

Anthony J. Raimondi

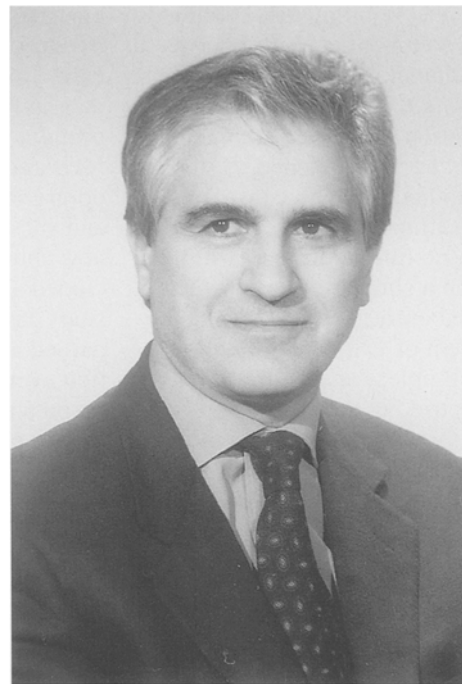
## Concezio Di Rocco

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Concezio Di Rocco, surely one of the four or five best all-round pediatric neurosurgeons in the world, served as President of ISPN during the calendar year 1994–1995. Concezio is a Christian name borne almost exclusively by natives of the Abruzzi and their sons; Concezio di Rocco was deprived of the company of his father – through death – at 10 years of age. He did his pre-university studies at the national preparatory school in Assisi, the town of birth of Saint Francis, in Umbria. He gives his father, or rather his father's library, the credit for his early and lasting interest in the classics, which along with the fact that he took his *'Maturité'* at the 'Propersio' classical lyceum, was very probably a decisively important factor in his ranking among the best students in Italy. It should perhaps be remarked at this point that the classical lyceum in Italy still offers the very best educational experience and imposes the most rigorous academic demands upon the pupils: they learn; they learn to think; they learn to analyze; and they acquire true culture.

It was during his lyceum years that Concezio (Ezio) met Paula, falling in love with her immediately and subsequently marrying her after completing his medical studies. When they met, Ezio was the one who wished to become an architect, very probably because he had been exposed to the works of Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier, very probably because of his natural gift for expressing himself with paint and brush, and also very probably because of a drive to give vent to his God-given talents of seeing, interpreting, and synthesizing. He was distracted, however, by the works of Freud and Jung and of Brown and consequently changed course for medicine. Fortunately, he did not pursue the alchemy of psychiatry, but gravitated rather to the very real world of the surgical treatment of diseases



of the central nervous system. Paula, however, for reasons not known to me, did become an architect, thus providing Ezio with an ongoing vicarious relationship with his adolescent 'love' for the master science.

Ezio very probably had great difficulty in accepting the non-organic interpretation of disease, for his realism and very active tactical aptitudes would never permit total abandon to theoretic interpretations of philosophical perspectives. In fact, during his medical studies at the Università Cattolica in Rome, he gravitated immediately to Professor Gianfranco Rossi, an internationally recognized neurophysiologist, one of the students of Moruzzi (the discoverer of the reticular activating system).

Gianfranco Rossi taught Concezio Di Rocco the importance of subspecialization, directing him into pediatric

neurosurgery, and sent him to the Children's Memorial Hospital in Chicago to study under Professor Anthony J. Raimondi. It was there that he saw the full range of pediatric neurosurgery as a human, scientific, technical, and experimental discipline, permitting its professionals to undertake surgical treatment of the most complicated pathologic entities in children – and to do this within the constraints imposed by a suffering family and justifiably demanding pediatricians.

By 27 years of age, Dr. Di Rocco was already publishing papers on the effects of corticosteroids on cerebral edema, electroencephalography, and epileptic foci. His pediatric neurosurgical studies led him into experimental work on intracranial pressure, hydrocephalus, cerebral angiography, maintenance of the stability of the spinal column after spinal cord surgery, and craniosynostosis. His interest in hydrocephalus, craniosynostosis, and intracranial pressure phenomena (all begun at Children's Memorial) has stayed with him to the present day, as has his fascination with the full range of epileptogenic pathology. Thus, his exposure to the thinking and work of Gianfranco Rossi and the world of pediatric neurosurgery at the Children's Memorial Hospital, which came very early in

his academic life, was responsible both for forming him and for his present activities: an artist learns first to make colors and then to compose them; the composition of colors is the measure of the artist's greatness.

The scientific productivity of Concezio Di Rocco is remarkable from the aspects of both quantity and quality, with a well-balanced distribution of books, chapters in multi-author works, articles, and abstracts. His involvement in scientific organizations, post-graduate teaching, and the career development of his students reflects his academic mind and socio-professionally oriented spirit.

Paula, his wife, is now a highly successful and very well-established architect with teaching appointments at both the University of Rome and the University of Paris; their son, Federico, is an outstanding student presently enrolled in the faculty of medicine at the University of Paris; and he, Concezio, maintains an extraordinarily active professional, academic and family life in Rome and Paris. His fluent knowledge of English and French permits him to live out his international life fully and to see clearly that common thread upon which all of mankind is strung: intelligence is worthless without culture; culture is of negative value when deprived of human application.