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Administered by the  
American Academy of Family Physicians  
Foundation

## **SOME HISTORICAL FACTS ABOUT THE AAFP SCIENTIFIC ASSEMBLY (1949-2007)**

### **1949, Cincinnati:**

A total of Fifty-seven firms were technical exhibitors at the 1<sup>st</sup> Scientific Assembly. Hotel costs for this Assembly ranged from \$3.00 for a single room at the Metropole to \$50.00 for a suite at the Netherland Plaza. Banquet attendees received a specially designed vase of Rookwood Pottery, bearing the Academy seal. These vases were sold for \$1.75 plus tax to individuals who did not attend the banquet, and are today considered to be rare and very valuable collector's items.

According to an article published in the *New York Times*,

"A meeting that had real medical significance was held last week in Cincinnati. It was the first meeting of the American Academy of General Practice, an organization of more than 10,000 general practitioners. An attendance of 1,500 had been expected, but 3,500 family doctors came from all parts of the country...The scientific exhibits were particularly significant...The 'male frog pregnancy test' booth was crowded from morning until night with physicians eager to learn the techniques of this simple, reliable and practical office procedure. . ."

Notably also during this year, according to the July 1949 edition of *General Practice News*, "During the annual Assembly the Congress of Delegates adopted a resolution placing the Academy on record as opposed to 'any form of compulsory federal health insurance or any system of political medicine designed for national bureaucratic control.'"

### **1951, San Francisco:**

An article which appeared in the March 19, 1951 edition of the AAGP's *Daily Bulletin & Directory* announced that "Residents, interns, students, technicians, nurses, and clergymen may register without paying the five-dollar fee required of other non-members."

### **1952, Atlantic City:**

The March 24, 1952 edition of the *Daily Bulletin* reported that "100 AA Members Plan to Attend Session," and noted that ". . . the group desires to attend this session ["Problem Drinker"] in a body - but anonymously."

**1954, Cleveland:**

Sir Alexander Fleming, discoverer of penicillin, attended the Scientific Assembly this year. Dr. Ulrich R. Bryner, 6th President of the Academy, was a personal acquaintance of his. Sir Alexander received an honorary membership in the Academy. He also autographed a print of a penicillin mold, the print of which is today still preserved in the collections of the Center for the History of Family Medicine.

**1956, Washington, DC:**

Two significant firsts occurred during this year's Scientific Assembly: on March 20, 1956, the first tours for children of members were offered, with children visiting the Washington Zoo, FBI Headquarters, the Smithsonian Institution and the Washington Monument.

The following day, attendees received a surprise visit by then Vice President Richard M. Nixon. In a 25-minute address to the assembly, Nixon was quoted as saying that "he thinks this country has the finest medical care system in the world, and he feels the Administration only seeks to help improve the present system."

**1959, San Francisco:**

Two new technical exhibitors were featured at this year's Assembly: The American Tobacco Company and the R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company. Also during this year's Assembly, "Space Medicine" was a topic which was offered as one of the scientific sessions.

**1960, Philadelphia:**

The Sears Roebuck Foundation exhibited a model office building containing 2,112 square feet of office space. Also during this year, a notable (for the times) scientific session was also offered: "Fall In or Fall Out" - "Critical targets for thermonuclear attack: seventy areas including 92 cities. Experts predict 13.5 million casualties. Some 9,000 surviving Academy members would lead in getting care to survivors."

**1961, Miami Beach:**

This year's Assembly featured a "mortgage burning luncheon" to celebrate for the payoff of the mortgage on the Academy's \$650,000 National Headquarters building in Kansas City, which the Academy had purchased in 1956.

**1962, Las Vegas:**

During this year, the Academy became the first major medical group in the country to hold their annual convention in Las Vegas. Also of note during this Assembly, the topic "How To Please Your Doctor Husband" was the subject of the annual ladies luncheon.

**1966, Boston:**

A notable title of a roundtable session presented at this year's Assembly was "The Angry Adolescent"—perhaps indicative of the tensions inherent as part of the era's "Generation Gap." Also at the 1966 Assembly, a report of ladies entertainment: "At the Ladies' Tea, Dr. Ashley Montagu will speak on 'The Natural Superiority of Women,' premise of a best selling book written by him. Dr. Montagu is very British and very amusing and has made frequent appearances on the Jack Parr and Johnny Carson shows."

**1971, Miami Beach:**

Actor Robert Young, who portrayed Marcus Welby, M.D. on the ABC television show of that name, was the keynote speaker at this year's Assembly (He later served as keynote speaker again at the 1974 and 1984 Assemblies).

**1975, Chicago:**

President Gerald R. Ford's personal physician and AAFP member, Admiral William M. Lukash, MD, USN, received the AAFP President's Award at the Assembly this year.

**1978, San Francisco:**

Before computerization made registration more efficient, the AAFP touted a new "display board" for the Clinical Seminars Registration. This board greatly simplified the process for registering for these courses.

**1985, Anaheim:**

Attendees at the 1985 Assembly were treated to a special presentation of the Pulitzer Prize-winning Broadway play "night, Mother," for the keynote presentation. The play was a stark drama of a suicidal daughter and the mother who desperately tries to prevent her suicide. The original Broadway cast presented the play. Kathy Bates played the suicidal daughter. Bates later became famous for her roles in many movies, including "Misery," "Fried Green Tomatoes," "Dolores Claiborne," and "Titanic."

**1988, New Orleans:**

A prophetic headline in the *AAFP Reporter* (Assembly Edition) stated: "Waterlogged New Orleans struggles to stay dry." The article was informational for visitors that did not know that the city sat below sea level.

**1991, Washington, DC:**

The AAFP began an effort to encourage recycling at the Scientific Assembly, including providing stations for attendees to recycle newspaper, glass, cans, and other wastes. Name badge holders and portfolios were also recycled. The official program and *AAFP Reporter, Assembly Edition* were printed on recycled paper.

**1997, Chicago:**

The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the American Academy of Family Physicians was celebrated with many special activities, including a “birthday party” as the All Member Party, as well as a special exhibit on Academy history, as presented by the Archives for Family Practice (now known as the Center for the History of Family Medicine).

**1999, Orlando:**

For the first time in history, the Scientific Assembly started a day late when Hurricane Floyd neared central Florida and threatened to wreak havoc on Orlando, forcing postponement of the first day’s session. Airport closings and storm preparations also led to a shortage of program speakers and local laborers.

**2001, Atlanta:**

Held less than a month after the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the 53<sup>rd</sup> Scientific Assembly went on despite concerns regarding mass cancellations by attendees. The AAFP Congress of Delegates dedicated the 2001 Scientific Assembly to the victims of the attacks and the families they left behind. Also recognized were two family physicians that died that day in the attacks: Frederick Rimmele, M.D., of Marblehead, Massachusetts and Paul Ambrose, M.D., M.P.H., of Washington, DC.

On a brighter note, during this year’s Assembly, the AAFP also inaugurated its first African-American president, Warren A. Jones, M.D., of the Uniformed Services chapter.

**2004, Orlando:**

The AAFP inaugurated its first female president, Mary E. Frank, M.D., of Mill Valley, California.

**2007, Chicago:**

During this year’s Assembly, attendees were treated to a special joint exhibit which celebrated both the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the AAFP in 2007 and the upcoming 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the AAFP Foundation in 2008. The exhibit was developed from the collections of the Center for the History of Family Medicine, and featured rare artifacts, photographs, videos, and other materials on the history of the specialty.