



**Leonard Berlin, MD, FACR
Gold Medal Acceptance Speech 2011**

88th Annual Meeting and Chapter Leadership Conference

There are many types of awards in the world. There is a Nobel Prize, an Olympic medal, an Oscar, an induction into the baseball, or football, or country music, or other type of Hall of Fame. To me these awards pale in comparison to the Gold Medal of the American College of Radiology, for this ACR Gold Medal is for radiologists the ultimate achievement, because it is awarded by one's peers, and as such, no greater award or honor can be bestowed. As noted in the program of tonight's Convocation, the first ACR Gold Medal was awarded in 1927 to William D. Coolidge, inventor of the hot cathode ray tube. Several years later, the awardee was Madame Curie, and in the following decades through last year, a grand total of only 167 medals have been bestowed by the ACR. To be included in this group of the giants – the luminaries – of radiology who have been recipients of this medal in past years, in addition to my two friends and colleagues, Larry Bassett and Van Moore who are co-recipients with me tonight, is most humbling.

Former CNN talk show host Larry King once said that “Those who have succeeded at anything and don't mention luck are kidding themselves.” There has been much luck in my life. I was lucky to have been born in the United States, a nation in which one is free to dream, think, speak and act, without restriction due to race, color, religion, political belief or economic status.

I was lucky to have been blessed with parents who, despite very limited formal education and financial means, nevertheless instilled in their children a thirst for education, a strong work ethic, an obligation to be charitable and a commitment to live life with integrity and humanity.

And I was lucky to have entered the medical profession, a profession that is synonymous with and dedicated to, service to society and one's fellow citizens. And of all the medical disciplines, I was lucky to enter what I believe to be the noblest of the medical specialties, radiology, for radiology is distinguishable from all other specialties in that not only is the radiologist the patient's doctor, but the radiologist is the doctor's doctor as well.

Radiology has played a major role in my life for 56 years. Seeking employment to help finance my medical school education, I was lucky to receive on-the-job training as a radiology technologist at the University of Illinois Hospital, working weekends and vacations throughout my schooling. It was a natural consequence then, to follow medical school and internship, with a residency in radiology.

My radiology career began when the specialty consisted only of plain films and fluoroscopic screens which required the wearing of red goggles to maintain light accommodation, where films were hand-developed in a dark room, and when a wet reading was truly a wet reading. I've been lucky to have seen radiologic imaging technology advance exponentially, today reaching heights never even imagined decades ago.

From the time I joined the ACR 46 years ago, I have been lucky to have had many people help guide me on a path that has eventually led me to this podium this evening. There is insufficient time here to name and thank them all, but I must single out four individuals to whom I publically express my everlasting gratitude: Lee Rogers, who has been an advisor, a mentor, a role model and a friend, who encouraged and supported my medical-legal writing; Murray Janower who encouraged me to join and later to succeed him as the Chairman of the ACR's Committee on Ethics; Jim Borgstede and Larry Muroff, whose friendship and wise council over the years have been invaluable. I shall always be grateful and indebted not only to these four individuals, but also to my many colleagues and friends in the Chicago Radiological and the Illinois Radiological, Societies, as well as to the many others in the ACR with whom I have had the good fortune to work, including fine staff members whose professionalism is unsurpassed and whose willingness to assist is unlimited, such as Bill Shields, Tom Hoffman and Brad Short.

There is so much more to the ACR than it being just the organization that has always been, and continues to be, dedicated to educating and improving the health and welfare of both the public at large and radiologists. The ACR is a family. It is a family where camaraderie abounds, where friendships are made, where lifelong bonds are created, not only among its members and staff, but also among the spouses. As such there have been many who with open arms have welcomed my wife Phyllis into the ACR family, among whom I wish to single out Ellie Neiman, Martha Borgstede and Adrienne Kaye who have been like sisters to Phyllis.

Speaking of family, let me reflect on my own. In several weeks Phyllis and I will celebrate our 55th wedding anniversary. Phyllis has been my fellow traveler on the adventurous and exciting road of life, a road which hopefully still has no end in sight. Phyllis is my support, muse, lover, confidant, partner, best friend, mother of our four sons, Steven, Paul, Robert and Jonathan, all of whom are here tonight, and the grandmother of our seven lovely grandchildren, the oldest of whom – Stephanie – is also here tonight. They all are the love of my life.

For many years in my radiology practice, I was lucky to have a partner whose name was Sheldon Miller. Sheldon and I were radiology residents together and became close friends, as did our respective families. A superb radiologist and wonderful human being, Sheldon unfortunately died of prostatic cancer in 1989 at the age of 59. Sheldon had three sons, the oldest of whom, Frank, became a radiologist. Frank Miller is now a Professor of radiology at Northwestern University in Chicago, is well-known nationally and internationally, and a few minutes ago was awarded Fellowship in the ACR. Because his father is not here to say it, I would like to say, "Congratulations, Frank."

In 1930 for the Broadway show "Knickerbocker Holiday," lyricist Maxwell Anderson and composer Kurt Weill wrote a song entitled, "September Song." The song, which uses the months of the year as a metaphor for the years of one's life, is still frequently sung today because of the poignant thoughts it expresses. Some of the lyrics are as follows:

Oh it's a long, long while from May to December,
But the days grow short when you reach September,
When the autumn weather turns the leaves to flame,
When days dwindle down to a precious few,
September, November,
And these few golden days I'll share with you.

I've reached the metaphorical months of November and December in my life which, of course, are the winter months, but as we all know, winter can last a long time in Chicago, and is often filled with bright, sunny and warm days. These are indeed precious days, and I hope to spend them continuing to make whatever contributions I can to this College – my College – our College – its members, and the public-at-large.

I accept this medal with exultation muted by humility, with elation constrained by reflection, with exhilaration moderated by respect, with joy tempered by gratitude. I will treasure and cherish this gold medal and the memory of today's and this evening's events for every remaining day of my life.

Thank you.