

Heidelberg is the home of the oldest university in Germany and the third oldest in Europe. It is situated in the Odenwald Mountains on the Neckar River, which flows into the Rhine not far from the city. The city has a long history of academic excellence and is now also a seat of German technological innovation.

This was the 77th meeting of the Academy and also the 4th combined meeting with the German Academy of Neurological Surgeon and the German Society of Neurological Surgery. Mitch Berger was President of the Academy this year. Anil Nanda functioned as the Local Arrangements Chairman with his German counterpart, Andreas Unterberg. Doug Kondziolka was the Scientific Program Chairman.

The meeting opened with the first session in the Alte Aula (Old Meeting Hall) – an historic and beautiful room in one of the University buildings. That evening there was an informal get together of all of the participants at one of the historic student eating establishments, Wirsthaus “Zum Seppl.” It was a cozy, boisterous gathering with a sampling of typical German fare.

We visited Hambach Castle in the Rhineland Palatinate, considered a symbol of German democracy, as a rally was held there in 1832 in protest of the continuing warring factions of the various German principalities and incursions from France. We then visited the Vineyard Zumstein where we were driven through the vineyard on a covered tractor/wagon and heard about the region from the wine farmer/owner before repairing to the Cave to enjoy a rollicking dinner and sampling of the wine produced at the vineyard. We were served the local specialty, Salmagen, made famous by Helmut Kohl’s passion for this dish and his habit of serving it to visiting dignitaries from around the world including Thatcher, Gorbachev, Reagan and Clinton. Kohl was the longest serving German Chancellor and hailed from this region.

We next visited Schwetzingen, which has a castle and a vast baroque garden, built on the model of Versailles by one of the Prince Electors, and much admired by Voltaire and other famous visitors.

The Holy Roman Empire town of Speyer on the Rhine was our next stop; it features a magnificent cathedral erected in the Romanesque manner around the year 1000 BCE.

The scientific program consisted of the usual superb abstract presentations covering every aspect of neurosurgery accompanied by symposia including: AVM Management in the ARUBA Era, Immunotherapy Platforms for Brain Tumors, The Future of Neurosurgical Publication, and The Question of Separate Certification for Brain and Spinal Neurosurgery.

Mitch Berger's Presidential Address focused on the organization of human language, past, present and future.