

**MEMORIAL RESOLUTION OF THE FACULTY  
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON  
ON THE DEATH OF PROFESSOR EMERITUS FRANCIS M. FORSTER**

Francis Michael Forster, M.D., D. Sc. Hon., professor emeritus of neurology, chair of neurology emeritus, University of Wisconsin, past dean of Georgetown University, School of Medicine died on February 23, 2006 in Cincinnati, Ohio at the age of 94. He was nationally recognized and respected as a teacher, researcher in the field of epilepsy, and a prominent neurologist. He was one of the founders of the American Academy of Neurology, the professional organization of virtually all neurologists in this country.

He was born in Cincinnati, Ohio on February 14, 1912. He received his secondary education at St. Xavier High School, studied pre-medicine at Xavier University and received his medical degree from the University of Cincinnati, College of Medicine on July 11, 1937. In that same year he married Helen D. Kiley. Their love affair was life-long, ending only when she passed away after 67 years of marriage. Their five children are Denis M. Forster, J.D., of Wilton, Connecticut, Mrs. Mary Susan Cole of Sun Prairie, Wisconsin, Mrs. Kathleen Marot, R.N., Cincinnati, Ohio, Mr. Mark Forster of Madison, Wisconsin, and Mrs. Marianne Gabrielle Kopp of Janesville, Wisconsin. They have six grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren.

After receiving his medical degree he completed a rotating internship at Good Samaritan Hospital in Cincinnati. He then moved to Boston where he was a resident in neurology and neurosurgery at the Boston City Hospital under the direction of Dr. Tracy J. Putnam and Dr. H. Houston Merritt, who were renowned neurologists of that period when neurology was emerging as a distinct clinical and academic discipline. In 1940 he became the chief resident in neurology at the Boston City Hospital on the Harvard University Service. Following his residency, he was a Rockefeller research fellow in Dr. John F. Fulton's Laboratory of Physiology at Yale University.

Dr. Forster's long and distinguished career in academic medicine began as an instructor in neurology at Boston University School of Medicine in 1941. He later joined the faculty of Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia, and in 1950 became the first professor and chair of the newly formed Department of Neurology at Georgetown University School of Medicine. While at Georgetown, he established teaching and service programs in three Washington D.C. hospitals (Georgetown University Hospital, D.C. General, and the Mt. Alto Veteran's Administration Hospital). He was appointed dean of the School of Medicine of Georgetown University in 1953. His tenure as dean was noted for advancing the academic curriculum of the school, and for developing friendly and cordial relationships among faculty, students and alumni, which was a hallmark of his leadership skills throughout his career.

His desire to devote more of his energies to the discipline of neurology was persistent, and in 1958 he accepted the appointment as the professor and chair of the Department of Neurology at the University of Wisconsin. He served in that capacity until 1978, when he became the director of the Epilepsy Center at Madison's William S. Middleton Veteran's Administrative Hospital, now named the Forster Epilepsy Center in his honor. He directed the center until retirement in 1982. During his tenure in Madison, he was responsible for the graduate training of more than a hundred residents and fellows and many hundreds of undergraduate medical and students from other disciplines. Many of these trainees went on to distinguished careers in academic medicine and as clinical neurologists around the country. Sixteen former trainees became chairs of departments of neurology at academic institutions.

His interest in the field of epilepsy including diagnosis, treatment and experimental studies took root and grew during the early years of his career. His lasting interest in reflex epilepsy, a condition in which seizures are initiated by external stimuli, began after he detected the presence of somatosensory evoked seizures in a four-year old child, whose seizures were induced by a sudden and unexpected tap of her left shoulder. The seizures stopped after the irritating cortical focus was surgically removed. This observation led to subsequent pioneering studies of other types of sensory induced reflex epilepsy including conditions in which the sensory stimuli were of a more complex nature. Patients with musicogenic, photosensitive, voice-induced, and somatosensory seizures induced by viewing specific colors or objects, reading, or other types of stereotyped activities were

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studied and treated. He introduced conditioning techniques that produced significant improvement in many patients, and demonstrated that behavioral treatment methods could alleviate seizures and return associated EEG abnormalities and autonomic nervous system responses to normal. He developed an audiovisual method for studying seizures with simultaneous recording of the electroencephalographic (EEG) and the clinical manifestations through a split-screen video system, which was a remarkable technical innovation at that time. This system enabled analysis of correlations between seizure behaviors and EEG changes, and is now an essential practice tool for localization of seizure onset. During his career Dr. Forster wrote more than 200 scientific and clinical publications including eight chapters and four books. He also authored several books on non-medical topics.

He was a successful and esteemed clinician at the hospital bedside and in clinics. His patients came from many communities around the country, and included people from Amish communities in Pennsylvania, Wisconsin dairy farms, and from around the world. He was a consulting physician for President Eisenhower after his stroke, President Quirino and Archbishop Reyes of the Philippines, President Lonardi of Argentina, and many church dignitaries. He was an expert witness for Dallas County in the Jack Ruby trial that followed the assassination of President Kennedy and the murder of Lee Harvey Oswald.

Dr. Forster was one of the founding "Four Horsemen" of the American Academy of Neurology, a society with over 19,000 members. He brought together the "Four Horsemen" as a group of close Midwestern neurologist colleagues in the 1940s. The group included A.B. Baker, MD, of the University of Minnesota, Russell N. DeJong, MD, of the University of Michigan, and Adolph L. Sahs, MD, of the University of Iowa. Together they saw a need for a new neurological society that had a broader and more inclusive membership than the elite, east coast-oriented American Neurological Association, and concurring on the need, they established the American Academy of Neurology (AAN) in 1948 with 52 charter members. Forster was president of the AAN from 1957-1959, and championed formation of sections within the academy, anticipating the subspecialization now occurring in the field. The Francis M. Forster Leadership Fund has been initiated at the AAN in his honor, and during 2005 the department's current individual faculty have collectively contributed the largest donation from a single academic department to the AAN Foundation. He also made significant contributions to many of the country's professional medical associations including the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology and the National Institute for Neurological Diseases and Blindness. He served as a consultant to the surgeon generals of USPHS, US Navy, and Air Force, and continued as an emeritus consultant for 25 years.

Dr. Forster was the recipient of many awards and honors. He was president of the Academy of Neurology, the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology, the American Epilepsy Society, and the Pavlovian Society. Special honors received in his lifetime include a Distinguished Service Award from the American Academy of Neurology, the William G. Lennox Award from the American Epilepsy Society, and Founders Awards from the Wisconsin Neurological Society and Wisconsin Epilepsy Society. He was a member of the Advisory Council of the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Blindness, the forerunner of today's National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, and served on many of its committees. He received an Honorary LL.D. degree from Xavier University 1955, and an Honorary D.Sc. degree from Georgetown University in 1982.

He will be long remembered and greatly missed by his family, his many friends, and his colleagues. With all his accomplishments he was genuinely interested in people. He was an engaging and personable individual, and throughout his life was extraordinarily successful in connecting with people and convincing them that they could do good work. He mailed out a yearly holiday letter that summarized what happened in the department during the year and sent copies to current and past trainees and faculty. While no currently active members of the department worked directly with Frank, he nevertheless motivated and inspired many of us. Religion was important to him. He loved puns and used them unmercifully. One example is an anecdote about Picabo Street, the Olympic skier. After she donated a large sum to a hospital, he quipped that the name for the new addition should be Picabo ICU. During his career he would often jokingly say to colleagues that their wives or husbands were too good for them. He was definitely good for us.

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