

In Memoriam:

# John L. Silversides, M.D., B.Sc., F.R.C.P. (C)

(1914-1983)



John Lloyd Silversides died at his country home near Perth, Ontario, on August 3rd, 1983. Dr. Silversides had retired three years earlier from his academic positions of Professor of Medicine in the Division of Neurology, University of Toronto, and Senior Neurologist at the Toronto Western Hospital.

Jack was born in Winnipeg in 1914. He was admitted to the University of Manitoba at the precocious age of 15 as a chemistry student. After obtaining his B.Sc. degree he soon found his niche in Medicine and was graduated cum laude from Manitoba in 1940. Jack promptly entered the Royal Canadian Navy and served throughout the Second Great War on loan to the British Navy at Malta, then in the United Kingdom and France, and finally as Senior Medical Officer at a naval air force base in New Guinea. His training in Internal Medicine and Neurology began after the war, first at the University of Toronto, and then as a Nuffield fellow in Neurology and Neuropathology at the

National Hospital, Queen Square. There his development as an academic clinician was influenced by contact with Sir Charles Symonds and J. Godwin Greenfield, among others. Those influences, flavoured by his own unique clinical acumen, were passed to his countless trainees in neurology and internal medicine. He earned the F.R.C.P. (C) in medicine in 1949 and in neurology in 1952. The late Dr. Hurst Brown was quick to recruit him to the Toronto Western Hospital when he returned from London in 1951.

Dr. Silversides was the first full time neurologist at the Toronto Western Hospital, where he was responsible for building the Division of Neurology. In 1971 he undertook a sabbatical year in Neuro-ophthalmology at the National Hospital, Queen Square. During the last decade of his practice Dr. Silversides had an abiding interest in the neurology of vision, ocular movement, and vestibular dysfunction. His ward rounds, general neurology

clinics, and neuro-ophthalmology clinics were a special didactic treat for residents. Upon his retirement in 1980 he was appointed Professor Emeritus in the University of Toronto.

Over the years, Professor Silversides' academic duties included the positions of Head of the Division of Neurology, Toronto Western Hospital, Physician-in-Chief at the Addiction Research Foundation of Ontario, Chairman of the Medical Advisory Board of the Canadian Multiple Sclerosis Society, Medical Director of Hillcrest Hospital, Toronto, and President of the Canadian Neurological Society. His educational and organizational skills earned him prominence among Canadian neurologists. He was a teacher and mentor of many neurologists now scattered across the country. Dr. Silversides' good manners and consistent concern for the welfare of his patients commanded the enduring admiration of his colleagues and residents. His former patients who now attend clinics at the Toronto Western Hospital often comment upon his remarkable kindness to them. To many associates, he was fondly known as "Silver", a name earned by his sterling qualities as a physician, by his genteel bearing, and by his wavy white hair, as much as by his surname. Patient and slow to anger, he was often tolerant of ignorance but never of negligence. Silver always had time to listen and his sage counsel was valued. While conducting the Royal College oral examinations in Neurology he often became anxious in empathy with a candidate's struggle with a difficult question. He was known to leave the room, rather than endure the candidate's discomfort.

It was as a teacher, practitioner, and organizer that Dr. Silversides made his medical contribution and his impact upon Toronto and Canadian neurological activities was considerable. At the University of Toronto, his associates have been pleased to honour him by establishing an annual J.L. Silversides Lecture in Neuro-ophthalmology. The first lecture was published in the November, 1982 issue of this Journal; the second appears in this issue and the third was delivered by the 1983 Silversides

Visiting Professor in Neuro-ophthalmology, at the Academy of Medicine, Toronto, last May. Dr. Silversides' fortitude was exemplified by his attendance at each of these lectures despite his terminal illness. When things got tough, he used to say "I've got broad shoulders". He did.

Dr. Silversides so admired the craftsmanship of the early builders of our nation that he erected a compound of log cabins near Perth as a summer place that later served as his retirement home. He was a self-admitted "packrat" who habitually set out on weekend jaunts in the countryside of central and eastern Ontario in search of antiques at auctions and abandoned farms. He delighted in an extensive medical library. An avid golfer, he seldom missed a seasonable Saturday round with his crony and professional colleague Dr. J.C. Richardson. Dr. William S. Keith, his neurosurgical counterpart, shared many adventures in neurological care and jubilant fishing expeditions. Dr. Keith acknowledged that any diagnostic disputes were almost invariably resolved in Silver's favour. Even so, he was always generous to his colleagues and fostered an atmosphere of mutual respect. His broad knowledge and sound judgment made his diagnoses seem intuitive.

Dr. Silversides collected a unique treasury of pioneering farm implements, and carpentry and household tools, all carefully displayed in a museum at his country home. This collection is being catalogued by the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority to be established as the Silversides Museum in Lanark County, Ontario. Dr. Silversides is survived by his wife, Betty, son, Jamie, and daughter Ann, to whom we extend our sympathy. The neurological community is diminished by the passing of this gentle man, fine in spirit, fine in intellect, and fine in character.

James Sharpe, M.D.  
Toronto