

JAMAIS ADIEU, TOUJOURS AU REVOIR

A Remembrance of Frank Smith

Frank Smith certainly was known for being a father and a husband, teacher and a student, a surgeon and an athlete, frugal yet charitable.

He had two families. His first, of course, was that of his wife and children. He would try and keep his professional life in balance and spend time on the weekends boating in Canandaigua, working in the garden, specifically not spending all day long on the golf course. He had tremendous respect and love for his wife, and she was the one who monitored his activity and didn't let neurosurgery dominate the family.

His neurosurgical family was very important to him. He was object oriented and strived to train both technicians and clinicians. What I remember most was his imperative that we keep amongst the neurosurgery group in the hospital issues as private. We didn't hang our laundry out for the rest of the people to see, and we resolved issues amongst ourselves.

He certainly was a surgeon and an athlete, and it was difficult to separate the two. As a surgeon he was truly an artist. He was very theatrical about his operations and went from positioning the patient to draping the patient to the proper exposure. He would often take photographs during the operation and even 16-millimeter movies to show to patients and other physicians. He was an accomplished athlete. He was the city squash champ. He was the national squash champ for people over 70. He accomplished this by practicing religiously. He would practice lobs, shots, and drop shots by himself. His wife was always irritated because he had a dumbbell in the front seat of the car that he used to exercise to strengthen his wrists. Sometimes he took the balance of his athletic career and clinical practice and ran them a little too close. Our conference day was Tuesday.

Invariably we would have neurosurgery conference in the morning, then we would spend some time in clinic, and then we would meet with the neurologists later on, around noontime. Dr. Smith would always arrive at the Neurology conference with freshly washed and groomed hair, evidence of the fact that he had just come off the squash court. The neurologists would start their conference. Invariably he would doze, much like our residents do today. We were always in awe when the conference would end and he would perk up and make pertinent comments like he listened attentively through the whole thing and was not asleep. This was always a mystery to us.

He was a consummate politician. He loved controversy and was always involved in controversial issues. For example, when Charles Robb came here to take over the carotid endarterectomies, Dr. Smith reluctantly allowed that but gave Dr. Robb his 16-millimeter movie on how to do the operation. Dr. Robb, of course, was tactful enough to show this movie at Grand Rounds. He went on to serve on the board of the American Association of Neurological Surgery, the Cushing Society, and the Society of Neurological Surgeons. He was president of his favorite society, the Neurosurgical Society of America and was president of the Western Neurosurgical Society as recently as four years ago.

He made significant medical contributions, and he was somewhat ahead of his time. He was very proud of the fact that he was using loupes before they were commonplace. This may, of course, have been due to the fact that he was reluctant to wear reading glasses or bifocals. He was the first one to use a microscope in Rochester. He had me sneak it out of the ENT OR into neurosurgery, and he successfully resected a meningioma in 1973. He was against intracranial aneurysm surgery, long before the recent

article in the New England Journal was published, and he favored differential carotid ligation, which was in itself quite a controversial form of therapy. He was involved in intra-arterial chemotherapy and laboratory and spine biomechanics.

He was curiously very frugal, yet very charitable. I remember one of the guest professors came to Rochester, and he took him to McDonald's for lunch. That's Ronald McDonald's, not Joseph McDonald's. When I'd visit him in California, he would always present me with used golf balls that would fall out of the cypress trees around their house. He drove a used Ford Mustang from Monterey to L.A. for a meeting because he didn't want to buy a plane ticket. Not but five years ago, he drove all the way from Monterey to Montana, a distance of 1500 miles, and enjoyed every minute of it.

He was very charitable. He founded the Chair of Neurological Surgery at the U of R, which was held by Dr. McDonald, Gene George, Bob Maciunas, and now Web. He contributed to the School of Nursing in Ruth Smith's honor. He was also much involved in the Van Wagenen fellowship, and when it was short of funds he supported it out of his own pocket. He was very active at Hobart. He built their doubles squash court and was on the search committee for both the squash coach and the president of the university.

He was a teacher and a student. He seemed to teach by example and loved to demonstrate his talents. He was a student. I think this was most evident in his relationship with Dr. McDonald when they were for many years the Department of Neurosurgery. He studied under Dr. Van Wagenen and Dr. Naffziger. Certainly he enjoyed his training from Sam Urzetta at CCR and George Armstrong at the Valley Club.

In summary Dr. Smith was a true father figure. He was very much like a farmer. He sowed the seeds and fertilized and nourished, but he didn't force things upon his children or the residents. He was certainly loved and respected by all of us, and we are very thankful for the stimulation that he gave us. And finally, I would like to say adieu, go to God, toujours au revoir. We'll see you again.

--Tom Rodenhouse