John Scott Parks (October 1939–December 2021)

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of John Scott Parks, MD, PhD – December 23, 2021 – who is irreplaceable as a giant in the field of Pediatric Endocrinology. John Parks was an innovative researcher particularly in the genetics of growth who collaborated with researchers around the globe. But most of all John Parks will be remembered by a generation of fellows, from many countries, who have been trained by him and influenced by his model of a science-orientated physician who compassionately cared for patients.

John Scott Parks was born in Washington, DC on October 14, 1939 and was the only child to Dr. John L. Parks, an eminent obstetrician, and Mary Dean Parks. Already during high school, he excelled in academics but he also excelled in sports being the State shot put champion in both his junior and senior years. Even at this age, John showed his great social engagement and communicative qualities having been elected the president of the student council. Thereafter, John attended Amherst College and graduated magna cum laude with an A.B. in American Studies in 1961. He attended medical school at the University of Pennsylvania and earned his degree in 1966 and during that time was also a Fellow in Biochemistry at the National Institutes of Health working with Prof. J.B. Marsh and Prof. Ira Pastan. He was awarded his PhD in Biochemistry from the University of Pennsylvania in 1971. He completed his Pediatric and Pediatric Endocrine training with Prof. Alfred Bongiovanni at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. During this time he was also a Clinical Associate in the Endocrinology Branch at the National Cancer Institute at NIH working with Prof.

John Scott Parks

G.T. Ross and Prof. I. Pastan. From 1969 to 71 Dr. Parks served in the Reserve Corps of the US Public Health Service. Following completion of his training he joined the faculty in Pediatrics and Genetics at the University of Pennsylvania and worked at its renowned children's hospital (CHOP).

In 1982, John Parks moved to Emory University in Atlanta, GA and founded the Division of Pediatric Endocrinology with its great impact on patient care and teaching as well as clinical and basic research. While at Emory, John Parks served as Division Chief for 25 years and retired as Professor Emeritus with tenure in 2015.

The professional committees and boards John Parks participated in or chaired were numerous and diversified in their focus. For example, on a national level he served several committees for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) including the National Hormone and Pituitary

Program during the dramatic and rapid transition from human derived growth hormone (GH) to recombinant human GH. Dr. Parks also served on the Pediatric Endocrine subcommittee of the American Board of Pediatrics for many years. He was chairman of the Organizing Committee of the Endocrine Society meeting in 1990 and took several duties at the LWPES including being its President (1997–98). As a member and chairperson of the GeNeSIS Advisory Board, John Parks was also committed to promoting the new genetics of growth in the setting of global endocrine care.

Dr. Parks' research interest focused on the cellular actions of hormones. In particular, he was one of the first to investigate the hormones in the GH axis as well as the role of genes and genetic variation in the contribution to human growth. With his many collaborators from around the globe, Dr. Parks described molecular defects in the growth hormone axis including mutations of the growth hormone receptor responsible for Laron syndrome, the dominant negative effect of GH gene mutations and the role of genes that direct pituitary development, specifically, Pit-1 and Prop-1. Dr. Parks also studied the links between genes and variation in normal growth and skeletal maturation. In addition to authoring a great number of original articles, reviews, and book chapter John Parks was an impressive and internationally sought-after lecturer. Dr. Parks had the uncanny ability to explain complex patterns of genetic inheritance to the nonscientific public as well as to his peers in the scientific community. The clarity of his presentations reflected the profound penetration of the topics he addressed.

For those who had the chance to see patients with him, many were surprised by the aura of calmness and security that surrounded this physically dominant man. His reassuring approach was intuitively sensed by parents and children alike and families always felt they were the

focus of Dr. Parks' attention and they knew he would give them as much time as was necessary. His fellows would say "You know if Dr. Parks sat on the edge of the bed with a patient you were going to be there for a while."

John Parks would like to be most remembered for guiding and nurturing the pediatric endocrine careers of a generation of fellows. Those who have been trained by John hold him in highest esteem as clearly a brilliant endocrinologist, a resource beyond compare but also as the model of compassion and consideration in patient care. Although brilliant in reasoning, John Parks never carried an air of intellectualism and he was always humbly excited to embark on a new area of research in pediatric endocrinology with colleagues. His criticisms were restricted to factual aspects, always supportive, never hurting and often wrapped in his warm subtle humor. His breadth in knowledge of areas other than the sciences, like history and literature as well as the ongoing diversification of our world made him a renaissance man and a delightful dinner partner.

But this attempt of describing this remarkable person would be incomplete without also describing him as a family man. In 1959 John married Georgia Bigley. They raised 3 children and celebrated 5 grandchildren. Sadly, Georgia Parks died in 2008 after 49 years of marriage. John later married Sydney Waddell in 2010 and Sydney added 2 more children and 2 grandchildren. John loved his family deeply and modeled for pediatric endocrinologists how to establish work life balance.

John Parks will be dearly missed and remembered by the worldwide pediatric endocrine community, his family, his students, collaborators and colleagues, and his many personal friends.

Lillian R. Meacham, Atlanta (USA)

Michael B. Ranke, Tübingen (Germany)