

## From the Editor

### Convention (noun): An Assembly of Persons Met for a Common Purpose

An allied health profession was born in the 1950s, when exceptional, talented innovators began to develop techniques to temporarily support the heart and lungs so that intracardiac surgery could be carried out. The development of this specialty was accelerated in the early 1960s, when several of the “pump technicians” had the foresight to charter an academic organization. They had a large vision that included the creation of a system of certification to engender conformity in training and experience among technicians, and forums to encourage research and to foster the sharing of experiences among colleagues. At first, there were a few, small, informal gatherings of a handful of technicians as early as 1961. While these gatherings were exciting, something much broader was needed. Dick Jensen and Jim Wade, both from Minnesota, believed that the time had come to formalize and broaden participation. They organized the American Society of Extracorporeal Technicians’ (AmSECT) first formal convention. They began by compiling a list of all the companies that manufactured and distributed cardiopulmonary equipment. The list was not long, but each company provided the names and addresses of their customers. The first convention took place in Chicago, in April 1964, and was attended by about 25 pump technicians. The enthusiasm of this first meeting prompted a second one that same year, which was organized and hosted by Rose Litturi at the Cleveland Clinic on Halloween weekend, with about 80 in attendance. The third convention took place in May of the following year, in Minneapolis, and was attended by over 100 and the Society’s membership grew to over 300 members (1).

According to Merriam Webster, a *Convention* is an assembly of persons met for a common purpose (2). What was it that prompted these technicians to assemble? No doubt, the special relationship of these early technicians with a lifeless apparatus, comprised of inert stainless steel and extruded plastics provided a common purpose. That inert apparatus, in their hands, became a vital organ or instrument of life used by a surgical team to perform life-saving and life-extending operations. It is this unique relationship, of a perfusionist with a machine that continues to foster professional relationships spanning geographical, cultural, and generational boundaries. These professional relationships have been instrumental in the local and global development and improvement of cardiopulmonary bypass techniques and practices over the years. Professionals from outside of the United States seeking to share their experiences and learn from those assembled increasingly attended these conventions. Very early on, it was decided that this gathering should be an International event and was so named, The AmSECT International Convention. Participants have come from all over the globe, including: Canada, Belgium, Norway, Denmark, Brussels, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland,



Robert Groom

Germany, Iceland, South America, Japan, China, Korea, South Africa, Mexico, Russia, and Turkey. Indeed, the AmSECT International Conventions have produced many important byproducts, including the global transfer of technological advances; the sharing of models for education, organizational structure, and standards of practice; scientific publications related to extracorporeal technology; and the mentoring of future generations of leaders in our field.

On March 28–31, 2012, in Orlando Florida, the 50th manifestation of that original idea will take place. At the 50th International Conference, the society will pause and reflect on the many milestones of previous gatherings for “a common purpose.” There will be a special Gala Dinner at the convention this year, and a number of early pioneers from the field have been invited to attend as honored guests to represent the many whose collective efforts over the last 50 years have advanced our field. A 50th Commemorative booklet, highlighting the growth and development of key events in perfusion and related technologies, will be published and distributed. A video featuring many of the early practitioners, reflecting on the early days and on what their professional society has meant to them will also be available. Collections, representative of early equipment, will be displayed at the meeting.

We are deeply indebted to the companies that manufacture cardiopulmonary devices who have played a vital role in the conventions every year from the very first modest beginnings.

It has been said that an organization, in its simplest form, is nothing more or less than a gathering of individuals with a common purpose and most of the world’s work is done in and through organizations (3).

This year’s convention will be a time of celebration, reflection, and of course, continued work for a common purpose. For more information visit the society’s website at [www.amsect.org](http://www.amsect.org).

Robert C. Groom, MS, CCP  
Editor-in-Chief

**REFERENCES**

1. Berger EC. An introduction to AmSECT. *J Extra Corpor Technol.* 1968;1:16.
2. Merriam-Webster Dictionary. Available at: <http://www.merriamwebster.com/dictionary/convention>. Accessed January 2, 2012.
3. Covey SR. *The 8th Habit: From Effectiveness to Greatness*. New York, NY: Free Press; 2004.