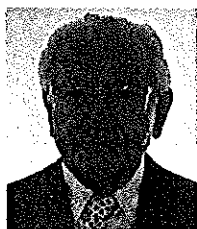


Message From Our Distinguished Past-President Dr. L. A. Lucas, 1953-'54

Beginning with this issue, the *Journal of Endodontics* will print a message from a Past President of the American Association of Endodontists alternately with those of our current President, Dr. Joseph I. Tenca. This new feature of the *Journal* is intended to give members insight to the history and movement of the AAE and endodontics as a specialty as we approach the 50th Anniversary of the organization.



At the time, I didn't think we were pioneers and champions of a cause, but we were. A few of us in the dental profession had become very excited about the revolutionary idea of "saving teeth." Prior to 1943, most of those attracted to the new technology unfailingly attended the annual Chicago Mid-Winter Meeting, where

Louis Grossman and Ralph Sommers (to mention only a few) presented clinics on root canal therapy. In those days we used gutta percha and a few silver points in the techniques. The clinics were in the Statler Hotel in Chicago and were "required attendance" for those of us who championed the new ideas.

Of the initial 76 charter members, I was one of the few non-academic practitioners in the group as well as one of the very, very few from the southwest.

Our first founding meeting was held in Chicago in February 1943 as best I can recall. Dr. Davis of the Nebraska Dental School was the first President. The two days or so of clinics concluded with a banquet and dance, thus establishing our usual pattern in the following years. The social activity was very popular and resulted in close friendships for many of us.

During the same period, several practitioners in the Chicago area were also giving clinics on root canals.

However, there was a great challenge for us! A highly influential medical clinic had publicly supported the theory of "focus of infection" as a causative explanation for all types of disease ranging from arthritis to depression. The medical establishment, in particular the supporters of this theory, recommended the removal of appendix, tonsils and adenoids that could "support infection"...this included pulpless teeth.

Thus, in the face of prevailing thought and practice, we "endodontists" began a careful scientific demonstration that "pulpless teeth" were not a source of infection when they were treated properly and the infection cleaned up. These teeth were a beneficial result of a modern medical technique.

My wife and I did not miss an AAE meeting from the first one in 1943 until 1976. The Association membership grew rapidly and, after a spirited debate, we expanded to include not only Chicago but Florida, New York, Las Vegas, Washington, D.C. and the West Coast.

When I was asked to be President in 1953-54, it was a great honor for me, as our previous leaders had all been important teachers in leading dental schools. Most of them were developing departments of endodontics within their schools. By this time, my practice in Oklahoma City was almost exclusively involved with endodontics. For a number of years I had presented clinics in Oklahoma and the Southwest. There was a tremendous growing interest on the part of practitioners in how to "save teeth" rather than extract them.

Looking back on those early days, I now appreciate the courage it took for those of us who were practicing dentists to attempt to save a tooth outside the atmosphere of the dental schools, where most of my associates in the AAE practiced. But as soon as I heard that such things were possible, I could not be content until I "mastered" the techniques of endodontics.

In 1943 we banded together, academicians and practitioners, to share information with each other and to have a meeting ground for an exciting medical and dental development. It was a challenging and fulfilling time for me to be present at the birth of endodontics.

I am proud to mark the beginning of our Association and it is my privilege to remind you of the great good that has been done by our profession and of the people we have served.

Since graduating from Creighton University in 1930, I have lived in Oklahoma City with my wife Margaret and my six children. Many of my 24 grandchildren and four great grandchildren live here also and visit frequently.

Retirement brought me a new pleasure, that of golf. I took it up at age 70 and after a lot of practice I have been able to shoot my age and have a hole in one!

Larry A. Lucas, DDS
Charter Member and
Past President