



Arthur R. Kahler, MD

IN MEMORIAM

1900 - 2001



ART KAHLER WAS A PIONEER. When he opened his Sacramento office in 1935, he was the first residency-trained ophthalmologist in our area. Until then, all eye cases had been referred to local ENT physicians or sent to San Francisco.

Art was born 101 years ago, on February 20, 1900, into the German-speaking family of a laborer in Devil's Lake, Minnesota. To attend high school, he lived with relatives in Des Moines, Iowa. He then went to the University of Iowa, graduating with his medical degree in 1929. Economic times were tight so Art took a job as a company doctor in the iron-mining town of Houghton, Michigan, working under frustrating primitive conditions to save the lives and limbs of miners. A year later, he returned to the University for a residency in ophthalmology.

Art was an intense person totally immersed in providing the best possible care for his patients. To some, he seemed gruff. In truth, he was a very serious, kind, caring physician who studied each patient thoroughly, sometimes taking extra time to work up complex eye problems. Long time patients learned to expect some significant waiting room time at his office!

Art helped out new ophthalmologists who came to town. His referrals helped at least 10 younger colleagues get their practices started. He was also extremely generous. In his early years in practice, he provided free eye care one day a week at the county hospital. As a devout Catholic, he saw most of the nuns and priests in our area at no cost. About the time he was giving up his surgical practice, he purchased the first operating microscope for the eye surgical suite at Mercy General - because it was more than the hospital felt it could afford.

Art's hobbies included duck hunting, photography and gardening. The backyard of his home on 40th Street was filled with beautiful camellias that he personally nurtured. But studying new developments in ophthalmology, particularly about glaucoma, was his main pleasure. He enjoyed translating articles from German journals and sharing them with colleagues. In the early 1950s, Art was a founder of the Alta California Eye Society, which continues to grow and thrive.

After 62 years of practice, Art retired at the age of 87. Two years later, he warned me, "Byron, don't retire too early. You will miss it too much!" He had a CVA at age 98, and reluctantly gave up living alone in his home. On March 20, 2001, he died after another CVA complicated by pneumonia.

In recent years, Art expressed concern about how badly insurance companies and others were treating physicians, and wondered why so many doctors signed managed care or capitation agreements. Perhaps we all wonder about that.

Art Kahler set a high standard for living and medical practice. He was a good friend to many and will be missed very much. The family requests memorials be made to: Regents of Univ. of California Glaucoma Research Fund - Kahler Memorial, Dept. of Health Sciences

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