

# REPORT OF A SCIENTIFIC MEETING

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## Third International Symposium on the History of Anesthesia March 27–30, 1992 Atlanta, Georgia

A truly international group of registrants attended the Third International Symposium on the History of Anesthesia in Atlanta, Georgia March 27–30, 1992. There were representatives from every continent. These dates were chosen, in part, to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Crawford W. Long's pioneering administration of ether for surgical anesthesia on March 30, 1842. The meeting was sponsored by the Anesthesia History Association with assistance from local anesthesia organizations and academic university departments.

The opening reception at the Carter Presidential Center provided an opportunity for registrants to meet one another and tour the Center museum. Exhibits there depicted the life and accomplishments of President Carter and provided an overview of the presidencies during this century.

In the Crawford W. Long Memorial Sessions, professional historians and physicians from the Atlanta area evoked the time and atmosphere of Long's life and career with presentations on the history of Piedmont Georgia and Jefferson, Georgia in the 1840s; the medical education of Crawford W. Long; and medical practice in rural Georgia in the 1840s. Long appeared to have acquired the best medical education available in the United States in his day, which included graduation from the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, and further clinical experience in New York City.

Dr. E. M. Papper spoke on "Romantic Medicine and Romantic Literature: Their Influence on Crawford Long." Dr. Papper emphasized the importance of the romantic movement in literature with its emphasis on the needs and feelings of individuals. Before such attitudes became widespread, society simply was not prepared to be concerned with matters involving patient comfort during surgery.

A trip to Jefferson, Georgia certainly was one of the highlights of the meeting. Jefferson, located about an hour's drive northeast of Atlanta, appears to be a typical small Southern town with the business district built around a public square. The Crawford W. Long museum occupies the site of Long's medical office and surgery. A plaque in front of the building identifies it as the site where Long administered the first surgical anesthetic. It contains memorabilia, documents, vintage equipment, artifacts, and exhibits illustrating the history of anesthesia. Also of interest in

Jefferson are the Long monument in the town square and even a Crawford Long pharmacy. A group of local history enthusiasts dressed in costumes and uniforms of the Civil War era set up and explained a military field hospital of the period.

Back in Atlanta, an original drama, "The Spit of the Devil," was performed with polish and enthusiasm by a group of local professional actors. This production was based on events leading to Long's first use of ether as an anesthetic. An 1840s "ether frolic" in rural Georgia and how it led to Long's pioneering application of ether in surgery were depicted.

Special addresses presented to plenary sessions of the meeting included "James Robinson: England's True Pioneer of Anesthesia" by Dr. Richard Ellis, and the Anesthesia Foundation Lecture, "Civil War Medicine: The Letterman Reforms and Casualty Care," by Dr. Robert J. T. Joy, Professor of Medical History, Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences. The Crawford Long Memorial Lecture, titled "From Sherman to Storm: A History of Military Anesthesia," was delivered by Dr. Rod K. Calverley. Special recognition was accorded to Dr. Juan Marin of Bogota, Columbia, who was a true pioneer of anesthesia in Latin America. Dr. Marin's animated response belied his status as an octogenarian.

Much of the meeting time was occupied with presentation of the 90 free papers on a wide variety of topics submitted by the registrants. It was incidentally noted that 1992 marked the 50th anniversary of the introduction of curare into clinical practice, and several papers were presented on incidents and individuals associated with this milestone. Other papers dealt with anesthesia "firsts" and development of various anesthesia organizations. Contributions of prominent anesthetists of the past, including Joseph Clover, William Morton, and Henry Hill Hickman, were discussed. Also recalled to memory were individuals from the not-so-remote past, including Henry Ruth, Henry Beecher, and Ralph Waters, whose names were household words to a now older generation of anesthetists. In addition, material on prominent nurse anesthetists from earlier times was related. Poster and video presentations and scientific exhibits rounded out the program.

Participants departed for home already talking about a Fourth International Symposium on the History of Anesthesia.

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