

16. Clair M. Kos

The test of an executive is not the things that he does but the things that he organizes to have done.

JEROME A. HILGER
PRESIDENT, 1970

ALTHOUGH there had been talk and even approval of employing an administrative assistant for Dr Benedict, someone who would be trained to take over when the time came, for one reason or another the plan had stalled. Clair M. Kos had been the Academy secretary for otolaryngology since 1960 when he was elected executive secretary-treasurer.

While William Benedict belonged to the generation inducted into Academy leadership in the 1920s, Clair Kos represented the next successive generation. As it happened, he had been a student of William Wherry's at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln where he received his BSc degree in 1933, his medical degree in 1937, and served a year's internship at the University's Bishop Clarkson Memorial Hospital in Omaha. He had taken his specialty training at Harvard University Postgraduate School of Medicine and the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary under department chairman Harris P. Mosher.

Dr Kos had been a full-time academician, a researcher, a subspecialist in otology, and a private practitioner. He was well-known through his contributions to the medical literature and to the development of middle ear

microsurgery. He had established the Iowa Foundation of Otology with the purpose of promoting education and research. Touching, as he had, most bases in specialty medicine, he was well attuned to the problems and interests of each (Fig 43).

By 1968 the Headquarters Office was far too large and complex to be picked up and moved easily to a new location. Dr Kos decided to divide his time between his practice in Iowa City and the Academy offices in Rochester. He called for a period of contemplation and study of Academy operations. With William Benedict devoting his full-time attention to Academy administration for so many years, no one, save a few office employees, was thoroughly familiar with how the Executive Office operated and implemented Academy functions.

A note posted in the Headquarters Office advised employees that it was necessary to understand how things had been done in the past before you could set about improving them. Dr Kos spent 11 months in what he called "dissecting the anatomy of the Academy"^{1(p165)} and "assimilating the complexities and details of operation which give the Academy its machine-like character."^{1(p164)}

Regardless of how well the Academy had managed to function, it had been doing so for



Fig 43.—Clair Kos at work during annual meeting.

the past few years by the skin of its teeth. Both Dr Kos and the Council knew at the outset that the Academy's administrative and operating structures were in serious need of sprucing up.

The Headquarters Office was loosely structured, and relative to Academy size and activities, had become a shoestring operation. Equipment and methods were outdated and hardly sufficient to manage current functions, much less gear up for new ones. Academy finances had not kept pace with inflation or with the growth in size and activities. In 1968, the financial picture showed only \$5,000 in the plus column.² Clearly the Academy was barely scraping by and had no margin for the expanded responsibilities being demanded of medicine.

At the 1969 meeting, Dr Kos delivered the most complete rundown of Academy affairs and operations ever presented to the Council, along with his suggestions for improvements and a broader sphere of activity.¹ He outlined

reorganization and revitalization of the Headquarters Office already under way, urged modernization and expansion of the Academy's educational programs for practitioners, and advised development of a master plan for programs, meetings, and activities extending perhaps a decade into the future.

All this would require the involvement of more members in the Academy's organizational structure, more personnel in the Headquarters Office, and more financial resources. At his suggestion, advisory committees were appointed to assist each Academy secretary. His call for an expansion of educational activities coincided with the opinion of others who had been studying current needs, and the continuing education idea was launched at the 1969 meeting.

The membership dues—at \$30 a year far below that of comparable organizations— was raised to \$100 a year. It was not popular but it was necessary. The Academy, rather than creeping along, could move full steam ahead.

Restrictive year-to-year planning must be abandoned, said Dr Kos. The Academy must project its growth, its needs, and its goals far in advance and plan for them. Good business management demanded it. Programs that met the needs of members and the requirements of medicine demanded it.

As the Academy's business manager, Clair Kos erased the last vestiges of a "Mom and Pop" operation. During the next several years, the headquarters was reorganized into five divisions with tightly drawn responsibilities in the areas of membership, continuing education, finance, editorial and advertising, and conventions and exhibits. Modern and efficient methods were introduced. An administrative assistant, talked about since the 1940s, was finally hired to oversee the whole operation. Office space was increased from 4,000 to 11,000 square feet.

Growth in the administrative component paralleled a growth in educational programs and a breakdown of functions on a specialty basis. Dr Kos set the stage for the Headquarters Office to absorb both continued growth and the desire of each specialty for individual treatment. He had not bargained for separation, but the groundwork he laid definitely facilitated the process.

The Academy's third executive secretary-treasurer had the unenviable job of what some had previously referred to as presiding over the beginning of the end of the Academy. With a clarity and presence of mind during the most trying and precarious time in Academy history, Clair M. Kos and the Academy presidents and members of Council during the 1970s turned the will of the majority—separation of the specialties—into a new beginning. They adopted a positive attitude, and channeled their efforts into making it a workable alternative.

In 1969 Dr Kos reviewed in retrospect his first year as the Academy's chief executive. "I chose to accept these responsibilities and I have

no misgivings," he assured, "but I sometimes wonder if I would have done so quite so eagerly or confidently had I known what lay ahead."^{1(p164)} Invoking unity in place of partisanship, he warned, "If we fail in our administrative efforts, we will lose the Academy to disruption, division, disunity, partition, disillusionment, disintegration, and degradation: a conglomeration of pieces having little resemblance to the original structure."^{1(p165)}

What lay ahead for Dr Kos was the most difficult task ever assigned an Academy officer. The weeds of dissension had been sown and had gone too long unattended to be curtailed. Although he quickly instituted remedial pacification measures, it was too late. If he lost the first battle, he did not lose the second. Through a stable administrative posture, Academy division was carried out with no lost ground and with the purposes and structure of the organization intact for two specialties.

Clair Michael Kos was born Aug 6, 1911, in Washington, Iowa, where his grandfather had settled in 1865 after immigrating from Bohemia. The family believes its ancestors may trace back to the Greek island of Kos (also Cos), the birthplace of Hippocrates. Dr Kos's grandfather was a storekeeper and his father a mechanical engineer.

He developed an interest in medicine as a young boy of 10 while observing what he would later describe as "the dignity, tenderness, and skillful ministrations personified in the family physician attending my mother."^{*} It proved to be more than a passing boyhood curiosity. He read fiction and nonfiction about doctors, and on entering college, registered for an intensified premedical curriculum during which he completed three years in two.

The Depression caused him to suspend his plans to enter medical college, and he worked a

^{*}Clair Kos 1978: personal communication.

year on a surveying crew to save enough to get started in medicine. A few years later, when financial adversity threatened interruption of his residency training, the young Dr Kos was aided by Harris Mosher, who had taken a special interest in him and who would later help secure an appointment for him on Dean Lierle's staff at the State University of Iowa in Iowa City. There developed between Harris Mosher, nearing retirement, and Clair Kos, his last resident, a tacit understanding that the younger man would continue in academic medicine.

After completing his residency in Boston in October 1941, Dr Kos spent four years in military service, most of it as director of otolaryngology at the Army Air Force School of Aviation Medicine, Randolph Field, Tex. From 1944 to 1946, he was also consultant in otology to the air surgeon, AAF Headquarters, Washington, DC. He entered the service as a first lieutenant and rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel.

Dr Kos has served in some capacity as a military medical consultant to the present time. From 1949 to 1970, he was a national consultant to the surgeon general, USAF, and for ten years he was chairman of the surgeon general's Ad Hoc Committee on Hearing. Since 1970 he has been a consultant in otology to the Aerospace Medical Center, Brooks Air Force Base, Tex, and is affiliated with research being conducted there.

Dr Kos belongs to the Society of Military Medical Consultants and the Medical Division of the Air Force Association. He is a founding member of the American Board of Aviation Medicine and of the Aerospace Medical Association. In 1947 he was awarded the United States Air Force Legion of Merit, and in 1964 he received the Distinguished Award of the Society of Military Otolaryngologists for his outstanding contribution to military otolaryngology.

Following his service during the Second World War, Dr Kos was an associate in

otolaryngologic surgery at Duke University and a fellow at the Lempert Institute of Otology in New York. In July of 1947 he accepted an appointment as assistant professor in the Department of Otolaryngology, State University of Iowa College of Medicine. After four years he was made professor of otolaryngology.

In 1960 Dr Kos left full-time academia to enter private practice. He established Otologic Medical Services in Iowa City, was director of the group until 1971, and has been president since that time. In 1970, he rejoined the teaching staff at the State University of Iowa College of Medicine as professor and clinical professor of otolaryngology.

Also in 1960, Dr Kos established, with the support of several patients, the Iowa Foundation of Otology, of which he is executive director. The foundation offers courses, sponsors development of teaching material and lectureships, and provides consultant services. Its active research program is aimed at identifying the causes of hearing impairment and studying effective methods for prevention and treatment. Still another part of the foundation's purpose is to encourage charitable contributions that will enable more people with hearing problems to receive medical and surgical treatment.

As an educator, investigator, and surgeon, Clair Kos has been one of the leaders in efforts to preserve and restore hearing, activities which have made amazing quantum jumps during this medical career. He was a member of the Academy's Committee on Conservation of Hearing and of its Subcommittee on Noise from 1958 to 1967, chairman of the State of Iowa Conservation of Hearing Committee from 1958 to 1970, and a member of the National Research Committee on Hearing and Bioacoustics from 1955 to 1958. He is currently a director of the Deafness Research Foundation.

A prodigious contributor to the Academy's educational programs, Dr Kos served as a lec-

turer in the instruction courses for 22 years and as a member of the Home Study Course faculty for 11 years. He received the Academy Honor Award in 1954. As secretary for otolaryngology, he planned the scientific program for ten years.

Dr Kos was president of the Iowa Academy of Ophthalmology and Otolaryngology in 1959, vice-regent of the International College of Surgeons from 1959 to 1964, president of the American Otosclerosis Study Group in 1969, and a council member of the American Otological Society, Inc, from 1969 to 1971 and president of the society in 1977-1978. Since 1958 he has been an examiner and director of the American Board of Otolaryngology. He is a member of the American College of Surgeons

and a cofounder of the Pan-American Broncho-Esophagology Association.

In 1978, Clair Kos became the first executive vice-president of the Academy's Division of Otolaryngology, with responsibility for administering the affairs of his division. With partitioning of the Academy into specialty divisions, each with its own administrative officer, Clair Kos became the last Academy executive secretary-treasurer in the traditional sense of one man upon whose shoulders largely rested the operation—and in truth, success—of the organization (Fig 44).

Inevitably, if unwittingly, executive secretary-treasurers became a central influence in the Academy. Through years of managing and



Fig 44.—Dr Kos (right) received Distinguished Service Award from ophthalmologists in 1978. With him is President Eugene Derlacki.

planning, their tone and style rubbed off on the organization. Their experience and knowledge became invaluable. Each of the three executive secretary-treasurers had his own flavor. All felt responsible for the total well-being of the society.

It was within the context of this feeling that Clair Kos assisted in making Academy division

harmonious and soundly executed. Backstage of events attending division, he kept the machinery running. Center stage, he guided those formulating divisions through the myriad mechanical and legal details necessary to ensure continuance of the Academy in altered form. Such leadership is within the oldest traditions of the Academy.