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William S. Ball, Thirty-eighth President of the American Society of Neuroradiology

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William S. Ball, Thirty-eighth President of the American Society of Neuroradiology



Bill Ball was installed as the 38th president of the American Society of Neuroradiology on April 5, 2000 at the annual meeting of the ASNR in Atlanta. Under his leadership, the ASNR will strengthen even further its commitment to bring to the society state-of-the-art neuroscience as it relates to the imaging and the treatment of disorders of the nervous system. Bill's road both to the presidency of the ASNR and to his position as a leading researcher and clinician in neuroradiology is not only interesting, but tells us volumes about the value of a broad perspective in medicine and the need to work indefatigably toward achieving one's goals.

Bill was born in New Orleans in 1950, and was brought up in the French Quarter. Although this is an area that now most of us would not consider conducive to the rearing of a future physician-scientist, in the 1950s and early 1960s, before tourism dominated the French Quarter, it was in fact a true neighborhood in every sense of the word. Bill first considered going to art school following high school, but his father, a commercial artist, fortunately talked him out of that career choice; he was told it was "too tough." With his career objectives altered, Bill became a biochemistry major and graduated from Louisiana State University in 1971. Bill subsequently attended Tulane University School of Medicine, and during his years in medical school he lived once again in the French Quarter. Because of Bill's initial interest in pediatric surgery, he began his postgraduate training as an intern in pediatrics at Tulane and Charity Hospital in New Orleans. Finding that he enjoyed pediatrics, he entered the residency program there, becoming the chief resident in pediatrics in his final year. Following this training, he joined the faculty of the Department of Pediatrics at Tulane as an instructor in 1977. Bill quickly realized that for him the pri-

vate practice of pediatrics was insufficiently academic in nature. Fortunately for radiology and neuroradiology, the acting chief of Tulane pediatrics, Frank Puyau, was both a pediatrician and pediatric radiologist and had significant influence on shaping Bill's eventual career choice. With Dr. Puyau's help, Bill was able to begin a midyear residency in radiology at the University of New Mexico in January 1978. When he completed his residency in 1981, Bill was undecided between specialization in pediatric radiology or neuroradiology, but a fellowship program at Children's Hospital Medical Center in Cincinnati allowed him to combine training in both specialties, with neuroradiology training under Corning Benton. He returned to the University of New Mexico in 1982, and functioned both as a neuroradiology fellow under the directorship of Bob Siegel, and as a faculty member in pediatric radiology. After spending 3 years on staff at the University of New Mexico as an assistant professor of radiology, Bill decided that he wanted to pursue an even more academic career. He was recruited to return to Children's Hospital in Cincinnati in 1984, and subsequently was named the chief of neuroradiology in 1986, a position he has held for the past 14 years.

As Bill rose to the rank of professor of radiology, he sensed the value of becoming increasingly involved in funded research, so in the early 1990s he developed the Imaging Research Center (IRC) at Children's Hospital. This center, which began with the concept of doing collaborative research with established researchers in pediatrics and neurology, has blossomed into a nationally recognized research center with 10 full-time employees, four of whom are faculty members whose work is devoted solely to projects within the IRC. The center is 80% grant supported, with three internal regions of in-

terest (ROIs)/contracts, and provision for support from 12 other ROIs and grants throughout the medical center. The areas of current IRC research include functional MR (fMR) imaging in language development, the creation of an MR database for the study of normal brain development, MR imaging in the evaluation of children with a high risk for developing bipolar disorders, and fMR imaging in obsessive compulsive disorders. The important point is that Bill successfully brought to that radiology department basic research, which prior to his initiative was not a major focus of the department's agenda. Over the past decade, Bill has done his part to show that radiologists can compete in legitimate externally funded research. Such forward thinking and striving constantly to reach a goal is a characteristic that those of us who have been fortunate enough to work with Bill are keenly aware of.

Bill has published over 100 papers covering a wide spectrum of topics in neuroradiology, has edited a best-selling textbook, *Pediatric Neuroradiology*, has held visiting professorships at institutions throughout the world, has been the recipient of 11 grant awards for his continuing research in the neurosciences, and currently is a permanent member of the National Institutes of Health Radiology Study Group.

Prior to his ascendancy to president of the ASNR, Bill held many key positions in the ASNR including: member of the Program Committee and Awards Committee, chairman of the Research Committee, chairman of the task force on electronic information, program chair, vice president, and president elect. It was primarily through his efforts that one of the most successful features of our annual meeting, the Electronic Learning Center, came into being. He guided that initiative through its formative stages, which began in Philadelphia at the combined Symposium/ASNR meeting in 1998.

Bill's wife of 23 years, Karen, was a pediatric nurse at Charity Hospital when they first met, and she continues to work as a nurse in Cincinnati. Two

sons, Matthew age 19 and Stephen age 17, and a daughter, Katherine age 15, round out the Ball household. As almost everyone who has spent time with Bill knows, he is an avid fisherman, fly fishing in particular. This avocation started in college and continued to grow over the years. To those who do not fly fish and know nothing about it, Bill's insight into this sport is intriguing. He explains that fly fishing has many variables. One must understand the river, be skillful in casting under various conditions, and pick the right fly for the fish. These all need to be put together in the proper combination to catch a fish successfully. What was his best fishing experience? "Always the last one." Where has he enjoyed fishing the most? "The San Juan in New Mexico and the Deschutes River in Oregon." In addition to the challenge of catching the fish, what does he enjoy the most? "The solitude, the scenery, the end of the day." It was revealing to hear Bill describe this sport; it was analytical, complete, articulately explained, and done with a deep-seated enthusiasm. It was a mirror image of his professional life.

In discussing some of the ways that academic radiology can improve, Bill feels strongly that the major figures in our specialty need to become personally involved in funded research. This would show respect for real research and would serve to encourage and mentor younger people in our field. A major attribute he feels that an academician should have is the willingness to give other people the credit they deserve. Aptly, he wishes his legacy not to be what he did, but rather what he enabled other people to accomplish.

The ASNR will prosper and grow in importance as long as the science of our specialty is our major focus. In Bill Ball, the society has a president who not only understands this thoroughly, but who has acted to focus the goal of the ASNR on the science of neuroimaging.

Robert M. Quencer, M.D.
Editor-in-Chief