

In memoriam: Lee VanBremen, PhD (1938-2012)

February 2013—Lee VanBremen, PhD, 74, executive vice president of the CAP from 1989 to 2001, died on Nov. 15, 2012 of aspiration pneumonia, a complication of Parkinson's disease.

"During Lee's tenure, the College sustained significant growth in size, budget, staff, influence, and importance," says Paul Bachner, MD, of the University of Kentucky College of Medicine, who was a CAP president-elect and president while Dr. VanBremen was EVP. "His leadership played a major role in the CAP's emergence as one of the leading medical specialty societies in the United States and the world."

Paul Raslavicus, MD, MHA, who was the CAP's secretary-treasurer and then president-elect during Dr. VanBremen's tenure, says, "The College maintained its vibrancy, its commitment to represent pathologists as vital participants in patient care, and its ability to respond to the needs and demands of members and customers" under Dr. VanBremen's leadership.



Dr. VanBremen

Dr. Raslavicus, director-at-large of the World Association of Societies of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, describes Dr. VanBremen as "a soft-spoken leader who was always willing to listen. He was a genuine person who could put people at ease. He had a great sense of humor with an infectious laugh and a ready smile."

Dr. VanBremen, who graduated from Yale Divinity School in 1964 and received a PhD in higher education administration from the University of Connecticut in 1974, was committed to strengthening nonprofit organizations.

He was assistant executive director for the National School Boards Association from 1978 to 1983. From 1983 until accepting the CAP position, Dr. VanBremen was executive vice president of the American Academy of Facial, Plastic, and Reconstructive Surgery.

He served on the board of directors of the Foundation of the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) from 1986 to 1992 and was its chairman from 1990 to 1991. He received the ASAE's highest honor, its Key Award, in 1991 for outstanding contributions to association leadership.

Dr. VanBremen also served on the board of directors of the American Association of Medical Society Executives from 1991 to 2000 and was president from 1998 to 1999.

CAP staff at all levels knew and were fond of Dr. VanBremen. "Staff were inspired by Lee's integrity, sensitivity, and commitment to taking the right actions for the right reasons," says Sandra Grear, vice president of membership and professional development.

John Scott, vice president of advocacy, says, "He was very well respected among his peers. He was an educator, mentor, great listener, and strong people-person. It was a great honor and joy to work for him."

Liz Cramer, manager of policy and records, says, "I loved Lee because he cared about me as a person. He mentored me, believed in me, and always encouraged me to grow."

Dr. VanBremen made it a point to know every employee of the CAP. "When awards were presented to staff members, Lee would compose personal messages of appreciation to highlight each person's contribution," Gear says.

Announcing his retirement from the CAP was not easy for Dr. VanBremen, who was in the early stages of Parkinson's disease. "When he told us he was leaving, it was an emotional moment for him," Scott recalls. "That spoke very much of how he connected to people. He cared about his team."

Jane VanBremen, Dr. VanBremen's wife of 52 years, says: "Lee always worked for the common good in whatever capacity he was in. People felt he was genuinely interested in them, which was true. He also expected them to do their best for the benefit of whatever organization he was leading."

Dr. VanBremen enjoyed spending time with his family, traveling, reading, playing games, and listening to music.

In addition to Jane, of New London, NH, he is survived by two daughters and six grandsons.□