Myrton “Myrt” Freeman Beeler (1922-2013)

Myrton “Myrt” Freeman Beeler, past editor-in-chief of AJCP and recipient of the 1987 American Society for Clinical Pathology (ASCP) Ward Burdick Award for Distinguished Service to Pathology, died of natural causes in his home in Thibodaux, LA, on December 25, 2013. Myrt served the ASCP for more than 20 years in multiple capacities. In addition to his scientific and writing skills, Myrt was also something of a renaissance man, characterized by his sharp mind, fearless curiosity, interest in music and painting, and active participation in New Orleans Mardi Gras (he was “king” of a Mardi Gras organization one year).

At the Louisiana State University (LSU) School of Medicine in New Orleans every Tuesday, until his retirement in 1989, I remember that Myrt would have coffee with two other senior faculty members (one the Department Head of Epidemiology and Public Health and the other a past Surgeon General of the United States and Chancellor of the LSU Health Science Center). They would discuss and debate the nature of the universe and the environment. Their intellectual discussions rivaled any of the great philosophers of history. At LSU, Myrt also established a doctoral program in clinical chemistry (the only one of its kind at that time in the deep south). For many years, he directed the medical student introductory course to laboratory medicine (a course unique to LSU) and had clinical pathology service responsibilities at Charity Hospital in New Orleans.

Carolyn Sue Walters was a cofaculty member with Myrt and remembers “one of Myrt’s greatest achievements was his ability to influence those around him to become active in their professional societies. He especially encouraged you to participate in the educational components of the societies, both as an attendee and as a presenter of papers and workshops. He was always available to help you in any way that he could in the pursuit of your goals and sometimes, if you needed a little prodding, set some for you. When I was angry about the direction that ASCP was taking regarding an issue, and was considering canceling my membership, he told me that if I really did not like the change in directions, that I would have no influence if I left the organization. He said that the only way that I could ever influence the direction was from within. As I result, I followed his advice, became very active in the society, and ultimately received an ASCP Lifetime Achievement Award. Myrt was truly the single greatest influence in making medical technology my profession, not just a job. I learned so much from him and have tried to ‘pass it on down’ to those with whom I worked. He will truly be missed.”

Kathy Fisher, Myrt’s assistant at LSU during his tenure as AJCP editor-in-chief, remembers “he always had a great sense of humor, and many times he made me blush with his jokes and stories. One of the main things I remember about that time is that he always thought I lost file folders, and they would somehow show up on his desk. Working for him for the 10 years he was editor-in-chief taught me a lot—I learned how to read/review manuscripts, which helped me write papers in college, and still helps me in my current position.”

Myrt taught me how to be a clinical pathologist. He supported my academic development by coaching me and publishing one of my first scientific articles in AJCP. He strengthened the position of the AJCP as the premier scientific journal in clinical pathology. I thank him for the influence he had on my career. I, too, will miss him. The whole ASCP community should mourn his passing.

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