

Anthony J. Raimondi

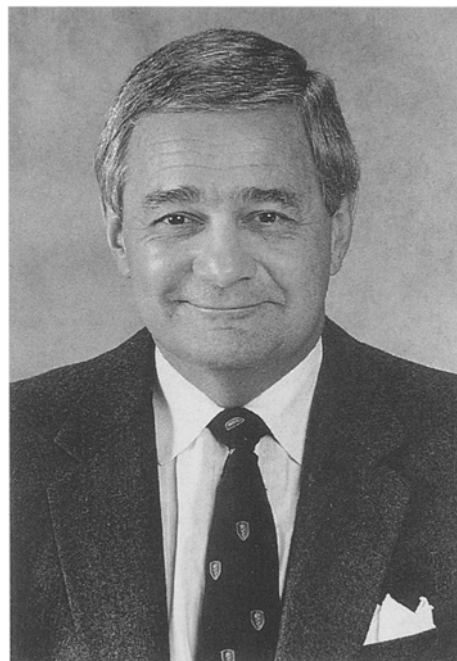
Robin Paul Humphreys

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Robin Paul Humphreys was born on 16 October 1937 in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, which he and his family left for Eastern Canada when he was 7 years old. All of his primary and secondary education took place in Toronto. He was honored by his high school teachers and classmates with the request to deliver the Graduating Class Valedictory Address. He has always been a straightforward, positive, delightful intellectual: a father, a husband, a doctor.

His decision to enroll in the premedical faculty of the University of Toronto may well have been one of chance, since his initial preference, petroleum engineering, was put aside "for" him by the fact that the deadline for submission of applications of premedical school preceded the deadline for the Faculty of Engineering. In fact, his first 2 years of premedical studies were disquieted by questions in his own mind as to whether he had made the right decision – doubts which then were thoroughly dispelled by his 3rd year of preparatory studies.

He was admitted to the University of Toronto, Faculty of Medicine, in 1956, became the Class President for the academic year 1957–58, and was awarded the Webster Scholarship in the year of his graduation (1962). His internship was of the rotatory variety, served at St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto, and then in 1963 he embarked upon his postgraduate studies in orthopedic surgery at the University of Toronto, where he worked on the clinical staff for 2 years before going into the laboratory to do investigative work under the direction of Robert Salter. It was during this period of experimental work that reflection and introspection brought him to the decision to leave orthopedic surgery, enter neurological surgery, and to work under the tutelage of Thomas P. Morley at the Toronto General Hospital, where he remained until 1970, at which time



he completed his postgraduate studies. There is much of Tom Morley in Robin: the wit, the timing, the ability to wait.

That same year he was accepted as a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons (FRCS, Canada), and was appointed an Associate in the Department of Surgery of the University of Toronto. In July of that year he went on to the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto to study pediatric neurosurgery under Bruce Hendrick, with long-term plans to spend time with Donald Matson in Boston and Kenneth Till in London. However, the premature death of Donald Matson brought Bruce Hendrick to tell Robin that "you might as well learn on the job!" and to keep him in Toronto.

All of us in pediatric neurosurgery know that during that period at the Hospital for Sick Children there were the three

H's – Hendrick, Hoffman, Humphreys – who were dubbed “He, Ho, and Hum”, each taking on special activities. Robin chose to orient himself to establishing a craniofacial program with Ian Monroe and to structure the teaching curriculum. This latter remained an extraordinarily important aspect of his work life for the entirety of his professional career; in fact, in 1993 he has awarded the University's highest postgraduate teaching recognition, and now, when he presents talks to his peers, his form and content invariably convey true teaching experience.

Once launched along the road of pediatric neurosurgery, Dr. Humphreys was immediately astonished at the breadth and scope of pathological problems afflicting the child's nervous system and its bony coverings – a state of mind which was added to by a statement from Bruce Hendricks: “No matter what your experience, you never know what is lying just around the corner.” In the 5 years between 1973 and 1978, Robin rose from Associate in the Department of Surgery to Assistant Professor; and then between 1978 and 1992, he achieved the rank of Full Professor, gaining staff appointments as Consultant Neurosurgeon, Consultant Surgeon, and Associate Surgeon-in-Chief. His cross-appointments were in the Department of Anatomy, where between 1974 and 1994 he rose from Demonstrator to Associate Professor.

His publications, like those of his colleagues at the Toronto Hospital for Sick Children, are numerous, variable, both experimental and clinical, and appear in the full range of pediatric and neurosurgical journals. They have ranged in the broad sense from atlases of the human brain, through articles on the management of congenital anomalies of the central nervous system, to the management of tumors and vascular pathology in the newborn and the infant. Among his major works are those dealing with vascular pathology. All of his works are characteristically supported by illustrations of unusually high quality, both graphic and artistic, expressing a true understanding of the nature of the reader or student – the instinct to teach.

By 1987, Dr. Robin Humphrey's stature was such that he was included among the very limited number of pediatric neurosurgeons to found the American Society for Pediatric Neurosurgery – a singular honor indeed! In this society he immediately became active and was a very sought-after person for opinions, judgements, and evaluations, bringing equanimity both to his clinical and administrative activities. At this time, with the formation of the ASPN, the founding members began to think in terms of “defining what a pediatric neurosurgeon is” – a matter which to this day remains vague and controversial, generally expressed in various aphorisms, the most acceptable and least contentious of which may well be “If you are one, you know one.”

By the mid-1970s the case load at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto had accumulated to such levels that the academicians working in that setting found it irresistible; hence they all went about analyzing similar cases,

identifying common denominators, learning from their experiences, collating like observations into instructive procedures. Robin Humphreys was extraordinarily active in this process of piecing together bits of information, observations, diagnostic procedures, and surgical techniques, in order to communicate various standards in the practice of pediatric neurosurgery to the scientific community. One of the landmarks of this step-by-step process of reviewing, analyzing, synthesizing, performed by Robin Humphreys remains the Triage Algorithm for the Assessment of Head-Injured Children, which was prepared in chart form and is now in the emergency rooms of all the hospitals in Canada. One step further: Robin is presently deeply engaged in examining the impact of economic controls and technology on the delivery of health care in the 1990s.

To give a few figures concerning publications: he has authored or coauthored 143 articles and editorial comments and presently has 7 papers in varying phases of review for publication; he has published 23 chapters, with an additional 5 at varying stages of review and publication, has published 20 abstracts, has given 55 addresses either as visiting professor or special lecturer, and has been extraordinarily active in public affairs and community speaking. In this time he has received 5 research awards amounting to well over US \$ 200 000, and has been elected to the Presidency of the American Society of Pediatric Neurosurgeons (1992), the International Society for Pediatric Neurosurgery (1993), the Dean's Task Force on Faculty/Teaching Hospital Relations (1982), and various University and Hospital Committees between 1974 and 1994. He is a member of slightly less than a score of medical/scientific organizations and serves as an editor of three pediatric neurosurgical publications.

Presently, Robin claims to be a bit overwhelmed in the face of the explosion of knowledge and technology in our subspecialty, but he is not dismayed at the prospects of bringing these into an orderly and serviceable unity, trusting the future of our subspecialty (as is typical of a gentleman such as Robin P. Humphreys) to his young associates and students.

Robin has a very rich personal life, one which includes reading, traveling, visiting with friends, chatting, going to the theater and opera, all within the framework of developing a culture rich in the humanities. He lives this in love and respect with his wife, Judith, who has a similar range of intellectual and social expressions. Their two children, Cameron and Jane, are now well on the way to developing their own careers in business and the theater, respectively.

It is unusual in the field of neurosurgery to encounter a person such as Robin Paul Humphreys: one who has the bearing of a gentleman, the conversation of a scholar, the respect for his fellow man of a clergyman, the sense of humor of a well-bred Anglo-Canadian. Adding to these the skills – the extraordinary clinical and technical skills of a pediatric neurosurgeon – permits one to lean back, close his eyes, and envision the kind of doctor ...