Reflections on Dr. Gabrielsen's Career and Contributions

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Dr. N. Reed Dunnick
Fred Jenner Hodges Professor and Chair of Radiology
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

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Senior Neuroradiologist
St. Joseph Mercy Hospitals, Ann Arbor

"I greatly appreciate the wonderful training in cerebral angiography that Dr. Gabrielsen provided, enabling me to move comfortably into intracranial interventional work which I have performed for the past 38 years. I also appreciate the lessons I learned regarding attention to detail, ensuring an accurate diagnosis in even the most difficult case."

Dr. Dick Latchaw
Professor of Radiology
UC Davis Medical Center, Sacramento

"I remember Dr. Gabrielsen saying to Drs. Joe Seeger, Dick Latchaw and myself in our neuro reading room on the last day of work (end of academic year), ‘I didn’t think we could learn so much.’ Of course, he was a teacher, leader and inspiration! Thank you."

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"It was an honor to be Tryg’s second neuroradiology fellow in 1967-68. His guidance and encouragement to me in what was then a new subspecialty in radiology were the hallmarks of a caring and brilliant teacher. He inspired diligence and a continued quest for education that served me well during the years of development of computed tomography and magnetic resonance imaging. Many of us refer to Dr. Gabrielsen as Tryg as over the years he has always been thought of as a friend as much as a mentor."

Dr. Norm Komar
Clinical Instructor of Radiology
St. Joseph Mercy Hospitals, Ann Arbor
Dr. Gabrielsen: Dedication to Mentorship and Clinical Excellence

Dr. Trygve Gabrielsen’s passion for medicine sprang from a formative experience when he was 15 years old. A severe febrile illness sent him to the local hospital of his small Norwegian community where his recorded temperature was 41.6 degrees Centigrade. He was close to death and, despite the confusion the fever caused, he knew it. “I was in the hospital for two months . . . but after that, I just HAD to become a doctor.” It was a big dream for a farmer’s son living in post-World War II Norway.

In February 1949, his family immigrated to Seattle, Washington. Because he had a year and a half left in Norway’s gymnasmus system, Dr. Gabrielsen enrolled at Edison Technical School, where an English comprehension test placed him at the fourth-grade level. He took an English-language speed-reading course, advanced chemistry and advanced algebra. At the end of the term, his English skills had progressed to the eighth-grade level.

A cousin suggested that he apply to the University of Washington. Despite his fear that he wouldn’t be able to get good enough grades to gain entry to medical school given his poor English skills, Dr. Gabrielsen took the entrance exam, passed it and enrolled in the university within six months of arriving in the United States.

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In 1965, Michigan sent Dr. Gabrielsen on a four-month “off campus assignment,” aided by a grant, to study in Stockholm, Sweden, a mecca for radiology at the time. In 1968 he was given another six-month “off-campus assignment” at a hospital in Oslo, Norway, where Per Amundsen was pioneering high-quality neuro imaging and advocating cerebral angiography by selective catheterization.

Dr. Gabrielsen returned to Michigan, bringing these techniques and high standards for neuro-imaging with him. His clinical colleagues came to trust his skills and judgment, often crediting his interpretations with assisting in making correct diagnoses. As Director of Neuroradiology, Dr. Gabrielsen was the leading radiologist to evaluate and select several of the first CT and MR units at UMHS. He and his neuro colleagues were the first to introduce these modalities into clinical use in the health system.

Initially with NIH support, Dr. Gabrielsen established a two-year neuroradiology fellowship in 1970. Although he enjoyed the technical and clinical research aspects of his career, Dr. Gabrielsen derived the most joy from mentoring his neuroradiology fellows through excellent clinical work. “I tried hard to always think about the patient and what was right. My guiding light was ‘Do unto others, as you would have others do unto you.’ I tried to teach this to my fellows and residents.” Having had no mentor in preparing manuscripts for publication while a junior faculty member, Dr. Gabrielsen spent much time ensuring that his neuroradiology fellows did receive such guidance as an enticement to publish.

Dr. Gabrielsen thought of his fellows as his “professional children” and tried to pass on all he knew. “I never felt that I quite achieved that goal. Nevertheless, I expected that all of them would continue to ‘grow’ professionally, and that at least some of them would become better qualified neuroradiologists than I had been, building on my knowledge, experience and guiding principles.”

Dr. Gabrielsen served our department for 40 years as both a resident and faculty. He was a dedicated neuroradiologist who took two sabbaticals abroad to improve his skills and bring new techniques to Michigan. His commitment to patient care through the use of imaging to more quickly arrive at the correct diagnosis made him a respected colleague throughout the neuroscience community. His passion for teaching – to create a generation of outstanding neuroradiologists – is a lasting testimony to his skills.

It is this kind of vitality and excellence that makes the University of Michigan one of the most esteemed in the nation, able to attract and retain talent of the highest caliber. It is also what the community served by U-M’s Health System has come to expect and from which it benefits.

Please consider contributing to the Trygve O. Gabrielsen Collegiate Professorship in Radiology. The generosity of alumni, faculty, colleagues, family, friends, and the community the university serves helps to ensure that the excellence exemplified by Dr. Gabrielsen continues to distinguish the university and the Department of Radiology.

To learn how you can contribute, please contact Laura Boudette at lauraabo@med.umich.edu or at 734.763.1404.
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Trygve O. Gabrielsen
Collegiate Professorship in Radiology

The Trygve O. Gabrielsen
Collegiate Professorship in Radiology

Executive Officers of the University of Michigan Health System: Michael M.E. Johns, Interim Executive Vice President for Medical Affairs; James O. Wooliscroft, Dean, U-M Medical School; Kathleen Pochampa, Dean, U-M School of Nursing; T. Anthony Denton, Acting Chief Executive Officer and Chief Operating Officer, U-M Hospitals and Health Centers.

The Regents of the University of Michigan: Mark J. Bernstein, Julia Donovan Darlow, Laurence B. Deitch, Shauna Ryder Diggs, Denise Ilitch, Andrea Fischer Newman, Andrew C. Richner, Katherine E. White, Mark S. Schlissel (ex officio).
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