



Edward R. Laws Jr., MD, FACS
AANS President
1997-1998



It was an honor to serve the AANS as President during the year 1997 - 1998, with our Annual Meeting in Philadelphia. We had a great neurosurgical leadership team including Drs. Russell Travis, William Shucart, Stan Pelofsky, Stewart Dunsker, Chuck Rich, Art Day, Roberto Heros, John Kusske, Bob Page, John Popp, Bob Schwetschenau, Mike Scott, Bill Mayher, and Bob Ratcheson.

Among the issues that confronted the leadership of the AANS was that of residency training and the particular area of post-residency Fellowships. It had become apparent that more than half of the graduating residents felt it desirable to have a Fellowship experience before entering practice or joining an academic group. The reasons for this were not entirely clear, the types of fellowships and their quality varied greatly, and it was felt that some scrutiny and oversight would be desirable. To that end, Dr. Julian "Buzz" Hoff was appointed Chairman of a Task Force devoted to the evaluation of the Fellowship experience for our neurosurgical trainees. He and his colleagues did a great job in analyzing the problem and in making recommendations for the solutions that ultimately have led to a very effective system of Fellowship opportunities with a degree of oversight, credentialing, and quality assurance that is admirable.

A second important issue was that of spine surgery. The initiatives begun by Dr. David Kelly and his colleagues had begun to bear fruit, with rising interest among the neurosurgical community in the academic aspects of spine surgery including biomechanics and basic research, and in the increasingly important development and application of spinal instrumentation technology by neurosurgeons.

A Task Force on Endovascular Neurosurgery headed by Dr. Marc Mayberg was developed to deal with the impact of this new technology on cerebrovascular neurosurgery.

It was felt at the time that there was a major problem developing with regard to support for Neurosurgical Research. The NIH had not been particularly forthcoming and there was a clear preference for research awards going to PhDs in neuroscience rather than to neurosurgeons doing investigative work. A retreat was held by the AANS Board of Directors with the participation of Dr.

Thomas Langfitt, and the steps were then taken to make a concerted effort to reverse these trends and to engage more neurosurgeons in research activities. These initiatives were further enhanced by the major efforts of the Research Foundation (now NREF) under the superb leadership of Dr. Robert Ojemann.

Professional development had become an important part of the services of the AANS and was being further developed in the form of courses put on throughout the year focused on neurosurgical leadership, practice management, coding, and other aspects of neurosurgical practice with support for the entire scope of an individual neurosurgeon's professional life. This evolved into the very successful practical clinics that are now held in conjunction with every meeting.

Reimbursement continued to be a major issue and the difficulties in maintaining the financial base for neurosurgical practice were evident even at that time. As a result, a CPT Coding Task Force was created under the leadership of Drs. Richard Roski and Richard Fessler. Dr. Robert Florin continued to gain visibility and credibility in Washington as head of our Physician Reimbursement Committee. Dr. John Kusske led an effort in Cost Containment designed not only to make neurosurgeons' practices more cost efficient, but also to provide cost savings for neurosurgical care to the public. The Washington Committee, under the able leadership of Dr. Art Day, was doing a wonderful job in coordinating these reimbursement activities along with other politically important initiatives such as liability reform. It was quite evident that Ms. Katie Orrico was a rising star on the Washington scene and that she was representing the interests of Neurosurgery in a superb fashion; obviously she has continued to do this. The Professional Conduct Committee had remained very active and was further enhancing its courageous stand to deal with problems of unethical or improper medico-legal testimony.

There was considerable ongoing expansion of the activities and influence of the Council of State Neurosurgical Societies under the leadership of Drs. Jim Bean and Lyal Leibrock, and also of the Young Neurosurgeons Committee under the leadership of Dr. David Jimenez.

The AANS Central Office was still making adjustments to the departure of our seasoned Executive Director, Mr. Carl Hauber. Fortunately, Ms. Laurie Behncke and her team were available to be certain that the Annual Meeting aspects of the AANS activities remained superb.

Clearly the highlight of the year is the AANS Annual Meeting, and this was the first one ever held in Philadelphia, PA. Dr. Bob Rosenwasser was the local host. Dr. Bill Chandler was the Annual Meeting Chair and Dr. Nick Hopkins was the Program Committee Chair. They worked to produce an absolutely outstanding meeting that took advantage of everything that Philadelphia had to offer.

The Cushing Orator was Dr. Eric Wieschaus, a young professor of Molecular Biology at Princeton University who had recently received the Nobel Prize for his work in molecular genetics and the development of the nervous system. It was an inspiring lecture and coordinated well with the Decade of the Brain Medalist, Dr. Ronald McKay from the NIH, who spoke about neural stem cells and their differentiation. These two lectures set the scientific tone of the meeting, which was superb.

It was a pleasure to award the Cushing Medal to Dr. Albert Rhoton, the Humanitarian Award to Dr. Lee Finney, and the Distinguished Service Award to Dr. Mark Kubala, recognizing his superb leadership in the Texas Medical Association and the AMA.

Special Lectures included the Schneider Lecture given by Dr. Bob Spetzler on vascular lesions of the spinal cord, a lecture by Dr. Axel Perneczky on endoscopic approaches to supratentorial lesions and the Donaghy Lecture by Dr. Bob Ojemann on cavernous malformations of the brain. The Matson Lecture was given by Dr. Louis Schut and the Tumor Section had a special lecture by Dr. Judah Folkman.

It is always of interest to review the presentations at the Annual Meeting, as many of them are predictive of the changes that were occurring in neurosurgical practice. The program for the Philadelphia meeting included initial reports of both pallidotomy and deep brain stimulation for Parkinson's disease. There was a flurry of papers related to Gamma Knife radiosurgery, specifically for arteriovenous malformations of the brain, for cavernous sinus meningiomas, for acoustic tumors, and for trigeminal neuralgia. In the spine arena there was a presentation on C1-2 screw fixation, and the use of the thoracoscopic approach for thoracic discs.


In the vascular arena there were papers regarding endovascular approaches for carotid artery disease, a paper on complex basilar artery aneurysms and their management, papers on vasospasm, a report of the NASCET trial results, and a report on the unruptured aneurysm study.

In the brain tumor field, Dr. Mark Israel gave an excellent paper on the molecular basis of radio resistance (the Farber Lecture). There were presentations on endoscopic approaches for both brain tumor surgery and for pituitary surgery, with the Mahaley Award given to Dr. Prem Pillay for his paper on endoscopic pituitary surgery. The first report of the use of PCV therapy for oligodendrogliomas was given, and papers regarding the use of monoclonal antibodies and cytotoxic T cells for tumor treatment were part of the meeting. Another major highlight was an erudite lecture by Dr. Michael Salzman on Philadelphia art.

It was a splendid year in so many ways, and one that would have gratified the founders of the Harvey Cushing Society with regard to the astounding progress that was being made in neurosurgery.

June 2006

Vital Statistics

	<p>1997-1998</p>	<p>Officers: Edward R. Laws, Jr., President Russell L. Travis, President Elect William S. Shucart, Vice President Stewart B. Dunsker, Treasurer Stan Pelofsky, Secretary</p>
	<p>Annual Meeting Location:</p>	<p>Philadelphia, PA</p>
	<p>Presidential Address:</p>	<p>A neurosurgical way of life. JNeurosurg 89:901-910, 1998</p>
	<p>Cushing Orator:</p>	<p>Eric Wieschaus, PhD, co-winner of the 1995 Nobel Prize. What Fly Genes Can Tell Us About How Human Embryos Develop. [Not Published]</p>
	<p>Awards</p>	<p>Cushing Medal - Albert L. Rhoton Jr. Distinguished Service - Mark J. Kubala Humanitarian - Lee Finney</p>
	<p>Lecture:</p>	<p>Schneider – Robert F. Spetzler</p>
<p>Membership:</p>	<p>5386</p>	