achieve these goals. Physician-scientists are too valuable to this society not to do otherwise.

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Atlantic City is passé — I’m betting on Chicago

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My first ASCI meeting as a member was in Chicago in 2001. I was absolutely thrilled to have been elected and eager to attend. I presented a poster on neural crest contribution to the cardiovascular system, and I arrived at the poster session a few minutes late. I was shocked to find Dan Foster, Joe Goldstein, and Michael Brown examining my data. They were pointing at figures and arguing about some point or other. My first reaction was to turn away and to disappear into the crowd. I summoned my courage, however, and introduced myself. Without further formality, I was subjected to a withering dual-barreled barrage of skepticism and inquiry from Goldstein and Brown. I had supposed that their interests were limited to cholesterol and lipid metabolism, and I was surprised at their interest in my work. Eventually, Bill Kelley arrived. He had recruited me to attend. I presented a poster on neural crest contribution to the artery wall. The meetings never fail to leave me once more with my mouth hanging open. The meeting year ends badly after fiscal showdown squeezes science. My first reaction was to turn away and to disappear into the crowd. I summoned my courage, however, and introduced myself. Without further formality, I was subjected to a withering dual-barreled barrage of skepticism and inquiry from Goldstein and Brown. I had supposed that their interests were limited to cholesterol and lipid metabolism, and I was surprised at their interest in my work and detailed knowledge of the field. I couldn’t believe that I was engaged in data analysis with Goldstein and Brown — and it was my data! Eventually, Bill Kelley arrived. He had recruited me to attend. I presented a poster on neural crest contribution to the artery wall. The meetings never fail to leave me once more impressed with the importance and potential of the well-rounded physician-scientist. I cannot think of another conference or event that takes its place in this regard. Although new primary data are now only rarely presented at the oral sessions (though the ASCI Council is changing that), a review of the past three years’ agendas reveals an astounding compendium of scientific advance and excellence (Table 1): six Nobel laureates, four Lasker awardees, seventeen members of the National Academy of Sciences, nineteen members of the Institute of Medicine, and a broad range of discovery to inspire the next generation.

The giants remind us that the Tri-Societies meetings were once able to assemble nearly all of academic medicine, providing an unparalleled forum for presenting and discussing new findings. This was possible because academic medicine was far smaller than it is today. In 1960, the number of faculty members in the largest departments of medicine averaged well under 100, sometimes under 20, and the NIH provided about $200 million in research grants annually — compared with over $20 billion today. Successful physician-scientists today, such as those inducted into the ASCI, must compete with a far larger and more advanced group

Conflict of interest: The author has declared that no conflict of interest exists.

of basic and clinical scientists than did our predecessors. Never-
theless, the total number of annual ASCI inductees has remained
relatively constant, and the quality remains outstanding. It is
perhaps an even greater honor today to be named by colleagues
to join the ASCI than ever before in the Society’s 100-year his-
tory. While the growth and expansion of biomedical research has
altered the nature of the annual meetings themselves, it has not
diminished the significance of the professional recognition asso-
ciated with the annual event.

Actually, 2001 was not my first ASCI meeting. In the late 1960s
and early ’70s I went along with my parents each May to Atlantic
City. I too have fond memories of those spring trips. The expansive
Boardwalk with amusement parks and cotton candy were mesmer-
zizing. There was the biggest Ferris wheel I had ever seen, and we
always returned with boxes of delicious and precious saltwater
taffy. At the time, I was far more impressed with the glamorous
photos of Miss America that lined the hallways of Haddon Hall,
where the pageant was held each year, than I was with the leaders
of American medicine.

I returned to Atlantic City this year and once again strolled down
the Boardwalk in search of saltwater taffy. I was disappointed to
find the city dilapidated and out of date, with an air of desperation
surrounding the glitzy casinos. The Ferris wheel was still there, but
it was rather small and unimpressive, and I wondered if it had ever
been the giant of my memory. The saltwater taffy was still good,
but all in all, the food is better in Chicago.

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was vice president in 1970.

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