

# Remembering Two Mentors

We all owe much of our success to the help of key individuals who took a personal interest in our growth, education, and development. This past March, I spoke at the memorials for two of my most important mentors. Doing so reminded me of how truly fortunate I am to have had their inspiration and guidance during my formative years.

Steven G. Kramer, MD, PhD, was the chief of ophthalmology at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), for 27 years. His tenure began in 1975 when, at the age of 34, he became the youngest ophthalmology chair in the country. Although Steve was an accomplished research scientist and gifted corneal surgeon, his personal career became secondary to the stewardship of a premier ophthalmology department. He recruited and nurtured a full-time faculty that grew from nine to 31 members during his tenure. He championed an ophthalmic basic science group that was among the leaders in NEI grants, and in 1988 he realized the dream of combining both basic and clinical sciences under the same roof of a newly constructed, state-of-the-art eye center.

Steve's greatest accomplishment was developing a residency program that was for many years the most requested in the national residency match. He made resident education the department's priority and restricted fellowships at UCSF so that fellows would not compete for surgical cases and faculty attention. Steve sought to mentor each of us personally, and, as a result, he was not only our chief but also our friend. He performed magic tricks (his hobby) at Grand Rounds, was our department's softball captain and pitcher, and insisted that we always call him *Steve*. UCSF became the



epitome of a residents' program, and the many outstanding ophthalmologists who trained under him are Steve Kramer's greatest legacy.

My mother, Carol Chang, was born and raised in Shanghai, China. Upon graduating college in 1947, she won a prestigious government award to study abroad.

Throughout its long history, China had always struggled to feed its population. As an idealistic and patriotic young woman, my mother's ambition was to develop novel ways to improve her countrymen's nutrition. Toward this end, she earned her biochemistry PhD from Cornell with a research interest in nutrition. Sadly, like many other overseas Chinese students, she could not return to China following the Communist takeover. For many years, the Cultural Revolution precluded any communication with her family, and it was 30 years before she was

able to visit China in 1977 to see them again. Pursuing her education abroad had unexpectedly cost my mother her country, her professional goal, and all contact with her family. Mom's ultimate sacrifice, however, was giving up that hard-earned career to raise her two children full time and to navigate the many challenges that all immigrant parents face. She managed to rear and mentor not one but two ophthalmologists in the process. My sister, Lisa, followed me through the UCSF residency and enjoyed Steve Kramer's guidance and support as well.

As busy as we all get, we sometimes neglect to fully appreciate and thank our mentors. What better way to honor them than by striving to teach and mentor our own students and children with the same unselfish spirit and energy? ■

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