



## My Memories of Dr. Scott Holmes *by Jay Davis, M.D.*

I first met Dr. Holmes in 1975 when I arrived in Arcata as a newly minted FP. I remember thinking he looked like he'd been sent from Central Casting to play the lead in some medical drama: he was handsome, cool, and confident—but never overbearing. He had a reassuring smile and a quiet demeanor that said, “Don't worry; we'll be OK.”

In those days, FPs first-assisted surgeons and I got to spend many hours with Scott. He was remarkable—totally unflappable, always polite, and very good at what he did. It was rare to hear an expletive come from him in the OR—but on rare occasions, usually after many hours of tedious surgery on some very uncooperative vasculature, he did lose it. “Rats!” he would murmur, and then continue operating. I never heard anything harsher from his mouth.

When I worked in the ER, it was always a relief to know he was the on-call surgeon. No matter when you called him, Scott sounded genuinely delighted to hear from you—even at 3am. That was not the norm. Understandably, nobody likes their sleep interrupted (I certainly didn't), and most on-call people made no secret of their feelings. Not Scott.

Hundreds turned out for his recent memorial, and hours were spent recounting his good deeds and extraordinary nature. Some in attendance owed their very lives to him. On one thing there was complete agreement: Scott was a true gentleman and a very fine surgeon.

And that is high praise indeed.

"There were giants in the earth in those days"

*Genesis 6 v.4 (KJV)*

*by Luther F. Cobb, M.D.*

The first day of this year marked the passing of a founder of modern surgical care in this area, a true giant in his field. Scott Holmes was a man who grew up in this area, had a deep connection to it, and although he could have practiced anywhere he chose and would have had a spectacular career, he chose to return to the area of his childhood days and establish a practice in concert with the newly founded Mad River Community Hospital in the mid 70's. He remained there for

about a quarter century, delivering the highest standard of surgical care, but also care with gentleness and heart, and genuine commitment to his patients and his profession. He also accomplished many things in the community aside from being the epitome of a surgical professional.

I had a particular connection with him, having taken over his practice in 1997, when he still was at the top of his surgical game, but he wanted at that point to pursue other directions. If you want to read more about those directions, I would direct your attention to the beautiful remembrance published in the Times Standard obituaries, from those who knew him in all his other contexts. I can state that he was a true gentleman, and taking over the care of his patients was a luxury as they were always well taken care of and there were essentially no loose ends to tie up on the transition.

Despite his having retired from active practice a little short of 20 years ago, he still remained intellectually active in the medical field, and seldom missed a meeting of the St. Joseph Hospital Wednesday noon Tumor Board. I recall seeing him at the last such meeting the week before Christmas. He looked every bit as vigorous as ever, and it was a great shock to hear that he had a catastrophic stroke just a few days thereafter. It is a great and cruel irony that the disease from which he protected so many other people managed to take him from this world, but we all know how uncertain life can be.

It was a great honor to know and work with Scott. He did what all of us in medicine and surgery hope to do, which is make the world a better place for his having been here. He most certainly accomplished that. He is deeply missed, and will never be forgotten.