

## The life-saving laboratory

Failures in the operating room are reevaluated in his laboratory, where the tools and techniques of his art are invented. The failures make starkly clear the importances of laboratory and animal studies to medical research and the horrible absurdity of the so-called animal rights advocates.

Sylvester's book also stresses the importance of the technological advances in the tools of surgery. Though Spetzler acknowledges his special gift for vascular surgery, he wants to ensure that all vascular surgeons can have the physical capability to do what he can. Toward this end he is deeply involved in designing new instruments and robotic devices: For example, he has developed an instrument which helps to place an aneurysm clip correctly, thereby, he says, making "any neurosurgeon a very good neurosurgeon."

## Listening to the fugue

However, Spetzler's main ambition is to make his profession obsolete: finding cures, being able to replace damaged brain tissue, to "repair" the brain, or prevent problems from arising. " 'Neurosurgeons will play a critical role in bringing all this about,' Spetzler says, and in doing so may put themselves out of business. But, 'It is not an unglorious occupation to put yourself out of business. That requires all of the very best talents. The sin is to try to hang on to the past only to have a profession, rather than using discoveries to make a glorious step into the future, to be part of whatever comes next.' "

Spetzler became director of Barrow Neurological Institute in Arizona in 1986 and developed it into one of the most modern centers for neurosurgery in the world. He emphasizes teamwork in all the disciplines necessary for his field, and

teamwork, he is convinced, is the secret of the many successful "standstill" procedures he has performed there. Another factor is certainly the great amount of excellent research done at Barrow.

Spetzler also rejects the argument that there is any procedure too expensive to perform. This book beautifully proves that surgery "on the frontiers" will repay the cost many times over, eventually becoming a standard procedure, thus pushing the boundaries of life back, one step at a time.

Sylvester insightfully compares the interplay of questions posed and answered in neurosurgery to a fugue in Classical music: "Finally there is the fugue, the most complex of the three [musical forms including the round and the canon], that follow this same idea of introducing higher-level repeats that are not quite repeats. The fugue, too, goes on and on, with a newly entering musical voice overlaying a theme so similar to the preceding that it catches your ear, your mind's ear. And endless in repetition it is, and not quite a repetition, now faster, now slower, and sometimes working in upon itself." Sylvester might have added that while listening to a fugue, you do not hear the composer's whole intent in any one voice or even in the successive voices. You suddenly hear a voice which seems to unify all the different voices and ideas into an altogether new idea: one which is not to be found anywhere in the notes, or, for that matter, in the three pounds of tissue in your skull.

## Books Received

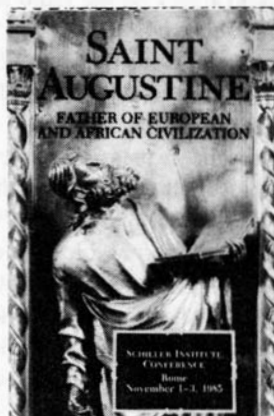
**The Downing Street Years**, by Margaret Thatcher, HarperCollins, New York, 1993, 914 pages, hardbound, \$30

**The Struggle for Russia: Power and Change in the Democratic Revolution**, by Ruslan Khasbulatov, edited by Richard Sakwa, Routledge, New York, 1993, 270 pages, hardbound, \$29.95

**Tower of Secrets, A Real Life Spy Thriller**, by Victor Sheymov, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, Md., 1993, 230 pages, hardbound, \$24.05

**Dorothy Maynor and the Harlem School of the Arts: The Diva and the Dream**, by William F. Rogers, Edwin Mellen Press, Lewiston, N.Y., 1993, 286 pages, hardbound, \$79.95

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