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Van Halbach, Fifth President of the American Society of Interventional and Therapeutic Neuroradiology

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Van Halbach, Fifth President of the American Society of Interventional and Therapeutic Neuroradiology



In April 2000, Van Halbach completed his term as the fifth president of the American Society of Interventional and Therapeutic Neuroradiology (ASITN). During his tenure, the ASITN expanded its membership, strengthened its financial position, and further solidified its position as the premier organization representing interventional neuroradiology. At the start of his term of office, Van's primary goal was to develop more fully mechanisms whereby the ASITN could assure that physicians who perform interventional procedures are properly trained. With the publication of standards of training for interventional neuroradiologists published simultaneously by the *AJNR* and *Neurosurgery*, this goal has, to a significant extent, been realized.

Van was born and raised in Southern California. He was the only child of an aerospace engineer and a mother who, from his earliest grade-school days, was determined that he would be provided with the very best educational opportunities possible. He can recall, as a small boy, being interested in the technical aspects of his father's profession. Later, exposure to the medical practice of his stepfather, a cardiologist, kindled his interest in medicine. Ultimately, these interests would converge to shape Van's choice of career.

Van graduated from Whittier College in Southern California, where he majored in biology and chemistry. He then enrolled at the University of California in Los Angeles (UCLA) School of Medicine, beginning over 11 years at the institution. It was during his junior year, while on rotation as a clerk at the Harbor Hospital, that Van first encountered Grant Heishima. This chance exposure provided him with insight regarding future training and, to use his own

words, was a defining moment in his choice of a specialty. Following graduation, Van remained at UCLA for all of his postgraduate training, which included a medical internship at the Los Angeles Veterans Hospital, followed by a diagnostic radiology residency and a 2-year neuroradiology fellowship.

After completion of his neuroradiology fellowship, Van was offered a staff position by Dr. Heishima who, along with his colleague Randy Higashida, was in the process of moving his practice from UCLA to the University of California in San Francisco (UCSF). At UCSF, Grant, Randy, and Van established what was to become one of the dominant interventional neuroradiology services in the world. Van recalls those days working with Grant as being ones of great personal enjoyment and professional growth, saying that virtually every day he learned something new. His professional contributions include 167 publications in scientific journals, 234 presentations and exhibits at national and international meetings, and 36 visiting professorships in the United States and abroad. Van has maintained his early interest in technology and, in his role as a consultant to industry (in particular, Target Therapeutics/Boston Scientific, Inc.) he has contributed enormously to the development of many of the devices that are currently used daily in the practice of interventional neuroradiology. His major frustrations in his professional life relate primarily to the complexities and limitations that are imposed on the practice of medicine by economic, rather than medical, considerations. Van and his wife Debra have four children. He and his family enjoy skiing, snowboarding, windboarding, and travelling.

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