



Jerome Lengyel M.D. 1934-2009

In February, 2009, the Humboldt County medical community lost one of its finest members, Dr.

Jerome Lengyel. For many of us, this loss has been a deeply personal one. We have lost a great friend as well as a respected colleague. I have known Jerome most of my professional life, ever since our first acquaintance just after internship. Through our long association at Eureka Internal

Medicine I came to know well, greatly respect and love this unique man of so many abilities, talents, interests and accomplishments.

Jerome was born in San Francisco, but grew up in Georgetown, California, raised by a writer and poet father and a librarian and environmentalist mother. It was in Georgetown that he began his exploration of the outdoors in the forests and streams of the Sierra foothills. As a young man he found his way to Humboldt County where he pursued a variety of jobs, including working as a dairy hand and in a sawmill in Hoopa. He spent time in the Merchant Marine and traveled widely. These experiences convinced him to return to school which he did, ultimately graduating with a degree in veterinary medicine from the University of California at Davis. Jerome learned a great deal as a vet, one of those things being that he wanted to be a physician. He returned to school and graduated from the University of Utah School of Medicine in 1967. After internship, he entered the United States Public Health Service, in the division of Indian Health, and was stationed at Crownpoint, New Mexico, from 1968 to 1970, which is where I met him.

Crownpoint was the smallest of the hospital units serving the Navajo people, where the hours were long and the work hard but very rewarding. From Crownpoint, Jerome went to Los Angeles and LA County Hospital/USC for his internal medicine training. In 1973 he returned to Humboldt County, joining the practice of Carl Solomonson and Phil Rummell. In 1974 he joined Larry Hill and Alan Goodman to form Eureka Internal Medicine, where he continued to work for the next 35 years.

Jerome took great pride in what EIM accomplished and what it contributed to our community. He was selfless in his concern for the group and its future and always was willing to place group needs ahead of his own personal wants. A more loyal and dedicated member one could not wish for. As a physician, Jerome was the doctor we all aspire to be: compassionate, caring, understanding, a good listener, engaged with his patients, interested in them as individuals who had wisdom to share. What greater tribute can a physician have than to be loved by his patients, and respected by his colleagues for his skills, his knowledge, and his commitment to the ideals of his profession. All this Jerome was.

Jerome married his first wife, Cynthia Ainsworth, while at UC Davis. With her he had four children, Donia, Jed, Tess, and Theo. For the past thirty years he was married to Nancy Threfall, with whom he had one child, Willa.

Jerome was a man of multiple and varied interests and accomplishments. As an athlete he ran

marathons, twice ran the race from Arcata to Willow Creek, ran multiple times the Western States Endurance Run of 100 miles from Squaw Valley to Auburn, and completed the Tour of the Unknown Coast 100 mile bicycle race 21 times.

He was an avid rafter and legendary river kayaker. Every Tuesday and numerous weekend days would find him and his intrepid fellow boaters on some fork of some river on the North Coast. He knew and loved the outdoors and the ways of the wild and delighted in these adventures. He was a serious reader with broad interests in philosophy, poetry, essays, environmentalism, spirituality, history, literature, and politics. His library reflected those interests and more. His chair at home was surrounded with the many books that he was currently reading. Finishing one book before beginning the next was not how Jerome read. Some books he would finish quickly, some took months, some he never finished but set aside to be taken up again and again. In the last few years of his life he began to write poetry, and then to share that poetry with others. From this he derived great pleasure, as he did with all his many interests. Somehow he also found time to be gardener, amateur botanist, and seed gatherer and dispenser, and story teller.

Above all Jerome was devoted to his family and to his many friends. Many of us were very fortunate to be his friend, to benefit by being embraced by him and to be part of the group he considered his extended family. We will miss this man and all he gave to us. Let us hope that he will continue to inspire us to do our very best.

by Jack Irvine, M.D