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**IN MEMORIAM**



**Pierce A. Rooney, Jr. MD, 1923-2009**

PIERCE (PAT) ANTHONY ROONEY, JR. MD, Past President of the Society and a pioneer in the medical community, died on Jan. 14.

A fourth generation Sacramentan, he served in the Pacific Theatre in WWII as a Navy lieutenant junior grade. While in the Navy, he met his wife and lifetime partner, Barbara. When asked how they met, Pat smiled and indicated he "pulled rank" and scolded Barbara, a lower-ranking WAVE, when she passed him without saluting. Of course, this was nothing more than a ruse to meet her. At least that was Pat's version of the story; Barbara contended it was her ploy to initiate contact with Pat by not saluting him.

Returning to civilian life, Pat graduated from Creighton University Medical School and completed his internship and residency in General Practice in the Bay Area. He was a general practitioner in Sacramento from 1952-56 but developed an interest in pathology which led him to UCSF. There he trained in anatomic, clinical and forensic pathology. He was eventually certified in all three disciplines.

Although he joined a pathology group in Sacramento in 1960, as a hospital-based and outpatient pathologist, he retained teaching appointments at UCSF, UOP and, in later years, UCD Medical School. This reflected his interest, skill and enjoyment in teaching. He also was interested in research and collaborated with UCD physicians on several studies and publications on head trauma, SIDS, and heart disease.

In 1964 Pat contracted with the Sacramento County Coroner's office to perform autopsies on homicide victims and other individuals dying under suspicious circumstances. Pat quickly established new standards for autopsy performance and the collection of evidence from human remains, both at the autopsy table and at the scene of the crime. He hired and trained an assistant and upgraded badly needed equipment, including the Coroner's office first x-ray machine. In 1968 he was certified by the American Board of Pathology as a forensic pathologist - the first in Sacramento County. He was a major force behind the evolution of the Sacramento Coroner/Medical Examiner Facility into one of the nation's finest.

Perhaps one of his most notable achievements was establishing a formal residency program in forensic pathology in 1976 at the Sacramento County Coroner's Office. It was then one of only 39 approved forensic pathology resident positions in the country. Also, it was one of only a very few forensic pathology residency programs approved by the American Board of Pathology that was not directly

established or sponsored by a university medical center. Residents who trained in his program went on to practice in Sacramento, other counties and states, and overseas.

Pat's interest in teaching was not limited to forensic pathology residents. He enjoyed teaching anatomy and pathology at the autopsy table to medical students, general pathology residents, physicians of a variety of specialties, nurses and other medical personnel from the UC Medical Center and other institutions. He extended his teaching to involve law enforcement personnel, coroner's deputies and attorneys. He had a talent of explaining complex medical conditions and injuries to lay persons including jury members, lawyers and judges.

Pat's forensic expertise, teaching ability, relaxed demeanor, composure under stressful conditions, unbiased testimony, and sense of humor are a few of his qualities widely known among lawyers and judges; they resulted in his reputation as a superb and credible expert witness. During his career he testified at hundreds of hearings and trials, some of which involved cases that received national and international attention. He continued to testify through at least 2007 on several "cold" cases from the 70s and early 80s that were solved using advanced DNA technology. Perhaps far less known than his high profile cases, but certainly indicative of Pat's reputation as a forensic expert, was his formal consultation at the Vatican regarding damage to the world famous sculpture and masterpiece in St. Peter's Basilica by Michelangelo, the Pieta.

Never one to shy away from additional responsibility, Pat served as President of the Medical Society in 1968, its centennial year. Prior to that, while on the Medical Society Board, he was instrumental in obtaining a native plane tree from Hippocrates home on the Greek island of Cos. In 1966, this tree was planted near the new UC School of Medicine in Davis. When the School of Medicine was moved from Davis to Sacramento, a graft from the original Davis plane tree was planted in 2006 near the Education Building at the Sacramento campus.

In 1985, Pat began to enjoy the rewards of retirement including vacations with Barbara and spending more time with his 6 grown children, 13 grandchildren and 2 great-grandchildren.

One of Pat's passions was the planning and creation of mosaics - pieces of art he prepared from tile, glass and other materials he and Barbara collected on trips throughout California, other states, Mexico and Italy. One of his more interesting works, produced in 1997, "Medicina Tumulta" can be viewed at the SSVMS building on Elvas Avenue. He was also an avid collector of firearms, a hobby he pursued through the last months of his life. He would target practice on one of the local shooting ranges as often as possible and loved sharing these outings with family members, former associates, and friends.

Pat will be deeply missed by his large family, numerous friends and former colleagues and associates. His legacy in medicine and forensic pathology will leave an indelible mark on Sacramento for decades to come.

- *Joseph Masters, MD; Surl Nielsen, MD, and Gary Stuart, MD*