

There Are Some Debts in Life That You Can Never Repay: We Remember Marshall M. Parks, MD

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For the first time, the *Journal of AAPOS* is dedicating an issue to an individual; a special person who fulfilled the cliché “larger than life.” He could have been known only as one of the first great teachers of pediatric ophthalmology, but his vision exceeded that. As the driving force behind the creation of AAPOS (as well as its first president), he was indirectly responsible for the establishment of this Journal.

Dr. Marshall M. Parks passed away on July 27, 2005, and we lost one of our greatest leaders and sources of inspiration. Wonder at his accomplishments as written by his daughter, Grace Parks Mitchell, and Paul R. Mitchell. Appreciate the beautiful obituary written by Dr. George Beauchamp. Witness the expansion of the Parks tradition in the inaugural Marshall Parks Lecture by Dr. Laurence Tychsen, which is published in this issue. Learn from perhaps the last article by Dr. Parks and principal author Dr. Irene Ludwig on accommodative esotropia. Take advantage of his Curriculum Vitae, which can be found online in this issue. We should all value his accomplishments and unrelenting contributions to our professional lives.

For our daily practices, Marshall Parks gave us the complete Three Step Test, the monofixation syndrome, the fornix approach to strabismus surgery, the advantages of early strabismus surgery, proper management of congenital cataracts, and many other innovations. For our educational needs, he provided the model for fellowship training in pediatric ophthalmology in Washington, DC (having personally trained more than 160 fellows) and led the American Board of Ophthalmology. For our subspecialty, he started the Costenbader Society, was the impetus behind the founding of AAPOS, and produced a strabismus textbook that served as a standard source for decades. For our profession, he served as President of the American Academy of Ophthalmology and was often the voice of pediatric ophthalmology to our “nonpediatric” colleagues. For the children, he not only did all the above but was the founder and President of

the Children’s Eye Care Foundation to promote further service and research. The list goes on and on.

He truly was “larger than life.” I remember him, however, on a much more personal level. Spending a year at his side taught me much more than just pediatric ophthalmology and strabismus. He was a man of great faith and enjoyed comparing New Testament scripture, which he could quote almost endlessly with Old Testament verses that I would offer. His destiny and Roman Catholic faith served him well as a Navy doctor in World War II, when his ships were literally exploding and sinking before him. His love of interacting with his pediatric patients who viewed him in his words “first as a father and then as a grandfather” was discernable to all around him. He would work through a grueling schedule of patient examinations and surgery, writing papers, preparing lectures, teaching fellows, helping administer the Department of Ophthalmology at Children’s National Medical Center in Washington, DC (with Dr. David Friendly and later Dr. Mohamad Jaafar), and preparing for the ABO enthusiastically without complaint. His much younger fellows could not keep up with him. His dedication to his large family was always evident, as exemplified by his statement that “Love is infinite.” I recall the adoration he and his wonderful wife Angeline gave my two sons (at that time) on their estate in Maine or at receptions in their house on Massachusetts Avenue in the 1970s. When Angeline passed away, the loss of such a caring woman was felt by all those who knew her. Marshall’s open heart found Martha, and their devotion and affection showed that marital contentment could be found again. His dedication to his fellows never ended on June 30th. He founded the Costenbader Society to annually improve the science of pediatric ophthalmology, which often served as a forum for the graduated fellows to learn Marshall’s newest ideas. He kept a large map on the wall of his examining room with the name and location of each fellow, indicated by a pin. He was constant to us and we were devoted to him.

There are some debts in life that you can never repay. That is the way that Marshall liked it. He was fulfilled by giving his concepts, knowledge, and leadership to his profession and asked for nothing in return but an honest exchange of ideas. He is no longer here to direct and inspire us, but his legacy to us and all of ophthalmology lives on. To this amazing man, we dedicate this issue of the *Journal of AAPOS*.

From Torrance, CA.

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