Correspondence

In Memoriam: Robert E. Priest—Experimental Pathologist and Teacher (1926–2001)

To the Editor-in-Chief:

Many of my colleagues in Departments of Pathology at Chicago, Seattle, Denver, Atlanta, and the West Indies (all places graced by his scholarship and wit) may not yet have heard the news that Bob Priest died of a massive stroke in Atlanta on March 4, 2001, some 15 years after his retirement. A more complete obituary, curriculum vitae, and set of photographs will eventually appear on a historical segment of the University of Washington Pathology web site. In the meantime, I provide this brief memoir.

I had the pleasure of “breaking in” Bob at the autopsy table at the University of Chicago in 1955. I was delighted to learn that he was a native of Lopez Island, part of my beloved Pacific Northwest. It was thus natural for both of us to have joined one of our Chicago mentors, Earl P. Benditt, when he was offered the Chair of Pathology at the University of Washington. We arrived at what was at that time a rather sleepy department. The first job given us by Earl was to empty and clean a group of ancient gross specimen jars so that they could be used for chromatography!

Bob had worked with Robert W. Wissler (soon to become Chairman of Pathology at Chicago) on the quantitation of the effects of estrogenic substances on serum lipids of rats fed with an atherogenic diet.¹ Working with Benditt and Sigurd J. Normann, Bob continued his pioneering efforts to use the rat as a model to investigate the pathogenesis of atherosclerosis and myocardial infarction.^{2–4}

The next phase of his career found him in Don King’s exciting department at the University of Colorado. Among several interesting lines of research carried out while in Denver, many together with his pediatrician/cytogeneticist wife, Jean Hirsch Priest, were investigations of collagen and basement membrane synthesis. An early *Science* paper was an example of this work.⁵

The bulk of Bob’s career was spent at Emory University, where he initiated the Ph.D. program in experimental pathology and directed the sophomore medical student pathology course. He continued his research on collagen

ens while at Atlanta, including the study of Marfan syndrome.⁶ Together with Jean Priest, he also became quite interested in the biology of cultivated amniotic fluid cells.^{7–9}

Sabbatical leaves and post-retirement activities brought the Priests to Würzburg, St. Andrews, Auckland, the West Indies (where he chaired the Department of Pathology), and São Paulo (where he and Jean helped establish a genetics laboratory in the FAMEMA medical school). There was plenty of time for Bob to work on his beloved sailboat, however.

All three Priest children (Edwin, Cindy, and Mary) were born in Seattle. Edwin, now a practicing internist, was named after Jean’s father, a distinguished Chicago pathologist.

A Robert Eugene Priest Fellowship Fund has been established at the University of Chicago. Donations can be sent to Paul Seeley, 5733 South University Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60637.

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