

COUNTDOWN TO BOSTON

40 DAYS



"K" is for KW

Of all the emails, *eConnections*, and Letters from the Executive Director I've written over the past 10 years, none have come close to garnering the kind and level of attention – good and bad, appreciative or outraged – aroused by the Letter published in the Fall 2017/Annual Meeting issue of *CNS Connections* handed out in Kansas City. I'm too young (67) to be putting out a "Greatest Hits" collection, and you need more than one hit to justify the "s" and call it a "collection." But you have to start somewhere, so why not here, with a re-issue of the Fall 2017 missive, "KW, KC, and the Future of CN"?

KW, KC, and the Future of CN

(originally published in 2017 Fall/Annual Meeting CNS Connections)

My favorite video clip posted on the CNS website "Careers – Getting In" section features this year's Philip R. Dodge Young Investigator Awardee, Audrey Brumback, explaining how she ended up in San Francisco for peds neurology training: "The thing that really struck me about the UCSF program was the kickass women!" she exclaimed, looking straight into the camera (In my head, I could hear her late father, Roger, erupting in laughter.)



"At most of the other programs," she continues, "it was a lot of people who looked like my dad; it was, you know a bunch of middle-aged white men." (Now, I could see him jumping to his feet and doing a little dance in sheer, giddy delight). But, when she came to UCSF, Audrey noted, there "was just this amazing cadre of women who were totally kicking ass in their careers and had families and seemed like nice people – Donna Ferriero, Audrey Foster-Barber, Yvonne Wu, Heather Fullerton – and I just thought, 'this is who I need to be around at this phase of my career. I'll be starting a family at some point, and these are the people who are actually going to be able to provide mentorship and be role models at this phase in my life.'" ([Click here to view the](#)

“Kickass Women” (henceforward, “KW”)



Pictured above (L-R): **Deborah Hirtz** (NINDS; Hower Award, 2011); **Faye Silverstein** (University of Michigan; Young Investigator Award, 1986; CNS Councillor, 1999-2001); **Donna Ferriero** (CNS Councillor, 2004-06; Sachs Award, 2006; CNS President, 2009-11); **Jan Goddard-Finegold** (Baylor/TX Children's Hospital; also "G is for Goddard-Finegold" sent 8/16).



Audrey Foster-Barber
(UCSF; Gold Humanism Award, 2018)



Heather Fullerton
(UCSF)

“Her words, not mine,” as Melissa McCarthy would say, playing Sean Spicer on Saturday Night Live. Because on my own? I couldn’t bring myself to type or say it aloud, certainly not in a boldfaced title. You see, unlike Audrey, I’m neither young, nor a woman. Nor did I, like her, spend my formative years in Oklahoma and Texas. I come from Minnesota where, as Garrison Keillor could tell you, we just don’t talk like that; the Lutherans won’t let us.

And then there was Isabelle Rapin, who I intended to reference in my letter. (Featured on 8/18: “I is for **“Icon: Isabelle”**). Isabelle would not approve. Of “KW” spelled out, I mean. Oh, she would more than merely “approve” of Audrey, herself; and she would be passionately interested in learning more about her autism research. But “KW”? Not so much.

One of my favorite Isabelle stories, shared last May when she passed away, came from a past-CNS President who remembers observing her at the 1997 meeting in Phoenix, reading the profile Rob Rust had written on her for the “Women in Neurology” Archives display, and hearing her exclaim in that inimitably commanding Isabellian cadence, “I...am...not...venerable!” But, of course, she was. Because, if she wasn’t, who this side of Maria Montessori was? If she took umbrage at “venerable,” I shudder to think what she might have made of the more colloquial “KW.”

Well, times have changed. Twenty years ago, the ratio of female to male CNS members was 1:3. Today it’s a near dead-even 1:1. Where women make up only 23% of Emeritus Members today (consistent with the 1:3 ratio in 1997), they account for 47 percent of Active Members. Fully 69

percent of Junior Members – residents in training – are women. Contrast that with the photo on page 5 showing “All the Young Dudes” at the Wash U training program in 1987.

That sea change in gender parity/dominance will be dramatically evident, indeed, its directional movement almost mimicked, in our meeting in the heartland this year. All four Emeritus Members honored at the Wednesday evening Legacy Reception are men (each of them unquestionably venerable): Dave Coulter, Abe Chutorian, Don Shields, and Ken Swaiman. Fast forward to Saturday morning, however, and you’ll find all but one presenter at the three breakfast seminars, Hower Award Lecture, and Pediatric Neuro-oncology symposium are women (a 14:1 ratio, for those keeping score).

But before ending with Saturday’s programming, let’s pause for a moment to look at Friday, noting that all four recipients of the CNS Outstanding Junior Member Award are women (Ka Ye Clara Chan, Hsiao-Tuan Chao, Rachel Goldstein Hirschberger, Carla Watson), as are both recipients of this year’s CNF Shields and PERF research grants (Melissa Walker and Tracy Gertler), the Bhuwan Garg High School Neuroscience Award (Lauren Singer), and the aforementioned 2017 Phillip R. Dodge Young Investigator Award Lecturer (Audrey Brumback). Isabelle will be there in spirit as longtime colleagues and friends from Einstein take the stage with Karen Ballaban-Gil introducing the 2017 Sachs Lecturer, Nico Moshé following the Dodge lecture.

Saturday’s Hower Award lecture may summon echoes of that priceless Rapin-Rust moment in 1997. In much the same way that Isabelle might exclaim, “I am not venerable” 20 years ago, Nina might take exception to being called a “KW”. But, of course, she is. Because, if she isn’t, who, sandwiched between Isabelle Rapin and Audrey Brumback, is? After Jon Mink, Nina’s colleague at the University of Rochester, brings the room to order as the new CNS President, Nina’s twenty-something twin sons, Jonathan and Stanford, will introduce their mom with the kind of pride and panache befitting a true “KW”. They, along with their third sib, Asher, and their father, Bob, a vestibular neurophysiologist, could easily put together a compelling video, starring Nina, showing how one goes about scaling the heights of excellence and colleagues’ esteem in one’s field while raising a family and maintaining a remarkable work-life balance.



It would be a great companion video to the “Three Amigas” clip posted on the CNS website Careers section featuring Nina, Ann Tilton and Pat Crumrine. ([Click here to access.](#))



HISTORY

Home / Videos / Three Amigas



Three Amigas

A conversation between three longtime friends and colleagues, Drs. Ann Tilton, Nina Schor, and Pat Crumrine. Conversation taped in October 2015 at the 44th Annual Child Neurology Society Meeting.

VIDEO AND PODCAST LIBRARY

"CNS Conversations"

History

Future

Training Programs

Mentors and Mentoring

Research

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The Society

Community/Partners

CNS CALENDAR

SEP 28 Pellock Resident Seminar on Epilepsy
September 28 - September 29

I've watched that clip a dozen times, each time wondering where we are going to find the next cohort of "KW" to match those three and a couple dozen others of their generation that I've had the privilege to work with over the years. Who will carry the flame? Or, more prosaically, who will chair committees, run for office, or represent the CNS as this cohort has at a marathon's worth of meetings with the AAN, ANA, AES, AUPN, AAP, RRC, ACGME, AUPN, ABPN, NINDS, UCNS and others too numerous to name? It's not as if raising families – or other, equally worthy life choices – alongside charting a career in academics/practice/research, and being actively involved in professional associations, has gotten easier. It hasn't. However much the gender balance in child neurology has shifted in women's favor, it hasn't shifted to the same degree or in the same direction when it comes to work-life balance.





The challenges ahead are real. But so are the resources needed to meet them. Starting with the fortuitous – and enviable – gender balance among CNS members. “Enviable” because, given the Society’s relatively small size and correlative communal and collaborative impulses and orientation, we as a Society are well-suited to model for other medical societies – and, for the larger society, as well – how to address burnout, how to find a rewarding work-life balance, how to encourage, support and reward excellence in pursuit of individual meaning and collective mission for both women and men – KW and KM alike. KC seems like as good of a place as any to start taking on that challenge in earnest.

(Postscript: Although neither earned CME credit, presented a poster, or even attended a SIG meeting, Audrey's two infant daughters have both attended CNS Annual Meetings. If that doesn't qualify them as "pre-KW," what would?)

Until tomorrow, (a sequel--"KW2"--there's just too many "KW"--Past, Present, and Future--for one entry to feature)

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.

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