Greetings, AESS Members & Students!

I would like to give you a little background on me and some of my plans for 2006, as your newly-elected President.

I am a Senior Technical Fellow at Boeing working on missiles; I have been a Boeing (nee McDonnell-Douglas) employee for 43 years. I reside in St. Charles, Missouri (near St. Louis, Missouri) with my wife, Barbara who is retired from Boeing and an Associate Member of AESS/IEEE. I am a Life Senior Member of AESS/IEEE; and am one of the founders of the St. Louis Section Chapter of AESS in 1995. I was selected to be the AESS Chapters Chair by Barry Breen. Since then I have been associated with Membership, was elected AESS Executive VP for 2004-2005; and President for 2006.

My IEEE volunteer work started in the St. Louis Section in the mid-1970s. I progressed through the Section offices, becoming Section Chair in 1981-1982. Following that, I was Region 5 PACE Chair and next elected Director of Region 5 for 1992-1993. In 2000, I was elected Member-at-Large for IEEE-USA; in 2002, I was elected President-elect of IEEE-USA and served as IEEE-USA President in 2003. For 2005, I was the N&AA Chair of IEEE-USA.

In 2005, IEEE President Cleon Anderson appointed me to Chair the IEEE Board Ad Hoc Committee for Industry Relations. Our Committee was fortunate to get Boeing and IEEE to sign a Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) on April 25, 2005. MOU’s with other companies are currently in the works. In October 2005, Boeing and IEEE held their first meeting to define the way forward by working together. A matrix was prepared contrasting areas in which to cooperate. A final report was presented to the IEEE Board of Directors in November 2005. The Mission of Boeing is most closely aligned with AESS’ mission, when IEEE societies are examined.

Now, let’s look to the future. Paul Gartz has performed an outstanding task of energizing our Chapters in Regions outside of the United States. Important activities have occurred in Japan, Australia, and Italy. More activities are planned in South America, China, the UK, India, and Russia. Zafar Taqvi has been assigned as the 2006 International Director for AESS and is funneling his energies in that direction; he lives in Houston and works with NASA. John Weyrauch, 2005 International Director and AESS Secretary, has had to stand down because of personal pressures. Thank you for your fine efforts, John and Paul!

Charles Gager, our AESS Treasurer for many years, has also decided to step down. We are in the process of selecting a new treasurer to take over in 2006. Charley has generously agreed to continue assisting our new 2006 Treasurer. Due to Charley's excellent financial management, AESS now has a reserve of several million, which will be used for member initiatives in the future. Thanks, Charley. The first initiative that I plan is to fund another Chapters Summit in conjunction with Sections Congress 2008 in Quebec City, Canada. Last year, Ron Ogan and Zafar Taqvi organized and held the first AESS Chapters Summit in conjunction with Sections Congress 2005 in Tampa. Great Job, Ron and Zafar!

As we are all aware, time passes and we get older. We must think of the future of AESS. We have about 576 AESS/IEEE student members, but we have only two student branches registered at IEEE HQ: Portland State University (Oregon) and The University of Missouri at Rolla. And we have about 250 GOLD members. [GOLD stands for Graduates of the Last Decade.] I was fortunate to meet Joe Pighetti, an AESS GOLD Member at Sections Congress 2005. Joe was participating in a GOLD Session at SC05 that I attended; he was very proactive. I decided to ask Joe if he would be the GOLD chair for AESS – he accepted. I have asked him to organize the GOLD AESS Members and plan projects for them, and to bring their ideas and concerns to the AESS Board of Governors. I will also ask Joe to help increase AESS participation at the Student Branch Chapter level.

Over time, our AESS membership has been in decline. In an effort to reverse this trend, I have asked Jim Howard to become VP-Member Affairs. Jim was chair of Sections Congress 2005. In addition, he has served as chair of the IEEE Membership Development Committee. He will bring new expertise to AESS. I wish to thank Walter Downing for his efforts as VP-Membership.

Finally, I believe it is important for the AESS members to get to know their governing body. As such, I have asked each of the Vice Presidents to prepare a monthly column for Systems so you can get to know them and their activities.

The AESS Board of Governors is your elected body; our organization is listed elsewhere in these pages. I appreciate and thank them for their extensive volunteer efforts in managing our society, but it consists of only a couple dozen dedicated individuals. You, the Members, number nearly 5000. We need your ideas and comments to make this Society even better.

Feel free to e-mail me at: j.leonard@ieee.org.

– Jim V. Leonard
President, AESS, 2006