

# Arthur E. Guedel Memorial Anesthesia Center

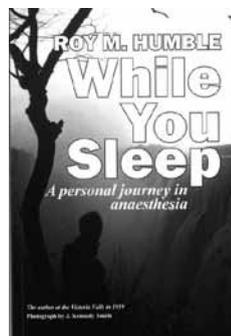
## Interested in a Good New Book? A Visit to the Guedel Results in One!

*By Selma Calmes, M.D., President,  
Board of Trustees, Guedel Memorial Center*

Interested in a new book that's fun to read? Retired anesthesiologist Roy M. Humble's book, *While You Sleep: A Personal Journey in Anaesthesia* (Melrose Books, Cambridgeshire, U.K., 2011), is a wonderfully entertaining read focused on anesthesia. It came into being after his visit to the Guedel Memorial Center in San Francisco, to see the Richard Gill curare collection. The visit got him thinking about his life in anesthesia, and thus this book. Because of the book's special interest to anesthesiologists, this article will review it and discuss why anesthesiologists might enjoy it.

The Guedel's collection of items related to the history of anesthesia is often used by researchers. As with any historic library, the researcher has to get written permission to use images, such as pictures of equipment; must give credit to the Guedel Center in the publication; and then must provide a copy of the publication to the library. Guedel images in the last few years have appeared in publications from Australia to England, in anesthesia journals and in textbooks. Dr. Humble used a picture from the Gill collection in his book. We wouldn't have known about this book of personal memoirs except for the requirement to send us a copy of the publication.

When the book arrived, the cover looked interesting, so I read it. I loved it. Dr. Humble has had an amazing life while practicing medicine on three continents. He was born in Scotland and attended Glasgow University and Dublin's Rotunda Hospital. He was then a junior medic in the British Army in Egypt and Libya. After traveling in Zimbabwe, he became a family doctor in Kenya. As Africa's political changes began, he and his wife decided to return to England. He had been doing anesthesia since medical school graduation, in addition to his medical practice, and he decided to specialize in anesthesia. Anesthesia training in London led to a consultant anesthetist position in Dumfries, Scotland. In 1969, he moved to Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.



## Guedel Center (cont'd)

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Most chapters have interesting ties to anesthesiology. His early experience as a tonsillectomy and adenoidectomy patient, the state of anesthesia during medical school and his days in Africa, and the situation for anesthesia (no blood gases, no ICUs, etc.) as he began specialty training are all handled with a precise understanding of the hazards of those times and the progress that we've made. His descriptions of many challenging patients will remind most anesthesiologists of their own similar situations and bring back many memories.

Two things make this book especially attractive: its structure and the style. The book is divided into two parts: his early life, medical training and early practice, and his later life once he began specializing in anesthesia. Each section has numerous short chapters with intriguing titles ("The Day God Came to Call," "Four Men in a Car," "The Flying Death"). Each chapter can stand alone. But Dr. Humble's style is the book's greatest attraction. He is generally lighthearted and very humorous, but turns dead serious in many areas, especially when patients die due to anesthetic or surgical care.

Reading this book will bring back many memories of life as an anesthesiologist to most of us. For recent graduates, it is a good tale about what anesthesia was like in the early days; it also vividly illustrates the strong qualities (including humor) of those who tried to move anesthesia forward in the early days. This is a delightful read. Because of the short chapters, it is especially good for before-bed reading. The book also serves to recognize anesthesiologists and their accomplishments—its back cover quote begins: "When thanking your surgeon after a successful operation, do you ever spare a thought for the individual who brought you safely through that surgery?" We're fortunate Dr. Humble visited the Guedel and decided to write about his life in anesthesia.

*This book is available on Amazon.com.*

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