

# President's Column

Peter Nickerson, MD, FRCPC, *President-elect*

It is with great sadness that I write this message. With Charley's passing we have sustained the loss of not only a friend and colleague, but a visionary scientist and leader who constantly reminded us all to "Do the Experiment" and "Test the Hypothesis" rather than letting our biases guide our decisions. When I heard about Charley, I was in the midst of having the privilege of representing him and ASHI at the Immunogenetics Summer School in Mexico along with the leadership of EFI and ASEATTA. The fact that these other groups felt the loss of Charley as deeply as I did told me that Charley's influence has truly been international. ASHI will be honoring and celebrating Charley in an article in *Human Immunology* as well as at the annual meeting. I ask you to join me in sending our condolences to Nancy and the family.

At the last ASHI annual meeting, Charley challenged us with the statement "We are ASHI and we are here to help!" With that philosophy, the agenda that he was setting for us was clear—we are to find new ways to better serve both our membership and the community around us. In January this year, an ASHI strategic task force convened to review the last three years as well as to develop a high-level plan for the next three. Currently, the recommendations from the task force are before the board and the next step will be to engage the various ASHI committees to determine how to implement the recommendations. Our intent is to share the overall plan at the time of the annual meeting. What can be clearly stated is that we reaffirmed the need to enhance the products for our membership (e.g. accreditation, proficiency testing, and educational forums), as well as to reach out to the larger clinical and basic science communities in new and creative ways.

The improvement of our current products has already started. By now, many of you will have seen that the interface for reporting proficiency testing results has changed significantly. The board appreciates the time put in by Marilyn and Rene from UPP and Anat, Tom and the rest of the ASHI Proficiency Testing Committee, as well as those labs that acted as beta testing sites. This was a major effort that is the first step in our plans to enhance the quality of the PT program. Other areas that we are planning to retool are the interfaces between the PT program and the ARB. Your continued feedback is encouraged, as your insights allow for an iterative process that results in the best possible product.

Significant change has also been implemented this last year in the design of the ASHI Regional Educational Workshops. As reported by Doreen Jezek (see related article in this issue), this has been a major undertaking on the part of the Education Committee and Association Headquarters Inc. (AH). We are

especially thankful for the efforts of Donna Becker and Clare Rife. Our immediate feedback has been very positive. Indeed, I had the opportunity to attend Phoenix and New Orleans and found them to be exceptional programs. This has been a clear example of "doing the experiment – testing the hypothesis." Was everything perfect? Of course not. But nothing ever is in an experiment. What we can say is we have learned from the experience and will use participants' feedback to improve things for this coming year.

How are we reaching out? One of the new initiatives started last year was the Immunogenetics Summer School (held in Europe and overseen by Frans Class). The positive experience that was had by all (students and staff) led to the agreement between EFI, ASEATTA and ASHI that this should be an annual program rotating between our respective geographic regions. To that end, the Immunogenetics Summer School was held in Mexico this year with ASHI serving as the lead organization. We were most fortunate to have Clara Gorodezky take on organizing the event and we are truly indebted to her for her tireless efforts. ASHI's ability to directly assist the sponsorship of the Summer School has been possible this year through an unrestricted educational grant received from Genesis Biopharmaceuticals Inc., for which we are very grateful. In addition to promoting an educational program in immunogenetics, the Summer School provides an opportunity for the leadership of these sister societies to explore other collaborative projects that strengthen the relationships between them.

ASHI has always had a large role to play as a partner with clinical transplant programs and organizations. Indeed, with the advent of both new therapeutic approaches (e.g. IVIG, rituximab, thymoglobulin, plasmapheresis, etc.) and diagnostics (e.g. solid phase HLA assays), there has been a renaissance in clinical approaches for the sensitized patient (i.e. high risk protocols, living donor exchange and acceptable mismatch strategies). In this context, histocompatibility laboratories are playing, and will play, a central role in achieving successful transplants for this disadvantaged group. At the same time we see this renaissance, there has been a call by the UNOS KP Committee for a complete review of the renal allocation process. This review is being conducted by the UNOS Kidney Allocation Review Sub-committee (UNOS KARS). Currently, they are in the middle of this process. Ron Kerman and I had the opportunity to present on behalf of the ASHI board to the UNOS KARS earlier this year, where we highlighted the need to increase the points awarded for sensitized patients and that newer diagnostic technologies are allowing us to more accurately define acceptable mismatches for these individuals. The message we presented was consistent with the message carried by other individuals invited to make

comments (Drs. Leffell, Zachary, Bray, Gebel, and Tyan). At present, the consistency of our message appears to have been taken to heart by the committee. They are currently testing new allocation models with the need for additional points for the sensitized patients. As this is an ongoing process, we anticipate further occasions to make comments in the coming months. Indeed, this is an opportunity for ASHI to help educate and facilitate positive change.

In closing, I want to reiterate that to date, this year has been one of unexpected challenges made even more so with the loss of Charley's leadership. That, coupled with the loss of the executive director of ASHI earlier in the year, has forced the board and AH to step up and shoulder issues across the whole

of the organization. I first want to congratulate the board in general, and the Executive Committee in particular, for their unwavering commitment to see ASHI move forward despite these challenges. Moreover, I want to thank the many ASHI members who have offered assistance. It reinforces for me how true it is that ASHI is more a family than an organization. We are most fortunate to have such committed volunteers. Beyond ourselves, however, we are most blessed to have had Kim Glenn available and capable of stepping into the void created at AH. Speaking on behalf of the board, we have been most impressed by her abilities and commitment to ASHI. For my part, my attitude is Charley has set our agenda for this year and I am committed to his vision and to ASHI to promote that agenda as we move forward.

## Walking With Giants

Patrick Adams, CHS



I have suspected it often and for a long time. Now, I'm sure: I walked and talked and worked with a giant.

On August 23, 2005, we feted the life and accomplishments of Charles G. Orosz, affectionately known to everyone as "Charley," at a memorial gathering held at the Ohio State University Medical Center. The speakers were a diverse group of 15 individuals, including a dean, distinguished immunologists, PhDs and MDs Charley had mentored, ASHI's immediate past president, and Charley's local "lieutenants," which included me. What struck me most was how we all, from diverse perspectives and experiences, sounded the same broad themes that underpinned his remarkable life.

### DISTINGUISHED SCIENTIST AND IMMUNOLOGIST

Charley will be recognized as ASHI's 2005 Distinguished Scientist in Washington at the annual meeting. His development of experimental approaches to understand cellular interactions involved in graft acceptance/rejection are recognized throughout the world.

### PRODIGIOUS AUTHOR

Charley's research on the immunobiology of graft acceptance was supported for many years by the National Institutes of Health. He authored more than 200 peer-reviewed publications and received many honors and awards. In addition, he was associate editor for the *Journal of Immunology* and served on the editorial boards of seven international journals.

### MENTOR

Charley mentored a variety of individuals at many different levels. He helped forge the professions of individuals seeking post-graduate training in transplantation immunobiology, careers in academic medicine, and clinical histocompatibility testing at both the technologist and director level. His mentoring continued well after the termination of someone's formal training.

### COLLABORATOR

Whether it was a program project, meeting organizer, or the ASHI board of directors, Charley was skilled at ferreting out the very best that every player brought to the table. He coordinated everyone's talents to work to greatest advantage on the project at hand.

### DEDICATION TO EXCELLENCE

Whatever Charley undertook, the goal was to execute with excellence. If it was worth doing, it was done very well. This dedication to excellence was fueled by boundless energy and an enthusiasm that was infectious.

### MISCHIEVOUS MAVERICK

With a glint in his eye, mirrored by the grin on his face, Charley might give vent to the rebel in his spirit. The challenge was never meant to harm, but it

often threatened the status quo and always with good purpose. Those who were fortunate to work closely with Charley quickly discovered that he thought outside the box. This thinking brought new ways to approach old problems. He was uniquely gifted to take ASHI's new structure and put it to the test. He was confident and comforted to know that, despite the interruption of his active presidency since late December 2004, ASHI was still moving forward.

### HAPPY FEET

At the end of the day, after all the committee work, workshops, and sessions it was time for those tired, but happy feet. Charley worked hard and played hard. Who can recall an ASHI meeting without Charley's frenzy on the dance floor coming to mind? I last saw Charley dance at his son's wedding this past June. Although Charley was in attendance in a wheel chair, due to a painful leg infection, he got out of his chair when it came time to dance. Those happy feet demanded their moment.

### FRIEND

No matter the context, Charley forged friendships and naturally perforated the line separating professional and personal lives. He was easy to get to know, and eagerly shared his expertise and life experiences with many stories and a broad smile stretching beneath his hallmark mustache.

### CHARLEY'S CHALLENGE

Charley last addressed our membership at the annual meeting held in San Antonio on October 5, 2004. He presented his vision as our incoming president during this address. He said, "We are now entering the young adulthood of ASHI, which is characterized by an altruistic citizenship, an interest in taking our place as a recognized, contributing member of the transplant community. This period is marked by an emergence from the self interests of our adolescence, and the adoption of a clear, outward focus on the interest and needs of the various components of the transplant community." He ends, "In short, we need to let people know that we are ready, willing and able to help them." These words reflect the passionate commitment to excellence and service that were hallmark characteristics of Charley Orosz. They can be summarized as: We're ASHI, and we're here to help. That's the challenge Charley gave us as we left the meeting and went back to our home labs and local programs.

### THE MEASURE OF THE MAN

Following their death, a very select group of individuals become larger than life. These are the heroes that we draw on for inspiration. Once in a very great while, someone comes along who is larger than life while they are with us. Charley Orosz was one of these rare giants.

*Ed. Note: Charles G. Orosz passed away Sunday, August 7, 2005. He had been ill for the past eight months.*