

COUNTDOWN TO BOSTON

16 DAYS



"P" is for Peter, Painter and Pennsylvania

I have been gently chided in otherwise warmly appreciative emails about my Countdown entries being a bit, well, "white menish". I would not argue that point beyond saying, "yes, the Society's early years seem suspiciously so, as well, don't they?" This is the material, these are the individuals I have to work with, after all. I am "white menish" and of a certain age myself. But, I try, whenever possible, to hint at possible arcs and transitions that may make my "Once upon a times" follow or point down paths that lead to different "And they lived happily ever afters" than the fairy tales and histories I grew up hearing and reading. As I have said several times before, this series is highly subjective: its casual reflections are emblematic, not encyclopedic.

Rarely does that need repeating more insistently than today, with "P is for Peter, Painter and Pennsylvania." They don't come much "whiter" or more "menish" than Peter Berman and Michael Painter, two lions from the early years of the CNS without whom the Society's history might be told very differently, or might not even be told at all. One could no more recount the history of the CNS than one could chronicle that of the Department of Neurology at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) or Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh (CHP) without referencing these two. Both loom large, one on the eastern, seaboard side of Pennsylvania, the other on the western, mountain side of the state. I liked and respected them both, immensely, but I would suggest that while both are admittedly and unavoidably "white menish," they are also – or were also – as extraordinarily different in personal style and sensitivities as they were extraordinary, in a more general, professional sense of accomplishments and stature. While Dr. Berman might sometimes talk to me about Art (OK, more like lecture, but he far better-versed in the visual arts than I), Dr. Painter would hold court on History, a more mutually embraced and evenly contested field of discourse, as he and I delighted in discovering and re-discovering over the years.



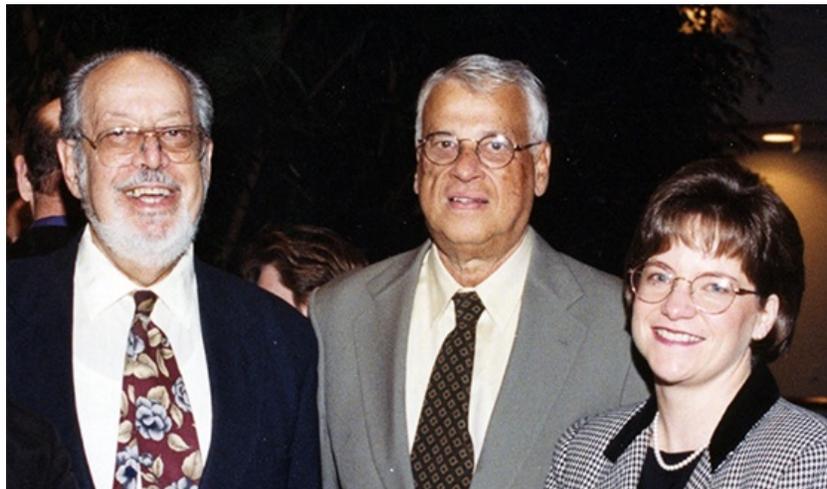
Peter Berman's distinctive voice can be heard on audiotapes of the first CNS business meetings in 1972, clearing away the fog, outlining critically important considerations, and decisively throwing his weight behind forming a new professional association for child neurologists. That it took until

1991 for him to be elected CNS President surprises me now. That he would be so humble in looking back on his term in office doesn't surprise me; he was always proud of, even a little in awe of finding himself sandwiched between his predecessor, Darryl De Vivo, and his successor, Joe Volpe. His steady helmsmanship during the nail-biting negotiations involved in pivoting successfully from the bombed out ballroom of the Vista hotel, adjoining the World Trade Center, in February 1993, to the Orlando Hilton later that fall was remarkable. No CNS President has encountered challenges approaching that until last year....and, again, this year; which should give you some sense of how considerable and consequential Phil Pearl's contributions have been over the past two years of endless crisis and uncertainty.

When I consider Dr. Berman's legacy, two of his earliest and most accomplished protégés come quickly to mind. The first, Barry Russman, served on the CNS Executive Committee from 1983-85 and was presented the CNS Lifetime Achievement Award in 2007. Among my favorite annual rites was listening to the two of them argue over who had attended the most CNS meetings, with Barry grudgingly admitting the one year he missed when, as President of the AACPD, duty called him away. I highly recommend catching the two of them sharing memories on the CNS Conversations section of the website: <https://www.childneurologysociety.org/video/drs-peter-berman-and-barry-russman/>.

The second protégé of particular note is Amy Brooks-Kayal, who received the Young Investigator Award in 1999, and later served as President of the American Epilepsy Society, an honor that pleased but in no way surprised Peter (the two of them are shown below with Ed Myer, from VCU; Dr. Myer was CNS board member from 1990-92).

Dr. Berman would be equally pleased to see his seat at the head of CHOP Neurology deftly assumed by Brenda Banwell, and would be equally unsurprised to find that two of the five Outstanding Junior Member Awards, and two of the four "Best of Show" poster presentations given in a session moderated by Doug Nordli at the CNS Meeting in Chicago in 2018 recognized work done by CHOP residents, Melissa Hutchinson and Sara Fridinger (shown below in the middle).



Mike Painter's best known protégés and partners in Pittsburgh come easily and quickly to mind as well. In much the same way that it would be hard to imagine the CNS without the signal contributions of Drs. Berman and Painter, it would be next-to-impossible to imagine the program in Pittsburgh or the CNS without the creative, nearly immeasurable contributions made by Pat Crumrine and Nina Schor. If part of Mike's compelling, if sometimes frustrating charm was his penchant for generating two brilliant ideas a day along with one deeply fraught one, identifying and encouraging Pat and Nina's natural leadership qualities were among the most brilliant of those twice-daily lighting strikes of pure genius. And he would have been delighted to see Miya Asato receive this year's CNS-PECN Training Director Award. The residents at UPMC continue to consistently submit high-quality abstracts garnering high-profile junior member awards at the CNS annual meeting. And I don't know of any training program whose faculty and fellows seem to enjoy each other's company more than those from Pittsburgh; they always seem to bring some of the fizz that makes CNS Annual Meetings so fun and friendly. That, I think, is part of Mike's legacy too.

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Mike served on the CNS Executive Committee from 1985-87, and later as PCN President before becoming CNS President in 1999. During his tenure, he and Ken Swaiman, then CNS Finance Committee chair, guided a proposal through to Board approval in 2000 establishing the Child Neurology Foundation. Mike later succeeded Dr. Swaiman as CNF President. I have previously expressed amazement at the statistical improbability of 2-of-11 Gold Awardees having last names starting with "Z": Robert Zeller and Mary Zupanc. How much more amazing is it, then, that 3-of-7 Child Neurology Foundation past-presidents should come from Pennsylvania? Mike's tenure was followed by Alan Percy, from Birmingham, AL, after which the crown returned to the Keystone State for two successive terms with Larry Brown (shown below with another estimable figure from the City of Brotherly Love, Agustin Legido, International Committee Chair, flanking Dr. Sam Gwer, the 2013 D'Souza International Fellow), and Bill Trescher, from the Penn State program in Hershey. Bill will be presenting important material in early October as part of a live CNS webinar organized by the RVU Task Force.



Mike and I did not always see eye-to-eye, and he sometimes seemed not to have heard me as he chased another newly hatched notion around the corner. But we always enjoyed each other's company and I delighted in hearing him unspool a new cache of Lincoln and Churchill quotes and anecdotes when we crossed paths at CNS and AAN meetings. I regretted upon first learning of Mike's declining health in early 2019, what I knew but would not admit to myself as, simultaneously, Rob Rust slipped quietly into the shadows in Virginia: the three of us, who had longed plan to get together "some" December for the Memorial Illumination at Antietam, would never make that trip.



So, I was truly touched when, in November 2019, Ira Bergman invited me to say a few words at Mike's memorial service at UPMC. I thought it a fitting homage to draw on Churchill, noting that what the British Prime Minister said of his most important World War II ally could be equally well said of Mike Painter: "Meeting Franklin Roosevelt was like opening your first bottle of champagne; knowing him was like drinking it."

Until tomorrow (the Letter "O")
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.

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2021 CNS 50th Annual Meeting

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