

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA PSYCHIATRIC SOCIETY

HOW IT BEGAN

June 1970

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It was in the spring of 1949 that Dr. Charles W. Tidd appointed a committee to consider the formation of a psychiatric society in Los Angeles, specifically one which would seek affiliation with the American Psychiatric Association, the national society. Tidd was a veteran on the local scene and at the time held the position as President of the Los Angeles Psychoanalytic Society, and it was in the archive of the Psychoanalytic Society I found a letter attesting to his pioneering efforts. The letter is dated September 21, 1949, from Dr. Walter Briehl to Tidd referring to Briehl's appointment by Tidd, along with Drs. Arthur Clinco and Philip Solomon, to form an exploratory committee to study the ways and means of forming a psychiatric society which would seek affiliation with the national association.

Along with his letter Walter submitted a three page report of his committee's efforts in regard to the mechanics of organizing and affiliating, in addition to a review of how the local psychiatric institutions would play a part in the new organization's functions. Inasmuch as Tidd and the members of the Briehl committee were all psychoanalysts the report anticipated prejudice if they were to be too active in the initial sponsorship of the new venture, and so a broader base was suggested using the directors of the established hospitals and clinics thus promoting "a joint undertaking and responsibility of the

various established psychiatric institutions and facilities in this area."

Another enclosure was a proposed constitution for the new society, derived from a study of several of the existing affiliate societies. In the usual fashion it defines name (Southern California Psychiatric Society), Object and Purpose, Membership, Membership Qualifications, the Officers and their duties, etc. Especially interesting is Object and Purpose: "...to foster and advance the science and practice of psychiatry and mental hygiene among the profession of Southern California and adjacent areas, chiefly through scientific meetings consisting of theoretical and clinical papers and case presentation material from the various psychiatric facilities of the community."

Tidd and Briehl in 1949 were trying to organize, improve and nationalize the local psychiatrists, already in Southern California in considerable numbers, and already active in a number of well established facilities and organizations. Briehl's letter mentions the facilities of the Veteran's Administration, the Medical Schools, the Los Angeles Psychiatric Service, the Cedars of Lebanon Hospital as well as LACGH and the various State Hospitals. Among the oldest was the Southern California Society for Mental Hygiene (dating back to 1924); also well established was the Society of Neurology and Psychiatry, a subsection of LACMA. Child Guidance Clinics were springing up in

response to the new awareness of the relationship of childhood problems and mental disease.

An early history of psychiatric organizations and activities in Los Angeles perhaps remains unwritten; my point here is to say that in the year 1949 there was a lot going on, many psychiatrists were in the area (most already members of the American Psychiatric Association). Psychoanalysis had arrived by 1930, and following a preliminary Study Group phase a nationally chartered Psychoanalytic Society was active from the early forties. The first was called San Francisco Psychoanalytic Society (1942), an affiliation of all analysts in the West. Next was the Los Angeles Psychoanalytic Society (1946) specifically for the analysts of Los Angeles.

Nothing much happened from the 1949 glimmering, and any documentary evidence next to be found bears the date of 1952. A three year hiatus, the idea shelved apparently, the most probable reason being the bitter SPLIT which occurred in the psychoanalytic community in 1950. Rather better to say culminated in 1950, with division of the membership of the Los Angeles Psychoanalytic Society, with a dissident group forming their own organization which subsequently became the present Southern California Psychoanalytic Society. The SPLIT was formal in 1950, preceded by a long incubation period; and the wound has never healed. (Recent events and attitudes suggest a trend

toward reconciliation).

Therefore our records lead to 1952, with a leadership of largely newcomers, unscathed by the Psychoanalytic SPLIT. No doubt the need for a psychiatric society was now all the greater, and its organization went ahead apace and without interruption, now well documented by records available in the files of the Southern California Psychiatric Society. At this point I emphasize documentation, not completely essential for historical research, but absolutely indispensable for purposes of validation. Reminiscing by old timers has its place, indispensable for giving color, emphasis on this issue or that; without this reminiscing a historical review is like a pudding without a sauce, the flavor is missing. I'd like to get a few of the documented facts into the foundation first of all, later the tapestry of historical narrative can be colored and shaded to the proper perspectives.

In the January 15, 1965 (Volume 12, Number 5) issue of the SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA PSYCHIATRIC SOCIETY NEWS appears a brief reminiscence type historical sketch of the founding of the Society, the work of Bernice Ennis and Oscar Thomsen. They met in 1963 with Marvin Klemes, Jerome Kummer and Allen Enelow at a luncheon meeting and recorded the reminiscing of these three; each had played a leading role among the founding members. The emphasis of their views was on the greater zip and zeal in the first years, less emphasis

on administration, participation by a greater part of the membership, etc. However the piece suffers with sketchy attention to the steps and details of the conception and birth of the new infant, and I propose here to supply some of these details, using documents from the files of the Society.

At the beginning of this piece I described the Briehl-Tidd exchange of 1949, and the documents found in the Archive of the Los Angeles Psychoanalytic Society. Now I wish to describe the oldest documents in the files of the Psychiatric Society, and in so doing try to give a picture of the events, issues and persons involved. I say it's worthy of review, all history eventually demands its recording.

OCTOBER 9, 1952

This is a two page carbon copy of a letter from Mathew Ross to R. Finley Gayle, then Secretary of the American Psychiatric Association, an initial probe, a first venturing, and I quote from it: "As you are well aware the Southern California area centering about Los Angeles has in the post-war years become densely populated by psychiatrists. According to the 1950 Biographical Directory their number approximates two hundred. The 1952 Southern California APA membership is undoubtedly well above that figure. We have secured the most recent mailing list from Mr. Austin Davies and are sending out announcements of an organization

meeting to be held on November 14, 1952." I have found no document pertinent to the November 14 meeting referred to above. Old timers please search your files and yours may be the pleasure of discovering for the Society a reference to this event. Please look. Such a document would refer to a first meeting of our Society. Dr. Ross' letter further states, "...I have met with a group of my colleagues and formed an ad hoc committee to organize a Southern California District Branch of the APA.....we feel we will be able to form a well knit group which will be able eventually to make some contribution to American psychiatry."

OCTOBER 14, 1952

This is a brief acknowledgement from Dr. Gayle to Dr. Ross for his letter of October 9th and stated, "I am so glad to know by your letter of October 9 that a group of your colleagues are planning to form a Southern California District Branch Society of the APA."

DECEMBER 2, 1952

A one page letter now headed SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA PSYCHIATRIC SOCIETY (District Branch of the American Psychiatric Association) and addressed to "Dear A.P.A. Member:" and proceeds with "As announced at our first meeting," (presumably November 14, 1952) "the next meeting of the Society will take place on Friday, December 12, 1952 at 8:00 P.M. at the Institute of Aeronautical Sciences,

7600 Beverly Boulevard, Los Angeles. Your attendance is urgently requested. The main business of this meeting will be ratification of the Constitution and By-Laws. Charter membership will be available by signing the Constitution at that time. A copy of the Constitution and By-Laws, as drawn up by the STEERING COMMITTEE, is enclosed; you are asked to study it carefully....." This communication is signed for the STEERING COMMITTEE by Jerome Kummer, M.D. with the composition of the STEERING COMMITTEE enumerated below and consisted of the following: Allen Enelow, Kieffer Franz, Marvin Klemes, Jerome Kummer, James Rankin, May Romm, Mathew Ross, Charles Tidd and James Wyers.

DECEMBER 19, 1952

Again the heading SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA PSYCHIATRIC SOCIETY addressed "Dear Member:" and again from the STEERING COMMITTEE and signed by Allen Enelow, Acting Secretary. The STEERING COMMITTEE has the same membership as of December 2. This communication gives a list of nominations for the first officers, the STEERING COMMITTEE acting as a Nominating Committee. The list is a long one and includes the eminent among the membership. For President: Mathew Ross and G. Creswell Burns. For President-Elect: Charles Tidd and James Rankin. For Secretary: Jerome Kummer and George Tarjan. For Treasurer: Leo Rangell and May Romm. The list for Councillor is lengthy, be content with surnames: Wyers, Enelow, Frantz,

Greenson, Marmor, Clinco, Lomas, Morgan, Blumstein, Walsh, Rothman, Olson, Ziskind, Levy, Freeman, Luster, Moriarty, Haenel, Futterman, Nierenberg, Garrett, Hartsough, Gottesman, Crutcher, Wayne, Pumpian-Mindlin, Bogen-Tietz, McCullough, and Gericke.

A provision for additional nominations was by petition, balloting would be by mail, and installation of the officers would be held at the next meeting, Friday, February 6, 1953.

DECEMBER 26, 1952

This date heads a letter from Dr. Mathew Ross to Dr. Gayle, Secretary of the American Psychiatric Association and is a cover letter for the application of the Southern California Psychiatric Society to become a District Branch of the Association. He refers to enclosure of a copy of the Constitution of the Society, and a list of 84 persons, all members of the American Psychiatric Association, presumably signers of the Constitution and therefore Charter Members. Dr. Ross signs himself as Temporary Chairman, Steering Committee, Southern California Psychiatric Society. Again below his name is enumerated the names of the nine man (one woman, May Romm) STEERING COMMITTEE, the same as mentioned above in the December 2, 1952 letter.

DECEMBER 29, 1952

Dr. Gayle, the national Secretary, replied promptly and his response to Dr. Ross acknowledges receipt of the December 26 application letter and says it conforms with

all regulations and states it will be presented to the Executive Committee, the Council, and finally to the Membership for acceptance.

JANUARY 5, 1953

This is addressed "Dear Charter Member" and is a cover letter for an enclosed ballot, the ballot sent out on December 19, 1952. No further nominations had been made per petition, therefore the ballot is identical with the nominations as of December 19th. The qualification for voting included payment of dues, in the sum of ten dollars, to accompany the ballot if not paid previously. This letter also announces installation of the officers to be held Friday, February 6, 1953, again at the Institute of Aeronautical Sciences, 7660 Beverly Boulevard at 8 P.M. Also announced was the first scientific program, a Symposium on Schizophrenia with the following speakers and subjects:

Milton Wexler, Ph.D. - Psychotherapy in Schizophrenia

G. Creswell Burns, M.D. - Biological Therapy in
Schizophrenia

Josiph Teicher, M.D. - Childhood Schizophrenia

MAY 5, 1953

On this date the Southern California Psychiatric Society officially became a District Branch of the American Psychiatric Society, so voted by the assembled membership of the Association. The Certificate testifying to this is

dated November 19, 1957, somewhat belated and the result of a discovery that no proper certification reposed in the Society's files. The national Secretary, William Malamud responded promptly to a request, rest assured we are certified.