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Charles Kerber, Immediate Past President of ASITN

Charles M. Strother

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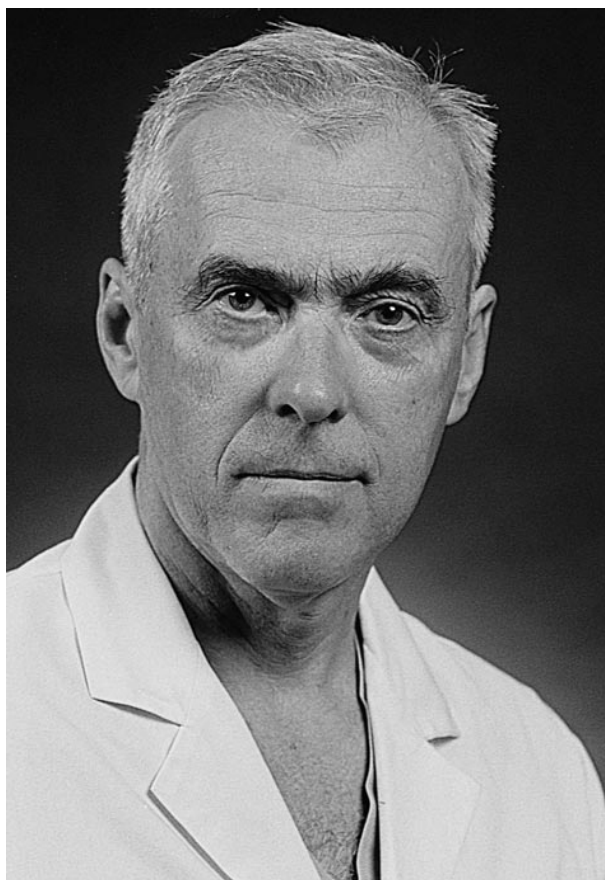
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Charles Kerber, Immediate Past President of ASITN

Charles Kerber was born in the Appalachian hills of Western Pennsylvania, close to the West Virginia border. He recalls that in those days the major decision for many young people from that area was whether to go north and work in the steel mills or to go south and work in the coal mines. Not enthused about either option, Chuck instead went to the University of Pittsburgh where he completed his undergraduate studies, medical school, and a surgical internship. After his internship, Chuck enlisted in the military where he became a flight surgeon in the U.S. Marine Corps. In this capacity, he was seriously injured in an airplane accident, and spent some 2 years at the Bethesda Naval Hospital where he underwent rehabilitation therapy. During this time, he took the opportunity to visit every specialty service in the hospital, aiming to gain exposure that would help him to decide what type of training he would seek when his rehabilitation was completed. Fortunately, radiology impressed him as being both the most challenging and the most interesting of all options, and he sought and obtained a radiology residency at the University of Pittsburgh. After 3 years' training in general radiology and 1 year in pediatric radiology, Chuck went into private practice in Northern California as a general radiologist. This practice did not satisfy him, and looking for more challenges, Chuck again, in a systematic review of other options, attended many of the weekly radiology subspecialty conferences that were held at the University of California, San Francisco. Of these, he found the most interesting Thursday neuroradiology conferences held by Dr. Thomas Newton, and, to the good fortune of our specialty, he sought and obtained a 2-year neuro-radiology fellowship.

Completing his fellowship in 1972, Chuck took his first faculty position at the University of Oregon Medical School in Portland. Soon after arriving in Portland, he participated in the diagnostic examination of a 12-year-old child with a large intracranial arteriovenous malformation (AVM). At the time of attempted operative removal of the AVM, the child died. Stung by his inability to offer something that would prevent such tragedies, Chuck began his work on developing tools and techniques that would allow effective and safe therapeutic procedures to be done in the intracranial circulation. Encouraged by his neurosurgical colleagues Harold Paxton and Anthony Gallo, Chuck developed flow-directed silicon catheters, a calibrated leak balloon catheter system and a small-gauge guidewire. It was during this time that he performed his first intracranial embolization by using liquid adhesive material. While at Oregon, Chuck also performed the first angioplasty of a carotid artery. Chuck remembers the radiology department at Oregon as



being a place where young people could do innovative work and where new concepts could be developed. During this time at Oregon, Chuck was able to organize his service in such a way that both radiology and neurosurgery residents rotated through neuroradiology, affording all neurosurgery residents with some hands-on angiographic experience. Because of concerns about turf, most radiologists were adamant that this should not be done. Chuck recognized that rather than encouraging neurosurgeons to perform neuroradiologic procedures, this exposure identified for both specialties areas where progress in patient care could be achieved.

In 1975, Chuck moved back to the University of Pittsburgh where he joined a young, productive, and inspiring group of colleagues (Arthur Rosenbaum was chief neuroradiologist; other faculty included Burton Drayer, William Bank, and Ralph Heinz). Chuck remembers this as being a fertile and enjoyable time during which he had the opportunity to refine his embolization tools and techniques. He also is especially proud of the fellowship training that he was able to offer during this period of his career. After 5 years in Pittsburgh,

Chuck returned to the west coast as a faculty member at the University of California in San Diego. Soon after arriving in San Diego, he began studies on flow dynamics, an area of research that still continues today. At UCSD, he resumed an association with George Leopold with whom he had been both a medical student and resident. He also began an association with neurosurgeons Hoi Sang U and John Alksne, two colleagues who have helped and encouraged him with his work. John Hesselink, head of the section of neuroradiology, also has been important in making Chuck's time in San Diego productive and enjoyable.

During his career, Chuck says that perhaps his biggest frustration has been the bureaucracy that limits efficient and effective patient care. His biggest pleasure has resulted from the fellows and residents he has trained. Chuck says that he is fortunate

to have been blessed with wonderful parents and siblings (three sisters). His wife, Kimberly Knox, also has helped him in many ways with his work. The greatest influence on Chuck's professional life has been his fellows, who have inspired and taught him. Chuck's hobbies include appreciating opera, hunting, and flying military airplanes. Sustained innovation and creativity over more than 3 decades are rare commodities. Neuroradiology in general and interventional neuroradiology in particular are most fortunate that Dr. Kerber chose this field for his life's work. More importantly, patients throughout the world have benefited greatly from his endeavors.

Charles M. Strother, MD
Senior Editor