



FLOYD F. MARCHI, M.D. 1921-2007

Floyd, a first generation American, was born, lived and died in Humboldt County. His Italian parents immigrated to Humboldt in the early 1900's, and, as a youngster, he helped support his parents and six sisters by selling newspapers and repairing typewriters in downtown Eureka. His humble beginnings didn't stop him from excelling academically. He attended Humboldt State College and graduated magna cum laude from UC Berkeley as a member of Phi Beta Kappa.

Floyd started out to be a surgeon, but was midway through his five year surgical residency at the University of California, San Francisco, when he developed pulmonary tuberculosis and was forced to give up surgical training. After he was treated for TB he changed to anesthesiology, finished his training, and returned to Humboldt County. Thus Floyd's misfortune became Humboldt's fortune. Years later his former chief, Leon Goldman (Senator Diane Feinstein's father) who was Professor and Chair of the Department of Surgery, told Norm Christensen that the surgical faculty at UCSF had already identified Floyd, when he was in mid-training, as someone that they wished to retain on the faculty.

But Floyd could not completely shake his surgical training. When giving anesthesia he watched surgeons critically. Joe Walsh, Bill Clague, Norm Christensen, George Husband, and John Van Speybroeck were often the recipients of comments from Floyd as he bent over the anesthesia screen to see what we were doing. Authoritative comments floated down from the head of the table: "Don't you think a transverse incision would be better?" Or: "That patient would probably do better with an end – to – end anastomosis instead of the side to side one." The reply to Floyd would almost invariably be, "Yes, Floyd, you're probably right!"

He helped bring anesthesia excellence to Humboldt County. For a time, he and Terry Kerrigan were the only anesthesiologists at St. Joseph Hospital. If they were giving anesthesia one did not worry; there would be no anesthesia catastrophe.

Floyd was quick and believed in doing things on time. If surgeons were late to start a case he could become very disturbed and berate the person to the surgical nurses. However, when the surgeon poked his head in the door he was able to control his annoyance, much to the nurses' displeasure, who felt the same way as Floyd did. John Van Speybroeck remembers that when he first came to Eureka, fresh out of an academic setting, he lay down for a nap after scheduling an appendectomy at 4 AM, believing that he had a least an hour before Dr. Marchi got there. He had barely closed his eyes when the phone rang. It was Floyd: "Where are you? Let's get going. We are all set."

Nurses loved and admired Floyd. Perhaps he grouched now and then but it was not about them. He was patient, instructive, and loved to teach. He allowed (even encouraged) RN's and student nurses to practice inserting IV's into his own arm. Floyd had large veins!

Floyd was generous but also prudent. When playing with his poker group, a group that had been together for 10 – 20 years, he always made it a practice of taking his money with him if he had to leave the poker table temporarily. One night it looked as if he was about to have a change of heart. After pondering a while he got up leaving the money on the table, walked half way out of the room, had second thoughts, turned around, came back and picked up his money.

When Floyd retired he found a new passion: art and sculpting. At Humboldt State University he studied under Mort Scott where he learned sculpture and turned out distinguished pieces.

Professor Scott says that Floyd told him that when he was young he wanted to be an artist but his family wanted him to be a physician. Scott says that Floyd had extraordinary talent and that anyone that has one of his pieces is “very lucky.” Scott says that Floyd had a wonderful eye and that he could model anything--so accurately that it could almost be mistaken for a photograph. But in addition to his realism he had a superb talent for the abstract.

As he was admired for his help and understanding by the nurses at St. Joseph Hospital so he was admired by the students at HSU. Scott says “the students loved him.”

Indeed, they don't make them like they used to!!!!

By George Husband, M.D. and Norman Christensen, M.D