Melvin L. Rubin, MD (1932-2014)

Lee M. Jampol, MD; Manus Kraff, MD

Melvin L. Rubin, MD, professor and chairman emeritus of the Department of Ophthalmology at the University of Florida College of Medicine, died on February 23, 2014. Ophthalmology has lost one of the foremost scholars and teachers of his generation. The recollection of any single individual’s contribution to ophthalmology lasts only a few years and very rarely from generation to generation. Dr Rubin’s contributions to ophthalmology will be sustained.

Dr Rubin trained originally as an optometrist before attending the University of California School of Medicine in San Francisco. He completed his medical internship at the University of California Hospital and earned a master’s degree and did his residency at the University of Iowa. He worked for the US Public Health Service as the executive secretary of the National Institutes of Health Research Training Committee. He then spent the remainder of his career at the University of Florida, beginning as assistant professor and rising to professor and chairman.

Dr Rubin’s contributions to ophthalmology relate primarily to education in 2 areas: retina and optics and refraction. He was the founder and the chairman of the Ophthalmic Knowledge Assessment Program, which remains an important part of our residency training programs. He was secretary for instruction at the American Academy of Ophthalmology for many years and was important in the development in the Home Study Course, which then evolved into the academy’s present-day Continuing Education Programs. His books, Optics for Clinicians and The Fine Art of Prescribing Glasses, were the cornerstone of education in these fields for a generation of ophthalmologists. He traveled around the country, teaching optics, refraction, and prescribing to residents. He played an instrumental role as a member of the Council of the American Ophthalmological Society in bringing that organization from the past into the present with enhanced educational programs at the annual meeting. He served in leadership positions on the American Board of Ophthalmology, Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology, and Association of University Professors of Ophthalmology. He was a member of the editorial boards of many major eye journals and he served on the advisory boards of many not-for-profit organizations involved in the prevention of blindness. He was also a scholar with interests in photography; he had a truly amazing collection of photographs of the Holocaust. He also was a stamp collector and bridge player and he had an interest in folk music and the banjo.

We believe Dr Rubin will be remembered, appropriately, for his key role in developing the education programs of our profession. The Ophthalmic Knowledge Assessment Program examinations and the Continuing Education Programs of the American Academy of Ophthalmology will ensure his legacy. We would also like to add that we knew Dr Rubin as a colleague, friend, and patient. He would best be described as honest, warm, witty, intellectual, caring, and as a scientist with great integrity. He was always upbeat and could be engaged in great conversation. For all of these attributes, Dr Rubin will be missed.

Author Affiliations: Feinberg School of Medicine, Northwestern University, Chicago, Illinois.

Corresponding Author: Lee M. Jampol, MD, Northwestern University Medical School, Feinberg School of Medicine, Department of Ophthalmology, 645 N Michigan Ave, Suite 440, Chicago, IL 60611 (l-jampol@northwestern.edu).


Conflict of Interest Disclosures: None reported.