

R. Parker Allen, MD (March 13, 1919–October 1, 2010)

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Dr. R. Parker Allen was a true pioneer in the field of pediatric radiology, working with the likes of John Caffey and using his skills and knowledge to contribute greatly to the development and teaching of a generation of radiologists.

R. Parker Allen was born March 13, 1919, in Red Bank, NJ. He attended Rutgers University as an undergraduate and Columbia University School of Medicine. He entered

the Army during WWII and received training in military radiology at Ft. Logan, CO. He remained in Denver as a radiology resident at the Veteran's Administration Hospital and, in 1949, became an associate of Dr. Frank Stephenson of the Presbyterian group and helped cover Denver Children's Hospital. In January 1951 he became chief of radiology, the first full-time radiologist at Denver Children's Hospital.

Dr. Allen was one of the founding members of the Society for Pediatric Radiology and served as its sixth president, from 1963 to 1964. He was a charter member of the Caffey Society, a small group of pediatric radiologists who worked with Dr. John Caffey and met yearly to show cases and discuss this emerging field. Dr. Caffey spent a year at Denver Children's Hospital in 1960.

Parker Allen's knowledge and skills were legendary in Colorado and the entire referral area. Dr. Allen said, "I think in my 23 years there, it was much more important, in terms of training a great number of general radiologists and a few pediatric radiologists." Dr. Allen continued as chief of radiology at the Children's Hospital until 1971, when he was succeeded by Dr. William S. Davis and in 1976 by Dr. John B. Campbell.

In the 1950s, Dr. Allen helped develop pediatric angiocardiology, working with the Fairchild aerial camera, the predecessor of the cine angiography equipment capable of providing rapid-sequence radiographs of injected contrast material passing through the heart.

From 1958 to 1975, he was an important and innovative contributor to the literature. In 1956, he proposed using "a magnet on a string or catheter ... to remove magnetic foreign bodies from the stomach, duodenum or jejunum" (*Pediatrics* 48:563). His writings covered many topics, including lymphangioma of bone (with Charles E. Shopfner, 1960), congenital generalized fibromatosis (with Virgil R. Condon, 1960), transitory extraperitoneal hernia of the bladder in infants (bladder ears) (with Virgil R. Condon, 1961), and

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skeletal changes in erythroblastosis foetalis (100 cases, 1963). He wrote articles on the paranasal sinus in cystic fibrosis and urethral lesions in infancy and childhood studied by cystourethrography. He wrote about the neonate with such reports as the extrapleural air sign in pneumomediastinum, congenital lobar emphysema with dilated lymphatics, the value of plain film in the diagnosis of neonatal Hirschsprung disease, neonatal small left colon and rib gap defects with micrognathia.

Parker Allen was a perfectionist. His favorite saying was “Do it right the first time.” He was a superb teacher and role model in tenacity and perfection. He was a very tough administrator but fair, and the technical staff at Children’s Hospital was extremely loyal to him.

I (TLS) was a pediatric resident when I met Dr. Allen. We worked together for 3 months and his tutelage was instrumental in my going into pediatric radiology. I was

impressed by his humility and honesty as much as by his skills. When going over cases to decide whether they belonged in the teaching file, he once asked me to read one of his reports of 1949 (when he first rotated through Denver Children’s). The patient had blatant rickets but the 3-page report did not mention the diagnosis. His response was “of course it is rickets—I just did not know it. The longer the report, the less certain is the diagnosis.”

After retirement in 1971, Parker and his wife Agnes enjoyed life aboard their motorboat, “the Mariposa,” at various times cruising the Inland Waterway, exploring the Caribbean, day sailing on Lake Champlain, and piloting his Cal 30 in the Gulf of Mexico. The Monterey Peninsula of California became their home in 2001. Parker and Agnes (1921–2011) are survived by a daughter Barbara, grandsons Parker, Michael and Matthew and three great-grandchildren, all of Seattle, WA.