

Obituary Prof. Beniamino Guidetti 1918 – 1989

Professor Beniamino Guidetti left us on the 4th of July 1989. He was a pioneer of Italian neurosurgery and a great teacher, both as a neurosurgeon and as a man, an example of integrity and incredible tenacity right up until his final hours of life.

He was born in 1918 and graduated in Naples in 1942. He began working in general surgery but immediately opted for neurosurgery, realizing the need (to quote one of his favourite sayings) "to begin where others have already arrived". Between 1947 and 1950 he spent about 4 years with Professor Olivecrona in Stockholm. In 1950 he spent another year working at the Lahey Clinic in Boston and the Temple University Hospital in Philadelphia. On his return to Italy in 1951, he organized the neurosurgical service at the Neurological Clinic of the Bologna University where he remained until 1955 when he was called back to Rome.

He was founder of the Institute of Neurosurgery of the Rome State University, where he channelled his remarkable energies into the creation of a school which would produce many future chiefs of neurosurgical centres in Italy: Alvisi in Bologna; Moscatelli in Bari; Gambacorta and Palma in Siena; Cantore, Giuffrè and Riccio in Rome.

Like all great surgeons, he handled even the most difficult operations with simplicity, elegance and rapidity, bringing the number of operations performed in the Institute he directed up to over 20 000 by 1988, in all fields of neurosurgery.

We all knew and appreciated his vast scientific contributions, particularly those considered to be important steps in worldwide neurosurgical literature such as intracranial meningiomas, intramedullary tumours, cervical myelopathies and carotid ophthalmic aneurysms.

He constantly played an important role in the Italian Society of Neurosurgery as well as being prominent in the European Association of Neurosurgical Societies and the World Federation: in fact, in 1963 when he was Secretary of the S.I.N. he organized the European Congress of Neurosurgery in Rome.

During his continuous and taxing career he was always able to count on the support and help of his wife Caterina and their three children Gabriella, Vincenzo and Giulio whose love and respect gave him great happiness.

To us, his pupils, he taught many things, both by his advice and by his example as a fighter: He was used to facing up to any sort of obstacle, surgical or otherwise, and during his last months and even his very last days, he still managed to come into the clinic every day, despite considerable respiratory difficulties, taking an active interest in everything and everyone. Therefore, his last lesson to us all was how to face death with calm and dignity, immersed in the neurosurgery to which he dedicated, quite literally, his entire life, right up to the end.

G. Cantore and A. Riccio, Rome, Italy

