Neil O. Hardy (1929-2018)

An award-winning medical illustrator, beloved teacher, and mentor.

Neil O. Hardy, CMI, FAMI, an award-winning medical illustrator, passed away on June 3, 2018 at the age of 88. Born in Syracuse, New York on July 30, 1929 to Paul Reeves and Marion Osgood Hardy. They moved to Belmont, New York and then to Sparrows Point, Maryland where he attended high school while his father was an instructor at the Aberdeen Proving Ground during World War II. Neil served in the U.S. Army during the Korean conflict, attached to a mapping unit in Tokyo. In 1955, he finished his BFA in a combined degree from the Maryland Institute and Johns Hopkins University.

In 1958, he earned a Certificate in Medical Illustration in the Department of Art as Applied to Medicine at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. While in school he was an avid swimmer and archer. On his application to the Department of Art as Applied to Medicine program he wrote about his hobbies for both art and the biological sciences and his great desire to combine them. "Medical Illustration would enable me to utilize both of my major interests in a beneficial way." At Hopkins, he studied under Ranice Crosby. It was hard work and much fun especially with fellow students like Howard Barner and Alan Cole. The AMI shares the many accolades Neil achieved in his generous service to the Association, to the generations of medical illustration students, and to the many clients and professionals with whom he worked.

After graduating from Hopkins, he moved to New York City and began his professional career by starting a department of medical illustration at the Eye Bank for Sight Restoration, a part of Manhattan Eye and Ear Hospital, and concurrently developed a freelance medical illustration business. In 1962, he launched a full-time freelance business from his home in Westport, Connecticut. Throughout his career he has worked for many varied clients including Reader's Digest, The New York Times, Red Book, Runner's World, Esquire, The American Journal of Nursing, Hospital Practice, Hospital Medicine, Scientific American, Cleggott Publishing, Advances in Oncology and HIV Advance in Research and Therapy, Modern Medicine, The American Heritage Dictionary, Stedman’s Medical Dictionary and many more.

He became a member of the New York Society of Illustrators ISI in 1968, and became a Lifetime Member in 1994. He was on the SI Board of Directors from 1989-1991. He showed many of his meticulously drawn medical illustrations with explanations about each one. Occasionally, he said, he had to store an eyeball or heart in the family refrigerator, much to the dismay of his wife, Judy.

One of the highlights of his career was collaborating on the book A Guided Tour of the Living Cell, by Nobel Laureate Dr. Christian de Duve for the Scientific American Library Series. He was an early pioneer in illustrating submicroscopic landscapes and was renowned as an expert in illustrating the molecular structure of DNA. Neil received the AMI Best Medical Book Award in 1978 for this book.

Virginia Ferrante-Iqbal wrote about the Retrospective of Neil Hardy at the Westport Public Library in 1999. Illustrations created at the beginning of his career were hanging next to his most recent molecular work and yet both looked as if they were done yesterday. His work is timeless. The mastery in his work is its clarity, every aspect of every drawing was researched and drawn with the highest attention to accuracy and detail. Each elegant composition always show human DNA correctly, as a right-handed helix."

Neil taught me, by example, to always pay it forward by sharing your knowledge with students and colleagues so that the profession will benefit as a whole. –Virginia Ferrante-Iqbal

He was also a guest lecturer at the Medical College of Georgia, Bridgeport University, and at numerous AMI meetings. Among his foremost joys professionally, was receiving the Ranice W. Crosby Distinguished Achievement Award (1992) from the Johns Hopkins University and The Brödel Award for Excellence in Education (2003) from the Association of Medical Illustrators. He was also AMI President 1982-1983, an Inaugural AMI Fellow in 1988, and received the AMI Lifetime Achievement Award in 1997. Neil is survived by his wife of 56 years, Judy, his son John, daughter Heather, and four grandchildren.

Please join us in celebrating the legacy of an extraordinarily talented Medical Illustrator, Sunday, July 22, 2018 at 10:00am, at the Westport Center for Senior Activities, 21 Imperial Avenue, Westport, CT 06880.

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Text provided by Gary Lees