

In memoriam: Raymond C. Zastrow, MD | 1930-2016

June 2016—Raymond C. Zastrow, MD, the 24th president of the CAP, died April 28 at age 85 following complications of surgery.

A member of the CAP Board of Governors from 1985 to 1988, Dr. Zastrow also served as CAP secretary-treasurer from 1988 to 1993, president-elect from 1993 to 1995, and president from 1995 to 1997. In 1998, the CAP recognized him as Pathologist of the Year.



Dr. Zastrow

Dr. Zastrow's colleagues remember him as a down-to-earth man of perpetual drive, curiosity, and vision.

"He was always trying something new, always looking for the innovative edge," says Eugene McMahon, MD, MBA, who is executive vice president and chief medical officer of Capital Health, Princeton, NJ. "He was already talking 25 years ago about the need for pathologists and the CAP to control laboratory quality assessment, because he knew that in a business setting in which pathologists are marginalized, you're going to end up with mistakes made in the name of cost-cutting, mistakes that affect patient care."

Dr. Zastrow was a clinical professor of pathology at the Medical College of Wisconsin and a pathologist at St. Michael Hospital, Milwaukee, where he worked for 40 years.

For a dozen of those years, Dr. McMahon worked with Dr. Zastrow as part of the latter's group practice. Their professional relationship began when Dr. Zastrow stopped by Dr. McMahon's poster session at a CAP annual meeting.

"I was a kid at that point, and so of course I was calling him 'Dr. Zastrow,'" recalls Dr. McMahon, who was a pathology resident at the time. "Well, there used to be a comedian who had a routine that started, 'You can call me Ray.' So he [Dr. Zastrow] looked at me and said, 'You can call me Ray,' with the same intonation that the comedian would use. Talk about down-to-earth. He was delightful."

Another of Dr. Zastrow's colleagues remembers his relentless advocacy on behalf of organized pathology.

"If you don't participate in organized pathology, you get the idea that your little group or your little city is all there is," says John C. Neff, MD, retired chair of pathology at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. "I'm an immunopathologist, and as a young pathologist, that was my world. Well, Ray knew how medicine was organized and run from the local, county, state, national, and international standpoints. He had that kind of comprehensive view, which most physicians don't."

Jay Schamberg, MD, a former member of the CAP Board of Governors and former director of pathology at West Allis (Wis.) Memorial Hospital, agrees.

"Ray was always talking to pathologists about what they needed to do, who they needed to support, in order to support pathology," Dr. Schamberg says. "He was always the politician in the room, always talking about issues regarding pathology reimbursement. He was the one who introduced me to the College, and he was a sort of mentor for me in the College over the years."

Dr. Neff recalls Dr. Zastrow's CAP presidency as coming at a particularly apropos time in the CAP's history.

"When he was president, we were going through talks at the national level about the Resource-Based Relative Value Scale," Dr. Neff says. "We needed a president who understood how money flows in pathology, and there was Ray, who knew it, who understood it. I once said that the CAP seems to get, most of the time, the president it needs at the very time it needs it. I had Ray in mind when I said that."

Dr. Zastrow was active in the State Medical Society of Wisconsin, and he served as president of the Wisconsin Society of Pathologists from 1983 to 1985. Within the CAP, he chaired the Commission on Government Relations, the Council on Government and Professional Affairs, and the Bylaws, Nominating, and National Legislative and Regulatory committees. He was a member of many other CAP groups.

Dr. Zastrow is survived by his wife, Mary, three sons, one daughter, 10 grandchildren, and one great-grandchild.