Paul C. Samson, M.D., 19051982 Part I. His Contributions to The Society of Thoracic Surgeons
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Part I. His Contributions to The Society of Thoracic Surgeons
Robert G. Ellison, M.D.

It is my privilege as Historian of The Society of Thoracic Surgeons (STS) to comment on the contributions of Dr. Paul C. Samson to the Society during his two terms as president. As treasurer of the STS during this period, I had ample opportunity to observe his personal and professional dedication to the ideals of our specialty.

At the organizational meeting of the STS in San Francisco on October 31, 1963, Dr. Samson was unanimously elected the first president. This was a natural choice because he was recognized as one of the most prominent thoracic surgeons in the United States. An accomplished clinician and teacher, he directed a training program in thoracic and cardiac surgery and had made numerous contributions to this area of surgery, the development of which spanned his professional career. Following World War II, he was one of the pioneers who helped solidify the concept of thoracic surgery as an identifiable specialty. His leadership abilities were widely recognized, involving him in official positions in numerous professional organizations. Little wonder that he was identified to lead a new society for thoracic surgeons!

In accepting the presidency of this new society, Dr. Samson stated, "It is with extreme humility that I approach the task of directing the foundation of a new society. I will need all of your forbearance, your consideration, and your cooperation. I must tell you in all honesty that I approached membership even on the Steering Committee with caution... However, when I learned further of the objectives of the new society, namely, that we wish to keep thoracic surgery as a specialty, that we wish to standardize and improve the training of thoracic surgeons, that we wish to provide a forum for the many younger thoracic surgeons who do not now have a national society of their own, and that we wish not to conflict with but to supplement the related societies, I told Chamberlain [Dr. J. Maxwell Chamberlain, chairman of the Steering Committee] to use my name on [that] committee, and you see what it got me."

Dr. Samson's unique personality was a powerful force in the rapid establishment of the STS on such a firm basis. While many other capable leaders contributed to the early development of the STS, Dr. Samson provided forceful direction for major progress during the 27 months of his presidency. Some of these advances included:

1. Ratification of a constitution and bylaws.
2. Development of a modus operandi for the day-to-day function of the STS.
3. Organization of a membership committee with policies for membership.
4. Selection of a program committee for the first two scientific meetings.
6. Achievement of formal approval for representation from the STS to the American Board of Thoracic Surgery.
7. Achievement of approval by the American College of Surgeons for listing of the STS among the coded organizations.
8. Achievement of approval by the American College of Surgeons for representation from the STS to the college's board of governors.
9. Achievement of approval by the American College of Surgeons for representation from the STS to the college's Advisory Council for Thoracic Surgery.

In his introductory remarks at the first annual meeting of the STS in St. Louis, January 25–27, 1965, Dr. Samson discussed background devel-
opments in the establishment of the new organization. He emphasized that membership in the STS would provide a forum and identification with a national specialty group for thoracic surgeons who had made a commitment to full-time practice of this specialty.

At the second annual meeting in Denver, January 24–26, 1966, Dr. Samson reviewed the "State of the Society." He summarized the activities of the STS during the 27 months of his presidency. His comments indicated that seven council meetings had been held, that the membership committee had approved 576 founding members, that the program committee had organized two outstanding scientific programs, and that *The Annals of Thoracic Surgery* and its editorial board were functioning effectively in publishing a very successful scientific journal. In addition, he reviewed the accomplishments relating to the recognition of the STS on a national basis.

He cautioned, however, that this was just the beginning, and he challenged the young surgeons in the STS to support the goals and objectives upon which the Society was based. He quoted from his editorial, "A New Specialty Surgical Society," published in the first issue of *The Annals of Thoracic Surgery* (1:1, 1965): "We believe that The Society of Thoracic Surgeons has a well-defined place in the schema of surgical organizations. . . . We believe that the scope and opportunities of thoracic and cardiovascular surgery as a specialty will unquestionably be enhanced because The Society of Thoracic Surgeons exists."

These predictions of the first president of the STS have certainly been realized, and the goals and objectives of the Society are being accomplished today. The membership of the STS recognizes the numerous and outstanding contributions of this dynamic leader, Paul C. Samson, M.D.

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