

June 6, 2013

I'm sorry to delay so long in responding but I have had what is essentially a new prep this quarter and that plus several trips to the midwest for my grandchildren's graduations and birthdays has left me with scarcely a minute to spare.

Unfortunately, now that I have waited so long I am embarrassed that I have so little to tell you. I cleaned out most of my ALS files when I left the University of Florida in '02 so do not have any paper records I can send you.

In the early years the ALS was intended as a purely honorary society. Election as a Fellow was intended to be an honor bestowed only on the most productive scholars after an extended record of accomplishment had been established. There was no expectation that Fellows, after election, would contribute to ALS in any substantive way. We met annually and the first years featured presentations by well-established scholars. In fact, Seppo Iso-Ahola and I were invited to present at an ALS meeting a year or two before I was elected a Fellow; Seppo was elected the following year.

Two issues defined the early years, membership dues and adopting a substantive agenda. I do not recall who raised the issue of dues nor why it was raised but that turned out to be a divisive issue. On one side were those who thought we needed to charge dues. Those who objected felt quite strongly that charging dues was an insult. Their argument went something like this.

- * First you tell me you are inducting me into an honorary society to honor me for my prior work.
- * Then you tell me I have to pay dues or you will revoke my membership in the society.
- * That cheapens the honor and creates the impression you are merely trying to recruit people to raise revenue.

Several of those who objected felt so strongly about the issue that they resigned. When I served as secretary treasurer and again when I worked on the web site I ignored their "resignation." I was of the opinion that they were honored by the society and our records should continue to show that.

The issue was further complicated by the fact that many of the Charter Fellows and even some of the early inductees were retired or retiring and they were not required to pay dues. I had taken retirement from SIU but then took a temporary position at the University of Florida so I didn't even know how my status should be treated. A number of other who retired also took some kind of position.

While serving as Treasurer I also found that a fairly large proportion of the non-retired membership were behind on their dues or had never paid dues. In short, the issue of dues was never handled satisfactorily. To repeat, however, I felt it cheapened ALS to claim that eminent scholars were being honored for their record of accomplishment but — oh, by the way, if you don't pay up we are going to kick you out.

The other issue concerned the adoption of a substantive agenda for ALS. I was elected President in 1988 and served from the Annual Meeting in Indianapolis to the next meeting in San Antonio. Being something of a workaholic, I suggested that we really should adopt a substantive agenda for ALS. My experience was that "there was nothing to do." I wasn't inclined to stand around patting myself on the back for having been elected to ALS and felt like membership in the organization began to lose its meaning the longer I was a Fellow. It was exciting to be elected, but then ... nothing. Anyway, I put together a list of initiatives I thought would be of interest to ALS fellows and lobbied for the Academy to formally commit itself to one or more. (I wish I had saved that document but, alas ...). Anyway, my proposal was resoundingly voted down at the San Antonio meeting. Essentially, the members said, "I've got a job and a lot of demands on my time. I don't need another job on top of that." The opposition to a substantive agenda wasn't unanimous, but probably 80% of the members opposed adopting an agenda. I had the distinct impression that the opposition, as overwhelming as it was, was still somewhat muted because people were being kind. In short, most of the members did not want to make me feel bad.

That issue relates back to the issue of dues. Since we had considered and formally rejected the notion of

adopting a substantive agenda, and since members paid for their own lunch at the annual meeting, those who opposed dues also argued, with some merit, that the Academy really had no need for dues.

Anyway, after the 1989 meeting I had less and less substantive contact with ALS. The only active roles were played by the officers and up until I volunteered to serve as Secretary/Treasurer (1999-2001) I am not aware of anyone who held another office after having served as President. Since I did not go to graduate school nor serve on a faculty with any of the other Fellows, and the ALS meetings had devolved to a Luncheon and not much more, I have not attended an ALS meeting since 1989.

Again, I am sorry I don't have more information for you. Perhaps something I forgot will occur to me in the coming weeks and if so I will send it alone.

Tony

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