Reflections on Dr. Gabrielsen's Career and Contributions

"Dr. Gabrielsen set an example for all of us. His goal was to train his residents and fellows so well that they would be better radiologists than we were."

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

"Tryg is an unforgettable mentor, and friend. I’m a full-time neuroradiologist, and hardly a day goes by that I don’t hear his inner voice saying ‘be sure to do this,’ or ‘don’t forget to check that,’ or ‘what if this patient was in your family?’ Thank you, Tryg."

Dr. Jim Kooi
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."

Dr. Francis Pauli
Clinical Instructor of Radiology
St. Joseph Mercy Hospitals, Ann Arbor

"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 computerized 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
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The Trygve O. Gabrielsen COLLEGIATE PROFESSORSHIP in RADIOLgy

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Fred Jenner Hodges Professor and Chair of Radiology
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
Dr. Gabrielsen: Dedication to Mentorship and Clinical Excellence

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In February 1949, his family immigrated to Seattle, Washington. Because he had a year and a half left in Norway’s gymnasium 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.

After three years as an undergraduate, Dr. Gabrielsen entered medical school. He considered becoming a surgeon, but he could not tolerate the lack of sleep often required of a surgeon. He observed that surgery residents didn’t seem to understand radiographic interpretation. While spending time observing a radiologist faculty member, Dr. Gabrielsen realized that he could help his colleagues treat their patients better by making more accurate diagnoses. The radiologist, the son of the University of Michigan’s radiology department chair, recommended that Dr. Gabrielsen come to Ann Arbor for his residency.

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.”

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A Deep Commitment to Excellence in Teaching and Mentorship

The Trygve O. Gabrielsen Collegiate Professorship in Radiology seeks to do two very important things. One is to honor Dr. Gabrielsen’s contributions to medicine, to the Department of Radiology, and to his many residents, fellows, and colleagues. The other is to ensure that the excellence Dr. Gabrielsen exemplifies continues to thrive in the department.

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.

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To learn how you can contribute, please contact Laura Boudette at laurabo@med.umich.edu or at 734.763.1404.
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