

## MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

### JOHN A. COLLINS (1933 – 1992)

John Austin Collins died suddenly on September 21, 1992 of a coronary artery occlusion while playing golf with his wife, Maureen, in County Galway, Ireland, the land of his father's birth. His untimely death at age 58 has robbed Stanford of a world-class surgeon, scholar, teacher, and man. His eleven-year tenure as Chairman of Stanford's Department of Surgery had a remarkably positive impact—not just upon the department, but upon the whole University.

Born in New York City on October 23, 1933, the eldest of three children, he took his pre-medical education at Manhattan Preparatory and at Fordham University from which he acquired his A.B. degree, *Egregia cum laude*.

John studied medicine at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons and received his M.D. degree in 1959. His academic excellence was recognized by his election to Alpha Omega Alpha. After an internship at Physicians and Surgeons and a surgical research fellowship at Mary Imogene Bassett, he completed his surgical training at Columbia. He was awarded a clinical fellowship by the American Cancer Society in 1963 and served as an Assistant in Surgery at Columbia until 1965. From 1965 to 1967, while on active duty in the U.S. Army, Captain Collins served as a surgical research investigator in the Department of Experimental Surgery at Walter Reed Army Institute of Research. He was Chief of the U.S. Army Surgical Research Team in Viet Nam, and received the Meritorious Unit Commendation, and Army Commendation medals. He became an international expert in the field of transfusion and bleeding disorders. In 1967 he was recruited from Columbia to Washington University in St. Louis where he worked up through the ranks from Assistant Professor to Professor during the years 1967 to 1977. His surgical tenure at Washington University was highlighted by the honor of serving as a John and Mary B. Markle scholar in academic medicine, teacher of the year, and as the 1977 commencement speaker.

Dr. Collins was Stanford's first choice to fill the vacant Chairmanship in Surgery in 1977. In 1978, he was awarded the Clifford and Elsa Rooney Chidester endowed chair and after a decade of outstanding teaching, he received the Kaiser Award for outstanding contributions to teaching at Stanford.

His popularity as a visiting professor is confirmed by two dozen such honors after 1974 and an equal number of international and named lectureships.

John served with distinction on numerous editorial boards, and regularly produced a popular "Annual Review of General Surgery" in which he sharply critiqued published papers in the field. He evaluated the literature with great perception, brushing away fluff wherever he saw it. He gave credit when it was due but was quick to identify soft spots in data which had been too quickly accepted by others. His analysis of much of the information presently available on the surgical management of breast cancer was particularly incisive.

Driven as a scholar, Collins made notable contributions to medical science both by his achievements in oncology and transfusion medicine and his scholarly publications, which exceed 150 in number.

All of the above speak to John A. Collins as scholar, teacher, and surgeon but equally important to those of us privileged to know him, he was John—the person. He was a big man physically. The common themes found in many anecdotes about him have been honesty, forthrightness, sense of humor, generosity, concern, loyalty, drive, responsibility, and yes, love. As a debater he was sparkling, always refreshingly candid, and even blunt. A true stand-up, or even sit-down, humorist, he was endowed with an Irish wit as quick as a spark and as funny as the best of pros. John was a strong family man and he and Maureen added enormously to the collegiality of the Stanford community. A generation of students and residents looked up to John as one would look to one's own father—a fountain of knowledge, a tower of strength, not afraid to identify error or weakness, yet equally quick to praise or support. He was a man of many facets who loved history and travel and philosophy as well as medicine.

The Stanford Department of Surgery, in its all-inclusive sense, the School, his many friends and patients, will continue to mourn the loss of John Collins, yet regularly will be delighted by recollections of the light side of this great man.

He is survived by those he loved most—his wife of 32 years, Maureen, and his four sons, Michael, Owen, John P. and Matthew. To them especially we extend our heartfelt sympathy.