

Scott L. Sattler. M.D. **(September 22, 1946 – January 13, 2021)**

by Caroline Connor, M.D., Lee Leer, M.D., David O'Brien, M.D., and Ed Olsgard, M.D.



It is a great honor for us to be invited to pen this remembrance of our dear friend, Scott Sattler. Scott was a force of nature. An institution. A kind, generous, polymath of a man. And a linchpin, to the four of us anyhow, of a bygone era of medicine: when small medical practices could not only survive, but thrive, when such practices were beacons of light in their local community. Along with Eureka Internal Medicine and Arcata Family Medical Group, Eureka Family Practice was such a place in Humboldt County. These practices are now long gone. But in their day, they provided care for most people in Eureka, Arcata, and McKinleyville. It is hard to imagine, at EFP, any of that happening without Scott. He was not just our official treasurer, but unofficially the heart and soul of the practice.

Scott and Ed first came to Humboldt County in 1973 after each had completed a rotating internship. Ed drove himself here. Scott, however, decided to hitchhike. To Hoopa. Where he had never been before. Just to check it out. While there, he met someone affiliated with a local medical clinic. While touring the clinic, a trauma patient was brought in. Scott helped stabilize the patient and get him loaded on the helicopter. The hospital administrator, who was also the ambulance driver, promptly offered Scott a job, which he accepted. When Scott was an intern he had met and fallen in love with Kathy Schettino, an RN at Santa Clara Valley Medical Center. After Scott had been working in Hoopa for a while, Kathy drove up after work one Friday to spend the weekend with him. She too had never been to Hoopa. She arrived in the Hoopa valley at around 10 PM, knowing only that Scott was somewhere in Hoopa. Fortunately, she passed the local sheriff's substation, and the sheriff was out walking his dog. She flagged him down, he called Scott, and Scott met her a few miles up the road. One thing led to another, and soon they married and began the first leg of their beautiful lifelong adventure together: eight years in Hoopa. During that time, Kathy obtained her Nurse Practitioner license and the two of them worked side by side. Scott was on call every 3rd night. He did OB, trauma, psychiatry. Everything. They built a geodesic dome home in the valley and had many memorable adventures there. One that stands out is Scott's foray into veterinary medicine. Through some series of unfortunate events, Scott and Kathy's dog became ill and in the course of treatment suffered a cardiac arrest. Scott cracked his chest, performed cardiac massage, got a perfusing rhythm back, closed up the chest and inserted a chest tube. The dog recovered! This is the same dog that apparently chased a horse through the plate glass windows of the waiting room of Scott and Kathy's medical clinic. During the day. While shocked patients sat in their chairs waiting to see Scott or Kathy. The horse too survived.

Scott had a passion for women's health and reproductive rights. He apprenticed himself with a Planned Parenthood affiliate in the Bay Area to learn abortion, and as soon as Eureka's Planned Parenthood affiliate began offering abortions, Scott became one of the first providers. That is where he met Ed Olsgard, who was the PP medical director. Scott also learned and performed vasectomies for many years.

Scott was a pilot, and as such periodically needed to have FAA mandated physical exams. One day at EFP, Ed noticed that Scott's name was on the schedule of one of his partners for an FAA exam. Ed told the partner to offer Scott a job. Which he did, during the exam. That was how Scott was recruited to and how he and Kathy joined EFP in 1983.

Fast forward to 1988, and there was a new doctor in town, working ER shifts at Mad River Community Hospital – David O'Brien. Ed and Scott became aware of his skill set and set out to recruit him. The recruiting venture entailed a bag lunch in a local park. An offer was made and accepted. One of David's favorite memories of Scott – which admittedly we have all heard and committed to memory – was Scott's aphorism "The key to caring for patients is to care for [about] patients." David goes on to say: "I have memories of the twinkle in his eyes, his sweet smile and kind spirit, loving and generous and always grounded in his spirituality. But whenever his values or beliefs were challenged, he had no fear and would fight for what he felt was right."

Scott was one of the first physicians Lee met when he moved to Eureka to begin solo practice in 1993. We all had busy outpatient practices and managed our own and the community's unassigned patients in the two Eureka hospitals. Of course, this also necessitated going to department meetings, staff meetings, and the like. This is how Scott and the other principles of Eureka Family Practice, David O'Brien and Ed Olsgard, came to know Lee and he them. One day, Scott and Lee were both at a nursing station writing up notes and orders, and he let Lee know that if there was anything he and EFP could do to help, he should feel free to ask. Lee promptly asked if he could share call with the EFP doctors. After some consideration, which included a dinner at Ed Olsgard's home, during which Lee was grilled (particularly by Scott) about his motivations and intentions -- they decided he was OK to share call with. In 1994, Lee joined the group as a full member and worked side by side with Scott for many wonderful years.

In 1996, we were joined by Caroline Connor, who had come to town on a recruiting visit. We all thought she would be a great addition and hoped she'd join the group, but she had other enticing offers that she was giving very serious thought to. It was largely because of Scott's perseverance and relationship building that she ultimately chose to move to Eureka and join EFP. She recalls that he sent her endless emails. Many had to do with her concerns about Eureka's weather. He assured her that it was not always gray and overcast here. So, he was capable of the occasional white lie in service of the greater good. Caroline and Scott became fast friends and maintained close contact up until the times of Scott's demise.

And this was the core of EFP for many years. We shared call together. We had annual weekend

retreats to the *Benbow Inn* to review the past year and plan the next. We rotated houses each holiday season to host the annual office holiday party. A mainstay of the party every year was the dessert contest. Each doctor was responsible for creating a dessert and presenting it anonymously to the staff for them to enjoy and to vote on as to the best of the season. There was no prize other than bragging rights. But still, we recall this event being more stressful than preparing for a Grand Rounds presentation. One year Scott (in our reasoned opinion) cheated. The party was at his house, and the last dessert presented to the assembled judges (our staff) was his flaming cherries jubilee. Everyone knew who had done that, and of course he was that year's winner.

Scott was a full spectrum family physician, who did obstetrics for many years. He also developed unique specialty interests which included learning how to operatively and non-operatively manage varicose veins. Too, he had a special interest in melanoma and pioneered his own monitoring system for patients with multiple nevi: he videotaped their moles and sent the patients home with the video tape (in those days, VHS). He advised them to review the tapes and report back any time if they saw that something had changed. Then, at each regular follow up, they'd return with their tape, and review the tape and the current state of all the moles together. Anything that had changed significantly earned a biopsy.

Scott was very involved in hospital medical staff governance and served as Chief of Staff of the combined St. Joseph Hospital/General Hospital medical staff from 1989 – 1991. He, along with Ed Olsgard, were instrumental in stimulating St. Joseph hospital to implement a hospitalist program. Looking back on that issue through the lens of today it may seem surprising, but there was at the time tremendous resistance to hospitalists both from the hospitals (which couldn't figure out how to afford them) and from the medical staff, which simply couldn't fathom making such a change.

But Scott was far more than just a doctor. He had a very deep spirituality and spiritual practice. He was a practicing Sufi and led Sufi choirs around the world. He was one of the founding members of Six Rivers Planned Parenthood's *Clergy for Choice*, and became a member of the *National Clergy for Choice*. Scott was very much interested in how we die, and how we can prepare for our deaths. As a member of the editorial board for the Medical Society's monthly Bulletin Scott wrote editorials that reflected and expanded upon his interests in women's reproductive rights and death and dying, among myriad other subjects. He was an amateur magician, whom we recall regaling more than one younger patient with the old "pull a quarter out of your ear" trick. He loved joking and making puns. When the *Eureka Inn* hosted its first "Pun Off," Scott entered and won. In later years, he served as a judge of the competition. His puns, though plentiful, were painful.

Scott is survived by his wife Kathy and their two daughters Shanti and Amelia, each of whom is married and has 2 children. The youngest grandchild, Lucia, was born on December 31, 2020. Scott was able to virtually meet and shower his love on Lucia in his final days. As Kathy points out, the proximate contrast between the baby's new life and Scott's passing is not lost on us.

