The occasion for the award

The 30th anniversary of the founding of the International Society for Pediatric Neurosurgery is approaching. This important celebration will be held in Japan, the country that hosted the very first of our Society’s annual scientific meetings, during the next Scientific Meeting in Kyoto (October 2002), which is being organized by Prof. S. Oi.

Thirty years is a long enough period to justify some reflection on the accomplishments of our Society and lead us to acknowledge those colleagues who have made significant contributions to the development of our specialty.

In this vein, the Editor of Child’s Nervous System is particularly glad to announce that – following a proposal from the ISPN Historian – the Executive Committee of the International Society for Pediatric Neurosurgery has decided to establish an award bearing the name of Prof. A.J. Raimondi, in recognition of his contributions to pediatric neurosurgery and his commitment to the education and advancement of young neurosurgeons.

This award will be bestowed on the author of the “best” article submitted for publication in Child’s Nervous System by a neurosurgeon who is still in training or has held the specialist qualification for not more than 5 years. The prize is to consist of a travel scholarship (travel expenses, accommodation, and registration fees) allowing the winning author to present the paper at the Annual Scientific Meeting of the ISPN. The Scientific Committee of the ISPN will choose the winning paper.

The figure of Prof. A.J. Raimondi is well known to most pediatric neurosurgeons and needs no introduction. However, the Editor feels that the short autobiography below and Professor Raimondi’s Presidential Address to the ESPN (held in 1996), both of which were found among his unpublished writings and kindly forwarded to us by his wife, Lucia, might contribute a little more to the overall picture of the personal qualities of one of the founding fathers of our specialty and his strong commitment to pediatric neurosurgery.

Concezio Di Rocco
Rome, Italy

Anthony John Raimondi (autobiography)

I was born in Chicago, Illinois, July 16, 1928. I took a degree in Chemistry at the University of Illinois, 1950, and then studied in Ferrara, Italy, for two years before graduating from the University of Rome (M.D., 1954). All of my postgraduate studies were completed in Chicago: neurosurgery, pediatric neurology and pediatric neurosurgery, neuroanatomy, neuropathology, electron microscopy, at the University of Chicago and Children’s Memorial Hospital.

The classic rigidity of undergraduate studies in a highly competitive American university, the total freedom to study when and how one chooses which Italian universities offer, and then the ‘Ivory Tower’ existence of one of the most intellectually stimulating academic environments ever to have existed were exhilarating sensations for a young man born and raised in Chicago and its suburbs.

My teachers, to whom I shall forever be indebted, were Gianluigi Crema, Joseph Evans, Sean Mullan, Douglas Buchanan, Orville Bailey, Percival Bailey, Raymond Clasen, Ruth Rhines, Luis Amador, Harvey White. My students, with whom I learned to practice neurosurgery and do meaningful research, have come from all five continents, been representative of the major religions which animate mankind, and subsequently gone on into academic life (twelve became department chairmen) and private practice. They are my links to the future, as my teachers have been to the past.

I was elected to Omega Beta Pi, Sigma Xi, and Alpha Omega Alpha.
Presently, I am Chairman of the Department of Pediatric Neurosurgery at the University of Rome ‘La Sapienza,’ and Emeritus Professor of Surgery (Neurosurgery), Human Anatomy and Cell Biology at Northwestern University in Chicago. One becomes what he is either by design or events, and the product permits ready identification of the path followed. As a student, developing neurosurgeon, militant (philosophically speaking!) pediatric neurosurgeon, I repeatedly said to myself and to those who would listen that I wished to be looked upon as ... “a man who tried.” In preparing this sketch, however, I interpret the life I lived as that of a teacher. Design and events, rather than separate, divergent paths, snap into focus as the parallel rails of the track which is the pattern of my academic life. The interweaving of academic and personal experiences is so intricate as to render attempts at unfolding perilous, and fruitless. In fact, the academic images which take form as I meditate, or enjoy the company of my family and friends, are those of my patients, my teachers, my students. My techniques, accomplishments, writings, positions remain an emotional burden. With this said, I am hopeful that the reader will find fecund expressions of the person blending into the chronology of learning experiences and professional events which are the heart of a curriculum vitae. Its soul is, by definition, intangible.

From 1963 to 1969 I served as Chairman of the Department of Neurosurgery at Cook County Hospital (at the time the largest single neurosurgical service in the US) and the Cook County Graduate School of Medicine (where I learned to organize and conduct postgraduate courses and medical congresses). From 1969 to 1980 as Chairman of the Division of Neurosurgery at Children’s Memorial Hospital I was immersed in the throbbing turmoil of congenital anomalies, trauma, neoplasia of a pediatric hospital which feared surgery, and considered neurologic disorders as inseparable an extension of pediatrics as infectious diseases or diarrhea, but which wished to evolve with medical science. I was free to develop my service, and myself. From 1972 to 1982, as Chairman of the Division of Neurological Surgery at Northwestern University, I reached the enviable position, integrating the patient care and teaching aspects of the residency program. My teaching and learning were, once more, as they had been at Cook County Hospital, ecumenical in scope, freed from the confines imposed by a single age category: my pediatric neurosurgery soul and activities were once more enriched by the breadth of the entirety of neurosurgery. It was also possible for me, directly and through scientific collaboration with my students and colleagues to continue investigative activities focused upon the fine structure of normal glia, cerebral edema, human brain tumors, human lead encephalopathy, and the oncogenesis of perineural fibroblastoma.

In the same time frame, the clinical workload permitted a detailed analysis of the neuroradiological characteristics, therapeutic procedures, psychomotor function, and social quotients of children with congenital hydrocephalus, with particular emphasis given to pediatric cerebral angiography and the study of two strains (HY3 and CH) of murine mutants with congenital hydrocephalus. The essence of our Department at Northwestern University was ... sub-specialization, individual research programs and goals. Only in this manner were so many different activities and experiences possible. As a student and fellow, as a resident and junior staff-man, my research was performed personally; as a chairman, my role was that of one who integrates, stimulates, facilitates. I enjoyed both roles thoroughly.

From 1962 to the present (1996) I have been continuously active in the study of neurosurgical techniques peculiar to infants and children, neurosurgical education, and integrating pediatric neurosurgery (as a clinical scientific discipline) into the general specialty of neurosurgery and socio-economic health care systems. The difficulties here have been considerable in that the sub-specialty of pediatric neurosurgery is changing dramatically: birth rates have fallen precipitously, pre-natal care and abortion upon demand are eliminating congenital anomalies from the spectrum of pathology encountered, the fracturing of the family has transferred the responsibility for child-care from the parents to social structures. I find all of this unacceptable, ethically and professionally: the science of pediatric neurosurgery is sterile without its moral and Christian implications!

The founding of the International Society for Pediatric Neurosurgery is a joy and pride which I claim and accept. I shall forever be grateful to have served as the first Secretary of the ISPN, to have become one of its Presidents; to have been the first President of the American Society of Pediatric Neurosurgery. The political dynamism of the Section of Pediatric Neurosurgery has been such that my thoughts and actions were unacceptable to that body and its pragmatism, to me. I was very pleased to have become the first President of the International Society for the Pediatric Skull Base, a Founding Member and the first Treasurer of the Italian Skull Base Society and the President of the European Society for Pediatric Neurosurgery. Also among those honors conferred upon me which I must cherish are: Knighthood of the Republic of Italy, Honorary Member of the Japan Neurosurgical Society, Man of the Year of the City of Chicago; among 90 invitations as visiting professor/guest lecturer are those from the Universities of Paris (Salpêtrière), Rome, Oxford, Coimbra, Norway, Harvard, California, Pittsburgh, Tokyo, Kobe.

Founding Child’s Brain was a hallmark in my life, as was being the founder and Editor of Child’s Nervous System (formerly Child’s Brain) and of Critical Reviews in Neurosurgery; writing 14 books, 38 chapters, and 135