



CELEBRATING THE FORWARD-THINKING CAREER OF NEUROLOGIST STANLEY APPEL

LEADERSHIP | For nearly four decades, Dr. Stanley H. Appel has dedicated his life to understanding neurological diseases and their devastating effects. Now the Houston Methodist Department of Neurology that he has chaired so many years will bear his name and become the Stanley H. Appel Department of Neurology – thanks to an unprecedented and remarkable gift from the woman who has worked by his side for 18 years – his wife Joan. “His passion for his work and for his patients is incredible,” Joan says. “I thought it would be a wonderful thing to name the department after him. He is really loved.” Her gift was a sudden epiphany, providing a pathway to ensure that her husband’s remarkable legacy will forever be associated with the nationally renowned department he has built at Houston Methodist. It also honors their mutual workplace, giving the hospital abundant resources to inspire excellence and innovation in perpetuity.

INSIGHT | Dr. Appel has served as chief of the neurology division and James B. Duke Professor of Medicine at Duke University Medical Center. He held a joint appointment as chair of the Department of Neurology at Baylor College of Medicine and chief of the neurology service at The Methodist Hospital from 1977 to 2004. He then became the first chair of the newly established Department of Neurology at Houston Methodist. In this role he also directs the Houston Methodist Neurological Institute and is professor of neurology at Weill Cornell Medicine. “This gift is extraordinary in so many ways,” says Marc L. Boom, President and CEO. “First, it’s from a woman who is, herself, a professional whose work instills the utmost respect and admiration. It’s also a transformational gift that blends current and future endowed funding that will continue to grow and support the organization forever. Finally, it’s from a wife honoring her husband in a very unique way, and both the benefactor and the honoree have dedicated their lives’ work to Houston Methodist.”

KNOWLEDGE | Stanley Hersh Appel was born in 1933 to Russian immigrant parents in Boston. As a young student at Boston Latin School, he was expected to study up to six hours a night. He completed his undergraduate work at Harvard, then attended Harvard Business School. But an epiphany at age 22 changed his course, and he decided to enroll in medical school to study and understand the workings of the human brain. He started at Tufts and earned his medical degree from Columbia College of Physicians and Surgeons, returning to Harvard for a medical internship.

FAMILY | Throughout his life, Dr. Appel has maintained strong ties to family and speaks with pride of his sons Evan and Jon, his daughter Tanya, and six grandchildren. It was Dr. Appel's mother, though, who always played a special role right up until the day she died at age 101. He had called her every Sunday night since moving into the dorm at Harvard. Dr. Appel remembers their final conversation in February 2010. "She said, 'You know, Stan, I'm tired. I think I'm going to say goodbye.'" The next day, he received a call that she died peacefully in her sleep. "She was in perfect cognitive health – she never lost a synapse."

PASSION | The Appels share a passion for neurology and a deep commitment to their patients. She is a physician assistant and conducted HIV and AIDS research before joining the Houston Methodist Department of Neurology in 1998. They both recall one patient's reaction to his diagnosis. Dr. Appel had just delivered the news when the patient said, "It must be so hard for you to go from room to room and tell people that they have ALS." "I just told you that you have ALS and all you can think of is us? That's why we're here," Dr. Appel recalls. "If anything is motivating, that is motivating. It keeps you going."

VISION | Quality and duration of life have improved for ALS patients over the years. Just 15 years ago, ALS patients lived an average of three years. Today, they live five to six years, some longer. Physicians are now able to better control the main clinical problems of ALS patients – breathing difficulties and falling. Dr. Appel has teamed up with Massachusetts General Hospital to study whether altering the immune system can help ALS patients. "We've spent many years documenting that the immune system plays a significant role in neurological diseases," Dr. Appel says. His research team recently took blood from an ALS patient and altered its properties before injecting it back into the patient after a few weeks. "In a mouse model, this dramatically extended its life," he says.

RESPECT | Dr. Appel's passion for his patients and his vision for the future of ALS research come alive in the ALS Clinic he founded 34 years ago. The MDA/ALS Research and Clinical Center was the first multidisciplinary care center for ALS patients in the country. One Friday a month, patients and their caregivers arrive early – it's first-come, first-served – and physicians, social workers, dietitians, physical and occupational therapists, volunteer lawyers and accountants come to them. They're called Team Hope, and they give people as much time as they need, with no direct cost to patients. The Appels are at their best on Clinic days, and they wouldn't miss one. The love and respect they share with these patients is present in their touch, their words and their smiles. Ronald Bess is a regular patient who comes three to four times annually and has for a decade. The 65-year-old retired refinery worker drives himself 55 miles to be the first one in line. "This gentleman shows that the more positive you are, the more you fight ALS and get on with your living, the better you do," Dr. Appel says. When the Appels hear that he arrives 45 minutes before the doors open at 6:30 a.m., they promise to put a chair by the elevator before the next Clinic.



THE APPELS ARE
PARTNERS
IN LIFE AND IN
MEDICINE



GRATITUDE | When Joan Appel decided on this gift to name the department in her husband's honor, Dr. Appel had no idea it was coming. "I'm grateful," he says, "but whether Stan Appel's name is on the department is not a key issue. What is most important is that we have a community of dedicated, highly motivated people who want to improve the quality of life for their patients." Joan's gift will do just that, by helping to ensure outstanding care and improved treatments in perpetuity through a sustained investment in research, innovation and discovery and by the continued recruitment and retention of leading clinician-scientists in the Appel Department of Neurology.

PARTNERSHIP | From the top floor of their Houston high-rise, the Appels have created a refuge above the city and the Texas Medical Center. They live with three cats and a nearly 360-degree view of the country's fourth-largest city. Every evening, they sit side-by-side and dine by candlelight. "There aren't many people who can work together 24-7, and we do," Dr. Appel says. "Neither of us likes to fight – we're non-confrontational people. We work very well together." And they make each other laugh. "She's smart as hell and always so funny," he says. "What you see is what you get," Joan Appel says of their relationship. "We have lunch together every day, and we always will. I keep threatening to retire, but I'll work until I drop dead. I know we're going to carry him out in a pine box."

LEGACY | Dr. Appel's list of accolades is long. He has written 15 books and more than 400 articles, won numerous awards, and trained more than 200 neurologists, many of them now heading their own departments. "Stan Appel is among the most pre-eminent neurologists in the world," says Houston Methodist Board Member Gary Edwards, whose late mother Sonja was treated by Dr. Appel and whose generous gifts – from Gary, his wife Peggy and their family – established the ALS Chair that Dr. Appel holds, named the ALS laboratory in his mother's memory, and established the envisioned Center for Neurodegenerative Diseases. "We're so grateful for the exceptional care he provided to my mother, and my family has been honored to support his work." Perhaps Dr. Appel's greatest, most lasting legacy will be his connection with patients and his ongoing quest to improve their lives through research, care and compassion.