James T. Goodrich, MD, PhD

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The earth lost one of its best citizens when Dr. James T. Goodrich died from the Covid-19 virus on March 30, 2020. Although he was a renowned neurosurgeon, he will be missed by this entire planet, not just his neurosurgical colleagues. Jim traveled extensively to bring help to those who needed his expertise. He enjoyed teaching young neurosurgeons and was a prominent faculty member for many courses taught around the world. I was privileged to see him teach in Europe, Africa, Asia, Central, and South America and North America. He was honored by governments, societies, and individuals. He gave freely of his time and expertise to those in need.

Jim was often referred to as “The Most Interesting Man in the World.” It is a description that fit him well. His interests extended far beyond neurosurgery. He loved history, and early in his career, he began collecting books, manuscripts and items of significance to medical history. He developed a thriving business collecting and selling these items. He was always interested in learning about the cultures of the places we visited. Whenever we had free time at a conference, Jim would grab me, and we would take off to explore and learn local customs.

I had the opportunity to be involved with the separation of 3 sets of craniopagus twins beginning in 1978. My chairman at that time was Theodore Roberts. It was his idea to stage the separation of craniopagus twins, as opposed to a single surgery. The staged procedures were done over multiple surgeries, slowly changing the venous drainage between the twins. We had success in all 3 of our cases but were having difficulty getting other neurosurgeons to show interest in this newer and more prolonged approach. Jim came to Salt Lake City to see what we were proposing, and immediately understood its value. He went on to take this concept to a whole new level. He developed a multi-specialty team and used modern medical imaging techniques. As they say, “the rest is history.” He had more experience with craniopagus surgery than anyone. He truly became the master of this procedure. In addition to the procedures he performed at his home institution, he assisted colleagues in the UK, Saudi Arabia, and Brazil.

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I knew Jim as a great friend. He was delightful to be around. I always admired his easy-going style, especially the way he so easily nurtured and taught others. The times we shared a glass of wine and a cigar are some of my fondest memories. I loved him in life. I still do. Jim was a giant among us. Rest in Peace, my friend.

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