

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION
ALVIN J. COX, JR.
(1907 - 1990)

Alvin J. Cox, Jr. died on Thursday, December 6, 1990, in the 83rd year of his life, having suffered a coronary occlusion sixteen days earlier. His last days were unfortunately marked by increasing discomfort while he remained clear in mind. He and wife Helen lived in the Sequoias in San Francisco. In his last illness he was in the St. Francis Memorial Hospital.

Alvin Cox was an unusual man in the best sense, in family associations, in personal demeanor and appearance, and in accomplishments. His family was perhaps the most Stanford-oriented one extant. He took his undergraduate degree here in 1927 and his medical degree in 1931. His father and mother were both Stanford graduates; his father was also a member of the faculty in Chemistry from 1901 to 1907. An uncle, Charles Cox, was an instructor in Mathematics from 1891, the year of the University's opening, until 1900. An uncle on the maternal side — George deForest Barnett — was Stanford educated and later became one of our outstanding professors of Medicine; Barnett Chair in the Department of Medicine commemorates him. Cousin Charles W. Barnett was a professor in the same department from 1934 until his retirement in 1969. A number of other cousins were awarded Bachelor's degrees, one additionally an M.D. and two others the Ph.D. degree; his two sisters were baccalaureates as are all three of his children. His family has been represented at Stanford almost continuously since its opening in 1891. His patrician persona may have been a reflection of his background as well as the genes that account for this family history.

Alvin was born in Manila in March of 1907. After completing his education at Stanford he interned in the San Francisco General Hospital, in which our medical school supervised teaching wards. He became an assistant in the school's Pathology Department for two years, and then an Instructor. In 1933 he went off to the Freiburg Institute of Pathology in Germany for two years of polishing skills. In 1936 he returned to Stanford and rapidly scaled the academic rungs to

Professor and Chairman of the Department in 1941. He held these appointments for almost a quarter century, until 1964. In that year he resigned his positions in Pathology and transferred to Dermatology where he set up the Laboratory of Dermatopathology, which soon became an outstanding example of its kind. He headed this unit through retirement in 1972 and then as Professor Emeritus (Active) until 1985, when at the age of 78 he decided to retire in fact as well as theory.

Dr. Cox was a highly respected member of the medical fraternity, as academician and practitioner. He maintained career-long interests in several areas of his field: chronic poisonings, experimental cancer, diseases involving the stomach and, in the dermatologic phase of his life, in psoriasis. To all these areas he made contributions; his writings as well as his teaching and conversation were informed by wisdom and responsible opinion. He was able to ask the right questions in his work and was in no hurry to publish until he had satisfying answers.

As would be expected of a leader in his field, Dr. Cox was a member of numerous biomedical societies, and President in 1973 of the American Society of Dermatopathology. He was a sometime member of the editorial boards of California Medicine, Cancer Research and the American Journal of Pathology, and a consultant to various government hospitals. In the Medical School one of the important tasks that devolved upon him was the chairmanship of a 22 member faculty committee charged with evaluating the long-term objectives of medical teaching preliminary to the move of the School from San Francisco to the campus. The recommendations of this committee were adopted as the basis for the flexible curriculum inaugurated when the transplanted School opened here in 1959.

His efforts on behalf of dermatology were much appreciated by the Department and dermatologists generally. In June 1975 at a reception in the Faculty Club he was honored with the presentation of a portrait which hangs in the Department's Library and Conference Room. The school-wide esteem of former students and colleagues was recently evidenced by his selection by the Medical Alumni Board of Governors as recipient of the J.E. Wallace Sterling Distinguished Alumnus Award (with Dr. Marcus Krupp as co-recipient). He was informed of this in September; the presentation was to have been next November. He had the pleasure of responding to the letter of notification shortly before his final illness.

The term "gentleman and scholar" may be going out of fashion for lack of subjects, but there is no better phrase to apply to Alvin Cox, to which should be added "generous of spirit, wise, and personable." He was all these things to

many people for many years. We knew him and mourn his death and are grateful for the length of his life.

In 1947 Alvin married Helen Files. He wrote in a short biographical essay a few years ago that she has been the guiding light of his life. Helen, two sisters, and children Roger, Barbara, and Caroline and three grandchildren survive him.

Sidney Raffel, Chair
David Rytand
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