

American Gastroenterological  
Association  
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November 21, 1966

**Morton I. Grossman, M.D.**

President-elect

✓ American Gastroenterological Association

Veterans Administration Center

Los Angeles, California 90073

Dear Doctor Grossman:

Thank you for your questionnaire of some time ago. It came while I was in Asia attending the World Congress on Gastroenterology, followed by a State Department-sponsored lecture-demonstration in endoscopic pathology of the stomach given at eight medical schools in Tokyo, Seoul, Manila, Hong Kong, and Honolulu.

Your survey is very interesting and the kind of thing that one would expect of you. I congratulate you upon being president-elect and predict an excellent administration.

In answer to the question - have you been invited to apply for membership, the facts are briefly as follows: After a Bachelor's Degree at the University of Chicago and an M.D. at Rush Medical College of the University of Chicago, I spent three years as a fellow in internal medicine and gastroenterology, primarily at the Cook County Hospital, with some part-time study at Billings and Provident Hospitals. My sponsors in those days were Sidney Portis, Harry Singer, Rudolf Schindler, Warfield, the roentgenologist, and Yaffe, the pathologist, and to some extent, Walter Palmer. I was trained to establish a GI Service at Provident Hospital, which had an affiliation with the University of Chicago at that time.

Shortly after publishing my first significant research paper; viz., "Studies on Chronic Alcoholic Gastritis" in 1941, I inquired about the possibility of joining the AGA. This was before the board certification requirement. I was told "one does not apply, one has to be invited by the organization." I attended meetings regularly, continued to do research, published papers, taught, and developed my service at Provident Hospital, which was at that time approved for residency training in internal medicine. Meanwhile, I had received a Master's degree in pathology, under Yaffe at the University of Illinois, and

years before passed the National Board, all three parts after graduation.

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In 1946, after passing the Board of Internal Medicine and the Board of Gastroenterology, I wrote 25th place among 124 candidates for the Department of Internal Medicine at the Cook County Hospital attending staff examination, was appointed to a clinic in gastroscopy, and later instructor at the University of Illinois Department of Medicine. I again raised the question of membership in the AGA with some of my friends, and over a period of twelve years I was sponsored by the following principal proposers: Andrew C. Ivy, George Usterman, Heinrich Necheles, and Sidney Portis. ~~On the part of these men~~ and, indirectly, by others, including the late Dr. Elman of St. Louis. There was considerable embarrassment and I finally asked that all further efforts be withdrawn.

Meanwhile, several of my students have been admitted to membership, and I am happy to have had a part in their training. I have recently learned that Dr. Carroll Leevy of New Jersey last year became the first Negro gastroenterologist to be admitted to the AGA. Fortunately, I have been able to obtain professional fellowship and growth, which comes with participating membership in the society of one specialty, to some extent through other organizations.

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After thirty years as a gastroenterologist, I have no malice in my heart for being systematically denied a place on the stage, or in the mainstreams with fellow gastroenterologists, ~~with~~ the principal organization of Americans in this specialty, which by virtue of its name and activities has assumed the national and world image of encompassing and representing all qualified gastroenterologists in America.

With kindest personal regards, I am

Very truly yours,

Leonidas H. Berry, M.D.

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