

In Memoriam:

Morrison H. Finlayson, M.B. Ch.B., F.R.C.P. (C)

(1929-1982)



Editors Note: *This tribute to Dr. Finlayson originally appeared in the May 1983 issue of the Journal of Neuropathology and Experimental Neurology. We are grateful to the editor of this journal for permission to reproduce it here.*

Morrison H. Finlayson died on October 5, 1982, at the age of 53, an untimely end to a productive career. He was best known as a neuropathologist, but his actual practice included both general pathology and clinical neurology. His base was the Montreal General Hospital, where he worked since the end of his training.

He was born in 1929 in Vilna, in northeastern Alberta, his father having come there from Scotland as a pioneering settler at the age of 17. Fin, as he was widely known to friends and acquaintances, obtained a BSCh from the University of Alberta. After a year of geophysical work in the Canadian North, he entered the venerable University of Edinburgh, receiving his

medical degree there in 1958. He returned to Alberta for a rotating internship, a year of residency in pathology, and a year in neurology. From 1961 to 1962 he was research assistant in neuropathology at the National Hospital, Queen's Square, London, assisting J. Purdon Martin in his studies on disorders of motion and the basal ganglia. Fin then came to the Montreal Neurological Institute to be senior resident in Neurology and demonstrator in Neuroanatomy. This was followed by two years as teaching fellow at the Pathology Institute of McGill University. With this background, Fin acquired the Royal College Fellowships in both Pathology and Neurology.

Fin had a special interest in residency training and the problems of residents. He organized evening seminars in neuropathology for pathology residents. He headed the residency training committee of McGill's Department of Pathology. Over the past three years he was president of the Canadian Association of

Neuropathologists. He served as Canadian delegate to the International Society of Neuropathology and as a vice president of the Society from 1978 to 1982.

Despite his heavy commitments to teaching and to the duties of pathology and clinical neurology, Fin made significant scientific contributions. A few examples must suffice. He was one of the first to recognize the association of central pontine myelinolysis with fluid and electrolyte imbalance. He described the cerebral lesions in chronic portal-systemic shunts. His electron microscopic studies on the nerve lesions in dimorphous leprosy and his experimental studies on spinal cord infarction must be mentioned. His work on familial amyotrophic lateral sclerosis with dementia established the characteristic distribution of cerebral lesions in that disease.

In 1954, shortly before starting his medical education in Edinburgh, Fin married Josephine Rich from Edmonton, who

has thus been the companion of his entire medical career. The eldest of his two daughters is in nursing training. His son is studying medicine at the University of Sherbrooke.

Two years ago, the dismaying news circulated that Fin had had surgery, that a carcinoma had been found. No confirmation could have been gained from the even performance of his duties in the subsequent months. Despite chemotherapy and radiation, he attended the International Congress of Neuropathology. The annual meeting of the Canadian Association of Neuropathologists was his to organize this fall. He was the genial chairman of an excellent meeting. Five days later we learned that he was gone, a victim of toxic shock.

Much time will pass before we meet, if we ever meet, in our professional lives, one so gentle and so strong.

Stirling Carpenter, M.D.