



Robert G. Ojemann



Robert G. Ojemann was a world-renowned academic neurosurgeon and physician. He graduated from the University of Iowa in 1952 and received his medical degree at the University of Iowa College of Medicine, graduating first in his class in 1955. Thereafter, he came to the Massachusetts General Hospital in 1957 as a resident in Neurosurgery. After residency, he stayed at the Massachusetts General Hospital on the Neurosurgery faculty and rose through the academic ranks at Harvard Medical School and ultimately was named Professor of Surgery at Harvard Medical School in 1979. He remained on the staff of the MGH and the faculty of Harvard Medical School for his entire career. Bob was a national academic leader and served as president of the American Academy of Neurological Surgeons, American Association of Neurological Surgeons, Congress of Neurological Surgeons and Society of Neurological Surgeons and was chairman of the American Board of Neurological Surgery and the Residency Review Committee for Neurological Surgery. He received the highest awards in his specialty, including the Cushing Medal from the American Association of Neurological Surgeons in 1997, Honored Guest of the Congress of

Neurological Surgeons in 1992 and the Distinguished Service Award from the Society of Neurological Surgeons in 2001. His clinical and research interests were in the areas of brain tumors and cerebrovascular disease. He published over 200 articles and chapters and co-authored two books including the first book on the surgical management of cerebrovascular disease

Bob Ojemann was known as a superb surgeon, academician, clinician, teacher, and life-long student of neurosurgery. He was the “neurosurgeons’ neurosurgeon” and the teacher of an entire generation of neurosurgeons currently practicing world-wide. He was an example of the rare person who truly knew who he was, was comfortable with who he was, and lived who he was. He cared deeply for his students, residents, junior faculty, and faculty colleagues. He was also the consummate clinician, treating each patient as if they were a family member, with respect, compassion, and dedication. He was known

throughout the MGH for his special skills and his quite remarkable human qualities. His reliability and clinical acumen and firm commitment to do all he could in behalf of his patients prompted one of us (PSR) to call him on one emergency occasion when he was asked by an old friend on a Saturday afternoon to investigate the situation of a young student who had just suffered a severe head injury in Brockton. Bob responded immediately and joined a team of surgeons to see the young woman in the community hospital. He then rode back to the MGH in the ambulance with the comatose patient and operated upon her that evening. His continuing care resulted in her recovery. He showed the highest degree of skill and attention to her in a manner characteristic of him. She idolized him thereafter as did so many of his patients.

He taught all of us to do the same not through words or lectures, indeed Bob was a man of very few words; rather, he taught us through his actions. An oil portrait of him by Warren and Lucia Proserpi hangs outside the neurosurgery office at the Massachusetts General Hospital and it is not by chance that it shows him making rounds on the MGH wards late into the night. He always made sure each of his patients was doing well and was tucked in for the night before he would allow himself to leave for home and for some rest. In this era of increasing bureaucracy and the industrialization of medicine, Bob was one of the last of an unfortunately dying breed. Bob treated patients as individuals. He cared for them one by one.

Bob was a very peaceful and spiritual man. He was a deacon in his church and always the Master who served others. This clearly was seen in the way he carried out his daily life and in his interactions with patients, doctors, and everyone he met. He was also very dedicated to his wife and his children. He made many sacrifices to be able to spend what little free time he had with them. To see this balanced dedication first hand, made him a great teacher in all aspects of life for those who he trained.

Bob had many titles, a multitude of awards, and numerous publications but what he considered his greatest contribution was his “ability to teach surgical judgment and intraoperative surgery to the residents”. Robert G. Ojemann was truly a great man and we are all the better for his having been among us.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert L. Martuza, *chairperson*

Stephen B. Calderwood

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