

In Celebration of a Life Well-Lived.

James Preston Robb 1914-2004

Preston Robb was Professor of Neurology and Neurologist-in-Chief at the Montreal Neurological Hospital from 1968-1976. He was one of the founders of the American Academy of Neurology and of the Canadian Neurological Society, and a pioneer of Paediatric Neurology in Quebec. Dr. Robb was born in Montreal in 1914, the son of Joseph Doig Robb and Janie McLeod Preston. He took pride in his trace of Indian blood. One of his ancestors was Thayendanega (Joseph Brant), the Mohawk chief who commanded the Iroquois forces allied with the British in the American Revolutionary War. The influence of Robb's parents lasted a lifetime; throughout his career, his father's photograph always graced his office.

He studied medicine at McGill, graduating in 1939. While at the university he played on the Canadian intercollegiate football championship and this accounted for his distinguishing broken nose. The team skills he learned in the Molson stadium stood him in good stead later on, perhaps contributing to his outstanding abilities as a captain of the rehabilitation group he created at the Montreal Children's Hospital and as a leader of neurology at McGill. After interning at the Montreal General Hospital and the Verdun Protestant, he joined the Royal Canadian Navy serving overseas and then at a base in Montreal. In response to Dr. Penfield's urgent request he was remanded to the Montreal Neurological Hospital. This experience sealed his fate propelling him into a career in neurology and prompting him to return there at the end of the War. An extended tour of American paediatric neurological centres took him to Johns Hopkins where he spent some time with Frank Ford, whose clinical skills he greatly admired, and to Boston where he worked with Richmond Paine and Randolph Byers. Upon his return to Montreal he set to work at the Montreal Children's Hospital and the Montreal Neurological Institute. At the Children's he succeeded Francis McNaughton, who was to become McGill's first Professor of Neurology. He was for generations of trainees from all over the world a role model of rectitude and fairness. As well, he was a magnificent teacher, always nurturing independent thought and supporting initiative.

He was punctual, decisive, and his clinical judgement was phenomenal. Like many great paediatric neurologists, he obtained most of his information by watching children at play and interacting with their games. He was extraordinarily fond of children and they responded in kind, undaunted by his imposing



stern exterior known to intimidate cocky residents and obstreperous sailors alike

Robb's research started with work in language localization with Wilder Penfield, whom he held in high regard, and he wrote about neurological complications of pregnancy, motor disability and various paediatric neurological problems. Above all, he pursued a lifelong interest in epilepsy. In 1964 he followed the call of his friend, Richard Masland, to the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda. After a stint there he travelled extensively, surveying facilities for the treatment of epilepsy across the United States and Canada. These travels culminated in a

volume on the epidemiology of epilepsy entitled

Epilepsy: A Review of Basic and Clinical Research. He pioneered the cooperative

epilepsy studies launched by the National

Institutes of Health. His work set the

stage for the centres of excellence for

treatment of epilepsy created across

the United States. Robb was greatly

concerned about the creation in

underdeveloped countries of

treatment facilities for epilepsy

and other neurological disorders.

He trained many neurologists

from Africa, Asia, and South

America, and towards the end of

his career served as visiting

professor at the University of

Nairobi. His exposure to the

hurdles that must be overcome

before epilepsy can be effectively

treated in Third World countries left an

indelible impression. Upon his return to

Canada he wrote a practical text on the

subject for paramedics and other health

workers which has since been translated into

Chinese, Spanish and Portuguese. His papers were a

model of style and always to the point.

Robb was a founder and president of the Canadian

Neurological Society and President of the American Epilepsy

Society. He received the William Lennox Award from the

American Epilepsy Society and became chairman and medical

advisor to many organizations, including the Presidential

Advisory Board of the Epilepsy Foundation of America, The US

Public Health Service Advisory Committee on the Epilepsies,

and many local centres.

Robb was an example to his juniors in many ways, none more

so than in his family life. His marriage to Mary Waller was a

particularly happy one. She had been a head nurse at the

Montreal General Hospital. Beautiful, kind, warm and endowed

with faultless social judgement, she eased her husband's heavy

workload and helped generations of foreign neurological trainees

and their families adapt to North American ways. They had four children, moulded by their happy home life. Although Robb never seemed quite certain about the role of women in medicine, the eventual addition to the family of a physician daughter-in-law seemed to tilt the scales in a favourable direction. Sociable and friendly, a droll raconteur, Robb was a wonderful host.

In 1982, Robb was made Professor Emeritus of Neurology at McGill. He had always said that he did not want to be under-foot when he retired as Neurologist-in-Chief. True to his word, upon retirement he moved to Lyn, Ontario where he embarked on a second, highly successful, career as Chairman of the Board of the family company and at last had time to enjoy his hobbies of tree farming and wood carving.

During the long and satisfying years of our collaboration I came to appreciate deeply two attitudes that set Preston Robb

apart. The first was his desire to understand the cultural and emotional background of his patients, often so different from his own. This, he sensed, determined their reaction to neurological disability in themselves and in their loved ones. The second was his insistence that the physician do everything possible to create an environment where patients and families were able to maintain their dignity while coping with the dreadful hurdles that life placed in their path.

Preston Robb died at the age of ninety after a brief illness. He was in full possession of his faculties to the end and gave a remarkable address after receiving a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Montreal Neurological Institute, just a week earlier.

*Frederick Andermann
Montreal, Ontario*

IN MEMORIAM

William (Bill) MacMurray Lougheed 1923-2004

Dr. Bill Lougheed, a pioneer in the field of vascular neurosurgery, and one of Canada's great surgical teachers, died at his home in Barrie, Ontario on September 30, 2004. Trained under Kenneth G. McKenzie and E. Harry Botterell, and inspired by early cardiovascular surgeons at the Toronto General Hospital such as Gordon Murray and Bill Bigelow, Lougheed decided early to focus his efforts on surgery for blood vessel disorders of the brain. After experimental work in animals he introduced hypothermia and reversible cerebral circulatory arrest for intracranial aneurysm surgery in the 1950s, the first clinical application of brain cooling to protect from anoxia. The advantages of an operating microscope first became apparent to Lougheed in his animal laboratory, where in the 1960s he began a series of experiments in microvascular reconstruction. At Lougheed's insistence a maneuverable, double-headed surgical diploscope was developed providing both surgeon and assistant simultaneous binocular vision. Microsurgery was born and Dr. Lougheed became Canada's first, and one of the world's first, microneurosurgeons.

Along with Toronto jeweler Harry Kerr, Lougheed designed an innovative aneurysm clip with an adjustable spring that varied the closing force of the clip blades. Nontraumatic "temporary" intracranial vascular occlusion was made possible, used by Lougheed for aneurysm surgery (local "proximal occlusion" of the aneurysm-bearing parent artery, overcoming the need for global cerebral circulatory arrest), for one of the first intracranial embolectomies performed, and the world's first long-saphenous vein cerebral bypass procedure in 1970. Lougheed and

colleagues Robert Elgie and Henry Barnett reported the first series of carotid endarterectomies performed in Canada in 1966. Perhaps more than any other, carotid endarterectomy became Dr. Lougheed's "signature" operation, taught to generations of neurosurgeons now spread across Canada.

Bill Lougheed's greatest contribution to medicine was training neurosurgeons at the University of Toronto. He excelled as a teacher of operative neurosurgery, emphasizing preoperative preparation and intraoperative organization. He taught how to treat properly the assistant and scrub nurse, maximizing the help they provide under difficult circumstances, regardless of their expertise. With often heroic patience, he was able to navigate residents through even the most complex neurosurgical procedures, always ensuring his usual expert technical result but still leaving intact the resident's sense of pride and achievement, the feeling that he or she, the resident, "had done it".

Bill Lougheed held the affection, loyalty and respect of several generations of men and women whom he helped become neurosurgeons. His legacy lives on in the Lougheed Microsurgical Course at the University of Toronto, directed by Dr. Christopher Wallace, provided for and attended by all Canadian neurosurgery residents. Predeceased by Grace, his beloved wife of 49 years, Bill leaves his children Stoney, Bill, George, Joey and Bubba, their partners and children, and his friend and partner in recent years, Margot McKay.

*J. Max Findlay
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