



IN MEMORIAM

Leslie J. Schoenfield, M.D.
Professor of Medicine, Emeritus
UC Los Angeles
1932 — 2003

Honesty, fairness, and respect for others were at the core of Les Schoenfield's character and were the foundation of his relationships and professional accomplishments.

Born in the Bronx on February 20, 1932, Les was an undergraduate, medical student and intern at Temple University in Philadelphia. After a two- year commitment to the U.S. Army at Fort Hood Hospital in Texas, he completed a medical residency and gastroenterology fellowship at the Mayo Graduate School. Following his training, he obtained a Ph.D. in physiology at the University of Minnesota for work on bilirubin metabolism, and he later spent a year as a National Institutes of Health special fellow at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm.

From 1963 until 1970, Les was on the staff at the Mayo Clinic and progressed from an instructor to associate professor in internal medicine at the Mayo Graduate School. During his last four years at the Mayo Clinic and Graduate School he was the associate director of the gastroenterology research unit and the gastroenterology training program. In 1970, Les moved to Los Angeles, becoming the director of the Division of Gastroenterology at Cedars- Sinai Medical Center with an academic appointment at UCLA. He remained at Cedars- Sinai until his retirement in 2001 as professor emeritus, though he returned after retirement to lead a comprehensive evaluation of the fellowship training programs at Cedars- Sinai.

As the director of the Division of Gastroenterology at Cedars- Sinai, Les led an expanding division during a period of major changes in gastroenterology that included an expanding role of endoscopy, nutrition, hepatology, and inflammatory bowel diseases as specialized areas of activity. During the expansion that took place within the Division and its potential and real conflicts, Les maintained the loyalty, trust and respect of employees, colleagues and community gastroenterologists. He demonstrated a remarkable ability to work with others in both the hospital and medical communities to advance the Division's programs. He set high ethical standards that emphasized patient care and was selfless when it came to efforts on behalf of the Division. He was a model leader and problem solver.

Les's research interests shifted from bilirubin metabolism to the pathophysiology and medical treatment of gallstones. This research interest continued throughout most of his tenure at Cedars- Sinai Medical Center under NIH- sponsored grants, and he was a pioneer in the area of medical dissolution of gallstones. He is well- remembered as the director of the National Cooperative Gallstone Study, a multicentered, NIH- sponsored, clinical trial for the medical dissolution of gallstones. As the Director, Les demonstrated not only extraordinary administrative skills and scientific rigor but also extraordinary interpersonal skills. Les's honesty, fairness, and respect for others melded the many strong and independent personalities from the gastroenterological community who were participating in the Study into a unified and effective group. At the same time, the study participants developed a deep respect and a genuine fondness for Les that lasted long after the Study was completed. The enduring relationships formed during the Study were a source of great pleasure to Les.

Les's honesty, fairness, and respect for others also brought him the trust of the Cedars- Sinai and UCLA medical communities. He was often called upon by others to lead or advise. No matter how difficult a problem, he remained upbeat and optimistic. Typically, he sought input broadly, including everyone with a stake in the endeavor, yet his intellectual skills clearly guided the way.

As a teacher, Les was exceptional. His respect for his students anchored his teaching relationships, but it was his organization, clarity, and broad knowledge that made him a highly effective teacher. Every medical encounter with Les was an educational experience. Teaching evaluations of him from medical students, residents, fellows, and colleagues were consistently at the highest level. He enjoyed the students personally as well as the process of teaching. Les could handle the difficult aspects of teaching as well. When students required counseling, Les was gentle but clear and positive in his discussions. A student always left with his or her self- respect intact and desiring to do better. No one wanted to let Les down.

On a personal level, Les took great pleasure from his family and grandchildren, reading, music, movies, and, of course, tennis. Tennis was representative of Les's approach to life. On the court, he gave his all. He was a fierce competitor but always a gentleman and a good sportsman who never lost his temper. He played with the same intensity that he lived. But Les could enjoy life as well. He enjoyed a fine meal, plain or fancy, and he always was ready for an evening of entertainment or dancing.

Les influenced many lives. He changed lives. He improved lives. Much of Les lives on in those who were close to him, and he is missed by everyone who had the privilege and good fortune to know him.

Les lost his battle with cancer on July 28, 2003.

Jay Marks
Stephan Targan
Glenn Braunstein