

OBITUARY

CARL J. PAUERSTEIN, MD: THE CONSUMMATE OBSTETRICIAN AND GYNECOLOGIST

Dr Carl J. Pauerstein, Chairman Emeritus of Obstetrics and Gynecology at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, died November 21, 2005 after a long and distinguished career. He was born May 31, 1932 in New York City and attended Lehigh University where he graduated *magna cum laude*. His MD degree was from Hahneman Medical College in Philadelphia where he was elected to Alpha Omega Alpha honor medical society. Residency training was at King's County Hospital in Brooklyn in the department of Dr Louis Hellman. The residency was rigorous and trained him well for his "classic academic career." After a 2-year stint in the US Air Force in South Carolina he moved to Baltimore to pursue further training in gynecologic pathology with Dr J. Donald Woodruff at Johns Hopkins. In Baltimore he renewed his association with Dr Joseph Seitchik, whose move to Texas would bring Carl to the Lone Star State.

In 1968 Carl and his beloved wife Marie brought their sons to Texas where they would spend the rest of their lives. Carl immediately launched into his research on the fallopian tube; in the next several years he became the leading authority on the physiology and pathophysiology of the oviduct. While writing papers, grants, and textbooks he also kept a full clinical schedule and was the Chief of Obstetrics at the busy county hospital. In 1979 he succeeded Dr Seitchik as Chair of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, a position he held until his retirement in 2002.

Carl trained in an era before formal fellowships were available so he was, by today's definition, a generalist. As such, he was a consummate obstetrician and gynecologist. The dictionary defines consummate as: "complete in every detail," "extremely skilled and accomplished"—these words certainly characterize Carl and his career.

As an obstetrician he served several times as the Chief of the Obstetrics Service and his knowledge of labor, maternal and fetal physiology exceeded that of most fellowship trained Maternal-Fetal Medicine subspecialists. In San Antonio in the 1960s he introduced "trial of labor" after one previous cesarean delivery as an option for patients and proved the safety of this form of patient management. He authored articles and text books on obstetrics. He was a believer in "evidenced based medicine" before there was such a term, and he took a skeptics eye to all the new ideas in obstetrics until he could demonstrate their safety and efficacy. Ultrasound for obstetrics made the grade with him; tocolytic therapy for threatened preterm labor often did not. He was open to studies, however, to ascertain the usefulness of procedures or tests. A great advocate for patient safety and dignity, he would strive to keep the labor process as straightforward as possible.

As a gynecologist, he served several times as Chief of the Gynecology Service. His knowledge of gynecology was legendary and he attended gynecology rounds weekly up until the time of his demise. Usually he knew more about the topic under discussion than anyone in the room. His knowledge of gynecologic pathology often exceeded that of the gynecologic pathologist. His expertise in the operating room was sought often even late at night. Though not a gynecologic oncologist, Carl knew the

literature and knew his way around the operating room well enough to perform many of the oncologic procedures.

In the area of reproductive endocrinology he was quite comfortable. His tubal physiology research was expanded into all of reproductive endocrinology and he could converse easily with endocrinologists in all areas. He was quick to see the scientific and clinical possibilities associated with assisted reproductive techniques and he even spent several months studying with Sir Robert Winston in London to master new techniques.

In research he truly excelled. Carl served as principle investigator on eight competitive grants from the National Institutes of Health, and he directed the P30 Center for Research in Reproductive Biology for more than 15 years. He published over 100 original articles on clinical as well as on basic science investigations. He was an active mentor to many young investigators and he was always available to assist in the preparation of manuscripts and grants.

As an educator he was stimulating. He delighted in seeing his former students do well. He authored numerous chapters as well as editing eight textbooks on obstetrics, gynecology, and basic science. He obtained a Rockefeller Foundation Grant to train international students to become the leaders in reproductive medicine in their home countries; and through this grant, he improved the lives of women throughout the world. His residents and junior faculty quickly learned that he required scientific evidence for their clinical decisions and practice. He demanded excellence and was prepared to provide excellence.

As an administrator he was skilled. Carl guided the department to a position of academic and fiscal solidarity unequalled in the institution. His advice and counsel were sought by other department chairs and administrators throughout the university and beyond. He was an accomplished negotiator and he seemed unerringly to know when "to hold 'em and when to fold 'em."

Dr Pauerstein served the professional community in many ways. In 1989 he was elected President of the Society for Gynecologic Investigation. This honor was well deserved and afforded Carl the recognition as one of all too few true scientific leaders in our discipline. He served as a consultant for the World Health Organization, the Program for Applied Research in Fertility Regulation, and the Agency for International Development. He chaired numerous committees including the NICHD's Centers for Training Programs and Program Projects, and the World Health Organizations Task Force on Acceleration of Ovum Transport. He was a member of the editorial boards of numerous journals.

Carl J. Pauerstein was the consummate obstetrician and gynecologist. He is survived by his wife of 51 years, Marie Pauerstein, their sons, grandchildren, and his sister Leah Margolis—he is sorely missed.

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