

1950

ASK NOT WHAT YOUR SOCIETY CAN DO FOR YOU

"Ask not what your society can do for you, ask what you can do for your society", sets the theme of my remarks today. As some of you may recall, this theme is a paraphrase from "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country." These stirring words are not only traceable to a famous son of a famous physician, namely Oliver Wendel Holmes, Jr., the Supreme Court Justice, but to Kahlil Gabran the philosopher author, as were later used again by President John F. Kennedy in one of his addresses to the nation in one his State of the Union Address.

Happily for you I hope my remarks will be brief and to the point. Perhaps not quite as laconic, and certainly not as poignant as those of another Presidential speech namely the Gettysburg Address.

My message is not only addressed to all members of the American Society of Colon and Rectal Surgeons, of whom I'm proud to be serving as your presiding officer, but they are particularly aimed at the younger members of our society, for after all, in the long run and in time, it is they who will stand to benefit the most.

What can you do for your society? I urge more participation in the scientific programs by the newer and younger members of the society. There was a time, within my more

than a quarter of century involvement in this society, that elevation from Associate to full Fellowship levels did not take place until a member had presented a scientific paper at the annual convention, Similarly, those of us who are older should not only encourage the younger members to scientific pursuits and literary efforts, but we should, by virtue of our added experience and wisdom, point out to them areas of research which can be pursued and which may be worthwhile reporting. Our local and regional societies are excellent arenas in which these fledging efforts can be practiced.

Some of us, after joining the society, are satisfied to come to the meeting and simply enjoy the fruits and efforts of others. There is nothing wrong with this, mind you, but life is not a one way but a two way street; it is give and take, get involved and participate!

The better our scientific programs, the more attractive our society is to potential members. The more attractive, the stronger our society becomes, and in these days of increasing third party interference into the practice of medicine, we need to keep our society strong.

In turn, appointments to committees and participation in the workings of the society originate in the recognition

of scientific presentation as well as administrative ability. The increasing intrusion of federal, state and municipal agencies into the performance of our professional duties has given rise to a marked proliferation of committee work within our own society. Committee work can be boring and frustrating, but without it, our democratic procedure which forms the basis of all society activities will perish. Don't avoid it, seize it as an opportunity to direct your energies for the good of our society.

In conclusion then, I repeat, ask not what your society can do for you, ask what you can do for the society. For in the end it is truly you who will benefit.