



In Memoriam

Theodore E.
Keats, MD

The call was too soon

C. Douglas Phillips, MD, FACR

*Is life a boon?
If so, it must befall
That Death, whene'er he call,
Must call too soon.*

—W.S. Gilbert, *The Yeomen of the Guard*

A number of years ago, I was given a series of opportunities by an individual, all of which changed my life. I was given a job, directed in an academic career, and introduced to a wide range of influential, charismatic, and important people in academic medicine. I was guided in some early publications, of which he served as the senior author or major editorial hand, and I was shown that it is possible to be a superlative academician and maintain an air of humility and humor. I was also introduced to this journal, for which he served as the editor for 12 years, and I soon found myself becoming a member of the editorial staff. That individual is sadly no longer among us. We are saddened by his passing, and I am personally honored to pen some history and praise in his remembrance. The man was Theodore E. Keats, MD. He died December 10, 2010, in his adopted home of Charlottesville, VA, and the world is a less interesting place in his absence.

Dr. Keats was the chair of the Department of Radiology at the University of Virginia

Hospital over an incredible span – 1963 to 1991. He ran a department where the faculty was international, widely varied, smart, and often a challenge to manage. You learn something from everyone who serves as your boss, and we all learned many things from the man. You listened carefully. You helped patients and helped the physicians who entrusted you. You were polite (it was Virginia, for goodness sake). You read up on things you weren't sure about — twice. Dr. Keats' style of reviewing films stays with me to this day. His point, highlighted by his *Normal Variants* textbook, was simple. You learned as much from the normal studies you saw as from the abnormal ones. You catalogued the appearance in your brain and kept it organized. The problem was that few of us were equipped with the mental firepower he carried. He told us that our mastery of the anatomy was what separated us from all the others who would read films. You had to know the range of appearances of normals to weed out the abnormal. Good advice forever.

His contribution to the musculoskeletal imaging literature was considerable. He was the inveterate case collector, author, editor, and a patient teacher. His mock exasperation with our learning was the perfect foil for his teaching style. You never felt humiliated, only pushed to go further with the discussion on the next opportunity. His service to

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organized radiology was mind-bending. Consider 14 years of service to the American Board of Radiology, untold numbers of major committee assignments, invited lectures, visiting professorships; it is a daunting list of accomplishments. And, importantly, he never lost his love of reading shoulder to shoulder with residents in the reading room.

His managerial style was simple but effective. His division directors and managers were smart, innovative people who he knew and trusted to do the day-to-day things. He was not a micromanager but instead a collector of skilled people, who were happy to work with him, and, he worked harder than most of us.

Virginia was the perfect place for him. He was the ultimate Southern gentleman. He shared his knowledge, his wisdom, and he shared his friendship freely. He and Patt, his wonderful wife, were the perfect hosts, and a warmer couple has not lived. For those who had the privilege to work with him, he also shared his love of modest formality and Gilbert and Sullivan. His yearly Valentine's Day dance, The Sweetheart Ball, was the resident's yearly opportunity to, as he put it, "dress up and look respectable." We learned ballroom dancing in the reading room, and we often were treated to light opera in the same venue—always impromptu, always

fun. He was a phenomenal storyteller and had seemingly endless stories to tell. I never turned down an opportunity to have lunch, dinner, or just a quick drink with Dr. Keats. You were always rewarded with a Board story, a story about a recent trip, or something about one of his colleagues in the ABR or another organization that left you laughing and looking forward to the next time you ran into that person. He was a man who stomped firmly on terra firma.

I have been privileged to meet a number of people who aren't replaceable; high-powered, driven, special people never meant for mass production. Theodore Keats was one of those limited edition models. A wonderful teacher, the penultimate academician, capable administrator, and a man called friend by many of us. I wrote a column almost 10 years ago in this journal in praise of Dr. Keats just prior to his retirement at University of Virginia. I owed, and still owe him much. I still have the note he wrote me in thanks. He wrote: "At this passage in my life, I have time to think about where I have been and what I have accomplished, and at times can't help but wonder whether it was all worthwhile." Well, it was definitely worthwhile.

I am saddened that he can't jot off another note this time to thank me for saying nice things about him. That connection was priceless. I will miss him. Thanks Ted.