EDITORIAL

Excellence, mentorship, and the final transition**James T. Rutka, MD, PhD**

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ON September 18th, 2015, I received a call from the office of the Journal of Neurosurgery Publishing Group (JNSPG) informing me that Dr. John Jane Sr. had passed away peacefully, surrounded by his family at his home in Charlottesville, Virginia. The news was not unexpected. Dr. Jane had been courageously battling his glioblastoma multiforme (GBM) for the past 10 months. During that time, I had the great privilege of visiting with him on several occasions and listening to his recollections of life and his preparedness for the inevitable. And, if attempts to defeat one cancer were not enough, Dr. Jane was a survivor of another cancer, pancreatic neuroendocrine tumor, for which he had undergone aggressive surgical resection, chemotherapy, and interstitial hyperthermia.

When Dr. Jane became Editor-in-Chief (EIC) of the *Journal of Neurosurgery* in 1992, he established the infrastructure for the office in Charlottesville, which, over time, grew to include a team of the most highly skilled, dedicated, and devoted staff who continue to assiduously maintain the traditions of the Journal in the realms of editing and production. Given their high regard for Dr. Jane, and the excellence with which he ran the Journal, they have all understandably taken the news of Dr. Jane's passing extremely hard. One of Dr. Jane's first recruits to work in the Journal office in Charlottesville was Margie Shreve. She had worked previously with Dr. Thor Sundt in Rochester, Minnesota, when he was EIC of the Journal. As manager of the Peer-Review Department of the Journal, Margie was, in essence, the administrative assistant for, and close confidant of, Dr. Jane throughout his 22-year term with the Journal, and beyond.

Since May 2013 when I became EIC of the JNSPG, I have made several trips to the Journal office in Charlottesville. It was during these visits that I had the great honor and privilege of being mentored by Dr. Jane, as well as getting to know him outside the neurosurgical community. We worked steadily toward a transition of EIC activities during my first year in the position. We spent hours together in the JNSPG office (Fig. 1). Dr. Jane taught me the art of assigning manuscripts to Editorial Board members,

how to scrutinize the efforts of authors on their revised manuscript submissions, and the importance of editorial decisions in cases in which the reviewers' comments are somewhat mixed. We discussed the best way to handle sensitive issues, as they related to authors, reviewers, and administrators. It was a truly unique and humbling experience for me to be mentored by Dr. Jane in this capacity.

Some of my fondest memories of these times include dinner evenings at the Janes' home. Dr. Jane and Noella, his wife of 54 years, were the most gracious of hosts. For them, entertaining in their home was an important part of their lives. The warmth and comfort of their home were immediately evident to me. When I visited, Noella would typically prepare a sumptuous meal that we would enjoy at the small table in their living room. Our conversations spanned a wide range of topics guided by Dr. Jane's incredible knowledge of world events, politics, health care, literature, medical publishing, and neurosurgery. The Janes' living room is notable for a long line of built-in bookcases in which hard-covered books are organized by topic or author. Dr. Jane could select any book at random from the hundreds that were held on the shelves and tell you in incredible detail all about the author, storyline, and plot of the book.

A remarkable bibliophile with an encyclopedic memory, Dr. Jane's all-time favorite book was *Kristin Lavransdatter* by Sigrid Undset, winner of the Nobel Prize in literature in 1928. Set in medieval rural Norway (circa 1320–1350 AD), *Kristin Lavransdatter* is an epic tale of a woman's journey through youth to old age. Dr. Jane told me he had read the book about six times, which is a major achievement, given the length of the book. I was truly honored when Dr. Jane gave me a copy of the book, inscribed by him, with a note on how pleased he was with the current direction of the Journal.

Over the past 3 years, because of our mutual interest in literature, John and I exchanged books on several occasions. These books then became the subject of our many discussions. Some of the books we shared with each other included *Five Days at Memorial* by Sheri Fink; *Do No Harm* by Henry Marsh; *The Hare with the Amber Eyes*

by Edmund de Waal; and *A Great Game* by current Prime Minister of Canada, Stephen J. Harper. Because Dr. Jane truly valued his neurosurgical residency training at the Montreal Neurological Institute at McGill, and because Noella (née Fortier) is originally French Canadian from Quebec, Dr. Jane continued to receive *Maclean's* magazine, a Canadian weekly news magazine, throughout his life. Accordingly, as a Canadian, I was somewhat embarrassed when John would bring matters of interest in Canada to my attention long before I myself knew about them.

Dr. Jane shared his personal treatment options with me regarding his GBM. In perhaps a bizarre twist of fate, he had confided in me that, prior to his getting ill, he had often imagined that having a GBM would be a decent way to meet one's end. With such a diagnosis, he was convinced there would be time to get one's affairs in order and to set aside time to do those last things in life that are most important. True to form, Dr. Jane informed me that in preparation for his last days, he had read nearly every book known to man on the topic of death and dying; and having discussed some of these books with him, I truly believe he had.

The last dinner evening I celebrated with the Janes in their home was on July 14th, 2015. For the past few days, Dr. Jane had been having increasingly more difficulty walking and climbing stairs. Both Dr. Jane and Noella knew that something was not quite right. As I sat with them in their living room, I distinctly remember noting the kind and compassionate way they spoke to each other, and the deep affection and profound love they had for each other.

One of Dr. Jane's final wishes was to visit the family's cabin northwest of Montreal in the Laurentian Mountains. Dr. Jane and Noella had spent time there in the summer ever since they were married. He enjoyed the peace and quiet of the cabin, and he was quite pleased with himself when he learned how to use his iPad to do Journal work remotely. Upon his return to Charlottesville from the Laurentians in late August 2015, Dr. Jane spent most of his time in their living room. Although too weak to get up to retrieve books from the bookshelves, he used a laser pointer to identify books to his family that he cared to hold in his hands one last time. His family, who knew and understood his passion for books and literature, was eager to bring these books to him.

In a career that spanned over 50 years, during which he wrote more than 400 peer-reviewed publications, Dr. Jane was academically productive to the end. His final two articles in the Journal were an account of the long-term survival of a child who underwent cordectomy for an anaplastic spinal cord glioma (interestingly, this boy, now a young adult, plays competitive basketball on the Under-23 US Men's National Wheelchair Basketball Team)¹ and an article on the value of cortical brain biopsies in the determination of outcomes in patients undergoing treatment for normal pressure hydrocephalus.⁴ Turning back the clock, it is noteworthy that in his very first publication in the neurosurgical literature, Dr. Jane described an aneurysm of the posterior inferior cerebellar artery in a 1-year-old child, an article that dates back to March of 1961.³

As for so many of us, I am indebted to Dr. Jane for teaching me the meaning of excellence in neurosurgery

FIG. 1. Dr. John Jane Sr. and the author in the JNSPG office in Charlottesville, discussing editorial decisions on manuscripts submitted to the Journal. In the background, an image of Dr. Thoralf Sundt, the EIC of the *Journal of Neurosurgery* before Dr. John Jane, is seen. Photograph by Kenneth Fox III. Used with permission. Figure is available in color online only.

and how to live and lead a balanced life. Neurosurgery meant so much to him, but his family was by far and away his top priority. I am grateful as well to him for recruiting me to serve on the Editorial Board of the Journal and for mentoring me throughout my career, but especially in the past two years as I served as EIC of the JNSPG. In the words of Ralph Dacey who so eloquently writes on the life and times of Dr. Jane in this issue of the Journal,² in the final transition from his earthly journey, "Dr. Jane not only taught us how to live with meaning and purpose, but he also taught us how to die with strength and dignity."

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Disclosure

The author reports no conflict of interest.