

## In memoriam Elisabeth Babin-Sigwalt (1938–1985)

Elisabeth Babin left us on December 24th 1985, at the age of 47 years, after a long and painful illness, the physical and spiritual suffering of which she accepted with courage beyond description. Her departure fills us with surprise. Nothing is the same as before: nothing can replace her enthusiasm.

Diplomate in neurology and radiology, her professionalism combined a clinician's sense with her specialised knowledge of imaging. In a series of valuable scientific works she described the normal and pathological appearance of the veins of the base of the brain. She published the first biography of Professor Rosenthal from Greifswald, the principle author of the description of the basilar vein. One of her pupils told me that she spoke of the roads of La Drôme and of the cerebral veins with the same passion.

Her second major subject of research was the spinal root canal and she made her personal contribution in the domain of radicular symptomatology in spinal stenosis. From her list of about a hundred publications one finds three works in all the neuroradiological libraries; one devoted to radiculography, a second concerning the narrow lumbar canal and a third about cranio-cerebral CT.

Elisabeth Babin trained numerous pupils from France and abroad, from Spain, Portugal, Poland, Austria, South America, Belgium, Italy, The Maghreb and from Luxembourg. All were attracted by her strict discipline, the extraordinary rapidity of her thought, her enthusiasm for all intellectual pursuits, the correctness of her judgement, her culture and the extent of her professional knowledge. She subjected life to dispassionate enquiry in order to begin a logical understanding of it and she led her students in the search for analysis and synthesis. She communed with objects, animals and other humans grâce à her own appropriate sensibility. Sometimes we would understand one another without exchanging a syllable and the words that followed only served to mark out the spaces for creative thought, helping us to localise things rather than to communicate them.

The unusual intelligence and originality of her spirit found an ideal partner in the skill of her hands. She had acquired exceptional competence in all the manipulations of pediatric neuroradiology and the construction of the small tools inseparable from her trade. Her seat for encephalography for the very small remains a celebrated achievement.



Sometimes, passing by her office, I perceive her laughter – the logical, mathematical laughter which she had the habit of superimposing upon the things over which her reason had triumphed. One imagined her brown-eyed regard, an extra and ephemeral light shining with joy. It was the regard of an imager-inquisitor who scans a picture, but she reserved it for the initiated and the better to frame it she left to her expressive hands the ability to outline an appearance, to design a symbol or a signature, to smooth away difficulties that blocked thought, or to evoke the inconceivable. It was, then, the hands that prolonged the thought.

As Serge, Alexandre, Florence and Paul-Etienne know, we retain a strong and indelible image of the doctor, of the researcher and of the teacher who was Elisabeth Babin-Sigwalt.

Professeur A. Wackenheim