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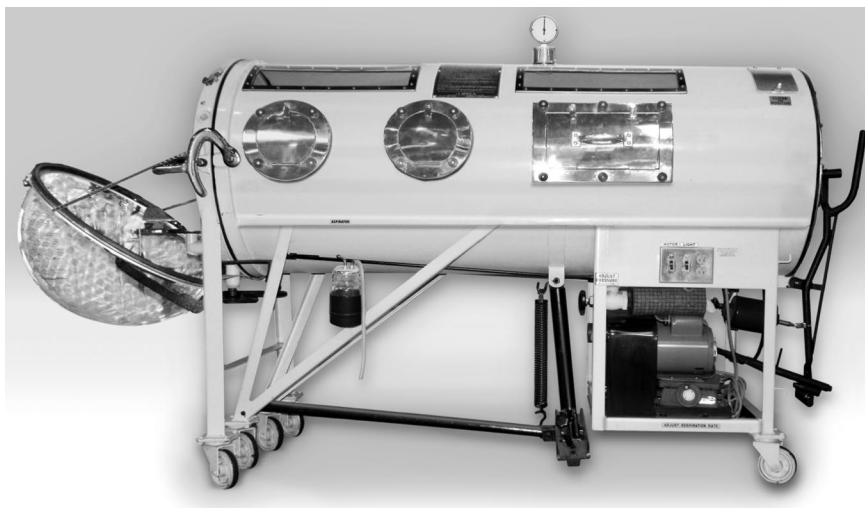
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## ■ ANESTHESIOLOGY REFLECTIONS

### Emerson Respirator or “Iron Lung”



A descendant of Ralph Waldo Emerson, John Haven “Jack” Emerson (1906–1997) demonstrated his mechanical genius by inventing in 1931 the first efficient, economical “iron lung,” which he called his “Respirator.” When Harvard University sued him for patent infringement, Emerson invalidated Harvard’s patents by proving others had prior claims on the tank respirator. “Not bad,” Jack noted drily, “for a high school dropout.” Unlike his prevailing sense of humor, Emerson’s eyes were rarely dry around photographs from the 1950s of school gymnasiums filled with tank-bound polio-stricken children. Many of these youngsters would eventually recover from their suffocating paralysis, courtesy of their tiny versions of his Emerson Respirator. (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists, Inc. This image appears in the *Anesthesiology Reflections* online collection available at [www.anesthesiology.org](http://www.anesthesiology.org).)

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