

COUNTDOWN TO BOSTON

45 DAYS



## "F" is for Fishman

Today's letter is "F", so let's begin with "Full Disclosure": I would not be writing this, and you would not be reading this were it not for Marvin Fishman, MD.

Mary Currey interviewed me, Larry Lockman hired me, Ken Swaiman more or less put up with me, but without Marvin Fishman, none of you would have ever even heard of me. By the time I first met Dr. Fishman at my first CNS Annual Meeting in Halifax, in 1988, I had done, or decided I was done with, a number of things – all starting with "F" – that might well have put me on another path in life. I was tired of writing film reviews and weary of constantly pitching, and less frequently filling, assorted freelance writing assignments. Writing fiction was a long-term dream and notions of making a living at it delusional. And I had a family now: my first-born, Soren, initially balked at the notion of waiting 40 weeks to make a grand entrance, forcing my wife into a few weeks of strict bedrest and me into cancelling plans to attend my first CNS meeting in San Diego in 1987. (Perhaps the cosmic convergence of San Diego, the CNS and me is simply not meant to be).



I was touring the Alamo in the spring of 1989 when Mary Currey hurried over from the San Antonio Hyatt where we were doing a site visit for that fall's CNS Annual Meeting. She had just gotten off the phone with Dr. Fishman, CNS President at the time. I have always loved the ironic dislocation involved in that call: the CNS Executive Committee was meeting in, and Marvin was calling from his native hometown of Chicago, while Mary and I were in his adopted home state of Texas; not quite Houston, but a town and site associated with Sam Houston.

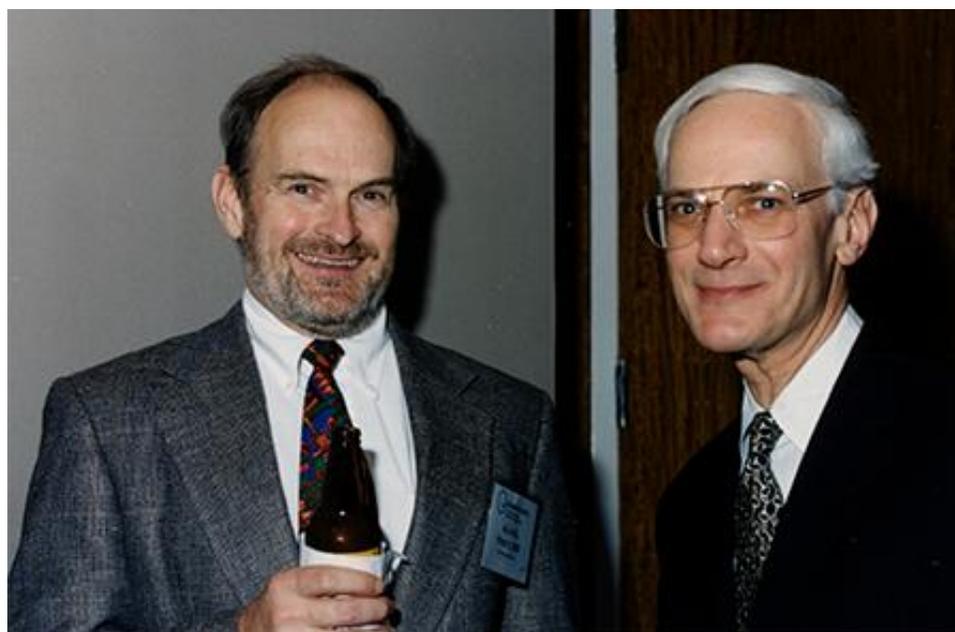
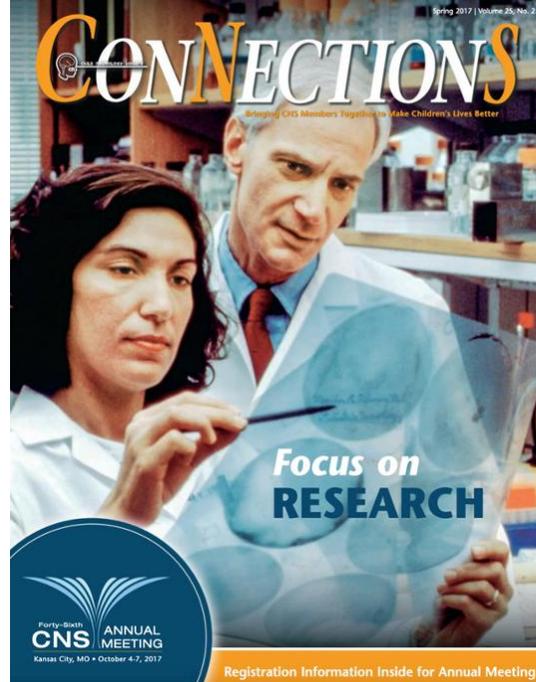
Moving Mary and me out of the Division of Pediatric Neurology at the University of Minnesota into the Society's first, independent office space (a quaint, ivy-covered brick building less than a mile from where I live now), was a risky decision, one that was not then, nor for many years to come, universally embraced. Dr. Fishman took full responsibility for the decision at the time, but not, characteristically, full credit years later when, in retrospect, it appeared to be the absolutely correct, even essential decision. He did so largely on faith, another "F" word, having talked with me at length only once or twice. Yet, somehow, he felt confident that I could provide adequate back-up support for Mary in launching and maintaining this challenging new venture.

I like to think that Marvin's confidence in Mary

and me was yet another, if lesser, expression of what I later came to appreciate as his remarkable gift for discerning and developing talent. Take a look at the four pictures and you'll see what I mean, if you don't know already.

Huda Zoghbi, 1988 Young Investigator Awardee and Sachs Award lecturer in 2001, was a Baylor Med School peds resident interested in cardiology--not the superstar geneticist she later became and we know her as--when Marvin persuaded her to think about going into child neurology.

Alan Percy had a great pedigree that included degrees from Harvard, Stanford, and Hopkins when he joined the faculty at Baylor/Texas Children's. He would likely achieve iconic status following any number of paths, but the path that found him walking and working alongside Marvin at Baylor was seminal in shaping a career that includes being President of both the Child Neurology Society (1997-99) and Child Neurology Foundation, a Hower Award in 2005, and development of a great program at Alabama-Birmingham.



The remarkable growth of the Baylor/TCH program in Houston under Gary Clark's tenure is directly attributable to his multiply diverse, yet smoothly integrated institutional vision and skill, but Gary would be the first to tell you his success owes a great deal to the fact that he succeeded Dr. Fishman, building on the solid foundation Marv established after being recruited by Ralph Feigin to leave Wash U (and Phil Dodge) to start something special in Houston. Well-mentored by Marvin, Gary has himself contributed substantially to the CNS, serving as Councillor for the South on the CNS Executive Committee from 2010-12, and as President of the Professors of Child Neurology (PCN, now PECN) from 2014-16.



And then there is Gloria, one of those people you occasionally meet who truly does light up a room. I don't know who chose who. Nor can I tell, looking at the photo of them dancing, who is leading and who is following. That's part of what makes Marvin so special: it isn't about him. It's never only, or even mainly, about him: it's about those he brings together or joins together with to get the job done.



Rob Rust, a dear friend of mine and so many others in the CNS, who for many years wrote the long, Whitmanian profiles of Award recipients we all admired and now miss, wrote the following in his profile of Dr. Fishman in 2013 when the CNS presented the Arnold P. Gold Foundation Humanism in Medicine Award to Marvin (he previously received the Hower Award in 1999):

"Among the sources of his particular effectiveness in all of his roles is the manner in which he seamlessly combines an acute and critical intellect with unfailing curiosity, the desire always to do the right thing, devotion to hard work, a dry sense of humor, and genuine caring and empathy. The combination has at least one additional important virtue: unfailing equanimity. Having all of these characteristics so naturally at his fingertips accounts not only for his skills as a teacher but also as a listener and communicator. He is a practical person that asks of others what he always asks of himself – essentially, to 'do the best you can'."

I have tried over the years to do the best I can, to make good on, and to allow Marvin to feel good about the huge risk he took 32 years ago. I never dreamed – who could have? – that the path he helped set me upon in Texas would wind up in Boston for the 50<sup>th</sup>/Golden Anniversary CNS Meeting. I'm grateful it did....or will, in 45 days.

Until tomorrow (the letter "G")  
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.

## 2021 CNS 50th Annual Meeting

For more information, click button below.

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.

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