

Remembering and Celebrating the Life of a Legend

JOAN E. HODGMAN, M.D. September 7, 1923 – August 10, 2008

With the passing of Joan E. Hodgman M.D. at her beloved family cabin in Oregon on August 10, 2008, the world of neonatal-perinatal medicine has lost one of its pioneers and most accomplished advocates. Joan E. Hodgman was born on September 7, 1923 in Portland, Oregon, and grew up in San Marino, California. She entered Stanford University at 16 years of age and earned a bachelor's degree and completed medical school at UC San Francisco in 1946. She moved to Los Angeles in 1948 and completed her pediatric residency training at Los Angeles County + University of Southern California (LAC+USC) Medical Center in 1950. After a brief venture as a solo pediatric practitioner in Pasadena, she was appointed as Head Physician at LAC+USC Medical Center in 1952. She became the director of its newborn division in 1957 and served in this capacity until 1986. During her tenure as director, she developed one of the first neonatal intensive care units in the country and her efforts resulted in a 50% reduction in neonatal mortality. Additionally, she led an effort to care for the nearly 20,000 babies born per year at LAC+USC Medical Center. Joan was known for her clinical acumen and excellence in teaching to medical students, residents and fellows. She served as an active member in several local, regional, national and international pediatric and neonatal organizations. Dr. Hodgman spent her entire academic career at LAC + USC Medical Center. Her research and passion focused on sudden infant death syndrome and the ethics of saving tiny preterm babies; just to name a few topics. She also helped to establish NICUs in Mexico, South America and in eastern European countries. Many neonatologists from around the world visited her unit to study the art of providing care to sick newborns and she left an indelible mark on a great number of physicians from all over the world as an international scientist and a caring physician. In addition, to mentoring residents, fellows and neonatologists, Dr. Hodgman truly cherished to be a preceptor for medical students from Keck School of Medicine. Indeed, she continued with these activities until the beginning of 2008. Dr. Hodgman's contributions were acknowledged by her nominations for and reception of numerous awards. Among others, Joan received the Virginia Apgar Award in Perinatal Pediatrics in 1999. This most prestigious award is given annually by the Section on Perinatal Pediatrics of the American Academy of Pediatrics to an individual whose career has had a continuing influence on the well-being of newborn infants. The award was established in memory of Virginia Apgar for her extraordinary accomplishments in the field of perinatal medicine. Dr. Hodgman's own accomplishments were summarized as follows by Mary Ellen Avery, M.D., another pioneer in neonatal medicine in a ceremony held on October 10, 1999 in Washington, D.C:

"Dr. Joan Hodgman has had an illustrious career as a clinician, an academician, a teacher, and a humanitarian for half a century. During this time she has championed the care of both healthy and sick newborn infants with indefatigable energy, clinical acumen, intuition and a true pioneering spirit. As a clinician, she has challenged the precepts of her teachers and peers and has not hesitated to test the validity of accepted theories and popular opinions with thoughtfully conceived and designed clinical trials. Her first publication in 1959 established the role of chloramphenicol in the "gray baby" syndrome. Her contributions to clinical neonatology are enormous as documented in 120 publications and on topics such as descriptions of congenital malformations, investigations into temperature regulation, sleep states, clinical trials of antibiotics, studies on hyperbilirubinemia and phototherapy. Moreover, she is an enthusiastic investigator who participates in many pediatric research meetings as measured by an amazing 244 abstracts, and 39 chapters in books. She continues to teach and conduct clinical research."

Joan loved water sports, skiing, and dancing. She could be found water skiing well into her 70s. Regardless, Joan never stopped working. She embodied JFK's famous quote, that we do things "not because they are easy, but because they are hard." A widow at 47 who never remarried, Joan was diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's disease last year but continued to work until she "retired" in February 2008. Her most recent peer-reviewed publications were in March and May of this year.

In lieu of flowers, family requests that contributions be made to Joan E. Hodgman, M.D., Endowed Scholarship Fund at the Keck School of Medicine of the University of Southern California, c/o Michael Mayne, 1975 Zonal Avenue, KAM 300, Los Angeles 90089.

Thank you Dr. Joan E. Hodgman for making this world a better place for every future generation of babies.

We shall never forget you as your Legend Lives on.