

COUNTDOWN TO BOSTON

36 DAYS



"M" is for Minnesota Twins

Like most small-market major league baseball teams, particularly in the free-agency era of skyrocketing salaries and chronically neglected minor-league farm systems, the Minnesota Twins have had their ups and downs. I spent my early years of fandom singing the team's official song with little conviction ("We're gonna win Twins, we're gonna score") and the latter years belting out Bruce Springsteen's "Glory Days" with little joy. Still, the fact that there are glory days to sing of – unforgettable World Series wins in 1987 and 1991 – is something to treasure and celebrate. The same holds true of the two sets of metaphorical Minnesota Twins within the CNS touched on today; Ken Swaiman and Bruce Berg, undergraduate and med school classmates at the University of Minnesota in the early 1950s, and Karin Nelson and Samuel Drage, both undergraduates at the U of M when Swaiman and Berg were med students wandering around the hospital and campus overlooking the Mississippi River. We'll look at a third set of more recent vintage Minnesota Twins when "M" comes around a second time in September.

Much has been said of Ken Swaiman already. He was, as child neurologists of all ages and stages well know, a founding force and first President of the CNS in the early 70s, the PCN in the late 70s, and the Child Neurology Foundation in the new millenium. He and Frank Wright, a member of the La Crosse 8 officed next door to him at the University of Minnesota, issued the first two editions of a seminal textbook in the 70s and 80s (I proofed and was acknowledged in the 2nd). Four editions have followed, thanks to the intellectual range and matchless drive of Ken's first and finest protoge at Minnesota, Steve Ashwal. It was Ken who birthed the journal *Pediatric Neurology* in the mid-80s, something younger CNS members might not know, mistakenly thinking current editor, Steve Roach has been taking it to new heights forever (in fairness, 10 years may very well seem like "forever" to someone in their late 20s; I don't recall).



As often happens with twins, identical or fraternal, one ends up being better known and more widely celebrated than the other. Ken has been amply recognized for his many contributions: a Hower Award in 1981, a special Founders Award in 1996, a special Legacy Award in 2017 and the naming of the Legacy Luncheon in his honor beginning with the upcoming 50th Anniversary Meeting in Boston. Less well known but worthy of equal celebration is his friend from St. Paul and the University of Minnesota, “the Big Swede,” Bruce Berg. (Note: “the Big Swede” was a moniker Bruce picked up early in life, working a series of physically challenging jobs to earn money for school in his teens and early 20s. He and I enjoyed many conversations over the years, relishing the opportunity to freely “speak Minnesotan” as two born-and-bred North Star State Scandinavian-Americans, he a Swede, me a Dane; he roared with laughter when I suggested that Danes, after all, are essentially decaffeinated Swedes.)

Long associated with UCSF, the outstanding program he started in 1968 (and Audrey Brumback later celebrated for its “kickass women”, many of whom Bruce recruited and mentored), Bruce strung together a trio of landmark accomplishments in the late 70s/early 80s that would stand up against anyone’s CV within the CNS, two during his one-year term as President, the third shortly thereafter.

1. **Annals of Neurology.** In conversations begun in the Fall of '76 when Bruce was CNS President-elect and Fred Plum, then editor of *Archives of Neurology*, was a visiting professor at UCSF, Dr. Plum floated the idea of starting a new journal, *Annals of Neurology*, noting that, strategically, the ANA needed the numbers a partnership with the CNS would provide to get it off the ground.
2. **American Board of Psychology and Neurology (ABPN).** It’s worth quoting in full a passage from Bruce’s remarkable reminiscences published in the *Journal of Child Neurology* in 1999. Noting that multiple child neurology training programs were beginning to spring up shortly after his and Paul Rosman’s back-to-back CNS presidencies (1977-79), Bruce wrote: “We now had a CNS, and PCN, but we had no representation on the ABPN, and there was notable resistance to any notion that child neurologists were an effective force. In 1981, at the time of the annual meeting of the ANA in San Francisco, Paul Rosman and I, as past presidents of CNS, arranged a meeting with some of the then present and past directors of ABPN, including Patrick Bray, Sidney Carter, Bob Fishman, Mel Yahr, and the late David Clark, to discuss the possibility of having a director’s position on the board dedicated to child neurology. The facial expressions of the attendees were something less than interested or agreeable. The issues were cautiously introduced to the group and it seemed to me that there was little interest in our suggestion. However, before the end of the meeting, Sid Carter winked at me and David Clark nodded and slyly winked, but Paul and I thought that we had gained little for our colleagues and child neurology and headed in the direction of the bar. We must have accomplished something, however, for in 1983 there was a director’s position for one child neurologists and we gained a second position in the subsequent year.”
3. **Professors of Child Neurology (PCN).** Backtracking a few years before the ABPN “victory,” Bruce worked closely with Ken Swaiman in creating the Professors of Child Neurology. Again, it’s worth quoting at length from Bruce’s own account, perhaps even

more so this time, showing as it does, Bruce's innate charm and sophistication: "Not long after (the founding of CNS in 1972), during an evening when Ken Swaiman and I were having dinner at Le Trianon restaurant in San Francisco, and amiably incandescent after enjoying a bottle of Heitz Cabernet Sauvignon and a snifter of Otard cognac, our conversation turned to the fact that child neurologists in academic settings had certain problems that were different from those in practice. We thought there should be another society of the directors of child neurology training programs, during which time these special problems could be discussed. Since I was President of the CNS at that time, I had the opportunity to facilitate the formation of that new group, which became known as the association of Professors of Child Neurology. Ken became the first president of this group and I was the second."



Dr. Berg's professional progeny includes Donna Ferriero, past CNS President (2009-11) and Sachs Awardee (2006) who remembers "ripping up my internal medicine residency applications" and plans for a career in adult neurology after doing a one-month rotation with Bruce during her 4th year in medical school. It also includes Nancy Bass, with whom he shared years of friendship and mentorship at UCSF, including daily greetings ("How ya doin' kid?") and jalapeno bagels,

before she returned to the Midwest, becoming in time, a current member of the CNS Board of Directors, and President of the PCN. The latter would please him enormously, for it was from Bruce Berg that Nancy learned to value, practice, even perfect the role of clinician educator. She has won several teaching awards and played a pivotal role, working with her colleagues on the PCN BOD (Karl Kuban, Tim Lotze, Soe Mar, and Rujuta Wilson) in changing the name of the organization her mentor co-founded and she now leads by inserting the key word "Educators" to arrive at Professors & Educators of Child Neurology (PECN). Donna Ferriero recalls, Bruce's response to the notion that receiving a teaching award is an indication you're not paying attention to your research: "Hogwash! Do what your passion drives you to do." He did, Donna and Nancy have, and child neurologists and the children and families they serve, across the country and around the world, have all been the beneficiaries.





"M" is also for a 2nd set of Minnesota Twins

In bridging the gap from today's "M" to tomorrow's "N" (N is for the NIH-funded Neurobiology of Disease in Children, NDC)," we could not hope to find a better or more fitting pair of Minnesota Twins than Karin Nelson and Samuel Drage. Both attended the University of Minnesota as undergraduates at the same time Ken Swaiman and Bruce Berg were enrolled as U of M med students (whether they knew each other then, I can't say, although it seems doubtful). Both went on to distinguished careers at NINDS, making lasting contributions that significantly shaped the paths and perspectives child neurologists adopted and now take for granted.



As noted in *NINDS at 50: An Incomplete History...*, Samuel "Sam" Drage, MD credits the Perinatal Project he served on as Acting Director "with changing concepts about the origins of cerebral palsy from birth injuries to earlier events when the fetus was still developing in the uterus. He also credits the project for validating the scoring system developed by Virginia Apgar, Professor of Anesthesiology at Columbia University.

Dr. Drage became Chief of the Developmental Neurology Branch in the mid-80s, working on the task force that sponsored studies linking aspirin to Reye syndrome and other studies linking folic acid deficiency to neural tube defects." Though not trained in neurology – his chosen specialty was pediatric endocrinology – his role at the NINDS and his contributions to child neurology compelled the CNS to welcome him as a member and he attended nearly every CNS annual meeting until his retirement in 1999.

Karin Nelson's path from undergraduate study at the University of Minnesota diverged from Sam Drage's: he remained in Minnesota for medical school, while she went to the University of Chicago, where she was first drawn to neurology by Douglas Buchanan, recipient of the first Hoer Award in 1974. Her path converged with Sam's when she worked with him on the Perinatal Project before becoming Chief of the Epidemiology Branch of NINDS.

Dr. Nelson is one of only four CNS members to receive both the Hower Award (1991) and the Sachs Award (2004), the other luminaries being Joseph Volpe, Darryl De Vivo and William "Billy" DiMauro. She also served on the 3rd CNS Executive Committees in 1973-74 and is pictured above, standing next to fellow-Minnesotan, Bruce Berg, and below, 25 years later, with the 2nd President of the CNS, with whom she served on the BOD, Gerald Fenichel, and my former boss, Larry Lockman.



In composing his inimitably long, instructive, and elegantly insightful award profiles, Rob Rust wrote the following of Dr. Nelson in 2004: “Dr. Karin Nelson’s name has become virtually synonymous with the intelligent study of the epidemiology and natural history of complex and poorly understood conditions. At the center of a research effort that has engaged the talents of many individuals, she has pioneered the application of well-selected and adapted epidemiological methodology to the cerebral palsies. She has employed the same methods in the study of other important subjects, particularly febrile seizures, epilepsy, autism, childhood stroke. The efforts expended by Dr. Nelson and her colleagues have left a trail of discredited hypotheses, superficialities, and generalizations and have repeatedly made it clear that antecedents are not necessarily causes. These efforts have resulted in a new and much improved data on a wide variety of subjects, data that have permitted improved hypothetical formulations to be posed and retested....She has not so much challenged others to conform to her own high standards of investigation as she has demonstrated the virtue and productivity of such standards. In essence, she has elevated the level of discourse.”

Until tomorrow (The letter “N”)
Roger

Roger Larson, CAE
Executive Director

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

For more information, click button below.

[Click for More Info](#)

50TH
CNS ANNUAL MEETING
PAST • PRESENT • FUTURE