

From the President's Desk: Remembering Gene Herbek

Patrick Godbey, MD

July 2020—It is with profound sadness that I write about the passing of a dear friend. Gene Herbek, MD, served as president of the CAP from 2013 to 2015, and many CAP TODAY readers will remember his informative column in these pages. For details about his life and accomplishments, please [read his obituary](#). I'd like to spend this column focused on how he shaped the CAP, and what an honor it was to have known him.



Dr. Godbey

Through his many years as a CAP member—serving on more than 60 committees, subcommittees, commissions, boards, and councils along the way—Gene had tremendous influence on the CAP. He always had the best interests of CAP fellows in mind, as well as those of our junior members. While some of his ideas were controversial, Gene was not afraid to get things done. And even the unpopular ideas have, in my opinion, proved to be correct. The CAP is a far better place because of his involvement at so many levels, most notably as a governor, secretary-treasurer, and president.

Even after his term as president, Gene continued to serve the members of the CAP. Most recently, as chair of the Nominating Committee, he was making plans for the next committee meeting when he got sick. This was a particularly good role for him because he never approached anyone with preconceived opinions. He was eminently fair and evaluated each person on his or her own merit.

Gene was a phenomenal physician. He also helped other laboratories better themselves through his active role in domestic and international inspections. As founder of the CAP Foundation's See, Test & Treat initiative, he helped thousands of women receive free screening for breast and cervical cancer. His impressive service record was the inspiration for the Gene and Jean Herbek Humanitarian Award, which was established to honor leaders in pathology who have shown dedication to the See, Test & Treat program.

Beyond our work for the CAP, Gene and I also shared a deep friendship. Our families are close and have spent much time together over the years. Gene was a great husband to his wife, Jean (colleagues referred to them as Dr. Gene and Mrs. Jean to avoid confusion). He was also a wonderful father and grandfather, playing a large part in the lives of his daughters, Sara and Emily, and his granddaughter, Rylee.

We traveled together for CAP business as well as for fun. At a friend's daughter's wedding in Mexico City, Dr. Gene and Mrs. Jean and my wife and I celebrated all night. We partied until 7:00 the next morning, and then we ate

breakfast, because Gene was the kind of person you wanted to spend more time with, even if you'd already been together for hours.

I learned so much from Gene about the CAP and how it works. I would not be in the position to write this memorial for him if it weren't for his encouragement: Gene was the person who told me I had to run for president of this organization. That was years ago at a restaurant in Orlando. He taught me how the CAP can be guided to do the right things for our members and our patients.

When Gene's term as president ended, it was my honor to be the master of ceremonies at his farewell soirée. His dedication to improving the CAP affected me on more than a professional level. Gene cared about residents and made a difference for them at a time when my own daughter was a pathology resident, and for that I will always be grateful. In so many other ways, Gene and his family enriched my family. He was a truly special person.

I miss you, Dr. Gene. Thank you so much for your guidance, friendship, and kindness. I will always be thankful for the time we spent together. I hope that everyone will always remember that every member of the CAP is better because you were one of us.□

Dr. Godbey welcomes communication from CAP members. Write to him at president@cap.org.