GENERAL SESSION
2:00 P.M., Kilbourn Hall, Auditorium

CHAIRMAN FIFE: Members of the National Association of Nurse Anesthetists, and guests:

It is with regret that I have to announce that our President, Miss Agatha C. Hodgins, is unable, due to a very severe illness, to be with us today. She has sent a message to us, which will be read by Mrs. Louis Keith Boswell.

AGATHA C. HODGINS

Director, Post-Graduate School of Anesthesia, University Hospitals, Cleveland, O.

Madam Chairman, Members of the National Association of Nurse Anesthetists and Guests:—

It is a matter for felicitation that the American Hospital Association courteously extended to our new Association an invitation to meet with them — a privilege happily accepted and much appreciated. Your president greatly regrets that at this significant gathering, her greetings and good wishes for a successful and profitable meeting must, perchance, be delegated to another. This present meeting is the first-fruit of what might be called an adventure. That adventuring is a necessary and vital thing to life and growth is a sound principle, emphasized by our wisest philosophers. "There never can be any static maintenance of perfection — advance or decadence are the only choices offered to mankind." (1) This spirit of adventure is then the dynamic force that keeps us constantly contrasting what we are and what we may be and supplies the necessary courage to change from static to growing conditions.

An adventure may become a satisfactory achievement, a disastrous occurrence or per chance dwindle to a mere excursion. To make achievement sure there must be a clear understanding of what it is all about and this dynamic force intelligently directed and guided. We must, while soberly considering the necessary stress and strain of organization, with its attendant discouragements and disappointments, regard all such, only as obstacles to be courageously overcome on our way to turning this adventure into a happy successful achievement. To do this we have need of both young and older minds. Youth contributing not only the fresh enthusiasm and optimism but also "the sense of uneasiness, of discomfort, of bondage, of slowness which things as they are produce in its more sensitive members." (2) These are valuable contributions to any undertaking, but without the balanced judgment and deeper, larger hope of mature minds they are apt to result in transient success and later failure. Life brings experience and "Experience," said the apostle, "worketh hope." Adventuring then in a fine cause is a thing of the spirit and on final analysis the life and growing of an organization will depend on keeping alive this questing spirit.

Conceded that an adventure should be entered upon for a reason and have an aim, which involves the attainment of certain objectives—
what then was our reason and what did we hope to accomplish when on June 17th, 1931, a group of forty-nine nurse anesthetists, representing twelve states, met at Lakeside Hospital, Cleveland, and formed "The National Association of Nurse Anesthetists"?

Basically, the reason for organization was a deepening consciousness, in the minds of those most concerned, of the accepted truth; that the development of any field of work is best obtained by organizing into a coherent group those most concerned in its continuance and progress. Also recognition of the fact that forming such an organization implies not only commitment to certain ideals, but involves the responsibility of working in a definite practical way for the attainment of desired objectives.

Particularly, organization of the group seemed necessary, because of the situation in regard to the present status of the nurse anesthetist — a confused and perplexing one, as no intelligent person can deny. Increasingly aware of the fact that while with practically every other medical group, organization had been accomplished — our group was in a sort of between position, having no distinctive place of its own. "There is a society of medical anesthetists, but nurse anesthetists are not eligible for membership; the work does not properly fall under the jurisdiction of nursing and for lack of a medical degree nurse anesthetists cannot be included as members of medical association." (3) Keen realization of the fact that, while doing a work of immense and real importance, we lacked the means to advance our cause as a whole, or to obtain for those making it their life work the status and security they so well deserve, made it obligatory that we create an organization primarily concerned with progress of the work and serving the interests of our own group. Acknowledging the place taken and the recognition given will depend on how fine an organization we can build up. A colorful continuing adventure this building up of an organization; an assured successful achievement, if each and every member will do her part.

An organization, such as ours, to be truly successful should not only be idealistic and practical; but must exercise between these two aims the saving sense of balance. Judicious weighing of values calls for fine exercise of the critical faculty, since criticism depending on whether it is constructive or destructive may be the means of nourishing or killing a project.

It has been wisely said, "... the object of the critical faculty is not to censure faults but to disengage excellencies ... The basis of criticism is imagination, its spiritual quality is simplicity, its intellectual distinction is balance." (4) Here then is a measuring stick of values, a guide to "true up" the formulations of future plans, and help towards the rightful fulfillment of sought for results.

The faculty of disengaging excellencies will set free for our consideration the best qualities and talents of those working with us, thus establishing an "esprit de corps" which cannot fail to bring about a constructive executive and educational program. There is an old Chinese maxim that "He who wishes to know the road through the mountain must ask
those who have already trodden it." One of the beneficial results of belated organization is that by seeking the counsel and help of interrelated groups, who have already "trodden the mountain" we will not only disengage the excellencies which they have discovered but will also establish between our group and theirs a feeling of friendly interest and cooperation invaluable to our future development.

The basis of criticism is imagination, because the fine exercise of the critical faculty implies ability to see the picture whole, not as a part. Remembering that mental vision must precede practical expression, we should all create a vision not only of the organization as a whole, but also of the part we as individual members hope to play. The more clear cut and aspirational this vision is, the greater probability of its fulfillment.

We are today everywhere confronted with the results of too extravagant thinking, which has ended in such elaborate plans of organization and multiplicity of projects as to render impossible, in many cases, the task of keeping them in efficient running order. Let us then start by exercising that spiritual quality, simplicity, not only in weighing and determining future policies, but in establishing working relationships with one another. Be simple, direct and sincere. Thus practicing simplicity we shall as individuals and a group reap its spiritual fruits — clearness of vision, singleness of purpose, strength and endurance.

In a recent fascinating autobiography this (to me) arresting paragraph occurs: "Now for herself (Gertrude Stein) she was not efficient; she was good humored, she was democratic, one person was as good as another, and she knew what she wanted done. 'If you are like that,' she says, 'anybody will do anything for you. The important thing,' she insists, 'is that you must have deep down as the deepest thing in you a sense of equality. Then anybody will do anything for you.'" (5)

Equality, which like simplicity is fundamentally a thing of the spirit, is a formative, potent influence in establishing the spirit of good will and friendly tolerance between members of a group. While recognizing the fact that diversification of gifts exists, we affirm equality of spirit among those concerned in a common cause. This deep down feeling of equality will keep us from being hesitant of asking assistance from others; thus, asking and giving, such talents as we may each possess will be brought together and used for the building of the whole.

"He is poor indeed who hath not patience." (6) We might well, by adding courage, take this as a motto. We shall be poor, indeed, if we do not add to our armamentarium cheerful, optimistic courage, endurance and patience. Remembering that while "Any man may make a mistake, none but a fool will stick to it," (7) we will courageously acknowledge faults and be cheerfully optimistic in starting — if need be — afresh. The exercise of courage will help us to take necessary criticism without resentment and give credit when due, ungrudgingly and generously. Realizing the existence in human affairs of the "up and down curve" we will take the down curve not as discouragement, but rather as time given for resting and contemplation — for gathering fresh courage to go buoyant-
ly forward on the upcurve, towards what we hope will prove a still more profitable phase of our adventure.

An effective, harmonious program will depend on how efficiently future plans are evaluated, coordinated and balanced on the basis of their usefulness to the organization as a whole. To do this successfully is an intellectual task of no mean order. Balance connotes wise judgment; placing emphasis on essentials rather than non-essentials, on the permanent rather than the transient, on a sound rather than expedient course. Recognizing the "time element" we will judge not on how long it takes but how well a task is done, and on the other hand avoid a senseless waste of time over unimportant things. Our sense of proportion will keep us from allowing a preponderance of any one sort of influence — thus leading to the formation of cliques. We will recognize that influence in an organization is like ballast in a ship — it must be the right weight and in the right place to insure safe sailing. The exercise of common sense and balance will give us a sane idea of the relative importance of events; in time we hope it will teach us to treat "all disasters as incidents and none of the incidents as disasters". (8) Thus by good sense in treating incidents, we will avoid many disasters. Balance seasoned with a sense of humor and good nature will not only save us from taking ourselves too seriously but enable us to be generous in seeing the viewpoint of others. By mutual concessions we will solve our differences and so preserve harmony throughout the organization.

The house I now live in is well over the century mark. Built in far-off Colonial days, it has, while lending itself to changes necessary for our modern ideas of comfort, retained the original characteristics of beauty, simplicity and usefulness, first given tangible form, in it, by conscientious fine workmen. Let us keep our abiding faith, that each component group, now building their part of our organization, may so embody in their work the spiritual qualities of courage, simplicity, endurance and good judgment, that the integral whole may, like this little house, give warmth, light and security to the present generation and be of continuing beauty and usefulness to generations coming after us.

(1) Professor Whitehead, "Adventure of Ideas".
(2) Author unknown.
(3) Paper by writer, read in Pittsburgh.
(4) William Sharpe.
(6) Shakespeare
(7) Cicero
(8) Harold Nicolson

Dr. Malcolm MacEachern, director of Hospital Activities, American College of Surgeons, talked to us on "The Importance of a Well Organized Anesthesia Department." We were unable to obtain Dr. MacEachern's paper in time to publish it in this report. It will be sent to you under separate cover as soon as we receive it.