



American Association of Neurological Surgeons



Roberto C. Heros, MD
AANS President
2002-2003

My year as president of the AANS was, without any doubt, one of the most meaningful and exciting years of my professional career. As I look back at the goals I set for myself at the beginning of my presidency, I will admit that I ended with a “mixed” grade in terms of accomplishing these priorities.

Priority #1: Unification of Neurosurgery

I began my presidency with a dogged commitment to do what I could, without compromising the ultimate goal of having strong and efficient national representation for neurosurgery, to bring about a unification of the infrastructures of the AANS and the CNS. To this effect, we had a number of face-to-face meetings with CNS leadership and our respective counsels. The AANS’ goal was that of a full merger with a single infrastructure, maintenance of the two annual meetings and the two journals, and a governance structure with equal participation from both organizations. The CNS proposal was to develop a separate entity, jointly owned and governed, which could perform many of the functions and services that now are performed, sometimes jointly but frequently independently and redundantly, by the two organizations. With the CNS proposal, both the AANS and the CNS would maintain their own independent infrastructure for performing those functions that were unique and distinctive of each organization. We stuck to our belief that having a single infrastructure was best for neurosurgery and ultimately the CNS rejected this proposal for fear of losing its identity.

While at face value, we failed to achieve what we set out to, as I look at the way the relationship between the two organizations has evolved since my presidency, I must admit that at the present time, the co-existence of two strong organizations representing neurosurgery does not look as negative to me now as it did when I assumed my presidency of the AANS. Granted, things were different at that time. Importantly, there had just been a significant downturn in the market that had reduced markedly the return on investments on which both organizations had become increasingly dependent to finance operations and growth. Additionally, there had been

considerable bitterness between the leadership of both organizations over the preceding few years related to a variety of issues about which the two organizations had different and at times, conflicting, views. I humbly take some credit, which I gladly share with Drs. Steve Papadopoulos and Mark Hadley, president and president-elect of the CNS at the time, for having put an end to the discord and at times, lack of cordiality with which the leadership of both organizations approached the common goals of organized neurosurgery. In other words, we agreed to disagree on the few issues in which we could not agree but we committed ourselves to disagree cordially and to always look to the common good for neurosurgery rather than to provincial interests of both organizations. I am delighted to see that with these principles in mind, both organizations have continued to thrive (let's give the upsurge in the market some credit!), that the relationship between the leadership of both organizations has become uniformly cordial and constructive, and that the areas of disagreement have gradually decreased to an insignificant degree.

Priority #2: Strengthening the AANS

This is a priority that really started during my years as Treasurer, continued during my presidency and, I am happy to see, has evolved to a much higher level subsequently than I could have predicted then. As stated above, the beginnings of some very real financial difficulties can be traced back to the downturn of the market during my days as treasurer. This occurred at a time when we had runaway growth in the cost of our infrastructure. We agreed, when I was Treasurer, to a very painful and drastic cutback in the cost of our infrastructure by 10% over a two year period of time. This, among other factors, led to the resignation of our previous executive director which at the time appeared like a terrible setback for the organization. However, we were fortunate in having Mr. Tom Marshall agree to take over the administrative reins of our organization at a time that appeared to be most difficult. Tom not only achieved our two year goal, but did so without weakening the organization. The AANS became "leaner but stronger" and I am delighted to see that since then the organization has continued to grow in efficiency, effectiveness and relevance to neurosurgery.

Priority #3: To win the bid to bring the next meeting of the World Federation of Neurosurgical Societies to the United States and to have the AANS sponsor and run that meeting

The WFNS had not had a meeting in the U.S. for over 20 years and winning this bid was not an easy matter. First of all, there was an excellent proposal from Madrid, Spain that had wide appeal to not only our European, Asian and African colleagues, but also to many from South America. As expected, our central office put together an outstanding proposal and many of my colleagues in the leadership at the time, particularly Drs. John Popp, Bob Ratcheson, and Art Day, among others, worked extremely hard to win that bid. Additionally, through the leadership of Drs. Mark Hadley, Nelson Oyesiku and others, we obtained the invaluable strong support of the CNS for our bid. I will leave humility aside and take some credit for having convinced many

of the voting delegates from South America, who naturally would have had more kinship and loyalty to their colleagues from Spain, to vote for our proposal. Those were difficult times for the USA in terms of loss of prestige around the world because of our recent invasion (I still prefer to call it “liberation”!) of Iraq. In addition, the concern for the difficulties that individuals from many areas of the world have had in obtaining an American visa after 9/11 played heavily at the time on many delegates. Yet, thanks to everyone’s hard work, we won the bid by a narrow margin and the WFNS meeting in 2009 will be sponsored by the AANS and will take place in Boston.

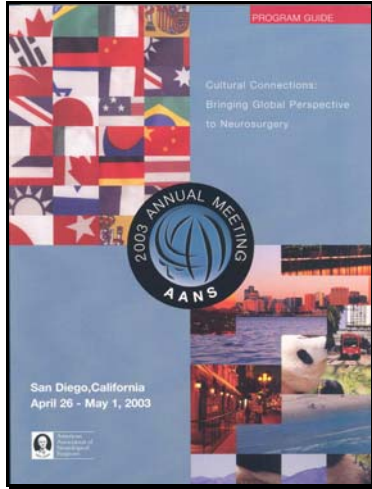
Other good things for neurosurgery and for the AANS happened during my presidency, but I must admit that at best I could take only partial credit for implementation of these measures which included the development of the Japanese Symposium in San Diego; the beginning of a process to develop a 501(c) (6) organization that could lobby more effectively for neurosurgery; the decision to start a dedicated AANS website; the agreement to have the AANS become the main repository for tracking neurosurgical maintenance of competence for the ABNS; and the decision to assess AANS members \$1,000 a year for three years to support the NPHCA initiative to combat the medical liability crisis. Of course, we also had to deal, and did so with a mixed record of success, with the “usual suspects” such as decreased reimbursement, suffocating regulatory demands, the criminalization of billing irregularities, neurosurgical coverage for emergency neurotrauma, etc.

All in all, it was a great year! I will be forever grateful for the wonderful opportunity of having served as president of the AANS.

June 2006

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Vital Statistics



2002-2003

Officers:

Roberto Heros, President
A. John Popp, President Elect
Fremont P. Wirth, Vice President
Robert Ratcheson, Secretary
Arthur Day, Treasurer

Annual Meeting Location:

San Diego, CA

Presidential Address:

Neurosurgical education: the “other” competencies. *JNeurosurg* 99:623-629, 2003.

Cushing Orator:

Henry A. Kissinger, PhD, National Security Advisor for six years, Secretary of State to two presidents, Nobel laureate for his role in negotiating the withdrawal of American forces from Vietnam. [Not Published]

Awards:

Cushing Medal - Stewart B. Dunsker
Distinguished Service - Troy M. Tippet

Lectures:

Bittner – Andrew H. Kaye
Hunt-Wilson – Fred H. Gage
Kurze – M. Gazi Yasargi.
Rhoton Family –
Rear Admiral James A. Johnson
Schneider – Madjid Samii
Van Wagenen – Neal F. Kassell

Membership:

6612