Commemorative Article

The Journal of Neurosurgery

Its origin and development

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The need for a journal devoted to neurological surgery had become apparent to several neurosurgeons in the early 1940’s. In those war years other needs had priority. Furthermore, the shortages of paper and the difficulties of printing during war-time caused those concerned to postpone any action. These deterrents were not so overwhelming to Dr. Alfonso Asenjo in Santiago, Chile. In the Spring of 1943 he wrote John Fulton asking whether the Harvey Cushing Society would be interested in founding an international Journal of Neurosurgery. He emphasized the need for such a channel of publication in both North and South America. Later in the year Asenjo came to the United States and again pressed the desirability of a neurosurgical journal.

John F. Fulton was a most unusual man. His intelligence, enthusiasm, ambition and energy had won him a Rhodes scholarship and a furtherance of his education at Oxford and more particularly with Sir Charles Sherrington. It had also brought him under the influence of Harvey Cushing. Whether these outstanding men were responsible for the direction which Fulton’s career took, or whether Fulton’s early interests in neurophysiology and neurological surgery took him to them, I can not say. In any event, Fulton’s entire professional career was devoted to neurophysiology and its relationship to neurological surgery. No man has ever done so much to bridge the gap between a clinical specialty and its basic scientific counterpart as has John Fulton. He made all neurosurgeons conscious of neuropathology. Throughout his most busy and active life he maintained a deep and constant interest in neurology and neurological surgery. Nowhere is that more obvious than at this particular time, when, as R. Glen Spurling has expressed it, “He fathered the Journal of Neurosurgery.”

Fulton in his typical dynamic fashion seized upon this project. In June 1943 he wrote the officers of the Harvey Cushing Society and proposed that the Society assume the responsibility for this new journal. At the same time he indicated that he recognized the inappropriateness of Asenjo’s suggestion that he, Fulton, become the Managing Editor. Although only two of the officers of the Society opposed the development of such a journal at that time, the enthusiasm of the others was not such that the Journal would have been started had it not been for Fulton. It was he who pushed the Journal of Neurosurgery forward so rapidly that the first issue appeared within a few months — in January 1944.

Fulton interested Glen Spurling, Gilbert Horrax, Winchell McK. Craig, and Kenneth McKenzie in supporting the Journal and together with Asenjo they agreed, at Fulton’s suggestion, to form the first Editorial Board. The selection of this particular group was fortunate and important. Horrax was the direct successor of Cushing and one of the most respected figures in American neurosurgery. He was the ideal choice for Chairman of the Editorial Board. Spurling was the most important neurological surgeon connected with the United States Army. Craig occupied a similar position with our Navy. McKenzie, a pupil of Cushing’s, was a Canadian and his presence on the Editorial Board emphasized the unity which has always characterized neurological surgery in the United States and Canada. Asenjo not only was the original proponent of the es-
establishment of the *Journal of Neurosurgery* at this time but was also the outstanding neurological surgeon in South America.

These men were fully conscious of the fact that there were many new developments in neurological surgery which were taking place and which were important to our war effort. They knew that we seriously needed a medium through which these developments could be published and circulated. They exerted their influence in Washington to obtain the support for this new journal from influential people in the Government and in the Army and Navy. John Fulton did not stop there. He got his good friend, Charles C. Thomas, to agree to publish the *Journal* and to use some of the supplies of paper which he had available for this purpose. Fulton had had many years of experience with Thomas and knew that at that moment Thomas, with his experience in publishing many books in the neurological field and in publishing Fulton’s *Journal of Neurophysiology*, was the ideal publisher to undertake this new journal. Fulton with his publishing background was able to advise and guide his neurosurgical friends in this new venture. Fulton outlined the policy of the new journal — a policy which it has maintained almost word for word to this day. He advised that publication be bi-monthly, and this was continued for the next 18 years. (In 1962, with Volume 19, it became necessary to publish the *Journal* monthly in order to accommodate all of the excellent material being submitted.) He suggested that the Editorial Board be kept small — only five members — and such is still the case, and that each member of the Editorial Board review every paper submitted for publication. Fortunately the Editorial Board has always been composed of devoted, hard-working men, and as a result it is still possible to continue Fulton’s policy of giving every paper the benefit of consideration by a number of thoughtful experts residing in various parts of the country. Fulton recommended that the Board not only have representatives from various parts of the United States, but that it contain members from outside the United States. As a result the original Board was composed of Asenjo from South America, McKenzie from Canada and Horrax, Spurling and Craig from the United States.

Fulton recognized that the *Journal* should be in the hands of neurological surgeons. His wisdom in insisting that neurological surgeons should be responsible for their own journal can hardly be doubted. Fulton also recommended that Dr. Louise Eisenhardt be selected as Managing Editor. Fortunately Dr. Eisenhardt accepted that appointment and has served faithfully and most expertly in that capacity ever since. From the first the *Journal* has had an international flavor. Not only have there been men from other countries on the Editorial Board, but there has always been a wide selection of distinguished representatives from many countries throughout the World on the Advisory Board. More important still, the *Journal* has always encouraged authors of suitable papers wherever they may reside, to submit their work for publication. That policy has never varied. That John Fulton advised the Society well in the establishment of its *Journal* is obvious to everyone. All of us are deeply indebted to him for the stimulus and the advice which he gave.

The speed with which the *Journal* was gotten under way is amazing, but not surprising to anyone well acquainted with John Fulton [Fig. 1]. He was not one to “let grass grow under his feet.” His first letter on this matter to Charles Thomas is dated “September 27, 1943” and the one to Glen Spruling two days later. The first issue of the *Journal of Neurosurgery* appeared in January 1944, three months later.

The first issue of the *Journal* was a most appropriate one. The leading article by Gilbert Horrax concerns the many technical contributions of Harvey Cushing to neurological surgery, and another article, pp. 83 to 93, concerning the dedication of the Army Hospital named in Harvey Cushing’s honor — the Cushing General Hospital at Framingham, Massachusetts — contains Fulton’s eloquent remarks in honor of “The Chief.” Fulton effectively quoted Cushing’s own words — “it is not the externals nor the inherited wealth, social position or occupation of an institution, any more than of an individual, which give it renown, — it is the character of the service it performs.” Although Cushing was keenly aware of the importance of “service” to individual patients, his remarks did not carry the limited implication of the excellence of patient care alone. It is obvious from Cushing’s own life that “service” of a hospital or a member of its staff meant service to the patients first, but also service in teaching and service in pushing back the frontiers of medical ignorance.