

J. KIFFIN PENRY



J. Kiffin Penry (1929–1996) completed his residency training in neurology at Boston City Hospital, under Richard Masland and Martin Netsky and later Derek Deny–Brown (so impressed was he by his seniors that he named his three sons after them). In 1966, Penry was hired by Masland to initiate and develop an *Epilepsy Section* at the National Institutes of Health. This he did with extra–ordinary energy and skill and with Penry at the helm, epilepsy in the United States moved rapidly forward. There was little in clinical epilepsy that did not interest Penry. He pioneered the simultaneous use of EEG and video monitoring in the classification and diagnosis of epilepsy. He recognised early the importance of measuring serum levels of antiepileptic drugs. He conducted early clinical trials and was instrumental in getting the FDA to approve the therapeutic use of valproate in the United States. He initiated several series of textbooks, including *Basic Mechanisms of the Epilepsies* and *Antiepileptic Drugs*, and was involved in a number of massive publishing ventures. Penry’s initial involvement with the ILAE was as secretary on the League’s first Commission on Antiepileptic Drugs. He became secretary–general in 1973, and president in 1977. In 1979 Penry left the NIH to return to Bowman Gray, where he established a series of mini fellowships that as of 1996 had trained 2,200 fellows. He was a dynamo of a person, an enthusiast and an organisational genius, and admired by all who knew him. Towards the end of his life, he became increasingly disabled by diabetes, and was greatly affected by the premature death of one of his sons. A huge debt is owed by succeeding generations for his work on behalf of the ILAE and of epilepsy in general.

ANTIEPILEPTIC DRUGS

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RAVEN PRESS, PUBLISHERS • NEW YORK