The feeling of congeniality at the Atlantic City meetings of the AAP and the ASCI, are enveloped by a vague and unsettling nostalgia. Dominating the scene was the Boardwalk — a site of unexpected encounters, often with long-forgotten colleagues, evoking a feeling of shared intellectual excitement and rich personal ties.

As a consequence, the finest research was presented here to a relatively small group of academic scholars. Presentation at the Congress Hall on the Steel Pier was the ultimate goal of budding investigators no less than exalted professors. The core of medicine was reasonably accessible to nearly everyone, since high technology, conceptual as well as technical, did not yet dominate the medical disciplines. It was a thrill to present a paper to a select, high-level audience, among whom were many hallowed investigators no less than exalted professors. The core of medicine was within reach of nearly everyone, since high technology, conceptual as well as technical, did not yet dominate the medical disciplines. It was a thrill to present a paper to a select, high-level audience, among whom were many hallowed investigators.

The Atlantic City meetings nurtured the finest medical research embraced by a rich climate of academic collegiality. Maybe the science is much better now — more sophisticated, more definitive, with far greater explanatory power. Maybe the central focus on physiologic derangements yielded less profound insight into normal and deranged function than the genetic and molecular biology of today. Maybe the true well-rounded research is in danger of having a short radius. One can doubt, however, whether the most important legacy of Atlantic City, the culture and cohesiveness of academic internal medicine, is effectively transmitted thereby.

Fortunately within the current leadership of the spring meetings, Samuel Johnson’s view of history has largely prevailed. Let us hope that in a future generation, someone in an analogous fashion to the above will find it attractive to compose a brief “Homage to Chicago” as a uniquely valuable and singular era and setting for academic internal medicine.

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The American Society for Clinical Investigation, 1952–1975: a personal perspective

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In this perspective, I trace my experiences with the ASCI, beginning in 1952, when as a medical student I attended my first meeting, until 1975, when I completed my term as president of the Society. I focus attention on the sociological aspects of the Atlantic City meetings and the critically important role these meetings played in the evolution of academic medicine during the third quarter of the 20th century.

The period encompassed by this article begins in 1952 with the first meeting of the American Society for Clinical Investigation that I attended and ends with the 1975 meeting, when I completed my year as president and graduated to emeritus membership. In 1952 Harry Truman was the president of the United States and the Korean War was in full swing. Research was rarely carried out by medical students at the time, but I was fortunate to have been given the opportunity to spend an extended research elective in the hemodynamic research laboratory of Ludwig Eichna at New York University and Bellevue Hospital. We studied the hemodynamics of heart failure, a subject that I have worked on intermittently since then and continue to investigate at present. Eichna was the secretary of the ASCI and therefore was quite involved in Society matters. He talked to me about them at some length, giving me a bird’s-eye view, and arranged for me to accompany him to the annual meeting in Atlantic City, New Jersey, then a quiet seaside resort.

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