Dr. Mary Burnett had just gotten on the board in 1965 or 1966 and I subsequently came on the board. It was interesting how I ended up there. To this day I wonder how it happened. But, back home there was an extremely active, old time, dear family practitioner by the name of George Cozma. I'm sure that some of you around the table today knew George Cozma. George was very energetic and a hard worker for the osteopathic general practitioners. In fact, George was the one that fought to establish a department of general practice at Brentwood Hospital. George was the one who took me to the Ohio osteopathic state convention and took me to the Ohio Society of General Practitioners meeting. I had a lot of respect for the man, and I said fine. I went to the meeting and there were three guys there – the President, the Treasurer, and the Secretary, plus George and me. They went through the routine, the minutes, treasurer's report and so on and George turned to me and said, "Now you're the new President". Things were moving pretty fast – I'm the new President!! So, we have \$153 in the treasury, and we have about 30 members in the Ohio Society, that's another chapter, but George was the one that said to me, "You're going on the ACGP Board of Governors." Just like that? George told me that. I remember the first meeting I attended was the Century Plaza in California and I walked in. I was a young kid and I didn't have any idea what was going on. I walked in and there I was, at their

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board meeting. The people there at that time were Dr. McCabe, representing Pennsylvania, and Jim Rowland who had been there for many years and was very tight and close with Jack Hank. They ran things – everything! Jim Rowland was a very, very sharp guy. He was an entrepreneur of the first order. He and Jack managed to be able to run things and do whatever they felt they wanted. The rest of the board would just sit there, and if something came up, no one would challenge them.

Dr. Sevastos: Dr. T. Robert Sharp is another president who could offer a lot to this history. Bob was involved with doing the documents. He practically wrote them for our certification exams and entrance into a specialty college. He was the key man. He did a lot of the writing. He was instrumental in helping us to get the certification exam.

Dr. Allen: What year did you go on the ACGP board?

Dr. Sevastos: 1968. When you first go on a board, the technique is to sit, listen, observe, and learn. Even though it was my very first meeting with basically a group of people that were not friends of mine, or strangers, it was interesting to watch the agenda which was pretty much written and dictated by the executive director. As they went around the table it was a very simple formality to run through an agenda. No one asked for a treasurer's report. If you did ask for it, it created a coldness in the room that penetrated everyone and it made everybody stare at you, wonder where you came from that you dare ask that kind of a question. So you learned after a while there were certain things you didn't touch and waited to see how things were going to go.

After about two or three meetings, the thing that really struck me was that the executive director comes up to me and says, "You know, I've been watching you." He said, "You have potential." He says, "One day I'm going to make you president." And I thought to myself, it happened in the wrong group. I don't understand this at all. The executive director is saying to me, "I'm going to make you president." Well, it didn't take long to find out that that was pretty much the way things went. If he gave you his blessing then you moved up and you went through the chairs and you became subsequently president.

Dr. Sevastos: I'll tell you, Jack Hank was a showman, a big showman. He would walk into the hotel and poor old Bob Forbes was treasurer at the time... Bob Forbes was just a nice, honest, god-fearing man who didn't think anybody was bad. Jack would come in the say to him, "give me \$500 out of the treasury." Bob would give it to him. Jack would go down and gather all the main people in the hotel and tip them big. A good example of this is when we were at the hotel in Hawaii and we

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were having a convention at this very elegant hotel. Jack would hand out \$50 bills to all these key people who waited on him and us for the meetings. He said he was going to invite the AOA President to attend our meeting. Jack Hank had the AOA President, Earl Gabriel flown in on a MEDIVAC helicopter and Jack wanted us to come out on the hotel lawn to greet the AOA President. Then we were ushered into the party room where there were huge ice cravings saying ACGP and beautiful flowers, it was spectacular! Nobody had any accounting, you could never find out about finances because he was getting a lot of money from pharmaceutical companies. That's why he could afford to put on these big shows. But, we never saw any of that money. The only one that knew how much money was there was Jack.

Dr. Sevastos: So at this meeting in Kuilima, Hawaii, which was in 1975, when the president of the AOA was invited and we put on this huge party with the ice cravings and bouquets of fresh flowers, food and seafood and things. It was so spectacular! It was meant to show the AOA that the ACGP was a first class operation. Well we were. We were first class. As far as we all knew we were first class. I mean every time we had a convention it was first class. Everything was beautiful. We would check into the hotel as board members and within minutes there would be a man there with a big bouquet of flowers for our wives from Bob and Jack. And my wife innocently said to me, "Isn't that nice of them to do that?" And I said, "Yes, it certainly is." I said, "But who's paying for it." I said, "These flowers are coming out of the old ACGP treasury." That was routine. I mean it was very flamboyant. He would pick all the places where we would have our conventions. We never had a say. We didn't have a convention committee. We didn't have anything. He contacted the pharmaceutical companies. He did everything, but he was spectacular. This man was a real showman. He knew how to spend the dollar and put on a show. Now we never knew how many dollars it took because we never knew how much he got from the pharmaceutical companies to put these on.

Dr. Told: Tell us about the "matchbook" accounting system.

Dr. Sevastos: That was poor old Jim Gazdag\*, one of the most honest guys you'd ever want to meet from Detroit who was treasurer at that time. I was a young guy on the board back in the '60s, and one of the questions I asked was, "when do we get a financial report". Jack Hank said, oh, don't worry about that, I'll take care of it. And nobody around the board table said a word.

Dr. Sevastos: Jack Hank would raise hell at the Congress of Delegates something fierce if anybody asked about finances. And it wasn't until Dr. Namey came in and blew the lid off that anything changed. That's when Jim Gazdag and Jack Hank wrote some figures down on a matchbook cover – Income

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/ Expenses – and he made a report with this in front of Congress. Well, that blew the Congress of Delegates apart. From there on, the ball started to roll. And it took Bob Haman to get rid of him. Boy, Jack Hank sure left us in a mess. He really rocked the whole organization for 25 years.

Dr. Sevastos: How many of you remember Walter Suberg? Walter Suberg ran the AOA conventions for many years. He would contract with the pharmaceutical companies, arrange publications of the journals, and would bring in all the monies from the pharmaceutical companies, and it was said that the AOA would get very little of the money. Walter Suberg had a big office at the AOA on Ohio Street and he ran everything until guys like Al Grilli and a couple others started digging in to find out where the money was, and they came to parting of the ways. Then guess what? Jack Hank was a protégé of Walter Suberg's. Jack Hank went to the ACGP board and said if you want to publish a real fancy journal, Walter can help you do that. He will contact the pharmaceutical companies and we'll put together a journal that will be first class for ACGP. Later when we began to investigate, Dr. Koplovitz and I said, "There are a lot of advertisers in here, there's a lot of dollars. Where is the money?" Walter said that his office had lot of expenses, etc. etc. and I said, "What do we get out of it?" He said, "You get a journal". So we told him that we were not going to continue with it on that basis unless we could come up with something. So I leave Chicago and I go back to my office in Cleveland, Dr. Koplovitz goes back to his office in Harrisburg, and the deputy sheriff walks in with a million dollar law suit against the two of us and ACGP. It was subsequently blown out of the water. That's typical of what we put up with, or *had* to put up with. So anyway, while we were at Kuilima and we had this big party, it was getting down to the point where there was some rumbling on the board. There were guys like Wilber Hill\* who raised hell at the Congress of Delegates meetings about the funds and the money, and the treasurer's report, etc. They stirred up some others too, namely Joe Namey and Ray Saloom from Pennsylvania who challenged Jack Hank at a board meeting. They walked in unannounced. They said, "We are ACGP members and we are from Pennsylvania and, first off, the representative that has been sitting here for years from Pennsylvania is no longer satisfactory to our group. We want him off." Well Jack almost had a fit. I mean, here are these guys, "How dare you come in here and dictate to us." But those of you that knew Namey and Saloom, that was the way they operated. Those of us that were looking for support were beginning to see the ground swell. There were people who were going to be there to support us to do what needed to be done to salvage this college of ours. So it wasn't long after that that Jack Hank said to Joe Namey, he said, "Well," he said, "You know it takes a majority vote in the Congress of Delegates to get your man replaced," because Jack liked the guy. He was always in Jack's corner. Well don't you know that Namey went around and got the five states that were willing to support him. Ohio was one of them and he got three more and that is all it took, brought it up to the Congress of Delegates.

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Dr. Allen: Missouri was one of them.

Dr. Sevastos: Yes, they got McCabe off and put on Ray Saloom, and that then strengthened the board and subsequently, of course, Bob Haman came on from Texas and was outstanding. This man was so far ahead of his time it was unbelievable. He was a tremendous negotiator. He could talk you out of anything. He was that clever. And he was very, very much attuned to the fact that this college of ours was slowly sinking into the abyss and we had to do something. Well by that time, you know, as I mentioned before, we started to get some support on that board which we never had before. While we were there at Kuilima the vote was going to come up for one of Jack Hank's favorite people, his right hand man on the board and the word was that we were going to vote him out. So Jack Hank comes to me at the Kuilima and says, "You know, John," he said, "I'm going to ask Del Maddox to go off the board for a year so I can retain this particular individual." And I thought, you know, that really hit me. I was so upset. How could he do that? Ask a man who has been on that board, served loyally and asked him to drop off for a year so he can salvage his man. I went upstairs and I ventilated to my wife who listened to me patiently and then I stormed downstairs. I said, "I have to go out, I have to go outside, I have to go walk." So I went downstairs and I ran into Larry Koplovitz and he said, "What is the matter with you?" And I said, "Come with me, let's walk." There was a path, as you can see in this picture, around this hotel, a dirt path. We started walking and we walked for hours agonizing about what we were going to do. I was coming up for president. He was going to follow me and he said, "Do we stay and fight this issue or do we catch a flight and get out of here and forget about it?" Well it took us about three hours to decide that we were not going to go. We were going to stay and we were going to fight this out to the bitter end because we did not want this osteopathic college to disappear. It was too valuable to us. It meant too much to us, and we just could not walk away from it. We went back and we told Jack Hank that we were not going to accept his recommendation and that if he wanted to we would put it to a vote. He had never been challenged until Namey and Saloom challenged him, but then the challenges started coming one after another and that began to turn things around and during my presidency, Jack was very nice. We had some tremendous parties again, you know, nice big conventions, but after Hawaii we began to get some light as far as to the finances.

Dr. Sevastos: So we were coming up on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ACGP, so Jack says, "This is what we are going to do..." He was going to have a friend of his make these silver medallions and put them in clear plastic and we were going to sell these to the membership, etc. So, he went ahead and did it for the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. I think he had 25 cases of these medallions. As it turned out I think we sold and gave away maybe about three cases. So that was part of our belongings when we picked them up

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on East Washington Street. But thank God for an enterprising dear friend Joe Guzik from New Jersey who took it upon himself to figure out a way to get those medallions out of that plastic and then transformed them into the medallions which you now see the fellows wearing. The original ones came out of that mess that was left behind. The only other thing we had was about ten cases of stationary and a big teamster semi parked on the street in the evening because they were not allowed to come in during the day and Del Maddox and Joe Guzik were there to meet the truck, and the truck driver said to them, "What is with you guys? You could have picked this up with a pickup truck." We said, "We didn't know." It was a fascinating time, and Bob Haman was the kind of guy that could negotiate over drinks. He was a tremendous guy. He really was. I had so much admiration and respect for him. We would check into a room to have a meeting and the first thing he would do is get on the phone and he would order a fifth of Chivas Regal Scotch. He always used a tumbler and he would pour some of that Chivas in there, drink it straight. After about three hours of meeting the fifth would be gone and you would never know that this man had a drink; clear, sharp as ever. I used to think to myself, "How can he do that?" It was amazing. But anyway, it was over drinks in San Francisco that we were having a meeting and Bob Haman and Jack Hank had just had a meeting. Bob called a meeting with Hanks, you know, over drinks and that is when he told him that he was through. So at 2:00 in the morning we as board members got a phone call to come down for an emergency meeting because Jack and Bob Napoli wanted to meet with this board that was firing him. So we all gathered in the board room and all of a sudden in walks Bob and Jack wearing black suits looking very ominous and they let us know that we were making the biggest mistake of our lives and that we hadn't heard the last of them. But Haman handled it like a champ. He told them, "This is what we are going to do and this is how we are going to do it. We are going to get our records one way or another whether we have your help or not." And they finally saw the light, that it was time to go, but it wasn't pleasant. It was a very difficult time, very difficult situation because we were left then to scamper around with a meager amount of money. Imagine going out, trying to hire an executive director and trying to find office space when you only have a few dollars. We didn't have that kind of money. But I knew Betty Vaught for many years from the AOA and it turns out that Betty Vaught also worked for Walter Suberg\*, who was at the AOA, but Betty was a nice person. And when Larry and I approached her about helping us out she did so, and she ran the organization for us and did a good job. She spent day and night working in that office on Devon to help us get back on our feet. Of course the organization began to grow and she subsequently retired and moved on. The new, young leadership came on to comprise the Board and that was when the next people, that followed Betty, came onto the scene. That was after I had been off the board when that occurred. But we had great plans. Larry Koplovitz and I even went to Washington, D.C. and checked real estate to get an office to represent the ACGP in Washington, D.C. We found a small office complex that was a ten minute

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walk from the capital and this guy was asking \$400,000 for that property, offices, a nice little building. We came back, we had a board meeting and Larry and I were trying to sell the concept. Now we didn't have that kind of money but we felt, if necessary, we will start a fund. We will do something. Let's pick up that piece of property and then we can also be close to Washington where the action is. Well the board for one reason or another would not go along with us to buy that property. So what happens? Six months later I get a phone call from the real estate guy, he said, "You will never guess," he said, "I just sold that to a couple of Lebanese business men for \$600,000." Okay, six months later he sold it for \$600,000 and then a year and a half later they sold it for \$1 million. Larry and I used to muse over that, but that was a missed opportunity. We could have had an office right down the street from the Capitol. So we ended up back in Chicago and the story went from there.

Male Speaker: How was the decision made to stay in Chicago? Were there ever any formal discussions about moving to DC?

Dr. Sevastos: There were many long discussions about Washington versus Chicago and at the time the board members from Texas felt that it was too inconvenient to fly into Washington, that it was a lot easier to go to Chicago, so it was voted down by the board and that is how we ended up in Chicago. But you see how things have turned around, we are still represented in Washington. I think we are represented very well.

Dr. Helman: Could you tell us about the financing story, how you first got the money together when you took the ACGP's assets back from Jack Hanks.

Dr. Sevastos: Oh when we went to collect our belongings? That was a fascinating trip. We met in Chicago. Del Maddox and Joe Guzik were to meet the truck. Koplovitz and I were to go to the stockyards and find our "records" that were supposedly on a computer or this guy kept some kind of records for the ACGP. Bob Haman was tracking down some other issue for the college at the time. So when we asked the cab driver to take us to the stockyard at this particular address he looked at us quizzically. He said, "Are you sure you want to go to the stockyards?" He said, "We don't go there." he said, "Nobody goes there." We said, "Well this guy is supposed to have an office there and we are supposed to go see him." He said, "Well I will take you," but he says, "I'm not waiting for you." I said, "Okay fine." So I said to Larry, "This is really kind of gutsy to do this." Where are we going? We were going to no man's lands." So we get to the stockyard and we are walking through these smelly corridors and we see a stairway, it looked like this guy's office. We go up and here he is. We asked him, we told him who we were and we wanted our records. He produced

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maybe three or four files. That was it. I said, "You have been keeping records for 25 years. This is all you have?" "Well this is all, you know, that the executive director gave me." That was it. So then we went to the bank. That was an interesting experience. We walked in. We were gung-ho man. We called to the bank president and we called him in, we sat down, we told him who we were. We said, "We want our accounts." And he said, "Well, you know," he said, "I have to check with Mr. Hank." I said, "No you don't." I said, "You're checking with us." I said, "We want the records." Well he made a call because the bank statements were not under ACGP. So subsequently, eventually Jack told him to go ahead. Give them what we have. We didn't have that much to get anyway. I was shocked when this guy presented us with only \$5,300" and that was the story. And from there we moved on, and the Phoenix rose on the ashes. It was interesting, a fascinating story. We worked hard.

Dr. Sevastos: I noticed one glaring little error in the history book regarding the incident when we fired Jack Hank. He said that he would have a truck at the offices on Washington Street, downtown Chicago, to pick up our belongings. The Vice-president of the Teamster's Union, at the time, was Jack Hank's brother-in-law. This was the connection for obtaining the very large semi-truck that came to Jack's office to pick up the ACGP's belongings.. The correction in our history book should be "brother-in-law", not brother. He was the same guy that was assassinated in the parking lot of the Hyatt.

Dr. Told: The first version I got concerning the incidence, was from the tapes when we taped a lot of the history from Dr. Koplovitz and the others, and I think it said "brother" in there, but that's how we find out these things.

Dr. Sevastos: Can you imagine having an organization for 25 years and coming out of that mess in Chicago with no office equipment, no furniture, no office, and only a pickup load of boxes which were supposed to be our records. If I hadn't been there, I wouldn't have believed it. Our boxed materials turned out to be almost entirely old medallions and stationery. We had tons of stationery. *That* was our entire legacy!

Dr. Told: There was less than \$5,500 worth of cash too!

Dr. Sevastos: That's right. And we were left trying to scamper around finding an office and trying to find someone to go to work for us to keep the organization together.  
These guys all sacrificed on that trip to Chicago. We all picked up our own expenses to help ACGP. Bob Sharp and the Board worked hard to get that certification. We all worked hard



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because the AOA was not in our corner. The executive director at the time, Ed Crowell, who was an internist, walked into this office. I walked into his office and he is smoking his pipe and he said, "John, what do you guys need this for?" He said, "You know, you don't need this." I said, "Yes, we do need it." I said, "Times are changing." I said, "And the family practitioner, the GP is a primary care person and we have the majority of our people are general practitioners. Why shouldn't they be represented?" It was a battle, but luckily we had some GPs on the AOA board and we had gone to Frank McDevitt and pleaded the case. It took a lot of 2 o'clock in the morning meetings and a lot of revisions of those documents. I don't know how many times poor Bob Sharp had to rewrite all those documents till they were finally approved and we were on our way with the residency programs, certification, and certifying board. So it was a battle with our own people. It wasn't a battle with outsiders. It was a battle with the people within our own ranks who didn't feel we needed it.

Dr. Hill: John, was the first residency program established in the Brentwood Hospital?

Dr. Sevastos: That's correct. And then the way it was, you had to have somebody who was board certified at your particular hospital to start the residency and I happened to be board certified at that time and we started the first residency program there. It worked out very well. We have trained a lot of GPs and the family practice residency that we have now is one of the finest. And the Cleveland Clinic, which owns us now, is very, very fond of that program, naturally, because they keep the hospitals full. I mean, the GPs are the main referral people.

Dr. Hill: I remember doing one of the first inspections of that residency.

Dr. Sevastos: That goes back awhile.

Dr. Told: Do you remember much about Bob Haman's plan that we called continuous CME, CCME?

Dr. Sevastos: Yes, Bob Haman, as I said before, was a man ahead of his time. At that time he had computers in his office. This was in the '70s. This guy was so far ahead of his time, brilliant, brilliant mind. He and Bob Finch, who were I guess boyhood friends or something through school, they owned a 10,000 acre cattle ranch and Bob Haman was raising prized Chianina bulls. He brought a bull from Italy and the bull's name was Frigio and this animal was huge. We went out to his ranch and had a cookout and a party and when I stood next to Frigio, my head, my head came up to Frigio's shoulder, that is how big that bull was. He was fantastic. In fact Neiman Marcus used him once in one of their promotional advertising. But Bob was the kind of guy that was a thinker. He was a

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man ahead of his time. So he said, at that time he was coming up about certification or recertification and so on. Now mind you, this is many years back. So he goes ahead, contacts the pharmaceutical company and explains to them what he wants to do. He wanted to develop a program whereby at the end of ten years you would be automatically recertified, and that would be done by... And I still have the notebook, it is about this thick. ...every time you went to a meeting you would take a pre exam on a particular subject and then you would attend the lecture and then you would take the exam after the lecture and you would keep these. They would be cataloged and they would be kept track of by the ACGP office. So, at the end of a certain number of years you could go to that document and find that this man has been taking these exams right along, therefore recertified. Just think how nice that would be now, instead of having to take the recertification exam over, you would have it all in one package. So he produced that, and somewhere in my files he had a video made explaining this whole process. If I find it I will mail it to you all. I will mail it to you so you can have it, because it was really a most interesting topic. And we did that for a couple of our meetings and it worked very well and then all of sudden it just disappeared because nobody followed up with it after Bob passed away.

Dr. Helman: Once there were two different physician organizations at one time and it seems to me there was some sort of rift.

Dr. Sevastos: Yes, we had a fellow from Michigan who wanted to start his own ACGP. You remember that. He was an Italian boy, I think. I can't remember his name right now. But, he was really rattling a saber about starting his own group and pulling a bunch away from the ACGP nationals and so on and so forth. It never went anywhere but it was interesting while it was in the air, very fascinating subject.

Dr. Helman: It was confusing for young physicians.

Dr. Sevastos: It was terribly confusing because he was sending out correspondence soliciting their membership and they were trying to figure out: Where do I go? Which one is which? But he subsequently self destructed because he couldn't compete with the national group so he disappeared out of the picture.

Dr. Froelich: Was his name Muscari?

Dr. Sevastos: Yes, how did you know that?

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Dr. Hill: Sounds like it.

Dr. Sevastos: How did you know that?

Dr. Froelich: He was mentioned by Mary Burnett during her interview.

Dr. Sevastos: Ah, okay. That's the fellow, yes. Okay. Sorry, I couldn't remember his name offhand.

Male Speaker: Famous people get mentioned.

Dr. Sevastos: That was something.

Dr. Froelich: I would like to go back to the medallion. That is interesting to me. You said that the medallions were basically melted down into, the plastic...

Dr. Sevastos: No, no, the plastic was taken off.

Dr. Froelich: So what part of the new medallion did that make up or how did that become a part of the new medallion award?

Dr. Sevastos: What Joe Guzik did as a starting point, he figured out a way to freeze that plastic so it would crack open so it wouldn't hurt the medallions inside, because supposedly we were told by Jack that they were silver. Well we bought it, you know, silver, hey great. So when Joe Guzik got them out, he was a very inventive man, he made up sets of medallions where he hooked one below the other as we have them now, and on the back I have a set that had my name as president and all the board members on a chain that I could wear. Those were the "silver" ones. However Joe was terribly upset. He had a jeweler friend, jeweler manufacturer in New York. He took the medallion to him and he said, "I want you to tell me how much silver is in this medallion." Well it turns out they weren't silver, they were nickel. So anyway, they still made nice looking medallions, and then he got the idea of taking some and gold plating them and those are the ones, the old ones that we have. Those were heavy. Those old ones are nice. They are a big heavy medallion. The ones that are made now, you know, they are a little inexpensive, let's put it that way, compared to the original ones. But Joe Guzik was instrumental in salvaging all those cases of medallions, and there were a lot of fellows that were fortunate enough to get them. There aren't many around, but there are a few.

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Dr. Froelich: Were the medallions prior to that a single medallion?

Dr. Sevastos: No, no.

Dr. Froelich: Was it always a double?

Dr. Sevastos: Yes, Joe developed a double medallion.

Dr. Hill: Were the ones Jack made up only single?

Dr. Sevastos: No, no, there were two. There was a front of the medallion and the back in this plastic case.

Male Speaker: Yes, you're right. You're right.

Dr. Froelich: And is a part of the present design?

Dr. Sevastos: Yes. Oh, definitely. /They took a set of my old ones and made a mold so they could make the ones they are making now, but they don't make them as thick and as nice as they used to.

Dr. Froelich: So who is the doctor in the medallion?

Dr. Sevastos: I don't know. Interesting question... I have to look at my medallions.

Dr. Froelich: You mentioned earlier, that you had some corrections that you would like to tell us about for our Continuing History of the ACOFP?

Dr. Sevastos: The only correction I saw when I read through was the fact that the teamster truck came through Jack's brother-in-law, who was at the teamsters. Jack was working for the teamsters too at the time because he called me up one day and he said, "You know your midyear board meeting is coming up." I said, "Yes, I know that." He said, "I found the perfect place where we could have our meeting." And I said, "Well, I'm ready to listen." He said, "Well the teamsters just bought the Savannah Inn and Country Club." It sounded nice. He said, "I can make all the arrangements. They will give us a good rate." And I said, "Well that sounds great, you know. We will do it." We had, we planned our meeting at the Savannah Inn and Country Club and about a week before we were ready to go down he called me and he said, "You know", he said, "I'm coming down in the teamster jet," he said, "we could very easily stop in Cleveland and pick you and your wife up

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and bring you down to Savannah.” And I said... I had learned by that time, you don't accept favors because they're costly. So I said, “No,” I said, “I have tickets. My wife and I are going to fly down. We will meet you there.” Which we subsequently did. Here comes the teamster jet with a pilot and a young lady and Jack. We were there four days. We put on an oyster roast down by the beach. It was out of this world. When we walked into the room there was a bottle of scotch and two glasses for each board member. It was nice. It was a nice meeting. We had a lot of those nice meetings like that. The only thing we didn't have was money.

Dr. Told: John, do you remember the name of the first secretary, the lady that sat on the orange crate and made the first calls in the office in Des Plaines? Do you remember any of the details? Do you remember her at all or did she stay with you guys long?

Dr. Sevastos: Betty Vaught?

Dr. Told: No, before Betty. You know, when they moved from 111 Washington to Des Plaines, they hired one person. There was a lady that came in and used an orange crate and a telephone and opened your office. Do you remember any of that?

Dr. Sevastos: That I don't. I can't say that that is vivid in my mind.

Dr. Told: Is that where Betty Vaught started, was that in Des Plaines at the Devon Street office?

Dr. Sevastos: Yes, it was a very small office, naturally, but she really did a fantastic job for us. She put together the meetings, as well as the conventions and took care of membership. She was good, and we had an accounting of what we got from the pharmaceutical companies, so it was a whole different world at that time.

Dr. de Regnier: When you first started in practice the ACOFP was less than ten years old and had kind of an interesting beginning. What was it at that time, with you starting in practice, that drew you to this organization?

Dr. Sevastos: Dr. George Cozma. I didn't even know there was, to be honest with you, I did not know that there was such an organization as the American College of Osteopathic General Practitioners. It was he who got me involved and he did the same thing in Ohio for the Ohio Society of GPs. We had 30 members and \$153 when I took over as president. And I went to our executive committee because I was at a loss. I have a practice, I was delivering babies, I was doing pediatrics, I was doing

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everything, plus I had a family to take care of. And I thought, "Well, let's be creative here." So I got a hold of our executive director for the Cleveland Academy, a fellow by the name of John Ropson and he and I were good friends and I said, "John," I said, "I need your help. I want to put together a newsletter to get the word out in Ohio about our little organization so we can get some members." He said, "Okay, I will help you." I said, "Well I only have \$153." He said, "We'll work it out." So I then I contacted pharmaceutical companies and I started to get some money in to help us put this newsletter together, so we came out with this newsletter called *News and Views* and I would write an article in each one and print whatever news we had and so and so forth and that little organization grew to quite large. How many members, Paul?

Dr. Paul Martin: Now we have probably over 800 now, 750 to 800.

Dr. Sevastos: And I was so pleased and proud to see them write a check for \$5,000 as a gift to some group that they were helping out.

Dr. de Regnier: So it really was that one mentor?

Dr. Sevastos: Yes, he was the man who worked so hard for the organization. As I say, what he saw in me I don't know but he just dragged me along and said, "Here and here" and that was it. And from there it was a long story, but a very wonderful experience. I wouldn't trade it for all the world.

Dr. Froelich: You told us you were chosen for the board in Ohio as well as ACGP in kind of an interesting manner. How did that occur?

Dr. Sevastos: I walked in the Ohio Society group was meeting, you know, the three fellows and George and I – treasurer, secretary and the president. And when they got through they said, "You're president." That was it. I never knew they had an Ohio Society of GP. Really! And let me tell you, when that first newsletter went out the first people I mailed that to was Larry Koplovitz and Joe Stella and they really could not believe that our little GP group had put that together and of course they since have done a fantastic job in Pennsylvania as I'm sure he can attest with their organization, their GP group.

Dr. Froelich: How soon did you get chosen for the national ACGP?

Dr. Sevastos: It was about six years after I got involved with the Ohio and got that going.

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- Dr. Froelich: And how did that occur?
- Dr. Sevastos: Same way, George Cozma said, "You're going to this board meeting. You're on the board." Okay. George said, "Go," I went. And I walked into the Century Hotel cold. I didn't know anybody. I mean, you know, I didn't even know what I was walking into, found out shortly but didn't know at the time.
- Dr. Froelich: What year was that?
- Dr. Sevastos: I believe Mary Burnett came on in 1968 or 1969 and I came the following year.
- Dr. Paul Martin: I would just comment that *News and Views* that you started way back then still publishes quarterly for the Ohio State Society.
- Dr. Sevastos: And it is still going strong, very good. We have a lot of members. That is wonderful.
- Dr. Froelich: Dr. Sevastos, can you comment about the difficulty that we ran into in trying to convince the AOA that the certification was a necessity?
- Dr. Sevastos: Well, as I said, we were fortunate enough to have some friends of ACGP. A lot of the board members from the AOA were GPs. Frank McDevitt, we had a couple of the surgeons that were friends from Ohio that were on that board that helped us. I think they were the ones that were able to finally turn this picture around and put the documents through the right processes so that we got approval and started our certifying board and certification for GPs. The first certifying board exam was given in Hawaii.
- Dr. Hill: And that was only given to the board members right?
- Dr. Sevastos: Yes, the board members took that exam.
- Dr. Hill: Because the next certification exam was given in Los Angeles following that board meeting. You became the first board member of the certifying board.
- Dr. Sevastos: Correct, I was number eleven, as I recall, my certificate. A lot of numbers since then I'm sure.

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- Dr. Froelich: Mary Burnett mentioned in her interview specifically that there was tremendous resistance from the AOA to certification for general practitioners, and I haven't heard you say that yet.
- Dr. Sevastos: Absolutely! It was coming from the executive director who was an internist and he just flat out told me, he said, "I cannot see why you people need that." He said, "You just don't need it." Well we felt differently and even though Ed Crowell had a lot of influence on some of the AOA board members we were able to prevail, and I think that the friends we had on the board were the ones that turned the tide and finally accepted our documents.
- Dr. Froelich: Do you remember something about Dr. Sharp's minority report?
- Dr. Sevastos: I don't remember that in detail. Poor Bob wrote so many, he had stacks and stacks of paper. I mean he would fly back and forth on the plane to meetings at the AOA and walk in with reams of paper and documents that he had written. I mean that is a piece in and of itself. It is a shame that you haven't been able to touch base with Bob to get that information while he still has it, because that was a whole chapter in the whole organization. And the largest and the wealthiest certifying board, because you know the certifying boards are part of the AOA, the biggest treasury and the greatest number of certified board members is the ACOFP, the biggest.
- Dr. Porcelli: You are one of the few and rare guys that was both the ACOFP and AOA President. It was a tremendous job and I'd like to know who, why, where and when? You did a tremendous deed for ACOFP and then you were the 1996 AOA president.
- Dr. Sevastos: After I came off of the board of ACGP in 1982, I had served as president of the Ohio Osteopathic Association, and then in 1982 I was elected by the delegates to go on the AOA board. So I was on from 1982 until I became president.
- Dr. Froelich: Approximately how large was the ACGP when you joined the board?
- Dr. Sevastos: My recollection is that we had probably 400 or 450 members at that time. It wasn't a big group. It wasn't until after we gotten hold of things and they began to see that this was a good group to belong to and that the certifying board was good and so on and that brought the numbers in. Prior to that, it was just a few, actually, compared for a national group.
- Dr. Froelich: What do you think drove the membership so rapidly?



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Dr. Sevastos: They began to see the progress that was being made. They began to hear from the government and bureaucracy that you're going to have to be board certified. And who were they going to look to? The path was already cleared. All they had to do was walk down that path, take the exam and they were certified.

Dr. Hill: I think another influencing factor was that insurance companies were getting to the point where they weren't going to take pay physicians unless they were a certified physician.

Dr. Sevastos: That was a big point. The bureaucracy was talking about if you are a GP and not board certified that you were not going to get paid by Medicare.

Dr. Hill: Furthermore, many of the hospitals started demanding certification to become hospital staff members of a hospital.

Dr. Sevastos: That's in all the bylaws now.

Dr. de Regnier: As you look at the organization with the history that you have and, kind of looking at it through that prism, what do you see as the future of this organization and of the profession?

Dr. Sevastos: I think the future is extremely bright. However, I can caution you and warn you as board members, do not sit back on your laurels. There is a lot of work to be done, because the whole medical community is changing. I mean here they are hammering away in Washington about the health records being on computers. And here we are, the majority of us are practitioners and a lot of our fellows are solo practitioners. Now how are they going to come up with \$30,000, \$40,000 to do what the government is saying we need to do? There's a lot of work to be done there, to help our members and if the Board of Governors can stay on top of that issue, and you have capable people that are involved. I know Dr. Paul Martin is involved with this electronic health record business. There are other people in the AOA, Daryl Beehler is really involved with this and is serving on the committee. You need to cultivate that and be ready and prepared if there is any funding because they keep talking about funding coming down the line to help the family practitioners that are solo or small groups to get the computerization in their offices. That money comes down the pike, the Board of Governors should be the first ones to know how to get it and how to write a grant to get that money so that they can help out their members. And if you can do that you're going to increase your membership even more because there are a lot of fellows out there that are stranded, they don't know what to do, and it is very expensive. I don't know who has their office completely computerized.

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Dr. Hill: There is no unified plan yet.

Dr. Sevastos: Well you know how the bureaucracy operates. They keep talking about it, keep talking about it. Now they are talking about having the QIOs in the various states help us. The QIO in Ohio that I serve on is KE PRO of Pennsylvania and has been extremely successful. At our last board meeting, they were discussing the issue that there is talk at CMS to release a certain amount of money to the QIOs in the state to pick certain practices and help them. Now what is going to come of that, I'm not sure. But I serve on that board so whatever it is going to be I'll be aware of it and I certainly would not hesitate to pass the information along so that we could be on top of this so we don't miss out on it.

Dr. Froelich: Do you remember much about the California merger?

Dr. Sevastos: No, I was just a young practitioner at the time. I remember the issue that came about and the terrible disappointment that I felt. At that time I felt like I lost a loved one, my profession, the biggest piece of it was gone all of sudden and I had difficulty comprehending all of that. I had the usual emotions. I was angry. I was sad. I was upset for a long time about it. The people like Ethan Allen and the others out there turned it around and it has become a beautiful thing again, but it was a sad time. It was a very sad time, for the whole profession, because we were left with, what, five schools at that time and we lost the biggest one.

Dr. Froelich: Were you concerned that we might lose the entire profession?

Dr. Sevastos: I never thought that. That never entered my mind. I fought for everything that I could get for my profession and I just felt there has to be a bunch of guys out there that are willing to fight this just like I feel about it.

Dr. Hill: There were some moves to try and get some of the other large states to go that way but the California events actually solidified the other states.

Dr. Sevastos: Yes, I think so.

Dr. Allen: Well I have always said that the Rocky Mountains are a great scrambler. So the messages that go back and forth from Chicago to California aren't really accurate. They get messed up and California is a different spirit out there.

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Dr. Froelich: Would you make a comment on what you see as being the most significant changes that you have seen in the organization during your tenure?

Dr. Sevastos: The changes from 1968 or 1969 to the present day are absolutely astounding. If anybody had said to me that this organization would be what it is right now I would have had some doubts, Even though I would have hoped that it would be like it is, but I would have had doubts because I just never dreamt the organization would take off and flourish and blossom like it has. It is something we can all be proud of, and it has given the entire profession uplift because we are the majority of the osteopathic physicians. Unfortunately a lot of the young people now are being drawn to the specialties, for various reasons. My understanding is that some of the deans of our osteopathic schools encourage their students to go into specialty practices. The other thing is that these youngsters coming up now look at going into family practice and then look over here, you have a young person coming out of pharmacy school and they're being given to start \$80,000 to \$95,000 plus a \$10,000 sign on bonus and a new car. Well we are talking economics here, and a lot of these youngsters are going into pharmacy school. That is why the osteopathic medical schools that built the pharmacy schools because that is where you fill your classes. These young people are going into pharmacy. So we have lost some, but I don't think that is going to be for a long-term. I think it is for the short-term, but a lot depends on what the ACOFP does in contacting the young people in the various colleges to get them to understand what family practice is really all about. You have to sell it to these youngsters. Now the AOA presidents go out now and visit the colleges and talk to the students, and the students have a lot of questions about the AOA, about the ACOFP, about everything, and they have their concerns. A lot of them are coming out with huge debts, \$100,000, \$150,000 debts or even more. But they have to consider, if I get out I might as well become an orthopedic surgeon, maybe I can pay this back faster. But there is only one small catch, malpractice insurance eats up most of that.

Dr. Froelich: Are you an optimist about the future of the ACOFP?

Dr. Sevastos: Oh absolutely. I feel very confident because I view the board members that you have and they are all very capable, very competent people. You don't have anybody here that is a follower. From what I have seen on your board they are all leaders and I think that is great. How can we go wrong?

Dr. Froelich: What would your greatest fear for us to be aware of or what would you be most concerned that new leadership needs to be watching for?

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Dr. Sevastos: That is a very interesting question and a very deep thinking question. You're asking basically what should the quality of a good board member be. Is that what you're saying or asking?

Dr. Froelich: Based on your experience, how would you advise them?

Dr. Sevastos: A good board member first of all has to be somebody that feels indebted to his profession. He feels he owes something to that profession, and is willing, whatever it takes, to pay it back. I learned that when I was a student in Chicago in 1952 to 1956 when I graduated. The DOs in Illinois did not have full practice rights, and I didn't know this. I was a freshman. I had no clue about it. I knew they had them in Ohio because J. O. Watson, God rest his sole, he had managed to get it through the legislature so that Ohio DOs all had licenses and I was going back to Ohio. But I didn't know that Illinois didn't have the full practice law and I said, "Well how is this whole hospital run and how do we do this? We have a clinic. We have a pharmacy. We fill prescriptions for all these patients. How do we do this?" And I learned from that experience that you have to fight for this profession if you want it to live and if you want it to grow, and we used to go out at night as a sophomore and junior, and stuff mailboxes with literature to get the right legislator in that would help us to get the full licensing law in the State of Illinois. The fellow that ran this whole thing was a fantastic man. His name was Don W. Craske, DO, MD. Now the reason he did that because the hospital couldn't run if he didn't have his MD, so while he had an osteopathic practice on the south side of Chicago, he attended Northwestern Medical School, was the top student, top man in his class. A week before graduation, the dean called him in and said, "Don, you have to close that office out there because we cannot tarnish our image by giving you the Suma cum laude\* Award because you're practicing that quack type medicine." Now you folks... Now here is the man who fought, he put his life on the line for this profession. He told the dean, he said, "Just give me the diploma and you can do whatever you want to with the Suma cum laude"\*and we walked out of the office, and he got his MD and he passed the board with flying colors. Well he was the one that kept pushing to get the legislature changed and he was tutoring seven young DOs, protégés at school, to take the first Illinois State Board Exam. And when the law passed, the year I graduated, 1956, these seven guys went and took this board exam and the next day in the *Chicago Tribune* there was an article: Osteopathic medical students get highest marks on the Illinois State Board of Medicine. We were home free, but it was a hell of a fight.

Dr. Hill: That was published widely by the AOA.

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- Dr. Sevastos: Oh yes. Well it should have been, but it was all these young students that were willing to go out there at night, sacrifice time from your studies, to go out and stuff these mailboxes. I guess I got caught up in that and I never stopped and I hope the rest of you never stop.
- Dr. Ethan: I think Illinois stayed without the complete practice rights for the DOs, because the AMA is headquartered in Chicago.
- Dr. Sevastos: Of course.
- Dr. Allen: So they were directing the strategy of the legislature.
- Dr. Sevastos: Things change because people were willing to sacrifice and to give of themselves. There has to be somebody that loves this profession. You have to love it and if you don't you shouldn't be on the board. It is simple. It is not a complex thing. It has been a pleasure. I have taken up a lot of your time.
- Dr. Martin: Can you first tell us about the time that you first started any kind of family practice, back in the days of CCOM? Wasn't it a fact that if the school had a car or if students had a car they would go out and they would make house calls in the evening and things like that? That may have nurtured some of your years of family practice.
- Dr. Sevastos: Well part of our training in Chicago was to make house calls as part of our senior year training and that turned out to be a most interesting experience. I'm not going to embellish it but you fellows can edit it as you see fit. It is going to be on your tape, but it is true. It is a true story. So we would be called out all hours of the night, but we went out in pairs, there were two of us that would travel together. I had a car and then there were a couple of other guys that had cars so they would take somebody that didn't have a car and we would make the house calls. So this one night I was with a fellow from Massillon, his name was Bill Kenneweg. Bill and I went on a house call at the Evergreen Park Apartments, not a very savory place. You probably all have read about it since then. It was not a very safe place to even go, but we went because they called and said they needed a house call. The hospital called and said, "Go." So we went and we walked into see the person that was sick and here it was this African American lady and she didn't look sick to us and we said, "What is the problem?" And all of sudden the bedroom door opens and here comes a guy with a gun and he wanted our injectables. Well naturally we gave them to him. I mean, he wants them, take whatever you want, but here is all we have. But we used to carry Demerol and stuff like that in those days and evidently they knew that. So then the following day when we got a call to make

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a house call, Bill Kenneweg and I went, and we opened up his bag I see laying in his bag a German Luger. I said, 'Bill.' He said, 'Hey, I'm not going through that routine we went through the last time.' He said, 'We have to have protection.' And he carried that thing with him in his doctor bag every place we went. It was interesting. But that was part of our training, you had to go make house calls. It was great. It was good training. But some of the areas in Chicago are a little rugged. It was tough.

Dr. Allen: Wasn't it true in Illinois that the DOs couldn't write for narcotics?

Dr. Sevastos: No, they couldn't because they weren't licensed. They couldn't write for any prescriptions so we had a pharmacy in the clinic because we used to see 500-600 patients a day in that clinic. They all usually had to have a prescription and they all had to go through that pharmacy because the prescriptions couldn't go out. Don Craske would come down and he would sign them all, and if the guys needed pills of codeines, Don Craske would sign and then I would send them out to the DOs that needed them for their practice. When the pharmacist had a heart attack at our clinic, they were devastated, so next thing I know I get a phone call from the president, a Scotchman, terrific guy. He ran that place close. He watched the money. But he called me to his office. What does he want with me? I didn't bother anybody. I go to his office and he said, 'John,' he said, 'I need your help.' I said, 'Yeah, what?' He said, 'Well you know our pharmacist had a heart attack. He's going to be laid up for a long time,' and he said, 'I happen to know that you have a pharmacy licenses in Illinois.' Well I didn't think anybody knew that because I did have because I worked part-time to help pay my way through school. So he says, 'I want you to run the clinic pharmacy.' I said, 'In all due respect,' I said, 'I came here to be a DO.' I said, 'I didn't come here to work in the pharmacy.' He said, 'No,' he said, 'I'm going to set up a booth and the girls know when a patient comes in they will put them in there, they will call you, you go check the patient, just run the pharmacy. You can hire as many of your classmates to help you in there, count pills, do whatever they have to do.' And he says, 'You do that.' And I did that for almost a couple of years after that. It was an interesting experience. I had a lot of interesting experiences. This profession is great, there's nothing like it.

Dr. Froelich: Was there any cash payment for being the pharmacist?

Dr. Sevastos: Not really. I wasn't looking for anything. I would go to work on weekends at Walgreen's and that is where I got paid. It was for the profession. They took this country kid who didn't have anything and it gave me a chance. It gave me a chance and that to me meant a lot. I wish I could instill that in these young kids, but you see the problem is they have been handed everything. They walk into

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these schools, any school, and they see all of these plush laboratories and these anatomy labs with the fans so there is no smell, and you don't go home smelling like formaldehyde for years after you finish school. And they think all this came from the sky. These are the people that caused that to happen for you. But anyway, I don't want to bore you any more.

Dr. Froelich: What do you say to that Generation X that you have just described when they say, "What has the profession done for me?"

Dr. Sevastos: Oh boy that lights me up. When they say that I sit down... Let me tell you what the profession has done for you. I say, "Do you see this table that sits here with all this food and all this great stuff that you have and all these microscopes and computers and stuff you have?" I say, "Where do you think that came from? That is what this profession has done for you." I say, "A lot of people worked hard to give you this, now what you going to do to pay it back?" But you see they are used to getting and not giving and that is sad and part of it is our fault because we give too much to our kids. What have they had to want for? We were lucky we were physicians. We made a good living. We provided for our kids. They figure that is the way the world is. The world is not like that, at least it wasn't for us. It is a different world. I always emphasize work, hard work will never kill you but worry will kill you.

Dr. Allen: It's quite an experience when they have gone down to some of this devastation after the tsunami, several of the schools have sent students down there.

Dr. Sevastos: Good experience, let them see what really goes on and these trips to the Yucatan and some of these jungle communities that I visited when I was president of ACGP, it is a good experience to go there and see. And the interesting thing out of my trip to the Yucatan, I was president of the ACOGP at the time, was we had a group of nurses who came from a catholic hospital in Iowa and about the second or third night we are driving back to the motel from this jungle village we were working in, these nurses, I had three or four in the back of the station wagon, said to me, "You know," she said, "you doctors are different." I said, "How do you mean?" She said, "Well we never worked with osteopathic physicians before." They didn't even know what a DO was, but they sensed that our approach and our compassion and our willingness to help people were so genuine it was osteopathic and they noticed the difference and they brought it to my attention. I said, "We take it for granted because that is the way we are. That is the way we are." And Dr. Anderson touched on that beautifully yesterday, compassion is a big item. But we are taught that way in our osteopathic schools. There is a difference, and that is the subtle difference. It is not the OMT so much, it is the

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approach to that patient that distinguishes you as a DO versus an MD. Anyway, I'm not going to preach anymore.

Dr. Sevastos: It is a great profession. And you all can make it greater. Thank you very much.

Dr. Allen: Thank you John.

(Applause)