

In memoriam

Harry M. Zimmerman, MD 1901–1995

On July 28, 1995, one of the most remarkable careers in American medicine came to a close with the death of Dr. Harry M. Zimmerman at the age of 94.

Among his many functions in his later years was service as associate editor of the *Journal of Neuro-oncology*. He was without question the most efficient, insightful and thorough associate editor that an Editor-in-Chief could have. All of the difficult issues and delicate problems could be promptly dispatched by Dr. Zimmerman. His recent activities also included editing a special edition of the *Journal of Neuro-oncology*, dedicated to Dr. Paul Bucy, another legend in the field. In recent years, Dr. Zimmerman continued in his vital roles at Montefiore Medical Center as Chairman of the Research Committee and of a variety of special committees dealing with critical issues for the medical center. He led the weekly neuropathology conferences and reviewed pathology slides from all over the world which were sent to him because of his unequalled experience in histopathological diagnosis.

If these activities seem rather extensive for someone almost 30 years past retirement, then one has to consider his avocation. Every summer, including July of 1994, he journeyed to his farm in Litchfield, Connecticut, to operate his new tractor and harvest 20 acres of hay. This vigorous personal and professional life, even in his later years, defined the incredible vitality, enthusiasm, and perpetual youth of this rare individual.

His past accomplishments are those of a true legend. He worked with Dr. Speilmeyer and then became one of the first Americans to specialize in neuropathology. In the 1932–1939 era, he worked at Yale University with Dr. Harvey Cushing. He helped to describe the basophilic adenomas and proudly displayed a picture autographed by Dr. Cushing signed, ‘with basophilic regards’. He joined Dr. Cushing in analyzing the extensive pathology collection which was left to Yale University

and also was a neighbor and personal friend of the distinguished founder of American neurosurgery. Dr. Cushing and Dr. Zimmerman would go together to local baseball games when Dr. Cushing signaled his wishes by tapping on the adjoining wall of their offices.

Dr. Zimmerman was one of the first to develop an animal model of a human brain tumor by chemical induction. The Zimmerman mouse ependymoblastoma was the only available experimental tumor for brain research for many years.

In World War II, Dr. Zimmerman served in the Pacific Theater in a close relationship with Admiral Chester Nimitz. The Admiral had always wanted to be a physician and was intrigued by Dr. Zimmerman’s experimental studies of infectious diseases affecting the troops. In the war, Dr. Albert Sabin (of later oral polio vaccine fame), worked with Dr. Zimmerman in the development of early anti-viral vaccines.

After World War II, Dr. Zimmerman became involved with the Montefiore Medical Center in New York City, becoming not only Chairman of Pathology, but serving as a pillar in the development of a whole new academic medical center and, a few years later, of a new medical school – the Albert Einstein College of Medicine. He helped convince the famous Einstein that his fame would be critical to the success of the new school, and therefore a reticent Einstein permitted his name to be used. Dr. Zimmerman served as the first Dean of the school of medicine and he joined Dr. Leo Davidoff in developing an outstanding program in clinical neuroscience.

He developed an outstanding neuropathology program and a veritable ‘who’s who’ of prominent leaders in the field received all or part of their training from Dr. Zimmerman. Through his work with Dr. Hirano, Dr. Zimmerman developed a remarkable interaction with Japanese neuropathology and helped train over 70 Japanese in the field.

In his long and productive life, Dr. Zimmerman received virtually all the honors possible in his field, culminating in the naming in his honor of chairs at Montefiore Medical Center, Yale and of a department in Japan.

I have been privileged to know Dr. Zimmerman not just as a legendary figure, but as a warm friend

and close colleague. His is a unique story and a legendary one but to me and to many who knew him well, he will be missed most as a wonderful friend.

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Editor, *Journal of Neuro-Oncology*