

President's Column

Fate Moves in Mysterious Ways

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As most of the ASHI membership is aware, the last few years have been a much-lively time in ASHI's development. Over this period, ASHI's organizational structure and operational methods have been modified to become much more business-like, much more effective in serving its members, and much more interactive with other organizations within the transplant community. In fall 2004, I began my tenure as President, and I committed enthusiastically to the continued development of ASHI in these directions. In general, I have been pleased to see the accumulating benefits of these efforts, in conjunction with the efforts of all of the other individuals who are actively engaged in the operations of ASHI. It appeared to me that the next year would be an exciting and productive period for both ASHI and myself.

However, fate operates in mysterious ways. While ASHI continues to develop and thrive, fate has been a bit less kind to me. As many of the membership may be aware, I have been seriously ill since Christmas, and unable to function effectively in any official capacity, including my capacity as ASHI President. I want to sincerely thank all those who sent cards and gifts upon hearing of my illness. To date, I have officially said little to the ASHI membership about the nature of my health problems. However, I believe that the ASHI membership deserves to be informed about any health problems that will significantly influence my ability to serve ASHI.

So here it is. Apparently, I have developed pulmonary hypertension in conjunction with active multiple myeloma. Both are debilitating to some degree. I am taking medications to deal with the former, and I have begun chemotherapy in an effort to force the myeloma into remission. This chemotherapeutic strategy is a five-to-six month process, which would be modified and repeated if it is not effective. The bottom line is that I have drifted into a chronic health crisis of unknown duration. I anticipate that the effects of these health problems and their treatment strategies will have some obvious,

periodic effects on my appearance, my general abilities, and my demeanor for some time to come. There is no doubt that this will clearly interfere with my functions as ASHI's President.

However, I honestly believe that ASHI will not suffer just because the fates have decided to put me, personally, to the test. Indeed, the momentum of the ASHI organization generated by its past Presidents, and the direction of development provided by ASHI's dedicated and hard-working Executive Committee members, have continued ASHI's progress and have made my absence virtually unnoticeable.

I have discussed all of these issues with your President-Elect, Dr. Peter Nickerson, who has been forced by my situation to make his own agreements with the fates. In my opinion, he has done this most gracefully, and in ways that have clearly benefited ASHI. First, he has selflessly and effectively stepped in to fill any voids that I left by my abrupt absence. Second, he continues to actively explore and engineer new ways to facilitate the continued growth and development of ASHI and its members. In some ways, it would appear that he has simply assumed his Presidential responsibilities a little early. Since his instincts and abilities are exceptional, I am sure that ASHI will continue to prosper while I deal with my distractions over the next year.

In general, I would like to stay connected and informed about ongoing ASHI issues and developments. However, I cannot reliably commit to the management of ASHI activities. This I must leave to Peter and our able colleagues on the various boards and committees of ASHI. I am happy to provide my opinions on various issues, if asked, but I will not interfere with Peter's leadership. As I have said, I have no fears for the future of ASHI under these conditions. For the longer term, I look forward to the return of my health, and to the return of my ability to further serve ASHI and the transplant community.