

COUNTDOWN TO BOSTON

13 DAYS



"M" is for Minnesota Twins: Mack & Mink

I have never been partial to sequels (the lone exceptions being *Godfather II* and the *Thin Man* movies), but I knew, even before I finished writing the first "Minnesota Twins" entry that there would have to be a second. The subjects of this second entry can't quite match the close connections between Ken Swaiman and Bruce Berg; those two "old lions," both grew up in St. Paul, were undergraduates and medical students at the University of Minnesota a year or two apart, were both elected President of the CNS and the PCN, and were both honored with presentation of the Hower Award. But today's set of quasi-twins come awfully close.



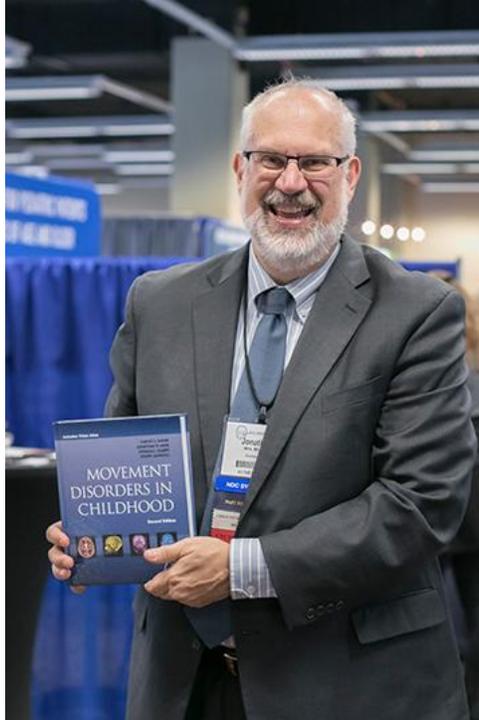
If I can come up with 10 non-genetic links between Ken Mack and Jon Mink without breaking a sweat, I'm guessing most of you, as trained neurologists, could spend two minutes scanning their CVs and come up with 20.

Minnesota

Let's start with the easiest link: both Ken Mack and Jon Mink are closely linked to Minnesota. Ken left Madison, Wisconsin in 2001 to join the staff at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN (Jon moved from St. Louis to Rochester, NY the same year). Jon grew up in Minneapolis and returns to Minnesota often to visit family and go camping and paddling in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area.

Stature

Both are notably imposing, both physically and professionally. Dr. Mack is an internationally recognized expert in pediatric headache, Dr. Mink is known in Tourettes and Movement Disorders circles worldwide.



Wash U

Both trained at Washington University in St. Louis. Ken was among the “young dudes” pictured in a previous feature on Wash U showing a remarkable cadre of seven young residents and fellows in 1987, four of whom went on to win the Young Investigator Award, including Scott Pomeroy (1989), Ken Mack (1991), Kel Yamada (1992) and Jeff Neil (1993). Jon is a few years younger and arrived at Wash U a few years later.

Special Interests

Both are associated with key “satellite” cohorts and activities not officially organized or sanctioned by the CNS, but subsidized by it, certainly, in recognition of their value to child neurologists in and outside of the CNS. Ken Mack teamed up with Steve Leber in 1994 to launch the ChildNeuro ListServe; while relatively dormant now, it served for many years as a hothouse germinating great ideas, consults, discussions and collaborations. In 1999, Jon Mink, Leon Dure and Harvey Singer organized and presented a hugely impactful symposium on movement disorders that soon thereafter spawned the Woodstock of CNS SIGs; the BYOV Movement Disorders “film fest” on Wednesday evenings draws big crowds and sparks high energy, with 150-200 attendees bringing videos to show and offer for a lively Q&A exchange moderated by a panel of experts, which for many years, up until the past few, featured Drs. Mink, Singer and Dure. To use a fishing metaphor, if I had to pick one fly to use for hooking med students coming to the CNS on child neurology, it would be the Wednesday evening Movement Disorders meeting.

HISTORY

Home / Videos / "The Masters of Movement Disorders": Jon Mink, Harvey Singer, Leon Dure



Click to view video

Teaching

Both Ken and Mink are well-recognized and multiply-rewarded teachers and mentors both within their institutions and within their broader, international subspecialty communities.

International Child Neurology Association

Both Ken and Jon have been very active in and seminal responsible for much of the growth and success of ICNA, including extended service by both on its Board of Directors. Ken is credited with revitalizing ICNA with his game-changing plan, adopted by the BOD, to eliminate membership fees in hopes of drawing members from the less affluent developing nations. Jon served as Chair of the Joint CNS-ICNA Scientific Program Committee in 2019-20, overseeing what turned out to be the highly successful 2020 Joint Virtual Meeting of the two organizations. That meeting's success was not, by any stretch, a sure thing; that it turned out to be is owing in no small part to the respect the international child neurology community has for Jon, compelling them to follow his lead in pivoting from San Diego to a virtual platform.



CNS Presidents

Both Dr. Mack and Mink served as Councillors on the CNS Executive Committee, Ken from 2005-07, Jon from 2007-09. Both were later elected CNS President, Ken serving from 2015-17, Jon succeeding him from 2017-19. Ken played a pivotal role in helping me make a successful bid to the ICNA BOD in 2016 to host a

joint CNS-ICNA meeting in San Diego in 2020; one of the central selling points was an extension of the expanded outreach to junior members: the importance of providing a new, emerging generation with the opportunity to affordably attend an international child neurology meeting and establish networking relationships around the world that would strengthen both organizations, all for the ultimate benefit of children everywhere. Ken was also the key player effecting the transition, following Jack Pellock's passing in 2016, from the decades-old Pellock Epilepsy Seminars to a wholly planned and supported annual course in conjunction with the CNS Annual Meeting for child neurology and NDD residents in their final year of training.



Jon continued to build on the revitalized "youth movement" of the past decade, actively encouraging younger members to be involved in committees and SIGs. He is also almost singularly responsible for encouraging substantive diversity initiatives, out of which the current Leadership, Diversity, Equity and Inclusivity Task Force, chaired by Rujuta Bhatt Wilson has grown. This is not a newfound, passing interest with Jon; in 2013 he received an award from the University of Rochester for his work in establishing and fueling diversity efforts at the medical school. Similar movement in a more open and diverse direction was initiated during his two-year term as Chair of the CNS Nominating Committee.



Names and Games (of Thrones)

Perhaps this is a good time and place to take a break from the portentous and make brief mention of the more mundane and obvious: their names. "Mack and Mink" are so closely matched aurally and phonetically that, had they met earlier, they might have formed a thriving law firm or an early vaudeville act. They are, or were, in fact, two characters caught up in a three-character Presidential succession that almost has a "Game of Thrones" feel to it. Coming from Rochester, MN myself, I was very taken by the notion that the years 2013-19 will go down in CNS history as "The Reign of Rochester," with Nina Schor (Rochester, NY) being succeeded by Ken Mack (Rochester, MN) followed by

Jon Mink (Rochester, MN). I doubt anything like this has ever happened or will ever happen again in CNS annals, or in any association of any kind, for that matter.



Hower Award

Ken Mack was selected by the CNS Awards Committee to receive the Hower Award and present the Hower Lecture in 2020 in San Diego, an honor which, unfortunately, was accorded him virtually. Jon Mink is the recipient of the 2021 Hower Award and is slated to give his lecture, "Mentors and Proteges: Standing on the Shoulders of Giants and Following Footsteps into the Future" on Saturday morning, October 2. The crowd for that lecture will likely, and unfortunately, be about half of what it might normally be because of COVID. I use the word "unfortunately" when referring to Ken's virtual and Jon's hybrid presentations not only because it is unfortunate they will not receive the full effect of a roomful of peers giving them a "standing O," but because both of them have such unique gift for "commanding a room"; these are genuine missed historical moments. Both of them are powerful speaking presences. I very distinctly remember sitting in on Ken's headache lecture at the ICNA meeting in Amsterdam in 2016. Generally soft-spoken, but with a scarcely hidden, delightfully unaffected *joie de vivre* pulsing just under his skin, one doesn't expect him to be a dynamic speaker. And yet. When he took the podium, it was like magic. Expertly moving his hands for emphasis (his use of hand motions is as good as anyone I've watched at CNS meetings), he really seemed to weave a web that caught everyone up in the room for the full length of the lecture.

Conversely, in a smaller, vastly more intimate setting, I enjoyed the privilege of a front row seat at a mentor/med student session organized by Rujuta Bhatt a few years ago at the AAN Annual Meeting in Los Angeles. I sat next to Jon, enthralled as I watched and listened to him charismatically connect with a steady stream of different students and residents, sharing stories about his side interest in woodworking taken up while he was a resident, asking probing questions that were personal but not intrusive, awakening a sense in each one overall that, "hey, I can talk to this guy; this guy remembers what it was like to be in his 20s, trying to figure out what he wanted to do with his life." Small wonder that his residents all seem so passionately devoted to him. How entralling was it? I put it a notch above the Dodgers game I was lucky enough to to that evening with Jon and his Rochester and "green journal" colleague, Bob Gross.

Minnesota Moments

Two personal Minnesota moments that I'll share with you, and then you can get back to your work. I remember driving down to Rochester to have lunch with Ken, Marc Patterson, and John Bodensteiner a few summers ago when Ken was CNS President, Marc was Scientific Program Chair, and John had not yet retired to Arizona. We dined in a new Mayo Clinic educational tower built on the very space my junior high school once occupied. If you know any one of the three, you'll know the conversation was lively and engaging. If you know all three of them, you'll have no trouble believing me when I say I laughed harder in that one hour than I did in any single full-day spent on that same spot almost 50 years earlier.

My second Minnesota moment is like a bookend to one of the first Countdown entries where I showed a picture from one of my sunset walks taken along the Mississippi River. My other sunset walks take me through the Macalester College campus and the adjoining Tangletown neighborhood to the west. Sometimes on that walk I pass by a plaque outside the science classroom building dedicated to Walter Mink, Jon's father. Two siblings and two of my best friends

all went to Macalester in the early 70s and remember him well as being hugely popular among their peers, a veritable legend. (An alt-rock band formed by late 80s Mac alumni called themselves "Walt Mink" and made a small splash with their half-dozen CDs). On the plaque is embossed, "HIS INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY, COMPASSION AND HUMOR WERE REFLECTED IN HIS TEACHING AND VALUED BY THOSE WHO KNEW HIM. HE NURTURED THE POSITIVE IN PEOPLE AS A TEACHER, ADVISOR, COLLEAGUE AND FRIEND."

You tell me: who (else) does that sound like?



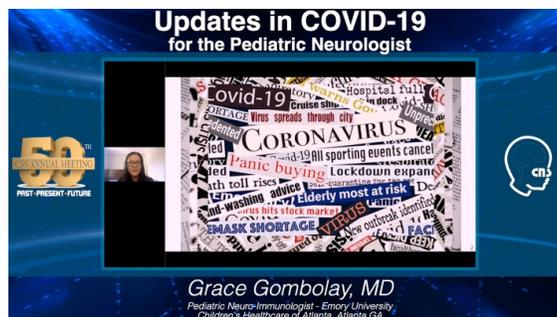
Until tomorrow (the letter "L")
Roger

Roger Larson, CAE
Executive Director

IMPORTANT UPDATE:

I inadvertently posted the wrong link yesterday to Grace Gombolay, MD's video summary of the upcoming session she has organized for the CNS Meeting: **Seminar 2: Updates in Pediatric COVID-19 for the Pediatric Neurologist.**

Please click on the following link to access: [Click to view video](#)



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

2021 CNS 50th Annual Meeting

For more information, click button below.

[Click for More Info](#)

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](#)

