

## Introduction of Felix Rapaport for 1998 Medawar Prize

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IT is fitting that Felix Rapaport should receive the prize named for the man with whom he is shown in Fig 1, 30 years ago. Felix has served our Society as Founding Secretary, past-President, and continuous Council membership for 32 years, and as Founder and Editor of Transplantation Proceedings.

However, Rapaport's influence on transplantation stems primarily from his scientific contributions. Between 1958 and 1962, he reported the first systematic study of skin allograft rejection in humans which suggested the existence of tissue types in man. These studies, and subsequent ones with Jean Dausset which will be described by Dr Rapaport, culminated in definition of the dog (DLA) and human

(HLA) leukocyte antigen systems, and defined "the laws of transplantation" in both species. When Dausset became co-recipient of the Nobel Prize in 1980 for the discovery of HLA, he remarked that equal credit should go to Rapaport.

The very diversity of Rapaport's later studies may have obscured the importance of these succeeding contributions. By showing that cytoablated dogs who were reconstituted with *autologous* bone marrow could acquire tolerance to kidney *allografts* during a brief window of opportunity,<sup>1</sup> he predicted the tolerogenic role of stem cells. Other first time observations included the loss of cellular immunity with malignant disease, severe trauma and burns,<sup>2-5</sup> the genetic control and sex-linkage of host resistance to thermal and



Fig 1. Felix Rapaport (left) with Sir Peter Brian Medawar at the second congress (II) of the Transplantation Society (1968).



Fig 2. The stages of childhood: age 3 in Munich, age 8 in Paris, and age 11 (with family) in the Dominican Republic.

radiation injury;<sup>6,7</sup> and crossreactivity between bacterial and histocompatibility antigens.<sup>8-10</sup>

To understand the man responsible for these achievements, one must know the child. Recent television appeals for support of refugee children have given accounts of former refugees as diverse as Albert Einstein and the gymnast, Nadia Comaneci, with the background music of "Where have all the flowers gone?" This morning, two incipient mid-century flowers, Felix Rapaport and Fritz Bach, have blossomed into Medawar laureates.

The nomadic life for Felix began idyllically in Munich in 1930, complete with a beautiful nursemaid (Fig 2, left). It would never be this comfortable again. Pursued by the threat of genocide, the Rapaport family moved to Paris (Fig 2, middle). When France fell, the Rapaports found them-

selves literally at sea, unable to find a port of disembarkation until the Dominican Republic opened its doors (Fig 2, right). For Felix, it was an opportunity to learn his third language.

The Rapaport journey next turned north to New York City, Stuyvesant High School, and a higher education at New York University. Always a star student and a leader, a robust Felix Rapaport is shown in Fig 3 (left) during his second year in medical school (1952), in shocking contrast to the emaciated fourth year student dying of hepatitis in a back room of the New York Bellevue hospital (Fig 3, middle).

As he had done before, Felix turned potential tragedy into triumph. This time, he was helped by his teacher, Dr John Converse, the noted plastic surgeon who ignited



Fig 3. The second year medical student (left), victim of near fatal hepatitis (during fourth year) (middle), and subsequent United States naval officer (right).



Fig 4. The Rapaport progeny (above) with Margaret and Felix (below).

Rapaport's interest in the still embryonal field of transplantation. Over the next decade, their joint activities with the New York Academy of Science established the mold from which the Transplantation Society was struck. Fully recovered from the hepatitis, Rapaport served as an officer in the United States Navy (Fig 3, right) and began his long odyssey as a peerless educator, scientist and transplant surgeon.

His most successful transplant procedures were donation of half of the genes to the vital collection from the next generation shown in Fig 4, to which the other half was given by the beautiful Margaret (lower left), his equal partner in this enduring marriage.

Where has this flower gone? Far from being ruined by the winds of this most terrible and most magical century, he is here today. Ladies and gentlemen, I present to you Felix Rapaport.

#### REFERENCES

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