

IN MEMORIAM

Kenneth A. Forde, MD, 1934–2019

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On June 2, 2019, the first editor of *Surgical Endoscopy* from the Society of American Gastrointestinal and Endoscopic Surgeons (SAGES), Kenneth A. Forde, passed away at the age of 85. Ken edited *Surgical Endoscopy* from 1988 to 1998, solidly establishing it as the foundational and prime modality for the society to catalogue and promulgate the work of its members. This was but one of many important contributions Dr. Forde made to SAGES and to the world of surgery. What follows are the official announcement of his passing away sent to SAGES members and short solicited comments from colleagues who knew Ken well. Finally, there is a link to a short video tribute to Dr. Forde.

Dr. Mark A. Talamini
Professor George Hanna
Co-Editors-in-Chief

SAGES announcement sent Thursday, June 6, 2019:

REMEMBERING OUR SECOND SAGES PRESIDENT

We are sad to share with our SAGES family that Dr. Kenneth Forde passed away peacefully on Sunday morning, June 2. Dr. Forde was a giant in the world of surgery, the definition of grace and class, and a true statesman. He was the co-founder of SAGES (with Dr. Gerald Marks) and our second President. He was the Editor-in-Chief of *Surgical Endoscopy* for 10 years, Governor of the American College of Surgeons, and the President of the 8th (2002) World Congress of Endoscopic Surgery. He was involved over the years in inter-organizational deliberations and other activities, including the American Board of Surgery, the American College of Surgeons, and the American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy. A former President of the New York Surgical Society and the New York Society for Gastrointestinal Surgery, he served as Secretary of the SAGES Education and Research Foundation and was on the Board of Directors of the Foundation for Surgical Fellowships. He was an active colorectal surgeon, endoscopic surgeon, teacher, and researcher at the Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, received countless

honors for teaching, humanitarianism, and alumni service. Dr. Forde was the recipient of the SAGES Distinguished Service Award and the George Berci Lifetime Achievement Award. He was active in his church, a friend and mentor to many, and married to his wife Kay (who predeceased him in April, 2017) for 60 years. He will be missed, but never forgotten.

From Gerald Marks, MD, co-Founder and past President of SAGES:

A cherished friendship of almost 50 years sadly closed with the recent passing away of Ken Forde. What began as a shared sympathetic mission to promote the concept that gastrointestinal endoscopy is an integral part of surgery morphed into a strong bond of heartfelt mutual admiration and affection. Partnered as we were in the formation of SAGES and in the struggle to ensure its viability, we developed an unusual closeness. Facing ongoing resistance to the formation of this society, nightly telephone conversations to discuss strategies were the norm, and many talks would last well into the wee hours. In what was truly a life-and-death effort to resist opposing forces, Ken's personal qualities of old world manners, an elegant quiet and orderly mien, a grand smile, an air of integrity, and a sonorous voice made him the ideal "conciliator" designed to counterbalance my seemingly forceful abrasiveness. Our negotiations were planned to figuratively have Ken wearing the white hat, and I the black hat. The viability and enduringness of SAGES can in substantial part be attributed to Ken and his sterling personal qualities. Through the formative years of SAGES, it helped greatly that our wives, in blessed memory, Kay Forde and Barbara Marks, both nurses, enjoyed similar values. Absent their husbands, they were content to enjoy each other's company as they explored sites of interest at various meetings. As a team, they were instrumental in creating a sense of family that characterized the early SAGES meetings. Moreover, Kay and Barbara were known for their tolerance of their husbands' lack of attention during those nascent times.

The extraordinary closeness of Ken and Kay's marital partnership was enviable but only served to magnify the tragic impact of Kay's passing. How Ken would endure was foremost in the minds of every friend. Ken's faith and courage was very much in evidence, but his well-being remained a serious concern to those who loved and observed him. We shall seek comfort with the knowledge that an army of colleagues, patients, family, and friends will share the grief of the loss of this elegant, mannerly articulate scholar and sage who made this world a much better place. I particularly will miss my "Bajan Brother" and all he meant to me. May Ken Forde's soul rest in peace and may his memory live forever.

From George Berci, MD, past President of SAGES:

Ken Forde's major activity in surgery focused on the colon. I met Ken in the early 1980s when he was already a Board Member of SAGES and represented the aim of gastrointestinal or colorectal surgeons to train in and perform colonoscopy. This important "hot" topic became a pioneering activity of the society. Ken Forde, with his knowledge and his leading position in SAGES guided us to the final acceptance of surgeons being able to perform this important procedure. He was extremely helpful to me with his advice following turbulence on the west coast triggered by his publication of 100 polypectomies via the colonoscope in 1974. I was very impressed by his vision, his political knowledge, and his realistic approach to the many problems that occurred in the early stages of endoscopic surgery. The Forde family and I and my wife, Barbara, were close friends; during the decades, we developed a close relationship. We will miss him.

From Sir Alfred Cuschieri, MD co-Editor-in-Chief of Surgical Endoscopy 1992–2015:

I was appointed co-Editor-in-Chief for *Surgical Endoscopy* in 1992 to work with Dr Ken Forde at the height of his career, famous for his involvement in Ms. Couric's NBC News series, "Confronting Colon Cancer." Dr Forde performed a colonoscopy on her, which was televised to millions of viewers, generating a nationwide huge increase in individual requests for screening colonoscopy. As like all who knew him, I had great respect for Dr Forde. This extraordinary human being and eminent clinical scientist had pioneered colonoscopy for detection of polyps and early colon cancer long before mass screening colonoscopy of the adult asymptomatic population was introduced. I remember our first meeting at a SAGES conference; he was kindness itself, helpful, and courteous. He looked at me with a twinkle in his eyes uttering "remember as an editor you must treat manuscripts submitted from close friends and adversaries alike," adding hastily, "if you have any!" This meeting was the start of a long-term friendship. Dr Forde was the quintessential academic surgeon, whose actions and iterations with

colleagues and patients spoke louder than words. We have lost a great scholar and an even greater humanitarian and physician, whose legacy will influence several generations of surgeons to come.

From Thomas L. Dent, MD, past President of SAGES:

Ken Forde was the consummate gentle man. Loyal, wise, generous, humble, articulate, a man of his word. Ken and I, along with the other founding members in the early days of what would become SAGES, spent thousands of hours together in the late 1970s and got to know each other very well. Countering our leader Jerry Marks' "take no prisoners" aggression and treasurer John Vansant's "we can't afford this" regular responses, Ken's was the voice of compromise and reason. Jerry once asked Ken and me to interview a young woman who he thought would be a good administrator for our small organization. Despite our initial suspicions, Barbara Saltzman (eventually Barbara Berci) was the perfect choice to help us grow.

My wife, Joan, and I loved to spend time with Ken and Kay; they were among our best friends. Since I, like Ken, graduated from the Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, I receive their quarterly alumni magazine; Ken was in five or six photos in every issue, presenting awards to alumni and representing P&S at almost every major medical school function. A brief story is an example of Ken's impact and celebrity: Joan and I were invited to a huge dinner at the Helmsley Palace in New York given by P&S to honor Ken for his many contributions. As a surprise, Ken arranged for us to sit next to the delightful television personality, Katie Couric, who had asked Ken to perform her colonoscopy live on her national TV show to highlight the need for colon cancer screening (her husband had died of advanced colon cancer).

We will miss you, my good friend, but never forget you.

From Bruce V. MacFadyen, MD, co-Editor-in-Chief of Surgical Endoscopy 1998–2008 and past president of SAGES:

From my first meeting with him in the early days of SAGES, I was very impressed by Ken's warmth, the depth of his surgical knowledge and skill, his excitement about the advantages minimally invasive surgery would offer patients, his exceptional people skills, and his desire to encourage others to develop new techniques and instrumentation. I was inspired by Dr. Forde's vision and wanted to be involved. Over the next few years, a group of surgeons interested in such creative innovation came together. It was never a closed group but was always open to new people. Soon there were many international surgeons, fellows, and residents involved. The warm welcome newcomers received at SAGES gatherings and the congenial atmosphere have been observed by many and have given SAGES a very noticeable camaraderie, which has remained one of its distinguishing features.

Ken's wife, Kay, was his valuable teammate and influenced the kind of society SAGES became. She too had outstanding interpersonal skills and was a strategic thinker and a fine writer and communicator. Her presence and participation enabled and enhanced what Ken was doing. Because of her active involvement, spouses were always an integral part of SAGES. SAGES became more of a "family," a family of people from all kinds of places and backgrounds, sincerely caring about each other. I have often heard the term, "The SAGES Family."

As new approaches, techniques, and instrumentation developed, the medical journal, *Surgical Endoscopy*, became the means for sharing new ideas. Dr. Forde was an Editor-in-Chief (the first from SAGES) and served in that role for 10 years. Kay gave a great deal of her time and considerable skills to working alongside Ken to develop a journal that would keep surgeons informed about all new developments. As editor, Dr. Forde encouraged careful analysis; he took time to help authors as they revised and improved their journal submissions. Through his leadership, *Surgical Endoscopy* became an internationally recognized surgical journal publishing many significant articles on minimally invasive surgery. I am most grateful for the perspective and wisdom Ken shared with me when I succeeded him as co-Editor-in-Chief. He shared his experience with me and encouraged me throughout my tenure.

All of us will greatly miss Ken and his great leadership, encouraging words, and friendship. He was a leader in his university and medical school, and in his church, and it will always be said that he was a giant in surgery and one that we should all emulate. I am thankful that I was able to have quality time with him at SAGES just this past April. Dr. Ken Forde is appreciated by so many and will be greatly missed.

From Jeffrey Ponsky, MD, past president of SAGES:

A quiet man with an immense presence, Ken Forde's voice was deep and enveloping. The words he spoke were thoughtful and carefully measured. His wisdom was legendary. In the early years of *Surgical Endoscopy* and SAGES, Ken provided a stability and reassurance to the rest of us as we struggled with issues of growth and the desire for recognition. He was so respected in the world of medicine that he brought credibility to our organization at a time when the society was little known. He stayed calm at times of upheaval and shared his friendship generously.

Ken's clergyman style and grace brought his colleagues a way of behaving that was important for their own growth and development.

He was a most unusual man and those who had the privilege of knowing him were truly blessed.

From Dennis Fowler, longtime colleague and friend:

Dr. Kenneth Forde impacted the practice of surgery by mentoring us individually and by changing the surgical mindset nationally and internationally. He impacted my career in the 1970s by obtaining for me both an endoscopy rotation as a resident and a surgical endoscopy fellowship. Both were rare opportunities in that era. Twenty years later, he co-recruited me to join him on the faculty at Columbia University in New York. Although his influence had an enormous impact on the clinical careers of so many surgeons like me, that may not have been the most important way in which Ken's life and career impacted surgeons and surgical patients. He was a true pioneer in surgical endoscopy, seeing its potential long before most surgeons. With his vision and persistence, he paved the way for us to be able to bring the benefits of endoscopy to surgery patients. By using his intellect, compassion, and extraordinary communication skills, he overcame levels of personal and professional discrimination that very few surgeons have ever experienced. In so doing, he set an example of acceptance and collaboration to which we all should aspire. These are the reasons I will remember and admire him forever.

From Spencer Amory, longtime colleague and friend:

Much has been said about Dr Forde's skills as a surgeon and endoscopist and about his contributions to SAGES and American surgery. It remains an impossibility to capture the scope of his impact. The thread that ran through Ken's professional and personal life was his remarkable generosity. He not only offered his wisdom to hundreds of trainees like me, but he made the introductions that set us on the path to success. Both Ken and Kay also had a knack for reaching out and supporting those who were experiencing a rough patch in their personal lives. It is a testament to the depth of his character that someone who regularly confronted discrimination remained so compassionate and generous to ALL who crossed his path.

The American College of Surgeons produced a video regarding Dr. Forde's life as part of their Icons in Surgery series presented in 2018 at the Clinical Congress. It can be viewed at the following link:

<https://youtu.be/9HDTPexuTQk>

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