

## Hall of Fame

March 30, 2006

You have been recognized for your significant contributions to the field of assistive technology and to the RESNA organization by being designated a RESNA Fellow. We are in the process of creating a RESNA Hall of Fame to maintain a record of Fellows' achievements for future generations of RESNA members and the general public.

I am writing to ask for your help and indulgence in creating an exceptional RESNA Hall of Fame. Below, please find a series of questions that will help elucidate your achievements, philosophies, and advice for your entry in RESNA's Hall of Fame. To respond to the questions, you may:

- Write your answers as a Word document and email it back to me.
- Go to the RESNA website: <http://www.resna.org/ProfessOrg/SIGs/SIGSites/SIG11/halloffame.html> and answer the questions online.
- Request a phone interview and I will call you and record, and later transcribe, your answers.

In addition to responding to the questions, would you please send a (flattering) picture for your Hall of Fame entry by separate email to me at [jweisman@vtc.edu](mailto:jweisman@vtc.edu). We prefer you send a picture your colleagues will recognize, i.e. baby pictures and Halloween costume pictures are not appropriate.

Please feel free to contact me by email or phone (802/734-1021) if you have any questions or suggestions.

Thank you very much for your time and for your contributions to the assistive technology and rehabilitation engineering fields and to the RESNA organization. The field and the organization are better for your involvement and service.

It would be very helpful if we can receive your answers no later than **Monday, April 10, 2006**. I look forward to hearing from you.

Warmest Regards,

Jerry Weisman

### RESNA Hall of Fame Interview

Please answer the following questions. When appropriate, please answer the questions with respect to the period you were awarded the RESNA Fellow.

Name:

Robert Edwin Tooms, M.D.

1. Date of Birth:

26 Oct 33

2. Place of Birth:

Dyersburg, TN

3. When did you first start working in assistive technology field?

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1965 — Established Memphis Child Amputee Clinic  
1975 — Established U. of TN Rehabilitation Engineering Center

4. How did you get into the rehabilitation engineering and/or assistive technology field? What is your professional background?

An orthopaedic surgeon, I spent six months as a Fellow at the Rancho Los Amigos Rehab. Hospital in Downey, CA and was exposed to rehab. engineering by Drs. Vernon Nichols, Jacqueline Perry & Alice Garrett, <sup>roy suggsion and</sup> the orthotic staff, plus Jim Allen & Andy Karelak of Rehab. Enginee in Memphis.

5. Was there one event, experience or person that played an important role in your decision to get into assistive technology field?

Working with Ronney Snell, CPO, and Douglas Hobson, P. Eng.

6. Why did you choose this field? What was your motivation?

To bring much needed engineering technology to solving the problems of disabled children. Seating for the severely involved child with cerebral palsy was a great need locally and nationally.

7. Has there been a particular person who was an inspiration or mentor to you? Describe your relationship with that person.

Ronney Snell, Douglas Hobson and I established the U. of TN Rehab. Eng. program & worked together for the duration of the program.

8. Why is rehabilitation engineering and/or assistive technology important to you? Describe the central focus your work in the field. How does your work fit into the field?

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The central focus of our Center was developing a system of seating for severely handicapped cerebral palsy children, then communication devices & various other assistive devices.

9. What are some of your most memorable successes in the field? How did they make you feel?

Developing concepts of seating techniques for CP involved children, using prefabricated modular systems, and teaching these concepts on an international basis.

10. What do you consider your greatest contribution(s) to the field?

Use of multidisciplinary approaches to applying rehab. engineering care for severely disabled children, particularly seating for C.P. children and developing externally powered prosthetic systems for limb deficient children.

11. What are some of your most memorable failures in the field? How did you deal with them?

Loss of major local funding source and staff leading to closure of program.

12. Describe what you consider to be significant changes in the field since you first entered it.

Marked expansion of professionals (engineers, M.D.'s, therapists) actively involved in both research & clinical application of rehab. engineering technology.

13. What do you perceive as the most important advances in the field? How have they affected your work?

Information exchange between engineering professionals and health care professionals leading to more widespread R.E. solutions for severely handicapped persons.

14. What do you see as the future of rehabilitation engineering and assistive technology?

Greater use of engineering technology worldwide to solve major problems of the handicapped.

15. Describe your role within RESNA. How has RESNA helped you in your career?

Part of the establishment of the <sup>RESNA</sup> organization and advocate of more training in R.E. principles in both engineering and health care professionals.

16. What do you see as the future of RESNA?

To continue as the premiere organization for communication + advocacy in rehab. engineering.

17. What would you say to those just entering the field?

A wonderful choice of health care career; unlimited opportunity to enhance the life of handicapped persons and their families

Thank you very much!!

Click ONCE to submit your Hall of Fame Information