



# American Association of Neurological Surgeons

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## **A. John Popp, MD AANS President 2003-2004**



I had never been involved with organized neurosurgery at the national level until I attended a Council of State Neurosurgical Societies meeting in 1994 as a NY State Delegate. It was a revelatory experience working with talented and committed colleagues on projects that offered help improve the specialty and the delivery of care to our patients. Thereafter, I was elected to the Board of Directors of the AANS as an at-large board member serving in that role from 1995-98. This was a transforming experience as I learned the workings of the organization – what it did well, what it did poorly, and what it did not do at all. I also held a number of other positions in the AANS prior to my presidency that gave me varied perspectives of the organization and the specialty of neurosurgery that I believe prepared me to become president. Those positions included membership on the Washington Committee, 1997-2002 [Chair 2000-02]; Editor of the *AANS Bulletin*, 1998-2003; and Vice President, 1999-2000.

A crucial year of preparation for the incoming President of the AANS is the year served as President-Elect. During my time as PE there are two events that I believe were crucial that assured a successful year as President: my decision concerning further negotiations with the CNS about consolidation of the AANS and CNS and my determination to lead the organization through a formal strategic planning process.

One of the roles of the PE is to head the Long Range Planning Committee. Having observed the organization carefully for 8 years, I felt that the time was right for launching a new formal strategic planning process. Initially, my fellow LRP members were not sure and felt that perhaps such a rigorous process was unnecessary at best and a waste of time at worst. I acknowledge immediately the great support of the other members of the EC once the process began and the complete support from the beginning by Mr. Tom Marshall and the rest of the executive management team at the home office. In a display of “chutzpah” mixed with nepotism that is uncharacteristic of me, I selected my wife [Margaret Vosburgh] as the facilitator of the first stage of strategic planning held prior to the November, 2002 BOD meeting in Chicago. While on the surface using a family member as facilitator might have been in questionable taste, Peggy was my secret weapon having two distinct advantages over any other. First, she was the best strategic

planner that I had ever worked with [a totally unbiased observation on my part] and second, she was cheap and led the planning initiative *gratis* – she even paid for her ticket with frequent flyer miles! The end result, I believe, was successful and one of many steps in the recovery of the AANS’ fiscal stability and prestige. Space limitations prevent a clear delineation of the major components of the plan, but broken down into the 4 strategic initiatives they are as follows: 1. Increase non-dues revenue; 2. Enhance members services; 3. Streamline the internal functions of the AANS; and 4. Develop a special focus on spinal neurosurgery.

Our prior two Presidents, Drs. Stan Pelofsky and Roberto Heros, had struggled mightily to negotiate with their counterparts in the CNS to develop a single organization to represent neurosurgery. This was in response to a call by the membership of both organizations lead by the CSNS, and recognition by many in the AANS and CNS leadership that this had the potential to streamline our work and advocacy for American neurosurgery. I had watched with great interest the great skill exhibited by Stan and Roberto in the negotiation process and what I perceived as a growing frustration by all involved in the likelihood of brokering a meaningful resolution of the negotiation. Indeed at that time it seemed to me that our attention was directed outward by this negotiation and that, given the likelihood of no resolution to the negotiation, we needed to focus inward e.g. strategic planning to make sure that the AANS was as strong as possible. I therefore was resolved to not be distracted by negotiations with the CNS and to focus inwardly to make the AANS an even greater organization.

As most who have been resident of the AANS recall, the year as president is simultaneously satisfying and fatiguing. All of us have a “day job” at home. With the extra demands imposed by the requirements of the presidency it makes the personal characteristic of hyper-organization [not unfamiliar to most neurosurgeons] and utmost reliance on the team at the National Office elemental to success. While it seems that all in the organization are very deferential to the wishes of the sitting president; it is also recognized that this position is the ultimate in being a “lame duck”. Your replacement has already been selected and has begun planning for their year as president. I am reminded of the observation by a former highly placed governmental functionary who observed that you knew that you were out of office when your limousine was yellow and your driver did not speak English as their first language!

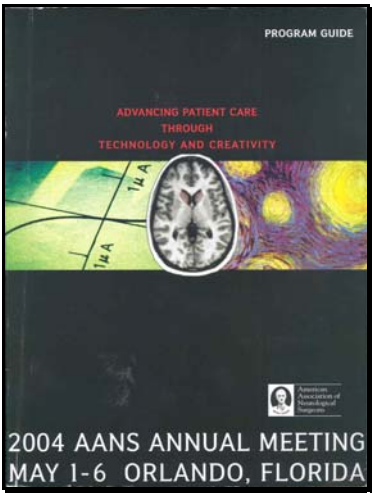
From this blur come several tangible initiatives that marked my year as AANS president. Many of those initiatives were internally directed. For example, as part of disseminating the strategic plan within the organization we began to require that certain standing committees take on portions of activities falling within their purview that would move the plan forward. This was true in committees such as Member Development that studied ways of developing programs that helped our members and thereby enhanced the value of the organization to the membership. We also began to regularize the length of time members could serve on committees to assure that more members could participate in the functioning of the organization. A related program in leadership development was implemented to begin to identify and educate those on a leadership track to assure that the volunteers engaged in the organization were prepared for the task ahead.

There was also continued vigilance of the external environment and a response to the growing liability crisis by forming, with the CNS, an organization to represent neurosurgeons interests in that arena. This organization, Neurosurgeons to Preserve Health Care Access, is a member of the coalition, Doctors for Medical Liability Reform, representing the interests of 230,000 physicians in reversing the serious impact of rising malpractice costs on the practice of neurosurgery through tort reform.

The culmination of the year as President is the annual meeting. The theme “Advancing Patient Care Through Technology and Creativity” was amply demonstrated during the week in Orlando. I understand that it was one of the most successful meetings in history by any measure. My Presidential address on “Music, Musicians and the Brain” combined 2 of my passions: classical music and neurological surgery. We had a distinguished group of speakers for all of our endowed lectureships and Mr. Ken Burns served as an excellent Cushing Orator giving a wonderful lecture that demonstrated the creativity that is a component of the practice of neurosurgery.

The following year as Past President I found that my limousine was yellow and my driver did not speak English as a first language!!

September 2006

<b>Vital Statistics</b>	
	<p>2003-2004</p> <p>Officers: A. John Popp, President            Robert Ratcheson, President Elect            Randall Smith, Vice President            Jon Robertson, Secretary            Arthur Day, Treasurer</p> <p>Annual Meeting Location: Orlando, FL</p> <p>Presidential Address: Music, musicians, and the brain: an exploration of musical genius. <i>JNeurosurg</i> 101:895-903, 2004.</p> <p>Cushing Orator: Ken Burns, director, producer, co-writer, chief cinematographer, music director and executive producer of the landmark television series <i>The Civil War</i>, biographer. [Not Published]</p> <p>Awards: Cushing Medal - John A. Jane Sr.            Distinguished Service - John A. Kusske            Humanitarian: Charles L. Branch, Sr.</p> <p>Honorary Member: Jacques Brotchi</p> <p>Lectures: Bittner – James T. Rutka            Hunt-Wilson – Pasko Rakic            Kurze – Robert F. Spetzler            Rhoton Family – Uwe Reinhardt            Schneider – Regis W. Haid, Jr.            Van Wagenen – Anders Bjorklund</p> <p>Membership: 6718</p>