

Remembering Martin Shearn, MD

A Tribute to Martin Shearn, MD

By Edgar J Schoen, MD

An announcement in 2002 noted that Dr Martin Shearn had died and that he had been Chief of Medicine at the Kaiser Permanente (KP) facility in Oakland. Physicians of TPMG and across the country deserve to know more about Marty. Even though many of them were not members of our group or perhaps not even physicians when he retired 13 years ago, they owe much to Marty's professional brilliance and pioneering innovations and leadership.

When Marty and I joined TPMG almost 50 years ago, in the mid fifties, we were under fire from the national and local medical professional organizations, which banned us from membership as a "socialist" organization and the enemy of fee-for-service practice. The press wasn't friendly either, and the general public conception was that although KP was cheap, the physicians were not up to the fee-for-service standard and you got what you paid for. As a counterbalance, we knew that we were good, and we had a loyal and growing patient membership. Our emphasis was on economic survival and on keeping up with the clinical demands of our members. Marty added the dimensions of education and professional excellence. As Director of Medical Education, he took a moribund residency program with few applicants and transformed it into one of the leading and most desirable clinical training programs in

the country, receiving multiple applicants for each available position. He talked the Health Plan into sponsoring annual medical symposia featuring famed speakers, including a number of Nobel Laureates. He was a model of academic excellence as well as a caring and productive practitioner. He became a noted rheumatologist; a Clinical Professor at the University of California San Francisco; and the author of many medical publications including a classic monograph on Sjögren's syndrome. He was a stimulating teacher and had a prodigious memory. Many of his residents joined TPMG and themselves became department chiefs and leading practitioners. They held him in awe and kept in touch with him—some were at his funeral.

It was people like Marty Shearn who got us here. We should remember that.



Marty was my closest friend and best man at my wedding. He was funny and stimulating with boundless energy. He excelled at anything he tried—whether it was music, painting, tennis—or even graphology. He was a loving husband and father.

Robbie Pearl calls attention to the unparalleled level of care and professional excellence of today's TPMG. It was people like Marty Shearn who got us here. We should remember that. ❖

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