

The Origin of the San Francisco Bay Area Chapter

As told by Ralph Worsnop

In 1964-1965 Ralph Worsnop (RW) invited other physicists in the area to inter-compare their therapy measuring instruments at UCSF. We used the old Theratron 'F' for a beam source. This was notably inconsistent with the on/off timing. With the short exposure times this was a disappointment to those who only had a Victoreen R Meter with a 25 R chamber.

Soon after that Mary Lou Meurk (MLM) invited the group to the Saroni Tumor Institute where more modern therapy equipment was available.

During the above "calibration parties" there was discussion suggesting that we meet on a regular basis to discuss what each of us was doing.

We heard that AAPM was entertaining the idea of regional chapters. New York had a formalized group for some time. A group (about six including MLM) gathered in RW's office at UCSF to make a proposal to the AAPM. The proposal was accepted at the AAPM annual meeting in 1966 (?).

On 17 March 1967, MLM organized a joint meeting with the local chapter of the HPS at Tilden Park in the Berkeley foothills. Many physicists in the area "calibrated" therapy equipment by putting their usually borrowed chamber under a beam and taking measurements of a single beam size in air. It was up to the physician to allow for field size, backscatter and all other parameters. The idea of physicists becoming involved with direct patient care was so foreign to them that RW gave a paper entitled "Is Clinical Dosimetry Really Necessary?". Those who had been augmenting their income with single readings were not too supportive of RW's talk!

On 12 June 1968, RW chaired the second AAPM "Mid Summer Topical Meeting" held at UCSF for four days. RW chose the topic of diagnostic radiology and drew speakers from all over the country. About 110 people attended. The accounts for this meeting showed that the AAPM gave \$500.00 seed money. At that meeting RW noticed, on the first day, that a number of wives were left at the hotel not seeming to know what to do. An announcement was made. On the second day RW's wife, Carol, came to the hotel with the family station wagon and took several of these lost souls for a tour of San Francisco. Previously there had been no "companions" program at AAPM meetings. This is believed to be the start.

In 1969 RW accepted an "offer I could not refuse" in Southern California and helped found the chapter there.