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Patricia A. Hudgins: The 28th President of the American Society of Head and Neck Radiology

Dr. Patricia A. Hudgins, Professor of Radiology and Chief of Neuroradiology at Emory University, was elected the 28th president of the American Society of Head and Neck Radiology for 2003–2004.

A native of St. Petersburg, Florida, Patricia Hudgins grew up as an “Air Force brat,” living mostly in the northeast, especially New Jersey and Long Island. This, she explains, is responsible for her lifelong love for Bruce Springsteen, also a New Jersey native. Pat and her siblings, Pam and John, were raised in a classic middleclass American family by her parents, Marjorie and Jack Rhyner. Pat excelled at Amityville High School, following which she received a full scholarship to Hofstra University on Long Island, where she initially majored in physical education (those of us who have seen Pat in the gym can attest to her love of exercise). Following a brief fling with journalism, Pat decided on a medical career, beginning her pre-med training during her junior year of college. Working full-time throughout her college career to pay for her car and books, Pat reports that while she looks back on this feat proudly, she is happy that her children do not have to repeat that experience.

After completing her undergraduate prerequisites, Pat applied to University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) Medical School on a bet from her college counselor, who said she had no chance of getting into UCSF as an out-of-state applicant (Pat never collected on the bet). She entered the UCSF in 1976, staying for both residency and fellowship training. Pat again worked during all 4 years of medical school, including a stint as an operating room scheduling clerk. Initially interested in internal medicine as a career, Pat completed 2 years of a primary care–internal medicine residency, but finally “saw the light” and applied for a radiology residency. This is where I first encountered Pat, who was one of the most excellent residents I’ve had the pleasure of knowing at UCSF. It was no surprise to anyone when she was chosen as one of the chief residents, as she had (and still has) a wonderful blend of intellect, humor, and leadership skills.

I’ll never forget the first time I met Pat. I was a new neuroradiology fellow, assigned the first day to the San Francisco General hospital. Entering the infamous county reading room to say hello to the resident on call, I found an attractive young resident using a few choice words on the phone to a medicine resident who was clearly not responding appropriately to a patient in need. Taken aback by the sight of a beautiful woman using language a sharp-tongued sailor would be proud of, I approached with caution. After hanging up the phone, she turned to me politely with



her winning smile and sweet demeanor, and introduced herself as if nothing had happened. This was one impressive person!

To our delight, Pat chose a career in neuroradiology, completing her fellowship at UCSF. This was to be a life-altering experience—not because of our superb training, but because during that time, Pat met her future husband, Roger Hudgins, who was completing a pediatric neurosurgical fellowship. According to Pat, their first “date” was over a “myelogram for dropped mets” on a 3-year-old with medulloblastoma. The romance did not stop there—Roger and Pat were married at the end of their fellowships and have been together for over 18 years. Initially, Pat spent a short time in private practice in Santa Rosa, California, but after watching fireworks in San Francisco one foggy 4th of July, Roger, a native of the South, said they had to move back to Atlanta as he missed the culture, heat, and watermelon. Pat went kicking and screaming, but grew to love the South and considers it her home. Pat is fortunate to have her parents living nearby in Atlanta.

Pat started at Emory University with no intention of staying in academic medicine. Her mentor, Dr. James C. Hoffman, taught her “a ton of neuro,” and asked her to be the “go-to guy” for head and neck radiology. After reading Mancuso’s book cover to cover and attending the ASHNR, Pat spent time in

the OR watching ENT surgery and quickly became “the guy” that the ENT docs went to. Dr. Hudgins now has a nearly full-time ENT practice with a dual appointment in the Department of Otolaryngology. She has served for 6 years as the division director of neuroradiology, which now has over 10 faculty members, including Jacques Dion, whom she helped recruit, and seven 1st-year fellows. Emory’s program is nationally recognized for its excellent clinical care and teaching.

Pat and Roger are proud parents to three children. Pat’s stepdaughter, Tiffany, is 24, lives in Atlanta, and is training to be a physician’s assistant. Their daughter Rachel, 17, is a freshman at Emory University and interested in languages, especially Spanish. Jack, their youngest, is 12, going into 6th grade, and a gifted athlete. Pat and Roger, who has a successful practice in pediatric neurosurgery, are busy raising their kids and spend a lot of time at the ball field watching Jack play on his many teams. In her “spare time” (she is also the president-elect of the ASNR and preparing next year’s program!) Pat enjoys travel and spending time at their vacation home in North Carolina. She just returned with her youth group from Honduras, a

place that she found “compelling, heart breaking and rewarding.” Pat intends to return in a medical capacity, perhaps with daughter Rachel as her translator. She would like to incorporate national and international medical volunteering in her life, now and when she retires.

Pat and Roger enjoy their spare moments in a home they recently acquired in Asheville, NC, which is a popular small mountain town with a very sophisticated medical community, huge arts and crafts community, and “lots of old hippies.” Three hours from Atlanta, it is where they unwind and will likely retire. The fireworks on the 4th are great, and the summer fog unheard of (but hey, can you get great Thai take-out?).

Pat Hudgins has a successful career because she is fortunate to have a bright mind and self-motivation. She is a marvelous person, an excellent physician and educator, a tireless volunteer for the ASHNR and other societies, and a devoted mother and wife —the epitome of “super mom.” The American Society of Head and Neck Radiology is truly in excellent hands with Pat Hudgins as its president.

WILLIAM P. DILLON
Senior Editor