Arnold Shkolnik, MD (1930–2018)

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At the age of 88 after a couple years of declining health, Arnold Shkolnik passed away Dec. 26, 2018, peacefully at his home accompanied by his wife, Carol Waugh.

Arnie attended the University of Illinois, where he received undergraduate and medical degrees. He began a residency in pediatrics at Cook County Hospital but had his training

interrupted when he was drafted into the U.S. Army. He attained the rank of captain by time of discharge. He returned to complete his pediatrics residency and a fellowship in endocrinology before joining a private practice as a pediatrician. After 5 years in a general practice Arnie said he couldn't take the parents anymore — and changed careers. He told the story about being interrupted several times during a Friday night poker game to take calls from parents of sick children. The last call was from a mother who was distraught that her son was limping. After quizzing her for some time he extracted the full story: yes, she had just bought her son new shoes, and, yes, there were blisters on both heels. Arnie said “enough” and soon enrolled in a radiology residency at Cook County Hospital. Building on his pediatrics background he became a fellow in pediatric radiology at Children's Memorial Hospital in Chicago under the direction of Dr. Harvey White. Arnie spent the remainder of his career (40 years) at Children's Memorial Hospital, now Lurie Children's, as a pediatric radiologist.

Arnie was one of the first radiologists to use US in the pediatric setting. After convincing hospital administration to trust his instinct they invested in one of the earliest US machines — a B-mode articulated arm scanner. Ultrasound became his passion and he went on to publish many firsts about US in children. He taught, lectured and published about his discoveries. He became a professor of radiology at Northwestern University and a fellow of three societies: the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Institute of Ultrasound in Medicine and the Society of Radiologists in Ultrasound.

Arnie received two Caffey Awards — one in 1975 for the paper presentation “B-mode ultrasound and the non-visualizing kidney in pediatrics” and one in 1983 as a co-author of “Sonography of the caudal spine and back: congenital anomalies in children.” In 1997 he received the prestigious Pioneer Award from the Society for Pediatric Radiology. His tenacity and advocacy for children have had an impact on the field of pediatric radiology and his legacy will endure.

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Arnie was humble and not overly impressed with his accomplishments, his career or his academic achievements. He mostly cared about others. He was impressed that at age 85 he was still playing basketball at the local gym with guys one-quarter his age. Several of those guys attended his funeral service and one spoke on behalf of the “gym rats” who missed him.

Arnie loved his work. He was challenged to find out what was wrong with each child. He stayed late accommodating add-on studies, supervising residents and fellows, meticulously editing their reports, and reviewing complicated studies with referring physicians. He was highly respected by the pediatricians and surgeons who referred their patients for an ultrasound examination. They trusted his expertise and they made life-changing decisions based on his word. Given that primitive ultrasound images really looked like weather maps, it wasn't always easy to be confident with a diagnosis. Ultrasound was part science, part art and part intuition.

Arnie loved the technologists and support staff. He would tell you his US technologists were far more valuable than he was. He knew everyone and called them all by name, from the receptionists at the hospital entrance to the people working in the cafeteria line. Everyone was part of the team; each person felt valued in his or her role. People loved working with Arnie and would do anything for him. He really made the hospital a fun place to work.

Arnie loved his patients and their families. He was a hands-on radiologist — I think it brought back the good memories of his short career as a pediatrician. When the radiology department got hectic and busy he would take it upon himself to walk out to the crowded waiting room, get everyone's attention, and apologize for the small room and for the delays. It

was a pretty amazing scene to watch him ease the tension of a whole waiting room.

Arnie rooted for the underdog! He was sympathetic to those less fortunate in life. Of course, he always had dollar bills in his pockets for people who were homeless. In Lincoln Park this could be a daily necessity. He also sympathized with his patients and their families as victims of the financial strains of our health care system, even to a point of extortion! If Arnie had ever been investigated for fraud it would have been from hospital administration — or his chairman — upset about his constant under-coding and undercharging — it was his personal Robinhood campaign.

“Back in the day” when the pace of work was slower, we often had enough time for lunch during the workday. Sitting in the hospital cafeteria Arnie always had a joke — or several — you know the ones, about the Jewish rabbi and the Catholic priest walking into a bar. He loved sharing jokes and witty puns with friends and colleagues — and if you knew Arnie you have to admit he could tell a good one.

Arnie was a great colleague and wonderful friend to many. He was as genuine as they come. He was the same guy in the reading room as he was at a Bulls game. He could be irreverent at both!

Arnie touched so many patients' and physicians' lives. He will live on in our memory, when we are kind to a stranger, come up with a good pun or go the extra mile for a patient. Arnie was an example for us all, both personally and professionally.

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