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# Charles M. Strother, 41st President of the ASNR

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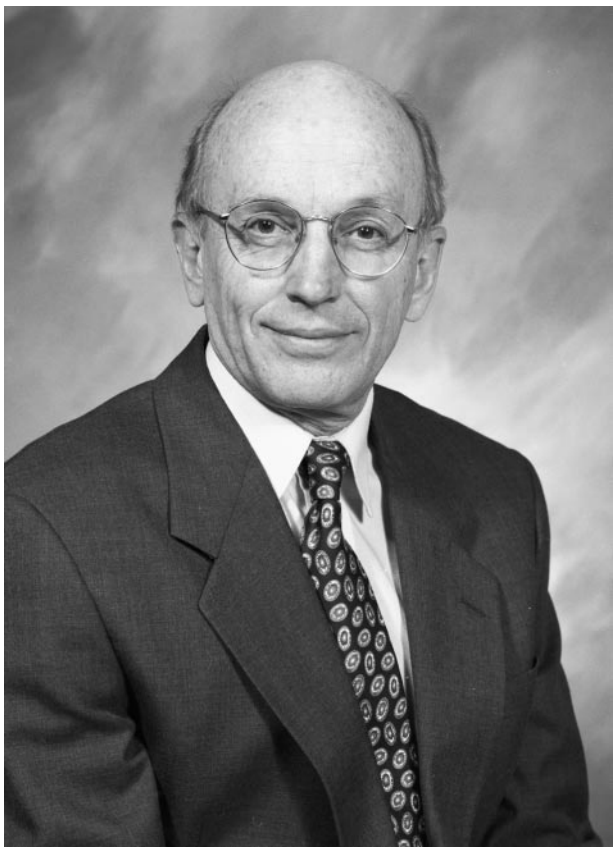

Charles Strother became the 41st president of the ASNR on April 30, 2003, when the gavel passed from Pat Turski to Charlie at the annual business meeting. This new leadership in the society is significant because now the ASNR has as its leader the first "pure" neurointerventionalist. Charlie's presidency occurs at a crucial time for the society and for neuroradiology, because there is a clear necessity for all interest areas of the discipline to work together for the betterment of the whole. This is a principal strongly espoused by Charlie Strother.

The story of Charlie's rise to a leadership role within organized radiology is one of persistence, making the most out of small opportunities, and bettering oneself along the way. Born in McKinney, Texas, to John and Ola Strother, Charlie was one of two children. Following high school, he had a peripatetic college career, attending in succession Texas Christian University, Texas Wesleyan University, and, finally, North Texas State University, in Denton. Never was medicine in his sights as a career during his undergraduate days; however, to support himself through college, he held a job at the John Peter Smith Hospital, in Fort Worth, beginning his career by washing glassware, including urine bottles. He quickly moved up in the hospital ranks, first performing all urinalysis tests and then becoming the night laboratory supervisor—of a crew of one. Not only did he then begin to develop a deep interest in medicine, but he was also encouraged greatly by Dr. May Owen, a pathologist at that hospital who strongly suggested that he pursue a career in medicine. In 1963 Charlie was accepted to the one medical school to which he applied, the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston, where he was an extremely successful medical student. He was elected to Alpha Omega Alpha as a junior and graduated with high honors in 1967. While a medical student, he rotated to Boston City Hospital for an elective in hematology at the Thorndike Metabolic Laboratory, thus spurring his interest in internal medicine. Subsequently, he served his internship year in internal medicine at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and during that year he met his wife to be, Elizabeth, whose brother happened to be a neurosurgery resident at Stanford University. Through that influence and his contact with patients with neurologic disease while an intern, Charlie's interest turned to the clinical neurologic sciences.

In those times, military service was obligatory for all able-bodied men, and Charlie took the advice of an acquaintance in Wisconsin who, after he was drafted into the army with an initial assignment to serve in a recruit induction station, suggested that he try to get reassigned as a physician in the "Special Forces," which, according to his sagacious friend, would allow him to work closely with division-level army athletic teams. This friend had confused "Special Services" with "Special Forces," so Charlie, not knowing what was ahead of him, requested this assignment. The reality of that misinterpretation became quickly clear the day he reported for duty at Fort Benning, Georgia; however, it was in retrospect for Charlie a fortunate mistake. Two years with the Special Forces in Panama and environs was an experience that to this day he fondly remembers.

Following his 2-year tour of duty, Charlie entered the residency program in neurology at Stanford, in 1970, but it did not take him long to see the developing influence of neuroimaging in neurology. It was then that he decided to pursue a career in neuroradiology. After completing his neurology residency, Charlie entered the radiology training program at Stanford and, after 2 years in general radiology, was able to spend two additional years as a neuroradiology fellow, splitting his time between Stanford and the University of California, San Francisco. During his fellowship, Hans Newton particularly impressed Charlie with his efficiency and seemingly effortless ability to simultaneously accomplish many tasks so

well. In fact, Hans encouraged Charlie to spend 4 months with Georges Salamon in Marseilles to study neurovascular anatomy, and it was during that interval that Charlie coauthored two chapters for the classic textbook, *Diagnostic Neuroradiology* by Newton and Potts. While in Marseille, he not only learned about anatomy and the beauty of science from Professor Salamon, but also encountered his young associate, Charles Raybaud, who became and remains a close friend.

Joe Sackett, who by 1976 had been an assistant professor at Wisconsin for years, with the help of Dr. John Juhl, recruited Charlie to return to Madison and help build a growing section of neuroradiology. Many important projects began at Wisconsin soon after Charlie became a faculty member there; this included the first American trials using water-soluble contrast medium (Metrizamide) for myelography and, in conjunction with Joe Sackett and Dr. Charles Mistretta and his colleagues in medical physics, developing and investigating the clinical utility of intravenous digital subtraction angiography.

Sensing the bright future that lay ahead for endovascular neuroradiology, Charlie went to Paris in 1978 to learn from Dr. Debrun the technique for making latex detachable balloons. As the field continued to expand with new devices, catheters, and guidewires coming rapidly into use, Charlie was at the forefront of all those advances. His interest and skills in interventional neuroradiology led to a working relationship with Target Therapeutics, where he became chairman of the board before the company was acquired by Boston Scientific.

Always on the lookout for new ideas and new ways of approaching clinical problems, Charlie's sabbatical in 1988 took him to Overluge Ulleval Sykehus in Oslo, Norway, where he worked with a number of Norwegian colleagues—Pydher Elherick, Finn Lillias, Railer Dullard, Johan Johansen, Spran Bokka, Per Naksted— all of whom remain Charlie's close friends and colleagues.

Returning to the University of Wisconsin in 1989, Charlie began to build a strong clinical and teaching program in neurointerventional radiology. His research interests have been and continue to be in device development and delivery, aneurysm hemodynamics, and angiographic techniques, including three-dimensional angiography. Charlie's publications are numerous, and, interestingly, many of his past and present investigations involve animal models for endovascular therapy. It is clear that from this type of basic research that the understanding and the treatment of many of the maladies of the cerebral vasculature are improved.

With a desire to work in a larger clinical service, in the fall of 2002, Charlie moved to the Baylor College of Medicine and the Methodist Hospital in Houston to work with his friend and colleague Mike Mawad. While he greatly misses his dear friends and colleagues at Madison, he enjoys the challenges and opportunities in this new environment.

Charlie and Elizabeth enjoy traveling particularly to uncommon destinations (how many of us have been to Antarctica?), hiking, cross-country skiing, and an occasional round of golf. Despite his new responsibilities as president of the ASNR, and the time-consuming job as one of the four associate editors of the *AJNR,* outside activities and interests will continue unabated.

At this time in the history of neuroradiology it is more important than ever to bring together the different subspecialty societies within the ASNR, so we may pursue common goals clinically and academically. Charlie understands how well the old adage "In unity there is strength" fits the current situation in medicine and in radiology. He also understands the realities of globalization, the potential for hybridization, and the potential for "tribalism" to become a destructive and inhibiting force.

Promoting increased value to the entire ASNR membership by continued exposure to cutting-edge technology in diagnosis and intervention and strengthening even further the ASNR as a learning organization are Charlie's goals for the upcoming year. With his effective leadership and understated demeanor, Dr. Strother is exactly the right person at the right time to head the ASNR.

ROBERT M. QUENCER, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

# Erratum

**Biography Charles M. Strother, 41st President of the ASNR**. AJNR 24:1715–1716. Page 1716, third paragraph should read:

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