

Stephen J. Ryan

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Stricken by a rapidly progressive illness, Stephen J. Ryan, President of the Doheny Eye Institute and Grace and Emery Beardsley Chair of Ophthalmology at the University of Southern California, died at home on April 29th, 2013, with his loving family at his side. He is survived by his wife, Anne, and daughter, Patricia, and brothers, Richard, John, and Robert and their families.

Steve Ryan appeared to be a constantly working professional. However, he believed in the power of family and friendship. He married Anne Christine Mullady in September of 1965 and this year would have marked their 48th anniversary. His network of friends was large and global, and every friend has a story to tell about some kind of positive interaction with Steve. While Doheny was

Steve's life's work, he understood the value of deep connections with family and friends. Ron Smith, M.D, chairman of the Department of Ophthalmology of the Keck School of Medicine of the University of Southern California, says: "He was my friend, colleague, big brother, mentor, and role model for almost 50 years—beginning with medical school and our residency together. He will be missed by all of us, not only as a dynamic and visionary leader of Doheny and in national and international ophthalmology, but also as a loyal friend and colleague who was always ready with a helping hand and words of encouragement for anyone who sought his advice and counsel. The world is a better place as a result of Steve's life."

Stephen J. Ryan was born on March 20, 1940 in Honolulu, Hawaii as son of an Irish American ophthalmologist and a Canadian mother. He earned his undergraduate degree in biology summa cum laude at Providence College in 1961. He went on to medical school at Johns Hopkins University. There he was introduced to vision research—stimulating his lifelong passion for ophthalmology. He was awarded his M.D. from the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in 1965. After internship at Cornell's Bellevue Hospital, Steve returned to Johns Hopkins Wilmer Ophthalmological Institute for his residency. He served as Chief Resident from 1969–70, was named an assistant professor, and contributed to his country as a fellow at the Ophthalmic Pathology Branch of the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology.

In a 2012 interview with Archives of Ophthalmology he credited A. Edward Maumenee, M.D., as his mentor and role model while a resident, chief resident, assistant and associate professor at Wilmer. "The most important feedback and advice were from my chairman and hero, A. Edward Maumenee, M.D. He emphasized to always strive for excellence and be the very best you can possibly be. Ed was the most influential person in my professional life."

In 1974 Steve came to the Doheny Eye Institute and the University of Southern California (USC) in Los Angeles.

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When Steve Ryan came west, he came to the right city at the right time. Los Angeles and California were known for life in the fast lane, openness to change, innovation, and creativity. Los Angeles was a global city with a diverse population, creating opportunities to do substantive research in virtually any population imaginable. Steve became the first and only full-time faculty member and founding chair of the Department of Ophthalmology at USC's Keck School of Medicine. In his early days as a department chairman, he recognized that USC was quite different from Hopkins. However, his Maumenee–Wilmer approach to leadership, management, and people worked in every organization in which he participated, and served him well throughout his career.

The connection between Steve and Doheny was immediate and powerful, partly because he quickly embraced Carrie Estelle Doheny's founding mission: "to further the conservation, improvement, and restoration of human eyesight." He wanted to achieve this mission by striving to create the premier eye research, education, and tertiary patient care center in the world. In the 2012 Archives interview, Steve stated: "You need a clear, inspirational vision of the path ahead. You need resources and a plan and a successful execution. Passion, enthusiasm, and energy play a big role, too. The key was that I was able to recruit great faculty who shared this vision, who understood what it would take to make Doheny Eye Institute the place where we could achieve academic excellence, and that we were taking this risk together." The first faculty member he recruited to Doheny/USC was Ron Smith, who later became his successor as department chair, and shared the Maumenee-instilled values of academic excellence.

Steve was Chairman from 1974 to 1995. Later he served as Dean of the Medical School from 1991 to 2004, the longest-serving Dean at Keck, and as Senior Vice President of USC from 1993 to 2004. This period is characterized by institutional growth and a change in culture to a private research university medical school striving for excellence and following the proven successful model of Doheny at USC. One of the highlights of his service to USC was the naming gift from the W. M. Keck Foundation in 1999. Steve Ryan poured his body and soul into the USC Department of Ophthalmology and the Keck School of Medicine, and took great pride in helping to raise USC's stature in both the clinical and academic research arenas.

During Steve's tenure, Doheny became one of the most respected programs in the country—and the world. Consistently ranked among the top ten ophthalmology programs by US News and World Report, and third in the nation in attracting research funding from the National Eye Institute, Doheny Eye Institute has become a national treasure. The Institute is also a significant training ground for tomorrow's leaders in the field. Today, the network of Doheny-trained department chairs

spreads around the world, thanks in large measure to Steve's commitment to training and developing physicians from the earliest stage of their careers.

Steve Ryan believed in the excitement of the pursuit of new knowledge and innovation in ophthalmology, and the value of research by clinician-scientists like himself to develop better treatments for patients at risk of losing their vision.

He was an internationally recognized expert in the field of retinal diseases and ocular trauma. His research contributions have helped to change how vitreoretinal disorders are now treated. For example, his early animal model of choroidal neovascularization has been widely used for decades for studying the mechanisms and treatment of choroidal neovascularization. His posterior segment penetrating trauma model led to a better understanding of the pathogenesis of traumatic traction retinal detachment, which influenced the timing of vitrectomy in patients after penetrating posterior segment injuries. He chaired the Silicone Oil Study and also projects regarding drug therapy for PVR, and he was a principal investigator in several multi-center collaborative trials including the DRVS, BVO, and COMS.

In addition to his laboratory colleagues at Doheny, he worked with the Beckman Initiative in Macular Research, which brings together clinician scientists and basic scientists from around the world in different disciplines to focus on atrophic macular degeneration in a collaborative effort to develop treatments of AMD.

A "great" man is defined in academic medicine by excellence in the following criteria:

Scientific papers published:

Steve cared deeply about sharing information, building on each generation of research to achieve results. He is author of more than 300 peer-reviewed papers, over 40 book chapters, almost 300 ARVO abstracts, and a long list of more than 40 named lectureships, including the Jackson Lecture. He was often called upon to give lectures and advise at home and abroad. He contributed to the richness of research in our field by serving as a member of editorial boards for many peer-reviewed publications.

Books published:

Steve is the author or editor of nine books, including RETINA which is in its 5th edition. RETINA will remain a testimony to his excellence in research and clinical management of retinal disease for the next generation. A book such as RETINA is only possible if you have a network of friends on whom you can rely. You need to be an accepted leader in your field. An effective leader defines a vision and communicates it clearly to his team. Asked in a May 2012 interview for JAMA Ophthalmology what makes an effective leader, Steve cited "the capacity to listen and grow, curiosity and respect for others, and to earn the trust of those

in your organization and team.” According to this standard, Steve was an exemplary leader. His passion, energy, and commitment inspired others to follow and pursue ambitious goals together to achieve the common vision and mission.

Grant support:

He was a Principal Investigator on many grants approximating \$10 million of NEI support over the years.

Prizes:

Steve was an internationally recognized expert in the field of retinal disease and ocular trauma. His contributions to the field of ophthalmology earned him countless awards from colleagues and institutions around the world, more than 40 named lectures, and distinguished academic appointments. His leadership was recognized with membership in The Johns Hopkins University Society of Scholars and Distinguished Alumnus Award, Senior Honor Award and Distinguished Service Awards from the American Academy of Ophthalmology, and induction as a Laureate of the American Academy of Ophthalmology, the Academy’s premier honor and one that has been awarded to only a few individuals.

Providence College awarded him a Doctor of Science (*honoris causa*) in 1977. The University of Leipzig, Germany, awarded him a Doctor of Medicine (*honoris causa*) in 2006.

Some of Dr. Ryan’s awards include: The American Academy of Ophthalmology Laureate, Senior Honor Award, and the Distinguished Service Award, the Research to Prevent Blindness, Inc., Louis B. Mayer Scholar Award, the Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology Kupfer Award for Distinguished Public Service, the Pan-American Association of Ophthalmology Benjamin Boyd Humanitarian Award, the Fight for Sight/Mildred Weisenfeld Lifetime Research Achievement Award, and the American Ophthalmological Society Lucien Howe Medal, Doheny Professional Association Lifetime Achieve Award, and The Johns Hopkins University Society of Scholars Award and the Distinguished Alumnus Award, Honorary Membership of the German Ophthalmological Society (DOG), and Honorary Membership of the Club Jules Gonin.

Assignments:

Steve Ryan has been a luminous leader in international ophthalmology and American medicine.

He participated simultaneously at extraordinary levels in a variety of clinical, research, academic, administrative, and political roles until he became ill earlier this year.

Steve spent the majority of his career, 38 years, in the USC Department of Ophthalmology, and served as President of the Doheny Eye Institute until his death. He helped guide Doheny to its place as a world-class institution.

He was a member of many organizations including the AAO, PAAO, ARVO, AOS, Macula Society, Retina Society,

ASRS, Club Jules Gonin, ICO, Academia Ophthalmologica Internationalis, and New York Academy of Sciences. He served as President of the AUPO and the Macula Society and on the Board of the Club Jules Gonin.

Using his profound knowledge and experience, he mentored and supported the foundation of EUPO (European Professors of Ophthalmology) and EBO (European Board of Ophthalmology).

From 1975 to 1979, Dr. Ryan served as a Member of the Visual Sciences “A” Study Section in the Division of Research Grants at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). From 1982 to 1985, he was a Member of the NIH National Advisory Eye Council (NAEC), and subsequently chaired the Retina Panel for the NAEC. An internationally recognized expert in the field of retinal diseases and ocular trauma, Steve provided congressional testimony on numerous occasions over the past 25 years in support of the NIH and the National Eye Institute.

He worked closely with the American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO), the Association of University Professors of Ophthalmology (AUPO), and the Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology (ARVO) to garner the vision community’s support to create organizations that advocated for and educated about the value of federally funded vision research. He then founded NAEVR (National Alliance for Eye and Vision Research), a non-profit advocacy coalition comprised of 55 professional, consumer, and industry organizations involved in eye and vision research, and AEVR (Alliance for Eye and Vision Research) Alliances, which serve as the “Friends of the National Eye Institute (NEI)” to educate opinion leaders in Washington about the importance of federal funding for eye and vision research, and to advocate for NEI vision research to Congress. He served as the NAEVR and AEVR Boards President from the Alliances’ founding in 1993 to early February 2013.

Steve was a member of the most prestigious professional organizations, including leadership positions at the Institute of Medicine (IOM) at the National Academy of Sciences (NAS). The NAS, enacted by Congress, is a society of the nation’s most distinguished scholars charged with providing advice to the nation on matters related to science and technology, thereby improving health, education, and welfare of all the world’s citizens. The IOM was among the many institutions that benefited from his professional and public service. Steve chaired the IOM Membership Committee and served as the Home Secretary of the IOM since 2005.

Elected to the International Council of Ophthalmology (ICO) Board of Trustees in 2006, Steve chaired the Scientific Program Committee for the World Ophthalmology Congress in 2006 in São Paulo, WOC2008 in Hong Kong, and WOC2010 in Berlin. He inspired thousands of colleagues to contribute to scientific programs that made the WOC one of the leading ophthalmology congresses in the world. Steve was named president of the ICO Foundation in January 2011 and

provided dynamic leadership for raising funds to support ICO programs. Steve's capacity to strategize, organize, and tenaciously pursue funding opportunities has given life to ICO educational programs that will have far-reaching effects.

Steve generously contributed his talents and wisdom to many boards including Allergan, Inc., the Arnold and Mabel Beckman Foundation, the Johns Hopkins Health System, the W.M. Keck Foundation, and he served his medical school alma mater as a member of the Board of Trustees.

There is no doubt that such an academic stature results in high reputation and peer reception. Steve's lifelong passion for ophthalmology and his keen intellect set him on a path to pursue new knowledge and innovation that would transform lives. But what really makes Steve outstanding was his ability to work with people, and the high-quality experiences he made possible for so many young people.

When I first saw him, I was astonished that a professor and chair could be so young, dynamic, and full of energy. His presence, warmth, and power made him a charismatic person, and he charmed me and others by his fairness and compassion. Steve was remarkable not only for his visionary, insightful leadership style, but for his complementary skills in implementation of the vision. He did not take himself too seriously, and was not afraid to make mistakes. In the weekly research meetings he listened carefully, made decisions, and set high goals to be achieved by hard work of his team. He asked for and lived commitment, attention to detail, and immediate followup. Steve was able to transfer positive energy and infuse his faculty and research team with integrity, energy, and speed: he provided the powder and supplied the spark.

He certainly made a huge impact on the vision community through his remarkable leadership skills. His concentration and focus, his independent judgement and passion for reputation, and above all his interest in people made him a great man. He could take complex problems and distill them to the essential principles and questions—creating a stimulating discussion. He created external focus, asked the team to look outward and face reality. He checked results and exercised accountability; if you are not keeping score you are just practising.

Steve tried to “hire the best people and then get out of their way”. He greatly enjoyed training and developing physicians at the early stages of their careers. He supported the success of others and gave credit to young people. He

asked them to do their best, set them up to succeed, and enabled them to show their ability. In this manner, he trained many of today's global leaders in ophthalmology.

He was particularly proud that over 26 alumni of the Ophthalmology International Fellowship Program had assumed Chair positions outside the U.S. In the U.S., ten graduates of the USC Ophthalmology residency, fellowship, or faculty currently hold Chair positions. He greatly valued his many professional relationships. Even more so, he valued the close friendships he made with these same individuals. And he was proud of the Doheny Society of Scholars. In recent years, one of Steve's great pleasures of travelling to distant lands was the delight at finding his former students and fellows in leadership positions in many countries. All of us who knew, respected, and loved this endearing man will miss him greatly.

Steve's passing is huge personal and professional loss. Steve was a visionary and an optimist—a warm and open-hearted man who loved life and loved people. In everything he did, Steve Ryan brought a gracious intelligence, a spirit of generosity, a dedication to integrity and moderation, and an affirming attitude. We remember him through his legacy of major contributions to medical and surgical retina, to international ophthalmology, and to the countless friends he made around the world. He leaves a lasting, positive impact on ophthalmology and medicine. Integrity and excellence in his personal life and in his expectation of others were paramount as Doheny grew and flourished. Everything that Doheny stands for reflects this and is the gift he has given to us all. It is extraordinarily rare indeed to have global impact in science, clinical care, organizational development, and broad-ranging leadership. We count ourselves fortunate to have known Steve.

In his 2012 Archives interview he said: “I encourage all of us to follow the core values of integrity and character so that people will trust us. And follow your dreams. We are fortunate to be in the 21st century with incredible potential to translate cutting-edge biomedical research to help our patients. The future looks very bright in ophthalmology, the very best clinical specialty.”

We are left with wonderful memories of a man and a friend whose work will resonate for years. “Those who live in the memory of their loved ones, are not dead, just distant. Only those who are forgotten are really dead” (Immanuel Kant).

Good-bye, dear Steve and thank you.