

## "R" is for Roach

Earlier in this series I suggested that had it not been for Marvin Fishman, few of you would have known or met me, and likely none of you would remember me. That's a large burden of guilt for any one person to carry, even a Texan, so today I'll take half of it off of Marv's shoulders and place it squarely on Steve Roach's.



Steve was only a few months into his first term as CNS President in the Winter of 2012 when he charged the other six members of the 2011-12 CNS Executive Committee with the job of interviewing me individually by phone to determine whether or not his notion of hiring me to succeed Mary Currey as Executive Director was well-founded. I had known and worked with most of them for years and wondered why that might be necessary, but as I came to appreciate, working closely with Steve over the next two years, he is not one to take anything for granted or leave any stone unturned. And, to be fair, I did throw him off guard with my seeming insouciance a few months earlier when we both arrived in Savannah at the same time for the 40th Annual CNS Meeting. Many of you may recall that the CNS occupied two hotels that year, separated by a river which, to cross from one side to another, required a ferry boat that ran semi-regularly but reserved the right not to in inclement weather. Turning toward me at the hotel check-in counter, Steve looked me squarely in the eye and asked, "Do you have a back-up plan if a storm kicks up and the folks at the Hyatt can't catch a ferry to the convention?" To which I replied, "Steve, if you can't forecast the weather accurately three years out when we sign these contracts, you don't belong in this business." I don't remember what his exact response was, but the look on his face was somewhere between amused and alarmed. In retrospect, I'm surprised and relieved he didn't immediately follow up by asking, "How are you at predicting pandemics?" The answer, as it turns out, is "not very good."



Shown above, the combined 2012-13 CNS Executive Committee, including members rotating on and off: Bottom (L-R): Dan Bonthius (*CNS Connections* Editor), Roger Packer; Vinodh Narayanan, Sue Hussman (CNS Associate Director). Top (L-R): Roger Larson, Barry Kosofsky, Steve Roach, Nina Schor, Suresh Kotagal, Bruce Cohen, Harvey Singer.

One of the conditions of being hired as the new ED was that I take courses from the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) and pass their rigorous CAE exam within three years. Which I did, and I am grateful for the support and encouragement Steve and the board gave me to nurture my professional development. But the truth is I learned 10 times more working side-by-side with Steve for two years than I have in the nearly 10 years of conferences and coursework since.

No one who has worked with Steve in any capacity would challenge my assertion that in terms of organizational prowess, he has no peer. Every training program he has been part of or in charge of has grown in numbers and excellence during his tenure, most notably Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, OH. Many of the young academic clinicians he recruited and/or mentored, and encouraged to actively participate in and contribute to the CNS, were shown on 8/26 ("O is for Ohio"); it's worth adding two more here, John Mytinger (on the occasion of his winning the 2015 CNF Infantile Spasms "Hero Award") and Dara Albert, active in the PECN and the CNS History/Archives Committee.



At a time when most people would settle for kicking back and coasting into retirement, Steve traveled south to take on a new challenge as co-chief of UT Health Austin Pediatric Neurosciences at Dell Children's and director of the pediatric neurology residency program. As he prepares to end his tenure as editor of *Pediatric Neurology*, having succeeded Ken Swaiman in 2012 after serving the previous 14 years as associate editor of *JAMA Neurology*, he does so knowing that he significantly strengthened the overall quality of the journal, including raising its impact score by 140 per cent.

During Steve's tenure as CNS President, we devised or revised most of the organizational

structure and policies that are currently still soundly in place. Working with his predecessor, Donna Ferriero, his successor, Nina Schor, and his counterpart at the CNF, Don Shields, Steve helped “reboot” the CNS-CNF relationship, setting it on track toward realizing the more closely and constructively collaborative partnership serving the larger child neurology community that it enjoys today. His keen eye for writing talent resulted in the appointment of Dan Bonthius as editor of *CNS Connections*, and his passion for cultivating writing skills among an emerging generation of child neurologists has led to his voluntarily staying on the final Saturday afternoon of the past five CNS meetings to teach a limited-enrollment Biomedical Writing Workshop.



Thanking Dan Bonthius for accepting the assignment as new *CNS Connections* Editor.

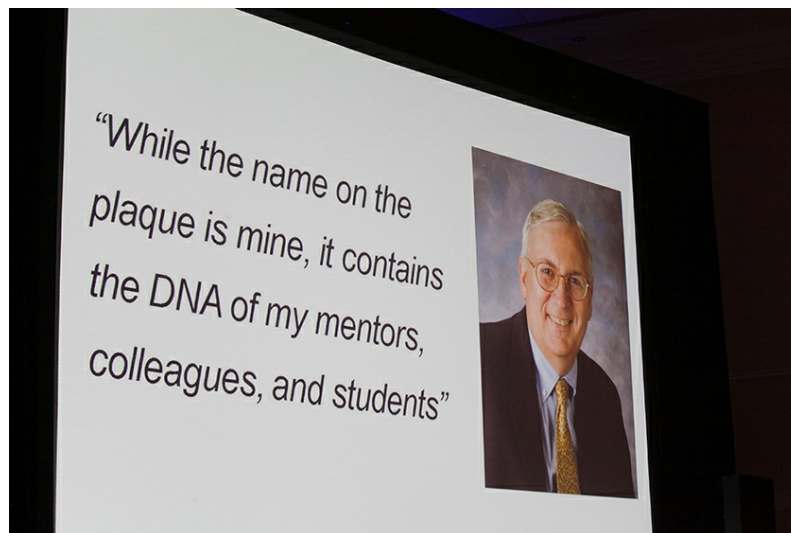


Presenting the 2013 Bernard D’Souza International Fellowship Award to Dr. Samson Gwer, from Nairobi, Kenya.





Presenting the first M. Richard Koenigsberger Scholarship Award to Dr. Louis Dang, from the University of Michigan in 2013; Louis went on to later win the 2019 Phillip R. Dodge Young Investigator Award. I should note here that, to the best of my knowledge, the photo above does not show them placing a bet on the upcoming Michigan-Ohio State Football game, compassion being another of Steve's many virtues.



A telling slide presented as part of Steve's 2015 Hower Award Lecture.



Two past-CNS presidents and longtime friends (and friends of mine, as well), John Bodensteiner and Steve Roach, with their wives, Donna and Lisa.

I have enjoyed in different ways and degrees working with every CNS President I've known since starting out as a part-time admin processing abstracts when Bob Eiben was President in 1983. People sometimes ask me if I have a favorite, and I always reply "whichever one is signing my next paycheck" (there's that insouciance again). The truth is, I have liked and respected all of them and have gotten to know and grown to like them even more over time. A few I consider friends. I have thoroughly enjoyed being hosted in Steve's splendid house in Columbus, getting a guided tour of his impressive collection of art and first edition books, savoring an expertly prepared meal he and Lisa prepared, petting their dog, Lucy. The lack of free time and my aversion to extreme heat has precluded visits to Texas, despite his frequent emailed invitations with photos of grazing deer and Texas bluebonnets in bloom. By virtue of his having taken a chance on hiring me as ED, having patiently coached and coaxed me through my first two years at the helm and made good on his offer to be available as a counselor and sounding board whenever I needed one thereafter, I consider Steve to be both Friend and Mentor. If he, or anyone else, had asked me 10 years ago if I could predict that outcome, I would have humbly responded – no glibness or insouciance – with a simple "no."

Until tomorrow (the letter "S")  
Roger

Roger Larson, CAE  
Executive Director

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### On-line Registration is Open!

Registration is now open for the long awaited 50th Golden Anniversary Meeting of the Child Neurology Society in Boston. Registrants attending this milestone meeting live and in-person in Boston will want to register early (some sessions are limited and reservation-only). You will also want to book hotel rooms ASAP. A link and access code to the Sheraton Boston Hotel will be included in your registration confirmation email.

[Click to Register](#)

### 2021 CNS 50th Annual Meeting

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