

## John Caffey, 1895–1978

Dr. John Caffey died the morning of September 2, 1978, at Presbyterian-University Hospital in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania after a brief illness. He was 83 years old and had worked until the morning of his admission to the hospital.

Dr. Caffey was regarded throughout the world as the father of pediatric radiology. His classic textbook, *Pediatric X-Ray Diagnosis*, which was first published in 1945, has become the recognized bible and authority in its field. The seventh edition of this book was completed several months before Dr. Caffey's death, and will have been published before this memorial appears. It has been among the most successful books of its kind in the medical field.

Dr. Caffey was born in Castle Gate, Utah on March 30, 1895, the same year that Roentgen discovered the x-ray. Dr. Caffey was graduated from the University of Michigan Medical School in 1919, following which he served an internship in internal medicine at Barnes Hospital in St. Louis. He spent 3 years in Eastern Europe with the American Red Cross and the American Relief Administration, and returned to the United States for additional training in medicine and in pediatrics at the Universities of Michigan and Columbia, respectively.

While in the private practice of pediatrics in New York City at the old Babies Hospital of Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, he became interested in radiology and was charged with developing a department of pediatric radiology in 1929. He frequently expressed appreciation and admiration for the late Ross Golden, Chairman of Radiology at Columbia Presbyterian Hospital, who allowed him to develop a separate department of diagnostic radiology without undue interference, and who was always available to help and advise him.

Dr. Caffey's keen intelligence and inquiring mind quickly established him as the leader in the field of pediatric x-ray diagnosis; recognition became worldwide almost instantaneously with the publication of his book in 1945.

Dr. Caffey received numerous awards in recognition of his achievements. Outstanding among these were the Mackenzie Davidson Medal of the British Institute of Radiology in 1956, the Distinguished Service Award of the Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center in 1962, the Outstanding Achievement Award of the University of Michigan in 1965, the Howland Award of the American Pediatric Society in 1967, the Jacobi Award of the Amer-



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ican Medical Association in 1972, and the Gold Medal Award of the American College of Radiology in 1975. He had been a member of the editorial board of *Pediatrics* and of the consulting editorial board of the *American Journal of Roentgenology*. He was a counselor of the Society for Pediatric Radiology and was an honorary member of the European Society for Pediatric Radiology.

Dr. Caffey's contributions to the pediatric radiologic literature were many. He was instrumental in directing attention to the fact that a prominent thymic shadow was a sign of good health and not of disease, an observation that literally spelled the end to the practice of thymic irradiation in infancy. Infantile cortical hyperostosis was described by him and is called "Caffey's Disease." Dr. Caffey in 1946 first recognized the telltale radiographic changes that characterize the battered child, and his students helped disseminate his teachings about these findings. It was Dr. Caffey who first recognized and

described the characteristic bony changes in vitamin A poisoning. He recognized and described the findings associated with prenatal bowing of the skeleton.

In 1963, 3 years after his retirement from Babies Hospital, he joined the staff of the Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh as associate radiologist and as Visiting Professor of Radiology and Pediatrics at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. Although Dr. Caffey came to Children's Hospital and the University of Pittsburgh in an emeritus position, he worked daily and on weekends throughout the years he was there. In Pittsburgh, he made four major new contributions to the medical literature. He described the entity, "idiopathic familial hyperphosphatasemia." He recognized and described the earliest radiologic changes in Perthes's Disease. He called attention to the potentially serious effects of shaking children, and used this as the subject of his Jacobi award lecture. He described, with the late Dr. Kenny, a hitherto unrecognized form of dwarfism which is now known as the Caffey-Kenny dwarf.

The John Caffey Society, which includes as its members pediatric radiologists who have been intimately associated with Dr. Caffey, or who have been trained by

his students, was established in 1961. This society is now among the most prestigious in the field of radiology. His book and the society named in his honor will live on as important memorials to this great man.

His greatness was obvious to all who worked with him. He was warm, kind, stimulating, argumentative, and above all, honest in his approach to medicine and to x-ray diagnosis. His dedication to the truth was expressed in his abiding interest in the limitations of radiologic signs in pediatric diagnosis and in his interest in normal variations in the growing skeleton. He was concerned with the written and spoken word, and was a skilled semanticist. His book and his articles are masterpieces of language and construction. He stimulated and was stimulated and loved by all who had the privilege of working with him. Radiology and Pediatrics have lost a great man, but they shall ever have been enriched by his presence.

Dr. Caffey is survived by a sister, Mary E. of Salt Lake City, a brother, Paul, of Philadelphia, and by a legion of close friends, colleagues, students, and associates.

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*Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania*