

IN MEMORIAM

Robert W. Burt, Sr., MD, 1937–2003

Robert W. Burt, Sr., MD, died in Indianapolis, IN, on October 13, 2003, at the age of 66 as the result of an aortic aneurysm. Bob was emeritus professor of radiology at Indiana University (IU) School of Medicine and, for 3 years before his retirement in 2000, director of the Nuclear Medicine Division.

In 1972, upon passing the nuclear medicine board examinations, he joined the IU nuclear medicine team as a most cooperative player. With a growing number of affiliated hospitals, administrators, and personnel, Bob's coordination skills assisted greatly in the development of a successful nuclear medicine clinical and educational program at the IU Medical Center. His background in the military melded well with his principal responsibility as clinical chief of nuclear medicine at the Roudebush Veteran's Affairs (VA) Hospital for a quarter of a century. Indeed, having experienced the onset of coronary artery disease at a very young age, precipitating his military discharge, he empathized with fellow veterans, even to the extent of pursuing cardiac nuclear medicine as his main professional interest. One of the results was a VA nuclear medicine cardiology service second to none in the nation. His medical problems never dampened his jovial spirit nor his natural amiability to all with whom he worked. Perhaps the value that he so clearly placed on every precious minute of life let him shun trivia and swiftly get to the heart of matters—he had an enviable gift of brevity, contributing often to the shortening of ponderous meetings. He was a true colleague and always ready to help with the many problems that the team encountered over the years. He was a perennial favorite with nuclear medicine residents and technology trainees.

Born in 1937 in Warsaw, IN, Bob graduated from Manchester College (North Manchester, IN) with a BS in Chemistry (1959) and from the Northwestern University Medical School (Chicago, IL) in 1963. He entered the Navy that year and interned at the Naval Hospital in Newport, RI. He was a resident in internal medicine at the Naval Hospital in Oakland, CA, from 1966 to 1969, when he was discharged with the rank of Lieutenant Commander. From 1969 to 1972 he studied nuclear medicine as a fellow at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania (HUP; Philadelphia). There he worked with David Kuhl, MD, with whom he published "Giant splenomegaly in sarcoidosis demonstrated by radionuclide scintiphography" (*JAMA*. 1971; 215:2110–2111). While at HUP, Bob also served as an assistant instructor in the Department of Radiology.

During his long association with the Indiana University School of Medicine he served as assistant, associate, and full professor of radiology and, ultimately, as director of the Division of Nuclear Medicine. At the Roudebush VA Med-

ical Center (Indianapolis, IN), he developed the nuclear medicine service "from scratch" and served as its chief for many years. In later years, his effective interaction with VA administrators led to one of the most exquisitely equipped VA nuclear medicine facilities extant, especially for SPECT and nuclear cardiology.



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With the advent of PET imaging devices and medical cyclotrons, Bob cooperated completely in the pursuit of a joint PET facility between the VA and the IU Hospitals, beginning in the mid 1980s and coming to fruition in 1990. Without that cooperation, the IU Medical Center probably would not have had PET for another decade. (Had that been the case, the excellent current PET patient studies on the SNM Web site from the IU Nuclear Medicine Division might not have been possible.) In addition, the early introduction of PET spawned a burst of digital imaging activity with the installation of a fiberoptic network linking the IU medical institutions, allowing Bob to become a pioneer in filmless digital medical imaging for the institutions. He accomplished this despite several extended periods of incapacitation from his underlying medical encumbrance.

Bob's talents were manifest not only at his home institutions but nationally. He was a charter member and past president of the American College of Nuclear Physicians. He was active on a number of SNM committees and was a past president of the Midwest Chapter of the Society. He chaired the Nuclear Medicine Section of the Indiana State Medical Association in 1985 and 1986 and was a member of the executive board of the VA chiefs of nuclear medicine group from 1990 to 1992. He was the author of more than 50 articles and book chapters on a broad range of nuclear medicine topics. He was a leader nationally in establishing the efficacy of PET imaging. At the time of his death, he served on the editorial boards of 3 medical journals: *The Journal of Nuclear Medicine*, *Radiology*, and *Stroke*.

Bob is survived by his wife, Irene C. Cox Burt, 3 children, and 1 granddaughter. He was buried at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia. Those of us who knew him as a scholar and gentleman are in awe of his accomplishments, especially when living with such health restrictions. He loved life, family, friends, and nuclear medicine and fought hard to the end to make the most of it all!

Henry N. Wellman, MD
Indiana University School of Medicine