

REMEMBERING Cherished Friends

Revered former General Surgery chair passes

A dedicated cancer specialist who spent nearly 30 years of his career as chief of the Department of General and Oncological Surgery at City of Hope (COH), Ralph L. Byron Jr., M.D., F.A.C.S., recently passed away at age 91.



DR. RALPH L. BYRON, JR.

Prior to joining COH in 1955, Dr. Byron ran his own medical practice in San Francisco. Earlier, he served for two years in the South Pacific with the U.S. Marine Corps during World War II. Other medical posts included working as a clinical professor of Surgery at the University of California Medical School and as assistant director of its Cancer Research Institute, and as a clinical professor of Surgery at Loma Linda Medical School. He served as a consultant to the San Diego Naval Hospital, as well.

A deeply spiritual man, Dr. Byron will be remembered at COH for penning "Surgeon of Hope," (Fleming H. Revell Company, 1977), a book in which he discussed his experiences at the institution. He is survived by his wife, Dorothy, three sons and a daughter.

"One of Dr. Byron's greatest joys in life was to train and mentor bright, highly motivated physicians seeking specialized training in cancer research and surgery then see them go on to lead the way in advanced patient care and medical research," says COH consultant and Distinguished Scientist Eugene Roberts, Ph.D., F.A.I.C. "Those who worked with Dr. Byron can testify to the fact that he was never satisfied with anything less than the pursuit of excellence in his life and in his profession." ❖

Memories of a beloved sister's battle with cancer

On September 19, 1994, 40-year-old Nancy Ann Kramer, an attorney from Oakland, Calif., succumbed to malignant melanoma after a year of ongoing treatment at City of Hope (COH). As a tribute to her beloved sister on the 10-year anniversary of Nancy's passing, Sunland, Calif.-based writer Pat Kramer wrote an essay about her family's experience at COH.

As part of a then-experimental treatment program for cancer, Nancy fought a valiant, three-year battle, surviving well past her initial six-month prognosis. In retrospect, I believe her longevity was due to her fiery spirit, her tremendous faith in her doctors, and the exceptional care she received at City of Hope (COH).

My sister truly was an exceptional person. A high achiever in all that she did, Nancy was blessed with beauty, intelligence and a great sense of humor that won friends easily. A criminal defense attorney by profession, Nancy spent her time fighting for others' rights under the law. Despite her success, she always remained humble. Once I recall watching her give a homeless woman some money. When I asked why she did it, she had a simple reply: "Because whenever you see a homeless woman, there are children somewhere who need to be fed. She needs this money more than I do."



NANCY ANN KRAMER

That same spirit prevailed even when she was undergoing long-term treatment at COH. While visiting her, I noticed that she knew all the staff by name and also knew about their lives. For despite her own personal ordeal, my sister always cared about others and retained her sense of compassion and humor until the end.

Having family around during her treatments was also really important to Nancy. Since she lived in Oakland, Calif., she had to leave her husband, Howard, and their baby, Aaron, when she came to COH. Since I live close by, I was a frequent visitor at the Medical Center. However, my parents live on the East Coast, so the Hope and Parsons Village was an invaluable resource for us. She especially enjoyed seeing them.

For me, the rose gardens and fountains on campus brought me tremendous peace during the time I was with her. We spent many visits gazing at the beautiful gardens, talking about our lives and our dreams for the future.

Since Nancy's passing, I continue to remember COH with fondness because I know that everything that could have been done, was done for her. In addition to providing her with the best medical care, I appreciate the love, compassion and respect that Nancy received from COH staff members when she needed it most. In the end, those little things meant everything. ❖