

Morris Simon February 17, 2006

It's difficult to fathom that more than a year has passed since our good colleague and friend Morris Simon has left us. It was on Martin Luther's day 2005 and one day after his own 79<sup>th</sup> birthday that he died unexpectedly and in apparent good health. The end came peaceful in the immediate embrace of his whole family who had just celebrated his last anniversary. His death came as a shock to all of us in the department and did not pass unnoticed in the whole of Beth Israel Hospital, the place that had housed his professional activities for half a century. Most of you in today's audience have know him personally, remembering him either as teacher, colleague radiologist or consultant during the years when he shouldered the responsibilities as radiologist-in-chief. I believe that we all would come to a similar conclusion as demonstrated here by Dr. Eric Milne, Professor of Radiology at the University of Southern California during a recent international meeting when eulogizing him with the word: "Forgotten Gold" In memory of Morris Simon a true gentle man.

( Slide1)

Personally I have caught myself many times during the last year wishing that I again consult with him about interesting matters, may it have been an unusual and challenging finding on a chest examination obtained in the emergency ward or the latest news that just had arrived over the radio while driving to the hospital early in the morning. I chuckle internally when I imagine how we for example had exchanged our private thought when hearing the vice-presidents most recent accident and had come to agreement that only positive aspect out of this sad story was that the target was a lawyer and not a physician.

The description of Morris' professional skills, his dedication to our departments teaching and research efforts and his personal friendship and support given to me during the leadership of the radiology department for more than 23 years would consume many hours. I will therefore focus on those episodes that I consider to be true highlights:

When I took over the department in 1970 I succeeded Morris Simon as the radiologist-in-chief. This occurred with his complete approval as he in personal discussion had already given me to understand that he was not attracted to the administrative, fiscal and medico-political responsibilities that such position entailed. I had the good fortune to find in him the most supportive and loyal friend who remained an invaluable recourse of advise and assistance throughout and I believe that I rewarded him in sheltering him so to follow his own teaching and research efforts.

As my department's Clinical Chief and Director of Education Morris did an outstanding job. Here a happy picture taken during the first year of my tenure, 1971, when we awarded the first prize of the class of technology students surrounded by the chief technologist Donna Sylvester and the Department Manager June Quintin.

(Side 2)

As a clinical Radiologist Morris was just outstanding. His ability to bring scientific principles into the “artistic” practice of medicine was remarkable. Long before I ever had heard of Boston’s Beth Israel Hospital or even the “Harvard Medical School” I became aware of him as the proponent of a theory that analysis of the lung vessels in chest x-rays films could detect incipient failure of the left heart. He had adopted the insight gained from circulatory experiments and incorporated them in the image analysis as if the patient in upright position would represent a water manometer where the width of the individual vessels would reflect the balance between pressure and flow at different heights level in the lung as exposed to the surrounding air pressure transmitted through the airways. When reading Morris’ paper on “Upper Zone Redistribution” or “Flow Diversion” as detectable on routine chest x-rays I tapped myself on the head wondering why I myself had not come to the same, brilliant conclusion. I felt that I must have been in good company with the many scientists in the 18<sup>th</sup> century when they became cognescent of Sir Isaac Newton formulation of the laws of gravity after observing an apple falling from a tree. I was not surprised to hear from Morris later that his thinking at that time had been stimulated during his years of training in London and his radiologic observation was an extension of the exquisite and sophisticated practice of clinical medicine displayed by the Masters of the English School, among which the name of the legendary Paul Wood comes to mind.

During the 23 years of my own department leadership Morris was an ideal partner with never fading interest to pursue his research projects. He had already started to become deeply interested in the application of computers and automatic communications in Medicine and created the “Simon-Leeming Code for Radiologic Reporting before I started in 1970. His vision was absolutely correct but timing was 2 decades premature at least when considering our institutions at that time limited resources.

Another interest that we shared pertained to the proper diagnosis of lung tumors. Morris knew that I had worked with Dr. Bjorn Nordenstrom, a good friend of his and member of the illustrious “Fleischner Society”, who was a strong proponent of direct small needle punctures through the chest wall to obtain tiny albeit rather reliable confirmation specimens of the lesion in question.

The next (Slide 3 )

shows Morris in one of our 5 angiographic rooms surrounded by 3 dimension localization system that he finally brought to perfection enabling us to offer patients and clinical colleagues a very direct and rather safe method to make a firm diagnosis.

Morris interest and accomplishment in the management of pulmonary embolism was widely recognized and he was a constant member of several National committees on this subject. His Vena Cava Filter is still listed among the leading devises for that purpose. Just a few years ago and after his transition the Emeritus Professor status he contributed With another brilliant idea when suggesting the Paddle Wheel CT display of pulmonary vascular obstructions. I distinguished colleague of ours, Dr. Jim Potchen, Chairman of

his Paddle-Wheel CT display of pulmonary embolism, a brilliant concept to solve a problem and that a distinguished colleague of mine, Jim Potchen, Chairman of Radiology at the University of Michigan, paraphrased with the exclamation "Why did I not think of that myself".

Another important characteristic of Morris to be mentioned is that he was a great humanitarian. Being born and raised in South Africa Morris was exposed directly to the problems of human confrontation, injustices and discriminations of which I, raised in the cold and isolated Scandinavia, only had indirect knowledge from newspapers or books. He told me a lot and was an effective teacher. His compassion for the underdog, and in particular for the innocent victims of wars, racial or gender discrimination was genuine and absolutely honest. I remember his courageous decision to make the trip to Hanoi to alleviate suffering and rendering medical support during the last year of the Vietnam Conflict.

I will conclude this synopsis of a great life story by rendering briefly my first and my last meeting with Morris:

It was Tuesday, August 28, 1962, the second day of the International Congress of Radiology, held in Montreal, Canada. I had just finished my presentation on Coronary Angiography in a dedicated presentation made by an international panel on this at that time very hot topic. There came this great and venerated professor of Radiology, Felix Fleischner and approached me, assisted by his young associate with the name of Morris Simon. Soon an intensive and friendly discussion ensued and we talked about technical and clinical matters, exchanging experience and advise. Many years later, while working with Morris at the Beth Israel Hospital, he found the old book of abstract, which included his handwritten notes with comments also about my presentation, and this gift from him to me is still in my possession as a highly valued Souvenir.

On Friday, January 14, 2005, while sitting in front of the computerized image display and interpreting the chest examinations on line to conclude the busy work schedule at about 5:30 pm together with my assigned first year resident somebody tapped me on the shoulder and it was my good friend Morris Simon. "Morris, what are you doing here, it is your day off." "Well" he responded, "I am busier than ever with the development of my medication dispenser. I also had to see my Primary Care Physician for a routine follow-up but everything was OK, including blood tests and blood pressure". Morris then continued with a subject which was very close to his heart and which I had heard many times before. Pointing at the young female resident sitting in front of one monitor to the right of me and overhearing our discussions and interpretation of the cases while kibitzing from behind he said: " This is the true and most effective teaching-learning arrangement that I can think of, actually the same as I imagine it must have been during the Renaissance in Florence, Italy, when the great artists were sitting side-by-side with the young apprentices transferring knowledge and understanding from one generation to the next." I felt slightly embarrassed with such excessive accolade and interrupted him by saying" Morris, stop with this propaganda for us old geezers". The three of us had a big laugh and parted shortly thereafter for the long weekend to follow,.

Morris and I shared the same year of birth. Of course we discussed the problem of advancing age. Morris was successful in "dying with boots on", the term that he had used himself during such occasions and he spared me the problem of getting him out of the intensive care unit as

soon as possible, as we had promised to each other. Morris, I miss you badly and my family shares the sorrow with your wife Josie and your four sons Mark, Adam, Daniel and Jason.