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Thomas Tomsick, Sixth President of the American Society of Interventional and Therapeutic Neuroradiology

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Thomas Tomsick, Sixth President of the American Society of Interventional and Therapeutic Neuroradiology

Tom Tomsick, the sixth president of the American Society of Interventional and Therapeutic Neuroradiology, was one of four children (he had one brother and two sisters) born into a working-class family on the near-eastside of Cleveland. His father was a police officer and his mother was a homemaker. Tom's interest in medicine began at age 5 when he suffered an episode of rheumatic fever. During high school at St. Ignatius and college at John Carroll University, where he was a premed and biology major, Tom was somewhat of an athlete, with particular emphasis on baseball. Tom was the bullpen and batting practice catcher for the Cleveland Indians from 1964 through 1966. Realizing that "glove men with strong arms are a dime a dozen", he turned down a professional contract (\$500.00 a month in the Florida Instructional League) to begin medical school at St. Louis University. There he encountered Dr. Jim Martin, Chief of Radiology, who first sparked his interest in the specialty of radiology. The spark was fanned because of exposure, during a radiology clerkship, to the classic text by Dr. Ben Felson.

In part motivated by a desire to study under Felson's guidance, Tom applied for and was accepted into a rotating internship at Cincinnati General Hospital. After this, he entered the residency program in radiology at the same institution. Because of the draft, his residency was interrupted after only 6 months and, during the next 2 years, he served as an Army Captain at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. After troop clinic from 6:30 to 7:30 A.M. (where he treated sunburns and venereal diseases on Mondays and sore feet, knees, and backs the rest of the week), he spent the rest of the day working in the radiology department under the designation of a "3306C—a partially trained radiologist". Because of this experience, upon discharge from the military, Jerry Wiot, now Chairman of Radiology at Cincinnati, granted him 1 year of credit toward completion of his radiology residency. The third year of residency was spent as a neuroradiology fellow working under the guidance of Bob Lukin and Allan Chambers. In July 1976, just as the first CT scanner was coming on line, Tom joined the staff at Cincinnati General Hospital. CT spiked an existing interest in the neurosciences and the possibility of combining radiographically guided navigation with the use of newly developed devices caused Tom to turn toward interventional techniques. He credits an early case of free-sphere embolization, done along with his colleagues, Bob Lukin, and a visit from Gerard Debrun as a visiting professor, as events that caused him to become more intrigued with therapeutic procedures. Because this was a time when therapeutic applications

were just being explored, Tom had the opportunity to participate in development of interventional techniques in Cincinnati. Both John Tew at Good Samaritan Hospital and Bob McLaurin at Cincinnati General Hospital supported Tom's effort to develop and use endovascular procedures. Tom obtained the first FDA IDE for the use of latex detachable balloons in 1980. Later, during the same year, he began his first work with ischemic stroke, collaborating with Charles Ollinger, a neurologist in a protocol that used IV administered ancrod and naloxone. Shortly thereafter, Tom Brott came to town; his interest and enthusiasm resulted in a great increase in both clinical and research activities directed toward early recognition and treatment of ischemic stroke. These topics would come to dominate Tom's professional activities.

Tom cites his greatest frustrations as not being able to hit the curve ball. Perhaps his biggest accomplishment has been his work aimed at improving the ability to accurately and quickly diagnose and then effectively treat patients who are suffering from ischemic stroke. Significant among his contributions are his involvement in one of the earliest efforts aimed at using IV tPA for the treatment of ischemic stroke, his demonstration that there is some correlation between the NIH stroke scale and the presence of a major vascular occlusion, and his description of the dense middle cerebral artery sign. Tom's efforts were also pivotal in obtaining FDA approval for use of detachable balloons and NBCA. He has recently been named to the Executive Committee of the Stroke Council of the American Heart Association.

Tom and his wife, Judy, a homemaker, gourmet cook, gardener, and partner, have two children. Their daughter, Lisa, a graduate of the University

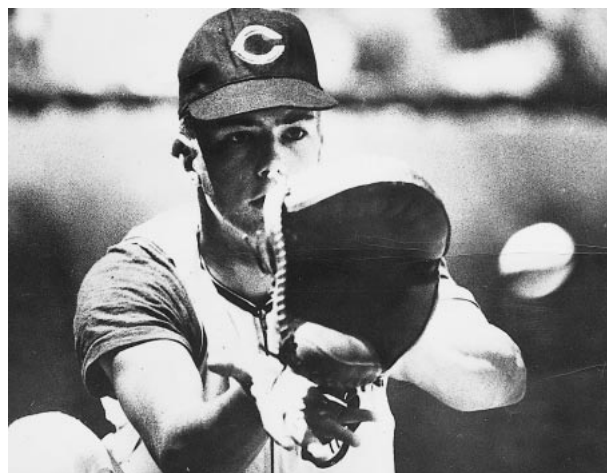


FIG 1. Tom as bullpen and batting practice catcher for the Cleveland Indians (1964–1966).

of Michigan and Georgetown Law School, currently is a lawyer in Washington D.C. Their son, a graduate of Duke University, is a first-year medical student at the University of Cincinnati.

Tom cites his "philosophy of life and embolization" as: 1) don't try to fit square pegs into round holes; 2) take what the defense gives you; and 3) be careful not to get yourself into a position from which you cannot advance, but more importantly, a position from which you cannot retreat. His pri-

mary goal for his term of office is to develop greater communication with individual members, to increase services to members, and to create an effective strategic plan to guarantee the long-term success of the ASITN and neurointerventional surgery.

Charles M. Strother, MD
Senior Editor