

# Robert (Bob) Wabnitz

1925-2007

"Wabby" as he was known to his students



Bob Wabnitz demonstrating the carbon dust technique at RIT, late 1980s.

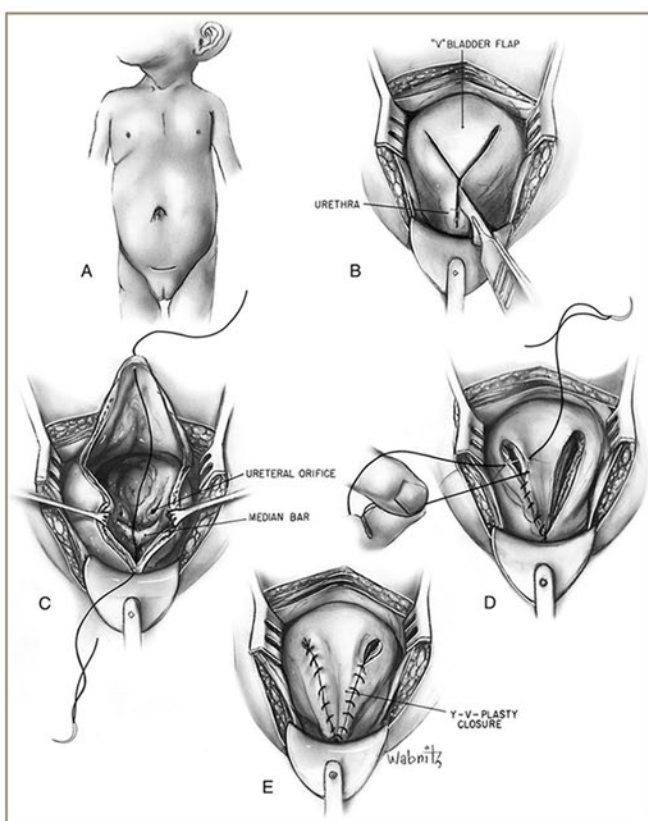
Bob was the long-time director of the Medical Illustration unit at the University of Rochester Medical Center, and was founder and former director of the Medical Illustration program at Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT).

**Robert C. Wabnitz** was born May 11, 1925 in Rochester, NY and served in Europe during WWII. After the war, he attended Rochester Institute of Technology, receiving an art degree in 1948. While in school, he learned of a new Medical Illustration program that was about to open at the University of Rochester School of Medicine under the direction of Natt Jacobs. Jacobs had studied under Max Brödel at Hopkins in the mid-1920s and went on to become one of the charter members of the AMI. Jacobs spent his entire career at the University of Rochester and, after Brödel's death in 1941, decided to establish his own Medical Illustration program. The program officially opened in 1948 with Bob Wabnitz as one of its first students.

Bob completed the Rochester program in 1951 and was hired as a medical artist at the James Kennedy V.A. Hospital in Memphis, TN. During this time, he collaborated with Dr. Charles Mayo Goss, professor of anatomy at Louisiana State University, to complete new artwork for the 26th edition of Gray's Anatomy (1954). Shortly thereafter, he relocated to New York City where he was staff medical illustrator at St. Clare's Hospital. He continued his work with Dr. Goss on new illustrations for the 100th Anniversary Edition of Gray's, released in 1959.

When Natt Jacobs passed away in 1959, the University of Rochester Medical Illustration program closed its doors. In 1960, Bob Wabnitz was hired to replace Jacobs as head of the service unit, but the teaching program remained closed. Bob continued to direct the Medical Illustration unit for the next 25 years and held the position of Research Associate until his retirement in 1998.

For the next fifteen years, Bob sought to re-open the teaching program. He finally got his chance in 1975 when the University of Rochester introduced a Master's degree program in Health Sciences Education. Bob directed the Medical Illustration track. When the University of Rochester phased out all of its Allied Health programs in 1978, Bob relocated the Master's program to RIT. The undergraduate and graduate programs have operated at RIT ever since while still maintaining a strong affiliation with the U. of R. medical school.



Y-V vesicourethroplasty for bladder neck contracture and median bar. From White, Robert R. 1965. *Atlas of Pediatric Surgery*. New York: McGraw-Hill. Illustrated by Robert C. Wabnitz.

Like Brödel and Jacobs before him, Bob's preferred medium was carbon dust on Ross Board. However, he developed his own distinctive style, considerably less detailed than his predecessors. Although he never sacrificed accuracy, he was able to churn out surgical drawings at an astounding pace. During his 45-year career, Bob illustrated over a dozen surgical atlases, including:

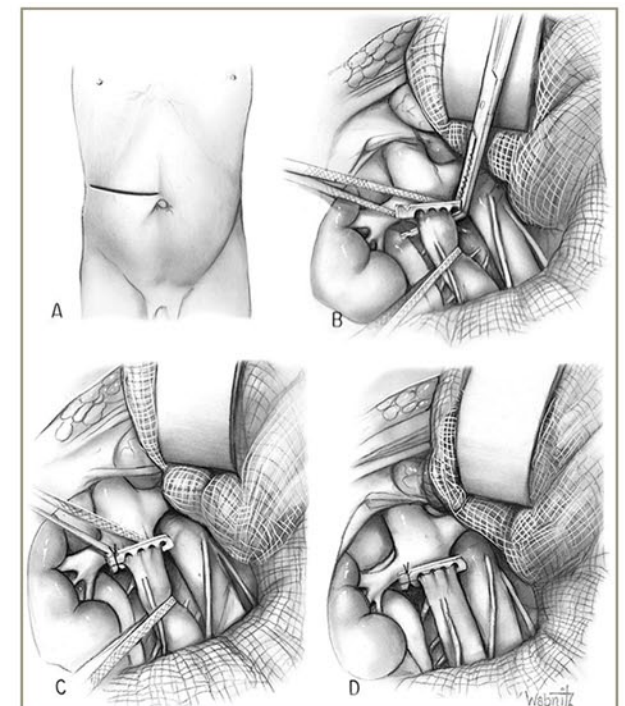
- *Orthopaedic Surgery*, Robert B. Duthie
- *Atlas of Pediatric Surgery*, Robert R. White
- *Essentials of Human Reproduction*, Joseph Thomas Velardo
- *Dynamic Classification of Bone Dysplasias*, Philip Rubin
- *Atlas of Orthopedic Surgery*, Louis Goldstein and Robert Dickerson
- *Atlas of Head and Neck Surgery*, John Loré
- *Principles of Surgery*, Seymour I. Schwartz
- *A Guide To Physical Examination*, Barbara Bates
- *Neurology and Neurosurgery: Basic Principles*, Frank P. Smith
- *Atlas of Otorhinolaryngology*, J.M. Toomey
- *Atlas of Technics in Surgery*, John L. Madden
- *Atlas of Operations for Soft-Tissue Tumors*, Constantine Karakousis

In his 23 years of teaching, he trained over 200 students, many of whom are now employed by prominent studios, universities, and medical centers across the country. He was well-loved by his students, who appreciated his incredible patience and dry sense of humor. He is survived by his wife Susan, five children, twelve grandchildren, and one great-grandchild.

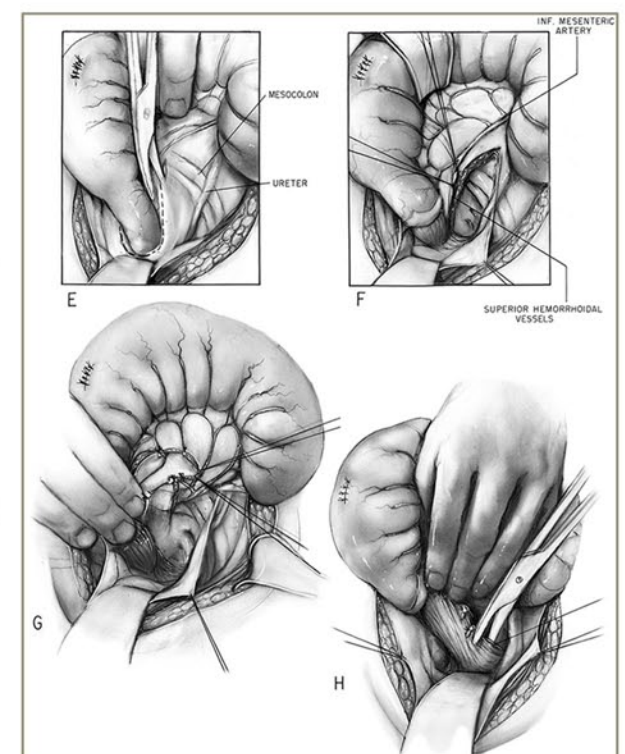
- Jim Perkins, Rochester Institute of Technology



The Medical Illustration class at the University of Rochester School of Medicine, 1950. Natt Jacobs is seated, center. Bob Wabnitz is seated next to him, 2nd from the right.



Partial interruption of inferior vena cava for deep venous thrombosis. From Adams, J.T. and DeWeese, J.A. 1966. *Partial interruption of the inferior vena cava with a new plastic clip. Surgery in Gynecology and Obstetrics* 123:1087. Illustrated by Robert C. Wabnitz.



Swenson pull-through procedure for repair of aganglionic megacolon (Hirschsprung's Disease). From White, Robert R. 1965. *Atlas of Pediatric Surgery*. New York: McGraw-Hill. Illustrated by Robert C. Wabnitz.