



## IN MEMORIAM

Baldwin Gaylord Lamson, M.D.  
Professor of Pathology & Laboratory Medicine, Emeritus  
Los Angeles  
1916 — 2004

Dedication to knowledge and service sums up the life of Baldwin Lamson, one distinguished in service to California and the nation. He devoted himself for 20 years to scholarly preparation. He completed studies at the University of California in Berkeley, obtaining a bachelor degree in seismology and physics. Armed with his newly acquired degree, Lamson was recruited by the Standard Oil Company of California, and prospected both in India and the Middle East. Dr. Mellinkoff tells us that it was after meeting a team of medical students in Saudi Arabia that Lamson decided to become a physician. Lamson was indeed impressed by the professional dedication of these young men.

He returned to the United States for studies at the University of Rochester, where he became a Medical Doctor. Lamson then served as a U.S. Navy officer, first as a Chief of Laboratory Service at the Naval Hospital in Corpus Christi, Texas and later as an investigator at the famous Naval Medical Research Institute in Bethesda, Maryland. There he and Dr. Tullis contributed to pioneering studies on the effect that radiation emanating from an atomic bomb explosion would have on animals (mice and swine). These experiments were expanded to include studies on the occurrence of cancer and life expectancy of the irradiated animals.

When Dr. Lamson returned to the state of his birth (May 20, 1916, Berkeley, California) he joined the faculty of the Department of Pathology at the then new UCLA School of Medicine. He contributed to the teaching program for medical students, and to the daily diagnosis of tissues received from the surgeons (in the surgical pathology section), and of those blood samples collected by all the hospital doctors (in the clinical pathology section). The most immediately practical achievement of Lamson as a faculty member was made in the clinical laboratories. In the early 1950s, Laboratory Medicine was no longer in its infancy but it was still far from adolescence. The number of tests requested never ceased to grow, and the methods continued to improve. As Director of Clinical Laboratories, Dr. Lamson guided the laboratories of the UCLA Medical School into maturity. But there was more. Because of his keen awareness of the meaning of the results to the daily performance of all practicing doctors, Dr. Lamson knew that his job would not be finished until the medical data were recorded, reported to the physician, and stored for easy retrieval. He saw that the advent of the computer could provide new means to store the information. However, in the early 1970s the words used in English prose were stored in numeric code classifications. Translation of the code into the written or the spoken language took time, and errors were frequent. Dr. Lamson was among the first to obtain grants, assemble and lead a team that ultimately succeeded in storing and recording the words used in describing the medical diagnosis into natural language: English. While he was a faculty member in the Department of Pathology, Dr. Lamson demonstrated his competence as a surgical pathologist, as well as his leadership in bringing the clinical laboratories into the modern era by launching the department into the computer age.

These qualities and his courtesy to subordinates and superiors were not lost to the scrutiny of Sherman Mellinkoff, the dean of the Medical School, and Charles Young, the chancellor of the University. In 1965 Lamson was appointed associate dean for Hospital Affairs, and subsequently the first director of the UCLA Hospital and Clinics. In 1977, he became assistant chancellor for Health Sciences. For 15 years he steered the

still young and fragile hospital to greatness. His success stemmed from his keen understanding of the functions of a university hospital: excellence in patient care and education of medical students. Because Dr. Lamson was confident in his goals and competent and honest in their attainment, his endeavors blossomed into a tight cooperation between hospital administration and staff with Medical School administration and faculty. Dr. Lamson's reputation soon reached the whole of the University of California. While he was still director of the UCLA Hospital, he was called to serve simultaneously as the administrator of the UC Davis teaching hospital.

Dr. Lamson retired in 1980. He had barely done so, when University President David Saxon, who was well aware of Lamson's performance at UCLA, made him the University of California's Vice President for Financial and Business Management. This was by no means a sinecure; one of the vice president's most delicate assignments was to bring administrators and grant recipients together to secure a fair distribution of grant overhead. Again, Dr. Lamson, armed with his vast administrative experience and his concern for academic excellence, succeeded in solving this thorny problem.

Finally in 1982 Baldwin retired and was allowed to return to his lifelong personal interests: music, the high Sierra Mountains near the Donner summit area where he so often hiked with his wife and children, and Californian and Western history which he loved to read about and share with his friends. Still, he was not entirely absent from UCLA, as he continued to attend some conferences and on such occasions often chatted with his colleagues. In 1994 all his achievements were publicly acknowledged by his peers, and the naval officer, the doctor and above all the gentleman was awarded the UCLA Alumni Association Award of Extraordinary Merit.

Dr. Baldwin Gaylord Lamson died on July 2, 2004, from heart failure in Sacramento, California, at the Davis medical facility. Dr. Mellinkoff refers to him as the soul of honor, and that is how he is remembered by all who knew him.

Julian Van Lancker