

Herb Tanenhaus, M.D.

1941 - 2021

by Irv Tessler, MD

In 1976, Herb Tanenhaus and I both arrived separately in Humboldt County. However, we would not meet for four years because I was in southern Humboldt for a couple of years, and then Sacramento for training in family practice. We met in 1980, when I moved back to Humboldt, and started a psychiatric practice. We met while serving on what was the Neuro-Psych Committee. This committee was made up of psychiatrists, neurologists and clinical psychologists. We met monthly or bimonthly, and Herb attended regularly. One of my first words to him was to tell him that if we ever formed a football team, I wanted him on the defensive line! He had a great sense of humor and always had an interesting new take on whatever subject or article was being discussed. I enjoyed his excitement when he heard a new idea.

Eventually the committee became just four psychiatrists, Herb, Bob Gardner, Dick Riley and myself. Some years later Bob Soper joined. That made for a nice call group.

I remember Herb telling me about his interest in personal computers and that he had joined a "Commodore Club!" He saw the potential for personal computers long before I did. The majority of my meetings with Herb took place either at the committee or at pharmaceutical dinners. He always greeted everyone with a warm smile and seemed genuinely interested in what and how you were doing. Again, his comments and questions during the programs often reflected his curiosity and original thinking.

Though Herb made reference to bike riding, I had no idea of the extent to which it went whether it was the many miles of his excursions, riding the unknown coast, etc.

Herb maintained an extremely busy practice until 2017, when he suffered a stroke. It takes a lot to disable a psychiatrist. Without speech, and unable to use a computer (dexterity) his world became small. What persisted was his enjoyment with people and being social. He didn't stop going out, meeting friends, having dinners out. Although silenced, his facial expressions always showed his enjoyment.

The following year Becky decided to close the practice . Many patients were disappointed. Becky said several protested with comments like “well he doesn't have to talk he can just listen!” Outpourings of affection continued.

Herb Tanenhaus was a very large part of our shrinking (no pun intended) psychiatric community

And has left a very large void.

*“Who looks outside, dreams; who looks inside, awakes.”* Carl Jung