Immunology has become a strong subdiscipline within Dermatology and immunologic phenomena in skin diseases capture an ever greater share of space in the published literature of Dermatology. When immunology and immunodermatology were the topic of a symposium on advances in biology of skin in 1969, major topics included skin transplant immunology and allergic reactions within the skin. In other words, the skin was viewed largely as a tissue bed in which it was convenient to observe and sample immunologic reactions. This major thrust of skin immunology has now been joined by the studies which assign the skin a significant role as an immunologic organ. An interim symposium in 1979 addressed the subject of “dendritic cells of the epidermis” with emphasis on the Langerhans cells. The gathering of immunodermatologists and immunologists in October, 1984 emphasized yet another dendritic epidermal cell, the theta-positive cell as a significant modulator of immune reactivity in murine skin.

The notions of a “reticuloepithelial system” and of a “skin-associated lymphoid tissue (SALT)” continue to gain credence by the potent and profound antigen-presenting effects of the Langerhans cell. Normally, these cells express the heterodimeric immune-associated (Ia, HLA-DR) antigens on their surface. However, we are now learning that keratinocytes and melanocytes may express the HLA-DR antigens on their surface in certain disease-associated conditions.

Our keynote speaker outlined the cell-damaging attack mechanism of complement which forms a polyphorin by the calcium-dependent polymerization of C9 upon cell membranes. These damaged, leaky cells are thus killed by this terminal event of complement activation. The dependence of antibody-mediated skin diseases upon complement action is suggested in bullous pemphigoid and is also possible in epidermolysis bullosa aquisita and pemphigus vulgaris, topics rigorously reviewed by Jordan and Briggaman and their coauthors.

These meetings continue to capture not only what is established and proven but what is developing and in progress by young vigorous investigators. Eight of the speakers this year were junior faculty members or research fellows. Likewise, a significant portion of the audience consisted of individuals actively engaged in research in Dermatoimmunology and residents in training. We believe the symposia continue to be a forum to stimulate future research and they provide heuristic encounters for young investigators seeking to identify important unsolved problems in our specialty.

Each of the participants responded to the environment where the ocean and forest meet in the tranquil setting of Salishan Lodge at Gleneden Beach, Oregon. Travel to this location is no more remote than to the meetings which this resembles so closely, the Gordon Conferences. The most easily recognizable difference is the “adult size amenities”. Nevertheless, the opportunity to formulate, reflect and interface with other disciplines was remarked upon by many of the participants. Many expressed a desire to return to their laboratories and apply immediately some of the new ideas and knowledge to their work. That is the final test of the successful meeting!

We were all sad to learn of the prolonged, serious illness of our friend, colleague and coorganizer of this meeting Dr. James N. Gilliam. When we sat together in December of 1983 in Chicago to plan for the meeting, few might have predicted that Jim’s life had so few months remaining. Many of us have communicated our respect and affection for Jim in the days and weeks prior to his death. The remaining symposium organizers dedicate this meeting to his memory. To interface and work with Jim Gilliam was indeed a joy. He was one who made each of us better, this friend and gentle giant of Dermatology.

The symposium continues to be sponsored through the auspices of the Cutaneous Biology Foundation, Inc. Financial support comes in part, from a grant from the U.S. Public Health Service (AM09431), the Medical Research Foundation of Oregon, and the support of the Pharmaceutical and Cosmetic Industries. The beneficiaries of this information are all who do research and development in skin biology. The immediate recipients are the members of the Society for Investigative Dermatology and European Society for Dermatological Research which support The Journal of Investigative Dermatology.

Income to support the meeting and its publication has fallen significantly behind the expenditures required during each of the past three years. Our anxious request for increased support and supplementation of funds has been resisted. We have reluctantly determined that this will be the last published symposium in The Journal of Investigative Dermatology purely for financial reasons. We close this strong association with The Journal of Investigative Dermatology with the feeling that mutual benefit has been enjoyed by the organizers of the various symposia. It is our commitment to continue to hold innovative, far reaching state-of-the-art symposia and bring their publication, in book form, rapidly to print as we have done in the past.

Kirk D. Wuepper, M.D.
James N. Gilliam, M.D.*
Marvin B. Rittenberg, M.D.
Stephen I. Katz, M.D.

* Deceased June, 1984.