

## Midwest Surgical Association

# Presidential Address: Surgery and sailing

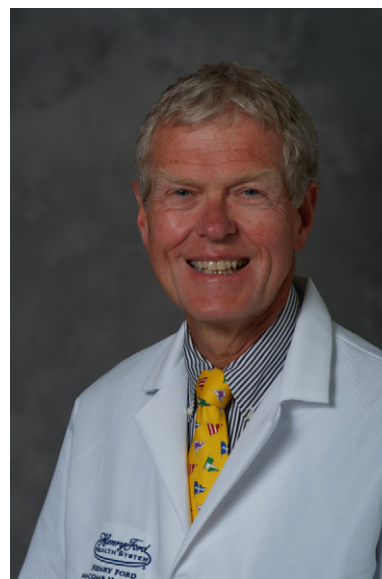
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Grand Hotel

Good morning. I would like to thank the association for the privilege and honor of serving as your 55th president this year. I have read all of the previous presidential addresses, and a common theme was the speakers using terms such as dread, burdened, and trepidation. This year I felt quite presidential for a while, and then realized I had the responsibility of coming up with an address and did not feel quite so presidential anymore. I do have the distinction of being the oldest to ever serve as your president. In addition, I am a PowerPoint virgin! It is an honor to be able to do this in conjunction with the 125th anniversary of the Grand Hotel where we have met and enjoyed a rich relationship since 1972. My introduction to the Midwest Surgical was as a resident at the University of Iowa in the mid-1970s. Every August or September, I would overhear several of my attendings, Drs Printen, Baker, Boyd, and Soper, all past presidents by the way, talk about what a great time they had at the recent meeting. So, I decided to become a member when I finished my training, which was a vascular fellowship at St John Hospital in Detroit. I came there for only 1 year intending to go back to the Midwest and do general and vascular surgery. My experience was so



**Richard A. Berg, M.D., President.**

fantastic that I ended up staying and doing just vascular surgery. My 1 year has lasted 35 years, and now it has grown into a medical center! I would like to thank and pay tribute to the following people: my parents for providing me with my upbringing and education, especially my father who was a college professor, a department chairman, and my dean in college; the president of my university, Dr Emory Lindquist, who was a lifelong family friend

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and mentor; my chief resident and mentor in the surgical research laboratory as a medical student at the University of Kansas; Dr Arlo Hermreck for inspiring and confirming my decision to pursue a career in surgery; Dr Joe Grady, the Chief of General and Vascular Surgery and Director of the Vascular Fellowship at St John for many years, and also trained Drs Lloyd and Schroder, both past presidents as well; and Drs Cirocco, Hawasli, and Edhayan, among others. Dr Grady was the most influential person in my career. Finally, and most importantly, I would like to acknowledge my family—my wife Mary and my son Jonathan and his wife Jessica who are here today. Our daughter Christine died in 2008 but is with us in our memories. She always loved coming to this meeting. My wife, in particular, has been supportive over those many years of single parenting as a surgeon's wife. In deciding on a topic for this address, I decided to talk about 2 of my favorite things: surgery and sailing. When I am not in the hospital doing what a surgeon loves, operating, I like to be on my sailboat. I am fortunate to have my home, marina, and hospital all within about a mile of Lake St Clair, a 430-square mile lake. My sailboat is a 34-foot Pacific Seacraft cutter rigged sloop named the *VASCUDOC*. One cannot talk about sailing without mentioning the America's Cup. My favorite presidential address is by Dr John Bergan, a Chicago vascular surgeon and frequent Chicago-Mackinac sailor. His address to the Society for Vascular Surgery, "There Is No Second," compared vascular surgery and yacht racing. "There Is No Second" referred to Queen Victoria watching the precursor to the first America's Cup race from her yacht. "Who is first?" Queen Victoria asked when only 1 solitary boat could be seen on the horizon coming to the finish. "The *America*," replied her attendant. "Then who is second?" the Queen asked. "Your Majesty," came the reply, "there is no second." The America's Cup race has no second place.

Dr Bergan beautifully illustrated the parallels between vascular surgery and yacht racing (Table 1). The America's Cup was originally known as the 100 Guinea Cup. This was a prize offered by the Royal Yacht Squadron of Great Britain for a 53-mile race around the Isle of Wight on August 22, 1851, in conjunction with Prince Albert's Great London Exhibition of 1851. The American yacht, challenging from the New York Yacht Club, was a 100-foot schooner named the *America* and defeated 14 British yachts. The trophy then became the America's Cup and remained at the New

York Yacht Club until the Australians won in 1983. A famous challenger who tried to get the cup back was Sir Thomas Lipton of Lipton Tea fame, who challenged for the cup in 1899, 1901, 1903, 1914, and 1930, all with boats named *Shamrock*, and lost all 5 times. The United States has defeated every challenger with the exception of 1983 (Australia), 1995 and 2000 (New Zealand), and 2003 and 2007 (Switzerland).

Familiar names more recently are Ted Turner who defended the cup successfully in 1977 with *Courageous* and Dennis Conner who won 4 times as a defender in 1974 with *Courageous*, 1980 with *Freedom*, and 1988 with *Stars and Stripes* and as challenger in 1987 with *Stars and Stripes*. The latest winner was Larry Ellison, founder of Oracle Corporation, in 2010. The 34th America's Cup will be held in San Francisco Bay, featuring 72-foot catamarans in 2013. Another reason I wanted to talk about sailing was our meeting here every other year and the rich history of the Chicago to Mackinac and Port Huron to Mackinac races every summer. The races are held every year on alternating weekends in July. The older of the 2 is the Chicago to Mackinac race, which is sponsored by the Chicago Yacht Club and was first raced in 1898. The winner was the sloop *Vanenna* over 4 other sailboats.

This year is the 104th "Mac." The course is about 330 miles with over 300 entries. The other race is the Port Huron to Mackinac race, which is sponsored by the Bayview Yacht Club in Detroit and was first raced in 1925. The winner was the sloop *Bernida* over 11 other sailboats. Violent storms caused 7 of the 12 starters to abandon the race. This year is the 88th consecutive race. There are 2 courses, one about 200 miles and the other 250 miles, with about 230 entries. The first winner, the *Bernida*, has been restored and is racing again in this year's Pt Huron to Mackinac race.

There are several other famous races including the Whitbread Round the World Race, the Sunday Times Golden Globe Race, the Vendee Globe Race, and the Fastnet Race. The Sunday Times Golden Globe Race was a nonstop, single-handed, 10-month round the world yacht race held in 1968 to 1969 and was the first around-the-world yacht race. It is amazing that the Southern Ocean contains that point on Earth that is farthest from any land. It is about 16,600 miles and equidistant from Pitcairn Island, the bounty Mutineers' last refuge, and Antarctica. This is farther from land than the astronauts in Earth orbit, which is

**Table 1** Sailing and vascular surgery

Sailing	Vascular surgery
Helmsmanship	Judgment
Sail handling	Selection of the proper operation and doing it well
Navigation	Managing the complexities of the post operative course
Weather	Preventing complications or dealing with them effectively when they occur
Safety and strategy	Perhaps choosing not to operate

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