

ORIGINS OF THE INTERNATIONAL FIBRINOGEN RESEARCH SOCIETY

A Personal Account

The first Workshop conference on Fibrinogen was conceived by Pehr Edman and organized in his honor by his wife, Agnes Henschen. The conference was entitled '*The Shape and Structure of Fibrinogen*' and was held in 1977 at Edman's Proteinchemie Department at The Max-Planck Institut für Biochemie in Martensried bei München. Edman was a renowned biochemist who had developed a new method for protein amino acid sequence analysis. The method came to be known as the 'Edman Procedure' and was a revolutionary improvement of existing methodologies. At the time of the conference Edman's procedure was being used by Henschen for sequencing Fibrinogen.

Many notable scientists contributed to that conference including Klaus Lederer, L. Bachmann, Gérard Marguerie, Dieter Heene, Helmut Hörmann, Friedrich Lottspeich, Edda Töpfer-Peterson, Preben Kok, and Micha Furlan, among others. The proceedings were published in a special issue of *Thrombosis and Haemostasis*.

That first meeting was succeeded by other Workshops that were held in different European cities. The composition of each Workshop Organizing Committee depended on the venue but usually included Agnes Henschen on their roster, probably to acknowledge her role in starting them. I did not attend those early conferences and therefore my knowledge of them is limited, but I did participate actively in the 1986 Workshop organized by Gert Müller-Berghaus in Giessen, West Germany. That conference was held at Schloss Rauschholzhausen. The following year the boundaries of the Europe-bound Workshops were extended to Renfrew, Scotland for a meeting that was organized by Gordon Lowe (Glasgow), Patrick Gaffney (London), David Lane (London), and Agnes Henschen (Munich). During that conference I met with the Organizing Committee and with prior Workshop organizers and suggested Milwaukee, Wisconsin as the site for the 1988 Workshop. My offer met with enthusiastic approval-that conference would be the first Fibrinogen Workshop to be held on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. The following year the global reach of the conference was further extended to Kyoto, Japan hosted by Michio Matsuda. Following that successful meeting, it was on to Rouen, France in 1990, a Workshop that was organized by Nanette and Claudine Soria.



During the two preceding Workshops, a working Committee composed of former organizers and participants, met to discuss the future of the Fibrinogen Workshops, to determine whether a more formal organization, namely *The International Fibrinogen Research Society (IFRS)*, should replace them, as well as to develop details of its ultimate organization and the drafting of a Constitution to codify governance structure. Formal inauguration of the IFRS took place at Rouen, where

Workshop members met one evening for dinner and other festivities at Place du Vieux Marché (Old Market Place). That Market Place is best known as the site where Joan of Arc was burned at the stake in 1431. In her memory, a modern church, *Église Jeanne d'Arc*, borders the Square. (*The picture shows the Square with the eaves of the Église on the left*).

That evening, Welsh-born John Owen from Bowman Gray School of Medicine whose weekend hobby was ‘Church bell ringing’, and who would become the IFRS Secretary-Treasurer, held forth eloquently. He mesmerized the audience with his Welsh accent and controlled and amused them for about 15 minutes. When he had concluded his opening remarks, he announced the genesis of the IFRS and asked for approval by the ‘soon-to-be members’. The response was explosively unanimous amid shouts, applause, and clicking of wine glasses. Owen announced that the Advisory Committee had selected me to be its Chairman and CEO. I, of course, had been aware of that decision, but nevertheless I was humbly appreciative, and accepted this honor in a brief acceptance speech.

The IFRS was subsequently registered in Wisconsin as a non-profit Corporation. Its first Board of Directors comprised *President*, Agnes Henschen (Germany); *Chairman and CEO*, Michael Mosesson (USA); *Secretary-Treasurer*, John Owen (USA); *Counselors*: Frank Brosstad (Norway), Jessie T. Douglas (UK), Michio Matsuda (Japan), Leonid Medved (USSR), Gert Müller-Berghaus (Germany), Willem Nieuwenhuizen (Netherlands), John R Shainoff (USA), and Claudine & Nanette Soria (France).

The day following our evening of revelry and conviviality, I convened a

meeting of The Board of Directors to choose a venue for the Fibrinogen Workshop in 1991, the first under the aegis of the IFRS. We selected Kiev, Ukraine, and Leonid Medved was chosen as its Chairman. The Soviet Union at that time was undergoing 'Perestroika' that would eventually lead to its dissolution. In the months following the Rouen meeting, there was increasing turmoil and disruption throughout the USSR. Early the next year John Owen sounded the alarm concerning the potential hazards of holding the Workshop in Ukraine, and in addition, only a small number of participants had registered for the conference. After consulting at length with members of the Board, I reluctantly decided to cancel the meeting. Understandably, Leonid Medved was disappointed at that decision and so were we all, but at least the Kiev meeting had the distinction of being the only scheduled IFRS Fibrinogen Workshop that didn't take place.

Michael W Mosesson

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