



THE FACULTY OF MEDICINE  
Harvard University

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# Alfred L. Weber



Dr. Alfred L. Weber was an icon in Radiology of the Head and Neck. An internationally recognized expert in the field, he helped bring the discipline through incredible technologic changes from plane film radiography to computed tomography (CT) and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). He spent over half a century in the Harvard Medical School system achieving the rank of Professor of Radiology. He served as Chief of Radiology at the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary for over twenty years.

Dr. Weber grew up on a farm in the town of Fulda in the central part of Germany. He graduated from medical school at the University of Munich. He then moved to Boston and started his residency in radiology at the Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) in 1956. This was his first post in the Harvard Medical School system. Following his residency, he stayed at MGH as a staff radiologist and in 1967 he established the Pediatric Radiology Department at MGH. In 1973 he was asked to take the position of Chair of the Radiology Department at the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary. He held this post until 1995 and this is where he established the main direction of his career and

achieved his outstanding academic reputation. He continued to teach at Massachusetts Eye and Ear and Harvard Medical School until just months before he passed away.

He was truly an expert clinical radiologist. He built up an extensive experience in several difficult subspecialties: first neuroradiology, then pediatric radiology and finally head and neck radiology. His opinion was constantly sought on the most difficult cases. The early part of his career was at a time of very rapid progress in imaging. New technologies were developed that completely changed the field of radiology. The demonstration of anatomy shifted from the projected format of plane films to the cross sectional imaging of computed tomography and magnetic resonance imaging. He rapidly learned every

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*In tribute to their dedicated efforts to science and medicine, deceased members of the Harvard Faculty of Medicine (those at the rank of full or emeritus professor) receive a review of their life and contributions with a complete reflection, a **Memorial Minute**.*

new technology and became an expert on how to apply each to the problems of otolaryngology and ophthalmology. His intricate knowledge of the anatomy and the disease processes allowed him to rapidly assimilate and integrate the new modality into day to day patient care.

Although certainly a superb diagnostician, Dr. Weber is most affectionately known and remembered as a teacher. He taught residents and fellows too numerous to count. Medical students and even undergraduate students thinking of medical school would frequent the reading room. His extensive knowledge and his practical approach to each patient's clinical issues helped mold the thought processes of hundreds of trainees. His strength was describing the intricate anatomy and using subtle changes to diagnose and determine the extent of disease. He was truly a master.

It was Dr. Weber's outgoing personality, however, that made him a favorite with everyone that he met. The second time he would meet someone it was as though they had been friends forever. He had a reputation for always looking out for the other person. He was more than free with advice about life as well as career, with insightful and helpful opinions on diverse topics ranging from politics to entertainment to the latest trends on Wall Street. On hearing that a student was interested in neuroradiology he would likely take them to the neuroradiology department at MGH and introduce them to people that might be helpful in their careers.

Al's teaching brought him many visiting professorships around the country. Numerous universities and national and regional professional societies from many countries around the world honored him with invited lectureships. As he travelled he would invite junior radiologists from these other countries to come and spend time in Boston. Many of them accepted the offers and it was common to have one or two visitors learning along with the residents and fellows in Al's reading sessions at the Massachusetts Eye and Ear. This developed into a network of Weber alumni students spanning the globe. To this day, when someone from the Eye and Ear travels to some remote location, invariably a former student will come up and inquire about Al. There would always be a story about Al and his way of making people from around the world feel welcome and comfortable in the department.

Dr. Weber was very active in various national and international academic radiology societies. He was a fellow of the American College of Radiology and a very involved member of the Radiological Society of North America and the American Society of Neuroradiology. He was particularly active in the American Society of Head and Neck Radiology, serving as President of the society in 1986. He was the American representative planning joint meetings with the European Society of Head and Neck Radiology. He wrote many papers and contributed to many books predominantly on head and neck radiology. His experience and continuing efforts in the development of organized radiology were recognized when he was asked to submit a paper on the "History of Head and Neck Radiology: Past, Present, and Future" to the journal *Radiology*. This invited submission was published in January, 2001.

Milton, Massachusetts was home for Al and his wife Gloria for most of the time that they were in Boston. They had three daughters, Gloria Jeanne Corey, Debby Atallah and Rachel Weber Sabates, as well as a son Chet Weber. There were numerous grand-children and great grand-children. In his later years, Al's travels changed from international lecturing to visiting grand-children and great grand-children. However, he could not resist his love of teaching. While visiting his family in Kansas City, he

volunteered to teach so often that he was made a Clinical Professor of Radiology at the University of Missouri Medical School.

Al Weber was one of the great minds of radiology. His contributions will live on through his students and his teachings. He will be missed by all that had contact with him and consider themselves to be part of his extended family.

Respectfully submitted,

Hugh D. Curtin, MD, *chair*

Laura V. Romo, MD

Michael McKenna, MD

Michael Lev, MD