

In memoriam: Tyra T. Hutchens, MD | 1921-2016

November 2016—Tyra T. Hutchens, MD, who served as CAP president from 1977 to 1979, died Aug. 28 at age 94.



Dr. Hutchens

Dr. Hutchens was CAP vice president from 1975 to 1977 and a member of the Board of Governors from 1968 to 1974. He was a member of the Executive; Standards; and Budget, Planning and Review committees and of the Council on Government Relations and Liaison and the CAP History Editorial Board. He was an advisor to the Instrumentation and International committees and a liaison in the 1980s to the NCCLS International Committee and in the 1990s to the World Association of Societies of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine. Dr. Hutchens was named CAP Pathologist of the Year in 1980.

He was chair of the Commission on World Standards, World Association of Societies of Pathology, from 1981 to 1987, and he was elected president of WASP in 1989.

Dr. Hutchens was a fourth-generation Oregonian whose great-grandparents journeyed across the Oregon Trail in 1847 and settled in Newberg, Ore., where he was raised. Dr. Hutchens, who in 1954 was one of the 12 founding members of the Society of Nuclear Medicine, had the same pioneering spirit.

Even as a high school student, he was fascinated by isotopes, recalls Betty Lou Hutchens, who was married to Dr. Hutchens for 74 years.

"The city library had to order books from the state library," says Betty Lou, who met her future husband when he was 11 and she was 10. They married the year he started medical school, in 1942.

Dr. Hutchens was greatly respected at Oregon Health and Sciences University for his intellect and leadership, says Susan Tolle, MD, an OHSU professor of medicine and geriatrics and director of the university's Center for Ethics in Health Care. Dr. Hutchens served as chair of the university's Department of Pathology for 25 years until he retired in 1987, and Dr. Tolle knew him professionally when she was a junior faculty member. She was a close friend of Dr. Hutchens and Betty Lou for more than 30 years and delivered the eulogy at his memorial service.

One of Dr. Hutchens' proudest achievements was establishing nuclear medicine departments at Providence and St. Vincent hospitals in Portland, Betty Lou says.

In his 2007 interview for an OHSU oral history project, Dr. Hutchens said that in the early years of nuclear medicine he carried soldering tools with him to repair the imaging equipment at the hospitals because no one else knew how to do it.

Dr. Hutchens was passionate about advancing pathology and fully integrating the specialty into medicine. When he began his career in the 1940s, his wife recalls, there was still debate about whether laboratory work was part of medicine. The integrity of the specialty was always at the forefront for him, she says.

Dr. Hutchens provided testimony on the Clinical Laboratory Improvement Act of 1977 (H.R.6221) before the U.S. House of Representatives subcommittee on health and the environment on June 15, 1977. He also testified on May 9, 1978, on H.R.10909, before the U.S. House of Representatives health subcommittee.

Dr. Hutchens was a past president of the Oregon Pathology Association and a founding member of the Academy of Clinical Laboratory Physicians and Scientists.

In 1995, he received the Georg Charles de Hevesy Nuclear Pioneer award from the Society of Nuclear Medicine in recognition of his role in establishing the field.

Amid the accolades and honors Dr. Hutchens remained kind, considerate, and humble, Dr. Tolle says.

“He was always so kind and respectful to everyone, and that was at a time when nurses stood up when a doctor entered a room,” Dr. Tolle says.

“Integrity in all of his medical practice and his dealings with people was quite important to him,” says Betty Lou.

Dr. Hutchens is survived also by three children, three grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren.[hr]