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John P. Dorst, MD

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It is many months since John Dorst passed on. He had been ill for years from complications of a brain tumor and its treatment. I asked two of John's fellows, Barry Fletcher and Jerald Kuhn, to write an obituary, and Dr. Kuhn offered some personal remembrances on his own. John was a lovely and gentle man. We will miss him.

Walter E. Berdon, MD



John Phillips Dorst, MD, distinguished pediatric radiologist and expert on skeletal dysplasias, died on 17 April near his home in Columbia, Maryland. His death was the result of complications of a brain tumor. Dr. Dorst had been Director of Pediatric Radiology at the Johns Hopkins Children's Center from 1966 to 1990 and was professor of both radiology and pediatrics at the Johns Hopkins University and became emeritus in 1995. He was a superb teacher and masterful radiologist who, according to one colleague, could "read your patient's X-rays like tarot cards."

John was born in 1926 in Cincinnati, Ohio, the son of a physician and medical scholar. He received his undergraduate medical education at Cornell University Medical College. Following an internship at the State University of Iowa Hospitals and a year of residency in Pathology at Northwestern Hospital in Minneapolis, Minnesota, he received his radiologic training at the

Veteran's Administration Hospital, Minneapolis, and the University of Iowa. He was a fellow under Dr. Frederic N. Silverman at the Children's Hospital of Cincinnati where he rose to the rank of Associate Professor before joining the Radiology Department of the Johns Hopkins Hospital in 1966.

During his nearly 30-year tenure at Johns Hopkins, John complemented a distinguished roster of radiologists in a stellar department established by Dr. Russell Morgan. Over a quarter of a century, John's close collaboration with renowned geneticist, Dr. Victor McKusick, contributed to his becoming a world expert on the diagnosis of skeletal dysplasias. That professional association produced seminal radiographic studies, which helped define the nature of inherited connective tissue disorders, especially the mucopolysaccharidoses and mucopolipidoses. In that role, he contributed to the respected publication, *Birth Defects: Original Articles*

Series and, until his illness, he was a revered consultant for members of the Little People of America, a support group for patients with dwarfing syndromes.

In addition to his work on genetic disorders, John wrote or co-authored more than 50 scientific papers on a variety of pediatric conditions. He was an engaging teacher who educated medical students, radiology residents, and pediatricians with equal enthusiasm and effectiveness. He was Director of Student Education for Radiology from 1989 until his retirement. We were privileged to be the first of 19 pediatric radiology fellows trained by John during his career, and we all benefited from his mentoring and enjoyed the warmth of his friendship.

John was a member of many national, international, and state professional societies, most notably the Radiologic Society of North America, the American Roentgen Ray Society, and the International Skeletal Society and was a Fellow of the American College of Radiology. He served in several capacities in The Society for Pediatric Radiology and was president from 1977 to 1978. In 1994, the SPR honored John with the Pioneer Award. He held several editorial positions with the journal *Radiology* and served on the Maryland Advisory Committee on Child Abuse. For many years, he was a visiting lecturer at the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology.

In addition to a legacy of accomplishments and contributions to pediatric radiology, John leaves his former colleagues, students, fellows, and friends with memories of a kind, approachable, even humble gentleman who possessed a prodigious intellectual curiosity, coupled with a sincere desire to help afflicted children through rigorous and insightful application of his professional skills. In his private life he was a passionate connoisseur of classical music, opera and the arts, an accomplished ballroom dancer, and an avid outdoorsman who enjoyed hiking, sailing, canoeing, and cross-country skiing. He was a loving husband and father who was devoted to Marcia Kinney Dorst, his wife of 50 years, and was immensely proud of his four children, Stanley Dorst, MD, of Columbia, Missouri, Heather Dorst of Columbia, Maryland, John R. Dorst of Shingle Springs, California, and Miranda Saunders of Woodland Hills, California. His death leaves his family and those of us privileged to work with him with a profound sense of loss, but also with fond memories of a fine man and noble physician.

Barry D. Fletcher, MD

I first heard John's gentle but persuasive voice when I was a junior staff radiologist at the University of Vermont in the fall of 1967. He had called me, evidently at Dr. Ed Neuhauser's suggestion, to convince me to come to Hopkins. I felt that I knew next to nothing about pediatric radiology and had never even heard of John Dorst, but he was so enthusiastic and sincere that I had a very strong hunch that if I wanted to learn pediatric radiology, he would be a first-class mentor. I've never made a better decision. When I arrived in Baltimore, I was fortunate to find not only John, but also his first fellow, Barry Fletcher. I was to be the second of nearly 20 fellows that John would train in his distinguished career.

John had no equal as a teacher whether the student was a fellow, a professor at Hopkins or an anxious medical student. The lessons John taught reflected his high standards of integrity and honesty, his dedication to his specialty, and his thorough, almost compulsive, approach to any diagnostic problem. He managed to maintain his calm, even-tempered attitude to any departmental problem, however vexing. If the ceiling sprung a leak, John would be the first to be there mop and pail in hand; if a critically important case had somehow been misfiled, he would spearhead the search until it was found. Naturally, when a puzzling case came across our desk, John seemed always to know the answer and have a reprint or a note from a Caffey meeting to expand upon his diagnosis. He was a meticulously careful fluoroscopist, a true artist. Ever concerned for the frightened child, he was able to gain the confidence and cooperation of many of his small patients when no one else could; when all else failed, he was a master at applying restraints so that optimal images would be obtained with minimal exposure.

No one cared more about the problems of "the little people" whether they were little because of short stature or because of their place in the world. John's contributions to the diagnosis of bone dysplasias are recorded in his CV and well known to all in the field, but only his co-workers, friends and family are aware of how important he was to all the other "little people" around him every day. Whether a man is measured by his accomplishments in his chosen field or by his impact on society and those around him, John was a giant. His death is a huge loss not only for his family, but also for his friends, his colleagues and his beloved specialty of pediatric radiology.

Jerald P. Kuhn, MD