

## In memoriam: William B. Zeiler, MD 1921-2020

May 2020—William B. Zeiler, MD, CAP president from 1987 to 1989, died March 24 at age 99.

Dr. Zeiler was CAP vice president from 1985 to 1987 and a member of the Board of Governors from 1981 to 1985. He led and was a member of several CAP councils, committees, and commissions.

He was named CAP Pathologist of the Year in 1990, and winner of the Gold Headed Cane Award from the World Association of Societies of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine in 2001.

Dr. Zeiler founded and was medical director of the Clinical Pathology Facility and Associated Pathologists Laboratories in Pittsburgh. He served on the medical staffs of various Pittsburgh area hospitals and a rehabilitation center.



Dr. Zeiler

"Bill taught me a lot," says John C. Neff, MD, professor emeritus in the Department of Pathology at the University of Tennessee Graduate School of Medicine, Knoxville. Dr. Neff served on CAP committees with Dr. Zeiler, whom he credits for expanding his perspective of the pathologist's role in practice, advocacy, and philanthropy, and for his foresight.

"He had a way of anticipating not only what was going to happen but what a lot of pathologists and physicians in general wanted to happen," Dr. Neff says.

Starting in the late 1980s, "There were a lot of pathologists and physicians who wanted guidelines, and we were just beginning to enter the era of genomic medicine and specialized medicine," Dr. Neff says, noting that it was in Dr. Zeiler's term that the CAP Molecular Pathology Resource Committee was created (now the Molecular Oncology Committee). Dr. Zeiler, who trained as an internist before entering a residency in pathology and "had an insight into medicine that a lot of pathologists don't have," Dr. Neff says, advocated for having pathology lead the effort to develop laboratory testing guidelines.

Dr. Zeiler was an early and leading proponent of international laboratory accreditation standards. The CAP now accredits laboratories in 58 countries.

He championed the building of the current CAP headquarters. In a December 2014 CAP TODAY column, then CAP president Gene N. Herbek, MD, wrote that Dr. Zeiler was "a zealous advocate for the then new CAP TODAY and a steady hand that guided consolidation of our staff activities in Illinois. Some who opposed the staff consolidation liked to point out that the construction site in Northfield, Ill., was a swamp, but Dr. Zeiler held true, as he always does, and that swampland now supports beautiful gardens."

Dr. Neff recalls touring the headquarters in Northfield during the building's 1990 dedication and asking about the

excess space that wasn't yet finished. "I said, 'What's this for?' Dr. Zeiler replied, 'We're going to grow.' I said, 'Not this much.' He said, 'They'll be building extensions, you watch, John.'" And for years there was a space shortage, owing to growth, until the internal layout was altered.

Dr. Zeiler recognized early on the value of commercial laboratories, Dr. Neff says. "When those first commercial laboratories opened up, many pathologists thought of them as threats," he says. "Bill and some of the others saw that some of the testing was going to become so esoteric that most laboratories would not be able to do it. These commercial laboratories would be needed, and the real question wasn't 'Yes or no?' It was, 'What kind of a deal can you make with them for your laboratory or hospital?'"

Dr. Zeiler and other past presidents "gave me an education on politics and medicine and political giving," Dr. Neff says, and were instrumental in expanding the resources of the CAP's Washington office.

Nick T. Serafy Jr., president and CEO of Proficiency Testing Service in Brownsville, Tex., says Dr. Zeiler was "always the gentleman in the room." Dr. Zeiler oversaw negotiations when Serafy's company became a vendor to the CAP in the late 1980s.

"I was a young man of 30 at the time and was pretty much the kid in the room," says Serafy, who is a member of the CAP Foundation Board of Directors. "I remember Dr. Zeiler treating me with the same dignity and respect with which he treated everybody else. It was a big moment in my life and he was part of it."

Dr. Zeiler established a generous dedicated trust with the CAP Foundation that will go to the Geraldine Colby Zeiler Fund for the CAP Foundation, created in 1996 and named in memory of his late wife. "We were very honored to be among his philanthropic concerns and interests," says Diana Kelker Workman, former executive director of the CAP Foundation.

Dr. Zeiler set up other gifts in memory of his wife, who trained as a cytotechnologist at the Mayo Clinic, among them the Geraldine Colby Zeiler Professorship in Cytopathology at the Mayo Clinic. "The good that's come of this is absolutely so widespread. A tremendous amount of work has been done," he said of the professorship in 2010 in an interview with CAP TODAY.

He established also the Geraldine Colby Zeiler Fund for the Advancement of Pathology, which supports annual cytotechnology educational grants managed by the CAP Foundation and distributed to recipients selected by the American Society of Cytopathology.

Kelker Workman says Dr. Zeiler also shared his skills as a master pianist with the CAP Foundation. "He was such a beautiful pianist," she says. "He helped with a lot of our special events and did a piano recital that was well attended at one of our annual meetings."

Says Dr. Neff, "He knew a lot, he accomplished a lot, and the College was well served by his presidency."

Dr. Zeiler is survived by four daughters, one son, and 11 grandchildren. □

—Amy Carpenter Aquino