

Joseph Francis Walsh
1915 - 2006

Joseph Francis Walsh, M.D. passed away peacefully on Saturday, April 22, 2006, surrounded by his loving family. He was born November 23, 1915, and was the third generation of his family to live in Eureka. In 1934, he graduated from Eureka Senior High School as the valedictorian of his class (as his mother was in her class.) He completed his undergraduate studies at the University of California at Berkeley (Cal) and went on to the Stanford University School of Medicine for his medical training, graduating in 1942.

He interned one year, then did his surgical residency in the Stanford Service at San Francisco County Hospital.

His surgical training was interrupted by World War II. During the war he was a Flight Surgeon in the 8th Army Air Corps, 445th Division under Captain Jimmy Stewart, stationed in England. There he earned a bronze star and completed his service with the rank of Captain.

After the war, he resumed his surgical training at Stanford then completed the last two years of his surgery residency at the Lahey Clinic in Boston.

In 1950, he and his young family returned to Eureka where he set up his surgical practice.

Dr. Walsh was the first board-certified surgeon from Santa Rosa to the Oregon border. He introduced contemporary concepts of pre- and post-operative surgical care in the practice of medicine on California's north coast. He was often requested as a surgical consultant, particularly in difficult cases. He was known as a "surgeon's surgeon" and was equally respected by his patients. In the operating room he was cool, calm, and gentle.

In 1961, he and his friend Norm Christensen, M.D. united their medical practices. In 1974 they were joined by George Husband, M.D. and in 1981 by John Van Speybroeck, M.D. Dr. Walsh retired in 1981 but continued to assist in surgeries with his partners, local plastic surgeons, and orthopedists well into the mid-1980's. In 1973, he volunteered on the floating medical center the SS Hope during its travels to northeast Brazil.

He was instrumental in establishing standards for surgical care in local hospitals and was one of the physicians responsible for starting the Blood Bank. He was a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons, a member of the Northern California Chapter of the American College of Surgeons, and was active in the Stanford Medical Alumni Association, the Humboldt-Del Norte County Medical Society, California Medical Association, and the American Medical Association. In addition to his surgical expertise, he was an expert fly-tyer and fly-fisherman. He maintained a cabin on the Klamath River, the site of many family vacations and fishing parties. He was an excellent cook, enjoyed playing golf with his life-long friend Bill Daly, appreciated music, loved hearing and telling jokes, and had an extraordinary knowledge of American and English literature. He was an ardent grammarian, as evidenced by the fact that one of his favorite books was Strunk & White's "Elements of Style." He was entranced by the origins and meanings of

words and was no stranger to past participles, diphthongs, gerunds, and transitive and intransitive verbs. He was a voluminous reader and remained connected to local, national, and international issues until the time of his death. His probing intellect and grand sense of humor were unique.

He and Janie loved to travel. He will be remembered as a loving, considerate father, an intelligent and compassionate physician, and devoted husband.

He is survived by his wife of thirty years, Janie Walsh, and by his four children and their families: Mike and Lynne Walsh and their sons Jason and Sean; Pam and Jim Olson; Sandy Walsh and her children Isaac and Leanore Shikuma, son-in-law Graham Flanagan, and grandson Kazuo; Johnny Walsh and his wife Shari Emerson; and his brother Jack, his wife Mary, and their ten children and their families. He is also survived by his wife Janie's three children and their families: Carol Clarke and her companion Al Richardson; Susan and Dan Harrison and their children Amy, Mason and his wife Jocelynn; and Gretchen Howard, her husband Gary Poncia, and her daughters Stephanie and Inga. Joe and Janie's blended family traditionally gathered each Thanksgiving in the family home.

He was predeceased by his parents Mike and Leanora Walsh; the mother of his four children Gery Walsh; sister-in-law Rose Walsh; and his four beloved uncles Joe, Ed, Ray, and Elmo.

He was a true renaissance man. He was "a most excellent person" (his description of people of whom he thought very highly.) He will be greatly missed by his immediate and extended family, his friends, and his community.

There will be a gathering of family and friends in his honor on Saturday, May 13, 2006, at the family home.

If you wish, please sign the guest book at www.times-standard.com and click on obituaries.