

Donald Byron Darling (Sept. 29, 1925–Nov. 16, 2010)

Roy G. K. McCauley

Received: 3 January 2011 / Accepted: 4 January 2011 / Published online: 21 January 2011
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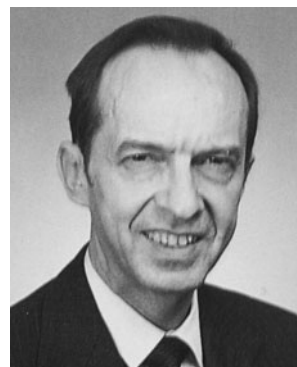
Donald Darling was born and raised in Washington D.C. He was academically advanced, entering Georgetown University after his third year in high school, graduating from medical school there in 1949. He received the Cahill Medal for best surgical thesis.

Following a rotating internship at Providence Hospital, Washington D.C., he completed his radiology residency, first at Georgetown University Hospital and then at Boston City Hospital. After a year of pediatric radiology training at Boston Children's Hospital he spent a year studying nuclear medicine at the Oakridge Institute of Nuclear Studies from 1956 to 1957.

Thereafter, he worked with Dr. Bertram Girdany at Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh for 4 years, followed by 1 year at Boston City Hospital prior to joining Boston Floating Hospital as radiologist-in-chief.

His academic career advanced quickly so that he became a professor of radiology in 1971 and then a professor of pediatrics in 1973 at Tufts University Medical School in Boston.

Over the years he was active on many committees at New England Medical Center Hospital and Tufts Medical School, often as chair. These included chair of the Radiotherapy Committee, chair of the Audiovisual Committee, chair of the Medical School Library Committee and member of the Executive Council of Tufts University School of Medicine. He had great interest in architecture and closely supervised the successful design of the new Pediatric Radiology Department at Tufts in the early 1980s.



Dr. Darling was a member of many societies, being a charter member of the Society of Pediatric Radiology and one of the earliest members of the Caffey Society.

He was highly organized and this was most evident in the publication in 1962 of his landmark book, *Radiography of Infants and Children* (Charles Thomas, Springfield, IL), followed by 2nd and 3rd editions in 1971 and 1979. He held his radiography technologists to high standards.

He was original and innovative, being an author on the New England Journal of Medicine article that first described the use of radioisotope to diagnose choledochal cyst. He first described the fluoroscopic double track sign of pyloric stenosis. He published the description of a device for taking chest radiographs that he designed for our department and is still in daily use.

His interest in pediatric hiatal hernia and gastroesophageal reflux started when the chief of Pediatrics, Sydney Gellis, asked him why the incidence of these entities was so much higher in Europe than in the USA.

After visiting Great Ormond Street Hospital in London, he realized that the diagnostic criteria were different. This

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led, eventually, to the publication of two articles: “Hiatal hernia and gastroesophageal reflux in infants and children: analysis of the incidence in North American children” in *Pediatrics* in 1974 and “Hiatal hernia and gastroesophageal reflux in infancy and childhood. Analysis of the radiologic findings” in *American Journal of Roentgenology and Radium Therapy and Nuclear Medicine* in 1975. There was, at that time, reluctance among many pediatricians to accept the widespread ramifications of gastroesophageal reflux. At an annual meeting of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Dr. Darling’s poster on the subject caused some disquiet, with one senior academic pediatrician denouncing it verbally as “an invented disease.”

Dr. Darling was ahead of his time with respect to radiation protection. For many years he required TLDs (thermoluminescent dosimeters) to be placed on each child having fluoroscopy. This was a potent tool, as the results after analysis were available to staff and residents alike, allowing them to see the actual doses received by their patients, thereby encouraging them during fluoroscopy to be as careful as reasonably possible.

Don was a quiet and humble man. However, he defended points of view that were important to him,

vigorously, with the backing of clear and logical thinking.

He had two obvious idiosyncrasies that were often lampooned by generations of irreverent residents. One was his habit of carrying around a huge bunch of keys attached to his belt. These would always announce his imminent arrival, so that by the time he turned any corner everything on the other side was usually circumspect. Second, he liked to write numerous messages to himself on the back of his hand and wrist in ballpoint pen. At least we now know that in one human subject this type of ink seems to have had no long-term sequelae.

He kept working with an active mind till he was 81 years old, though he suffered, with considerable dignity and fortitude, a variety of physical ailments.

In his private life Don was a deeply religious man who studied the Bible daily and was recognized as an authority on the lore of the Old Testament.

During his retirement he was enjoyed by his close-knit and loving family, many of whom lived nearby. He leaves his wife, Carolyn, two sons and two daughters and many grandchildren.

His link in the ongoing chain of teaching radiology was a strong one.