

In Memoriam: Ray Melrose



It is with great sadness that I write this memorial tribute to Dr. Raymond Melrose. Ray was my teacher/mentor and colleague at the Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of the University of Southern California, my partner at Oral Pathology Associates, Inc., and a dear friend. This relationship spanned 45 years, the majority of my life.

Ray was a leader in the field of Oral Pathology, as most of you are aware. He had served both as President of the American Academy of Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology as well as a director on the American Board of Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology. He had published numerous articles in peer-reviewed journals. He was a committed volunteer, having served as President of the California Division of the American Cancer Society. He and his wife Diane were major contributors to the Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry. However, all of these accomplishments fail to describe the manner in which he touched the lives of those around him.

As a teacher, Ray challenged his students and residents to reach their highest potential. He was always willing to go over slides or consult on difficult cases. No question was ever too “dumb” to ask. He was always positive and encouraging, never demeaning.

As a mentor, Ray helped me pursue a successful career in Oral Pathology. He counselled me through the process of tenure and promotion to full professor and helped me find my way through the maze of politics in the university environment. He was inclusive at a time when women were not so welcomed in the field of dentistry. He always “had my back.”

As a colleague at the Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry, Ray was well respected by the other faculty members and the at-large dental community that we served. He was always willing to go the extra mile. He served on most of the major committees, as well as having been appointed Department Chair and Associate Dean of Academic Affairs. He was well liked and approachable. He could always be counted on to “get it done.” Besides that, he was fun to work with.

In 1997, Ray and I embarked on an exciting new journey. We took the University of Southern California Oral Pathology Laboratory private and founded Oral

Pathology Associates, Inc., and together, we learned how to “run a business.” We merged our individual strengths to make it a success and worked together harmoniously until the practice was sold in June 2016. Ray was totally trustworthy and a man of his word. It was a great honor to be his business partner.

Last, and most importantly, Ray was a good friend. He was always there for me when I faced personal or professional challenges. He was a great listener and gave thoughtful counsel. I respected him greatly and treasured our friendship. I will miss him. Rest in peace, dear friend.

Janice P. Handler, DDS
Oral Pathology Associates, Inc.

Dr. Raymond Melrose has been such a force in organized Dentistry, Medicine, and Oral Pathology that it is hard to imagine any of these activities without him. We now must go forward and try to emulate him. That is a tall order, indeed.

Ray was a pathologist’s pathologist. He was truly brilliant and was great to consult with on cases. You could be certain that he would provide a stimulating discussion of possibilities, and he usually provided possible diagnoses that you had not previously considered.

It seems as if I have always known Ray. I deeply regret that I did not have the pleasure of knowing him early in my career as many of you did. But I so much enjoyed the many years that I did work with him when we met in our oral pathology circles. I am deeply grateful that I did have the opportunity to know and to work with such an admirable man. He was truly an inspiration to me and those that had the fortune to know him. Not only did he possess an incredible depth of knowledge and understanding of oral pathology and medicine, he willingly shared it with peers and students. He was one of the most approachable persons I have ever met.

Ray was kind, gentle, and quiet. This countenance belied the strength that lay beneath the surface. He possessed a keen sense of humor that you would sometimes encounter when you least expected it. He was always willing to help people in any way possible and did so with dignity and aplomb.

Ray and Diane were close friends of my wife Jean and me. We enjoyed many hours of socializing, fine dining, and enjoying good wines. I truly loved this man. I will miss him profoundly. The profession has lost an icon.

Dwight R. Weathers, DDS, MSD
Emory University School of Medicine