

John F. Holt, MD, 1915–1996



John F. Holt died peacefully in his sleep on 22 July 1996. He had problems with osteoarthritis of the knees but was for the most part healthy, happy, and active to the last day of his life. Those of us who worked with Jack admired his knowledge and acumen and enjoyed his cheerful nature which was manifested in that smile beneath the neatly trimmed mustache. Jack was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania on 20 January 1915 and was raised in Parker's Landing, Pennsylvania. He received his undergraduate and medical school education in the six-year BS and MD program at the University of Pittsburgh. Upon completing medical school in 1938 he served an internship at the St. Francis Hospital in Pittsburgh. In 1939 Jack moved to Ann Arbor to begin his radiology residency at the University of Michigan. He remained there for his entire career and retired 45 years later as Professor Emeritus.

During high school, college and medical school Jack financed his education by playing saxophone in local big (swing) bands with such colorful names as "The Dearopolis Aces" and "Bill LeRoy and the Town Tattlers". Jack always had a great sense of humor and once wrote, "I was selected to be the vocalist, and warbled such forgettable tunes as 'My canary has got laryngitis singing his heart out over you'." His love of music caused him to seriously consider a professional music career, until hearing another dance orchestra helped solidify his decision to enter medicine. Jack wrote, "We encountered Freddie Carlone's orchestra from tiny Canonsburg, PA, a much better band than ours! They had the local barber as vocalist; his name was Perry Como. I decided that if I wanted to com-

pete with talent like this that I would need a lot of voice training!"

Although Jack is considered one of the pioneers and great names of pediatric radiology, he humbly acknowledged that his "greatest contribution" to the specialty occurred unknowingly very early in his career when he decided to turn down a radiology residency position at The University of Pennsylvania in order to accept a position at Michigan. His last minute change of plans opened a spot at Penn, where by coincidence a bright young orthopedic surgeon had recently expressed an interest in switching to radiology. This opening allowed the legendary Dr. Edward B. D. Neuhauser to enter radiology.

45 years later Dr. Neuhauser wrote to Jack, "Nobody – NOBODY – had a greater influence on my medical career than you."

When an attempt to bring Dr. John Caffey back to his medical school Alma Mater was unsuccessful, Jack Holt, fresh out of residency, stayed on as faculty at the University of Michigan and commenced his long and productive career in pediatric radiology. He had many interests but was especially fascinated by musculoskeletal problems. His interest in normal variants, which he collected for many years, became the foundation for Dr. Ted Keats's classic atlas on the subject, now in its sixth edition. Jack stated that one of his most significant papers was the one published in *JAMA* in 1954, "Physiologic bowing of the legs in young children," which called attention to the number of unnecessary tibial osteotomies which were then being performed. He developed a lifelong interest in neurofibromatosis and served as a member of the Medical Advisory Board of the National Neurofibromatosis Foundation. In 1977 he delivered the Society for Pediatric Radiology's Edward B. Neuhauser Lecture entitled "Neurofibromatosis in children," which was subsequently published in the *American Journal of Roentgenology*. Jack's interest in this disfiguring disease was inspired by the realization that it would never have a poster child. In 1986 Jack was awarded an Honorary Plaque by the National Neurofibromatosis Foundation which was inscribed "For Invaluable Contributions."

Jack was instrumental in planning the C. S. Mott Children's Hospital, which opened in 1969, and he was its first Director of Pediatric Radiology. Jack was an active and honored member of many radiological societies. He was a founding member of the Society for Pediatric Radiology, served as its President, and was awarded its Gold Medal in 1990. He was also a founding member of the Association of University Radiologists. In 1956 he served as its Presi-

dent and in 1991 received its Gold Medal. Jack joined the American Roentgen Ray Society in 1947 and served in numerous capacities including Chairman of its Executive Council. In 1993 he was awarded the ARRS Gold Medal in appreciation of his long service. He was a member of AOA and Sigma Xi honor societies. During the past decade he was awarded honorary memberships in the International Skeletal Society, the European Society of Pediatric Radiology, the Australasian Society for Pediatric Imaging, and The Society for Pediatric Radiology. Jack was invited to join the John Caffey Society in 1967 and served on its Executive Committee from 1978 to 1984. In 1994 he received the Hench Award as an outstanding alumnus of the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. In 1996 he received the University of Michigan Medical Center Alumni Society's Distinguished Service Award.

Jack co-authored the once popular textbook, "Radiology for Medical Students" with Drs. Fred Jenner Hodges and Isadore Lampe which went through four editions from 1947 to 1965. For 35 years he served as Editor of the *Yearbook of Diagnostic Radiology* and was well known for his insightful commentaries. During his career, he helped to train over 400 diagnostic radiologists. "How is Jack Holt? Please give him our best," was commonly inquired of Jack's departmental colleagues at radiology meetings. Jack had a keen sense of humor and was liked, admired, and respected by colleagues, trainees, and patients. Sometimes such sentiments are expressed only after one has died, but Jack was aware of them during his lifetime. They are evident in the collection of congratulatory letters sent from around the world which were bound and presented to Jack on the occasion of his retirement in 1984. In addition to his love of big band swing music, he loved sports, which he followed avidly, *New York Times* crossword puzzles, American Flyer toy trains ("the realistic ones with two rails," as Jack was quick to point out), and Michigan's rustic Upper Peninsula.

He is survived by his wife of 54 years, Mary Helen Holt, and by three children, two grandsons, and his older sister. His smiling face and cheerful demeanor are represented in his portrait which hangs in the Pediatric Radiology reading room at the University of Michigan. Jack was a scholar, a gentleman, and a friend, and he will live on in our memory.

Michael A. DiPietro
Department of Radiology,
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-0252, USA