Charles George Drake, M.D. 1920–1998

An obituary

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long friend and colleague. Kenneth McKenzie, the chief
of neurosurgery, became Charlie’s role model. Charlie’s
initial interest was in general surgery, but this was rapidly
eclipsed by an infatuation with neurosurgery (which he
referred to as “the queen of surgical specialties”), ignited
by his exposure to McKenzie’s charismatic personality
and extraordinary neurosurgical skills. McKenzie was
trained by Harvey Cushing and believed that neurosur-
geons should have a strong neuroscience background.
Accordingly, he sent Charlie back to the University of
Western Ontario to study neurophysiology under Barr,
Miller, and Starvacki, and Charlie obtained a Master of
Science degree in 1947. He then spent 1 year in John
Fulton’s laboratory at Yale studying the physiology and
cerebellar anatomy of the motor system.

In 1948, Charlie returned to London for 2 years to work
at the Victoria Hospital as a resident under the legendary
general surgeon, Angus McGlashlin. Then, in 1949, he
returned to the Toronto General Hospital as a resident/
clinical assistant in neurosurgery under Kenneth McKen-
ze and Harry Botterel. After only 18 months of neurosur-
gical training, McKenzie took Charlie aside and told him
he had nothing more to learn in Toronto. McKenzie made
arrangement for Charlie to visit the great surgeons in the
United Kingdom, Scandinavia, and Europe. The most
rewarding part of this tour was the work with Hugh Cairns
in Oxford, Herbert Olivecrona in Stockholm, and George
Guiot in Paris. He saw the early transsphenoidal surgery
that Guiot had adopted from Norman Dott, and he also
saw Guiot divide the ansa lenticularis for tremor. It is sur-
prising that Charlie did not follow up on either of these
two areas.

Botterel also believed that Charlie could benefit from
additional experience in neurology and arranged for clerk-
ship at the National Hospital for Nervous and Mental
Diseases at Queen’s Square. In London, Charlie and Ruth
lived with “Barnie” Barnett, who was also clerking at
Queen’s Square, and his wife, Kay, who was a nursing
school classmate of Ruth’s.

In the fall of 1951, Charlie returned to Toronto for stud-
ies in neuropathology as well as to take his neurosurgical
examinations. During this time, he worked on the clinical

Fig. 1. Photograph of Charlie Drake circa 1984.