

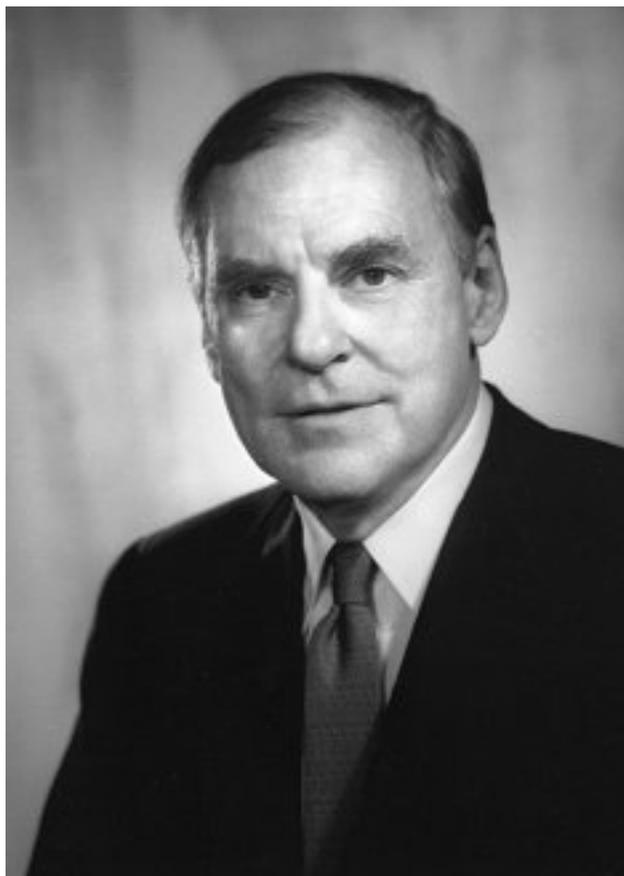
# NECROLOGY

In Memorium

AUSTIN I. FINK, ELECTED 1967  
J. DONALD M. GASS, ELECTED 1972  
DUPONT GUERRY III, ELECTED 1951  
JONATHAN D. WIRTSCHAFTER, ELECTED 1983

**AUSTIN I. FINK, MD**

*BY Edward L. Raab MD*



Dr. Austin I. Fink passed away on April 24, 2005, at the age of 84 years. He had been a member of the American Ophthalmological Society since 1967.

Dr. Fink was born on November 18, 1920. His childhood was spent in Brooklyn, the location of his father's medical practice. After completing high school, he attended the University of Michigan, graduating with a B.A. degree in 1941. He then began his medical education at the Long Island College of Medicine, receiving his M.D. in 1944 under an accelerated wartime military program.

Austin's interest in ophthalmology and eye surgery reportedly began when he was five years old. After internship, he began residency in Ophthalmology at the Long Island College Hospital in 1945. After only several months of training, he was recalled to military service and was assigned to the Ophthalmology Service at the United States Army Hospital at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, obtaining extensive experience in the treatment of battle casualties. In 1948 he was able to resume his residency and became Board certified in 1950.

Dr. Fink had a distinguished career spanning more than 40 years, both as an academician and as a practicing ophthalmologist. Early on, he met fellow AOS member Dr. Richard C. Troutman while both were serving as members of the Ophthalmology division of New York Hospital-Cornell Medical Center. They became good friends, and following Dr. Troutman's assumption of the chairmanship of Ophthalmology at the State of New York Downstate Medical Center, they were collaborators in the further development of that program from a division to its eventual emergence in 1984 as a fully established department.

Dr. Fink had an important role in the establishment of the Downstate residency program, and was highly regarded as a teacher of residents and medical students. He attained the rank of Professor, while serving also as Chief of Ophthalmology at Long Island College Hospital during most of that period, and combining these activities with a busy Brooklyn practice.

Austin made major contributions to our specialty and to the reputation of his institution by being among the first to describe the ultrastructure of the anterior chamber angle, and by his work in the management of congenital cataracts in an era predating our present sophisticated technology. He studied nicotine toxicity to the eye and the effects of corticosteroids and alpha chymotrypsin on corneal wound healing. His thesis for this Society concerned the effect of sickle cell disease on the blood vessels of the conjunctiva. In 2004, the Department he had served so well commemorated his many accomplishments at a special event held at the Brooklyn Museum of Art, and plans have been formulated to further honor him by establishing an endowed Austin I. Fink Lectureship.

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Not the least of his accomplishments, Austin was a cordial and gracious gentleman. He had deep interests in American and European history and photography. He was a collector of fine wines and an occasional grower as well. It is said of him that he regarded medicine as a religion and as a hobby. His friend and colleague, Dr. Troutman, describes him as an excellent host, and in his letter nominating Dr. Fink for membership in this Society stated that "Austin is a delightful conversationalist and very knowledgeable in music and art as well as in medicine." My own association with Austin was more a valued professional acquaintanceship, but I had the pleasure on many occasions of enjoying his warm smile and greeting and a pleasant exchange of information on what each of us was doing. He definitely was a "people person."

Dr. Fink is survived by his loving wife of 49 years, Selma; daughters Jean, Anne, and Meg and their husbands, and nine grandchildren.

I wish to acknowledge the kind assistance of Dr. Richard C. Troutman in providing much of the historical information.

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**J. DONALD M. GASS, MD**

*BY John T. Flynn, MD*



On February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2005, at home surrounded by his loving wife of 55 years, Margy Ann, his family, sons John Donald, Dr. Carlton Simpson, Dean MacIntyre and daughter Media Lee Yawn and their families, J. Donald M. Gass, MD departed from this life. His passing ends the remarkable journey of a truly unique man. His death, after a long struggle with carcinoma of the pancreas, came just as he lived his life, with courage, grace and humility. Medicine, our specialty of Ophthalmology to which he devoted his professional life, and the American Ophthalmological Society, have lost a wonderful clinician, teacher, scientist and colleague. The AOS, one of Don's favorite organizations, will miss his presence as an original contributor and discussant to its scientific agenda as well as his warmth, his humor and his generosity of spirit.

Don, the son of Roydon Simpson Gass, MD, and Mary Montgomery MacIntyre Gass was the couple's first child, born on August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1928, in Prince Edward Island, Canada. His was a medical family. After his father's fellowship training at the Rockefeller Foundation in New York, the family moved to Nashville TN, where the elder Dr. Gass became Nashville's most prominent pulmonologist and director of that city's and Tennessee's Tuberculosis Control Program. Don's childhood home was a serious but happy one. The family's bedrock was a deep and abiding religious faith that he carried with him unobtrusively throughout his life. Early on, he imbibed the virtues of compassion for his fellow man and the hard work necessary in pursuit of truth, which came to characterize all of his professional endeavors.

Upon graduation from Vanderbilt University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1950, Don married Margy Ann Loser, his high school sweetheart. As did many men his age, he served in the US Navy as a line officer during the Korean conflict from 1950-1953. Upon separation from the armed forces, he enrolled in Vanderbilt Medical School and graduated in 1957 with, in addition to his medical degree, the Founder's Medal for highest academic achievement, a portent of things to come. Dr. Bill Fleet, Don's classmate and internist during his final illness, said of him, "Even as early as first year medical school it was clear to all that Don was our leader without ever seeking to be it. We naturally trusted and turned to this quiet and thoughtful man for his leadership and counsel."

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Following internship he trained in ophthalmology at the Wilmer Institute of Johns Hopkins and then additionally added a fellowship in ophthalmic pathology at the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology under Lorentz Zimmerman, MD. It was this training that honed his skills, bridging the clinical symptoms and signs of his patients with their pathological underpinnings. Don traveled easily between both domains and that, more than anything, marked his many unique contributions to our specialty. After completing his training as chief resident at Wilmer in 1963, he and Margy Ann had planned to return to Nashville, Tennessee with their growing family to private practice for Don.

Quite by chance, on a particularly balmy South Florida mid-winter day, he happened to cross paths with another rising young ophthalmologist, Dr. Edward W. D. Norton. Dr. Norton had just started building his full-time faculty at a small eye department in a much out-of-the-way venue, Miami, Florida, in the 60's. Its name was hardly a byword at the time - Bascom Palmer Eye Institute (BPEI). It has never been quite clear whether it was due to Ed's quiet powers of persuasion or the weather or some combination, but it is no overstatement to say that this changed the course of Don's life and with it the history of American ophthalmology during the last three and a half decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Ed Norton in his letter of commitment for a faculty position, dated January 23, 1963, wrote to Don in his prescient way,

I hope that you will look this offer over carefully and realize that more important than what is written on paper is the good will that would exist between you and myself and the understanding on your part that I am dedicated to making the Bascom Palmer one of the best institutes in the country....in the years to come you will develop into an ophthalmologist commensurate with your potential and I know you will be a real asset to our team ... to achieve our goal to set up an eye institute second to none.

That amazing man put into words about Don and about the institution he was building, the goals which both achieved in the years to come.

Ed and Don developed, over the years to come, a very special, close bond of respect and affection for each other which words would fail to capture adequately, except to say that Don had found a home at BPEI and free reign to develop his enormous clinical powers over the next 32 years. There followed an outpouring of brilliant clinical and scientific work combining the then new technology, fluorescein angiography and stereo fundus photography with his superb clinical powers of observation and a brilliant intellect trained to think in terms of the pathobiology and genesis of the diseases, syndromes, dystrophies, abiotrophies that he was seeing, describing many for the first time and adding significant, often overlooked, critical insights to others previously described.

His contributions to the body of ophthalmic knowledge have been well-documented elsewhere and will not be repeated here. But to provide some measure of their breadth and depth, they spanned retinal inflammatory and infectious diseases, degenerations and dystrophies, neoplasia, vascular and idiopathic retinal diseases, congenital and toxic retinopathies and the retinal complications of surgery.<sup>1</sup> As Dr Alan Bird, an early student of Don's said, "When we documented the newly-described medical retinal disorders over a 20-year period, Don was responsible for over half and the rest of the world the remainder." This amazing body of work brought him honors and awards far too numerous to mention here. Fame sought him, never the reverse. Don retired from Bascom Palmer in 1995 and joined the faculty at Vanderbilt for another fruitful decade of contribution to ophthalmology.

Another of facet of his personality displayed itself in his teaching of his colleagues, fellows, residents, and medical students and, yes, even his patients. From his enormous store of medical knowledge, he would recall some small but crucial detail from the nosology of the disease that was meaningful to the patient in his examining chair. No audience was too humble, no detail too trivial, but that it provided an opportunity to teach, to learn, to clarify his thoughts about his patient's problem and place it carefully in the spectrum of diseases of which he was the master. It was in this teaching arena that the words of his colleagues and ex-fellows, consulted for this work, without exception testified to his human qualities of kindness, compassion for his patients, an all encompassing love of his work and a true humility about himself and his talents that are rarely found. Only a few can be mentioned here.

From Victor Curtin, MD, his colleague of decades in ophthalmic pathology and his early student, Harry Flynn, MD, who holds the J Donald M. Gass Distinguished Chair of Ophthalmology at BPEI,

Don was a superb teacher and colleague who won not only our respect and admiration but the respect and praise of colleagues throughout the world. He was a man of impeccable integrity and a subtle sense of humor. All of us mourn his death but are thankful for his contributions to our lives as mentor, colleague and friend.

Like so many men of his caliber, his fertile mind existed in a world of its own, the fruit of which he freely shared with colleagues, students and all who came in contact with him. Charlie Blair, MD, an early fellow from '68-'69, now retired, put it this way, "My fellowship with Don Gass was my best year and, for me a privilege. He was the brightest and most creative physician I have ever known."

Richard Lewis, MD, who has followed in Don's footsteps in medical retina and added the knowledge of the gene to the retina and its disorders said,

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My fellowship with Dr Gass began under a cloud. No sooner had my mentors at Michigan arranged a fellowship for me with Alex Krill, MD, of Chicago when word came that he had been killed in a plane crash at Midway Airport . A call to Dr. Norton resulted in a fellowship offer with Dr. Gass. He could not have been nicer...he patiently honed my skills with that funny (Hruby) lens at the slit- lamp..... taught me the true importance of a diligent history and the relevance of anticipating the patient's retinal appearance and diagnosis just by listening to the patient's story - when, how long, what's changed, how is it different, why do you think this is happening.....very few men (and women) have made an indelible impression on my life, my morality, and my respect for truth and clarity in patient care ...as has Dr Gass.... He will be sorely missed.

Tom Gardner, MD, had these thoughts,

When I think of Don Gass, the most enduring impression is the thoughtful way he considered what was best for his patients and colleagues in the most unselfish way. Many times when faced with a dilemma, I ask myself, 'What would Don do?' and that helps enormously.

Stanley Chang, MD, adds these words on the experience of working with Don,

Every day was a revelation. "Fascinomas" from all over the world came to see Don and it was a joy to watch him examine the patient and show you subtle clinical findings with the Hruby lens that you may have overlooked, and to see the powerful analytical forces of his mind and memory at work. On a difficult case, Ed Norton would frequently consult with Don and their interaction was stimulating. Occasionally both would be stumped, with both acknowledging their puzzlement. Most importantly, Don taught us how to behave academically and professionally. He had a pleasant disposition to all staff, residents, fellows, and fellow faculty. He never depended on anyone to do his work and did mostly everything himself. He never complained and always supported Dr. Norton. These latter qualities were never to be forgotten and emulated by many who crossed paths with him.

Robert Braunstein, MD, a fellow with Don and a life-long friend, tells this very personal anecdote of Don's very human side,

During my fellowship, my father-in-law traveled from Dublin, Ireland for his first visit to Miami. This quiet, gentle Irishman did not have the benefit of a high school education and had spent his years as a machinist in a paper mill. After Don met him, he offered to take him to the Everglades to visit an Indian reservation and witness "gator wrestling". As busy as Don was, he took a day out of his crowded schedule to insure that my father-in law would have this once-in-a lifetime experience.

Mary Lou Lewis, MD, who worked side by side with Don during his years at BPEI, described the experience thusly,

In thinking about Don Gass, so many memories come back. The characteristics most prominent with Don were his great kindness and wonderful knowledge. When I was a fellow on the retina service, I was a bit intimidated because Don was so focused and seemed preoccupied. I felt I should not interrupt his thoughts to ask a question. I later realized that he was happy to answer questions and didn't mind being 'interrupted.' I loved having an office next to his so I could ask him about interesting or difficult cases, which he was always willing to discuss with me. I also remember his quiet way with other people. We had, one year, a quite brilliant fellow who was also rather arrogant. He would give his opinion on a case in fluorescein conference and Don would patiently tell him that he could understand his reasoning but that, he, Don, thought otherwise for the 'following reasons.' His comments and opinions were always presented with kindness. This person's arrogance was markedly diminished by the end of the year. I also remember the special relationship he had with Dr. Norton and Dr. Pierre Almaric. It was as if they were kindred souls and would put their heads together to solve problems, and it was great fun for them. Don Gass is one that will never be forgotten – for many reasons.

John Shock, MD, an early fellow at BPEI remembers this about Don,

I probably learned more from him than any other teacher, not only about ophthalmology but about how to conduct one's professional life. There are really no adequate adjectives to describe his human side and its impact on those who knew him. He was not someone with whom you shared your personal problems, yet you felt he was your friend and colleague even as a student. He listened to your ideas and if he thought they were good, he told you so and gave you credit - even years after you shared them with him. When you saw him years after your last meeting with him, he picked up the conversation as if you were still his fellow. The older he got, the more famous he became, yet he never seemed to know it. When you called him, he was available. He loved to discover and to

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teach, and he had the perfect personality for both because of his intellectual honesty, not only with his students but also with his patients and his peers. It was his way of life and probably the best lesson one could learn from him.

Gary Abrams in recalling his time with Don brought out another aspect of his personality, which his students learned and benefited from, his life within the family,

After our first Fluorescein Conference, Don invited all of the residents and fellows to his house, ‘the Gass pad’, for pizza. It was a wonderful welcome to all of us to his home where he entertained us on his screen porch overlooking the water. He showed us, from the first, how approachable and friendly he was, even to the residents and fellows. All of us were comfortable showing him cases and asking his opinion and we could all see how much he loved what he was doing. Don was a wonderful role model. One of my most pleasant memories is of Don, the basketball player and Don, the father. Both of those memories are one because Don and his son, Dean, joined Bob Braunstein, one or two other residents or fellows and myself for basketball on the outdoor court at Key Biscayne Elementary School. I don’t think Don did this because he loved to play basketball, but it was a time to do something with Dean. I remember very little about the game, but I remember the nice, fun way that Don interacted with Dean and the rest of us.

These are but a small sample of the many similar recollections from his students about the man himself that simply portrays for those not privileged to know him personally the very human side of the man. This reserved, quiet and unassuming man - a husband, father, grandfather, physician, teacher, clinician, and role model for many - bore those roles lightly and gracefully. For those privileged to know him closely, he had about him a warmth that made him a delightful companion and friend.

At his memorial service in Nashville, his son John Donald delivered a moving eulogy about his Dad – one that would touch deeply any father and make him proud to have a son deliver these words,

My father was truly an extraordinary human being.... and he was extraordinary in ways that went far beyond his contributions to ophthalmology which, as many of you know, were profound. Indeed, most people who knew my father outside of ophthalmology had no idea about his achievements, the awards, or the recognition, but considered him extraordinary, nonetheless. Whether you knew him as a physician, colleague, teacher, mentor, church elder, Sunday school classmate, neighbor, friend, father, grandfather or husband, we loved him for his kindness, his gentleness, his patience, and his sense of humor, his integrity, and his genuine humility. We knew him as someone who cherished his family and who was totally devoted to the love of his life, Margy Ann. His faith in the Lord was steadfast to the end; he loved the Scriptures and his confidence was in the saving grace of Jesus Christ. His life was one of preparation for eternity and was a powerful witness, certainly to me, of what it means to be a Christian. My father was, indeed, an extraordinary man, and I loved him and will miss him until we are reunited in eternity. I know that if my father is watching today, he would, in addition to wondering what all of the fuss is about, would also want to say "thank you."

Donald Gass combined, in a unique way, a brilliant intellect and a true humility about his extraordinary talents, a combination of qualities not often found together in a single human being.

In closing, perhaps a few lines from the poet Longfellow seem appropriate for the man, his life, his work and his worth to all:

“Honor to him whose words or deeds,  
Thus help us in our daily needs.  
And by their overflow  
Raise us from what is low!”

<sup>1</sup>Flynn JT, Clarkson JG, Curtin VT, Flynn HW, Hurtes R, Smith JL. J. Donald M. Gass, MD: Festschrift editorial . *Am J Ophthalmol* 2004; 137: 480-482.

**DUPONT GUERRY III MD**

*BY Stanley M. Truhlsen, MD*



DuPont Guerry III, a member of the American Ophthalmological Society since 1951, died on April 3, 2005 in Goochland, Virginia at age 92. Sally, his wife of 66 years, was with him. DuPont was a descendant of a distinguished family of French Huguenots that settled in South Carolina in 1696. He was born in Greenville, South Carolina and attended the Greenville Public Schools. He enrolled at Furman University, graduating in 1934, and then graduated from the University of Virginia Medical School in 1938, where he was a member of Alpha Omega Alpha.

Following his internship at the University of Virginia he began a two-year residency in otolaryngology at the Manhattan Eye, Ear and Throat Hospital in New York City. DuPont became disenchanted with the specialty. At the invitation of Dr Hayes Martin, he considered a residency at the Sloan Kettering Cancer Institute. However, at the suggestion of an old friend and classmate, George Wise, he applied for an ophthalmology residency at the Presbyterian Hospital in New York City and was accepted by Dr. John Dunnington. It was there, at the conclusion of his residency, that he received a Doctor of Medical Science degree in 1944.

Due in part to his southern heritage, Dr. Guerry chose to start his practice in Richmond, Virginia. There he became an instructor on the faculty of the Department of Ophthalmology of the Medical College of Virginia. He later served as Professor and Chairman of the Department of Ophthalmology from 1953 to 1973. He was successful in rejuvenating and building it into a premier clinical and research department. He developed a large successful private practice, and enjoyed teaching.

DuPont became interested in research during his internship. He considered his discovery that Vitamin K was a life saving treatment for hemorrhagic disease of the newborn as one of his greatest achievements. For this he was awarded the John Horsley Memorial Prize by the University of Virginia. From this early research experience he developed a lasting interest in research that continued through his professional career.

In association with Dr. William Ham, Jr., he participated in a post-World War II Air Force-Atomic Energy study on the effects of the brightness of atomic explosions on the human eye. This led to the consideration of the possible effects of controlled light flashes in smaller doses in the treatment of lesions of the human retina. This then led to an association with Gerd Meyer-Schwickerath in Germany who was attempting to treat retinal lesions with thermal burns using sunlight. As a result of this collaboration the Medical College of Virginia received the first Xenon Photocoagulator in the United States. DuPont continued to contribute in many areas of ophthalmology and was in the forefront of the development of intraocular lenses. The Medical College of Virginia received one of the first ruby lasers and they did some of the early research in the establishment of national laser hazard standards. These and many other research efforts led to 69 publications.

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Based on research during a sabbatical at the Institute of Ophthalmology at Columbia University in 1951 he wrote his AOS thesis on *The Use of the Sanborn electromanometer in the study of pharmacological effects upon the intraocular pressure.*

DuPont served as president of the AOS 1964-65 and was awarded its prestigious Howe Medal in 1987. He was vice-president of the American Academy of Ophthalmology in 1981. He was a member of the American Board of Ophthalmology for 8 years. In 1982 the University of Virginia established the DuPont Guerry III Professorship of Ophthalmology. He was a member of numerous other societies including the Gonin Club, the German Ophthalmological Society and the Instituto Barraquer.

DuPont Guerry III was the epitome of the Southern gentleman. His ever-present smile, his friendly greetings, his jovial personality, his kindness, his humor and his wit endeared him to friends, acquaintances and patients. He loved to tell a good joke. He was a longtime member and former vestryman of St. Stephens Episcopal Church. Away from medicine he especially enjoyed tennis and played in the AOS tournaments into his 80s. He grew up experiencing the fun of hunting and fishing

Good fortune smiled upon DuPont while he was a junior in medical school. Sally Kennon Williams enrolled as a student for training as a laboratory technician. Their courtship ensued and they were married the day after he graduated.

DuPont is survived by his wife Sally Williams Guerry, and their 4 children: Dr. DuPont Guerry IV, Dr. Richard Kennon Guerry, Dr. Mary Guerry Tucker, and Dr. Thomas Guerry as well as 12 grandchildren.

His was a life dedicated to his family, his church and service to his profession. His son DuPont IV in his eulogy said, "He lived a full life span and gave and got generously from it in work and love and play."

**JONATHAN D. WIRTSCHAFTER, MD**

*BY C. Gail Summers, MD*



Known for achieving balance between his passion for neuro-ophthalmology and love of family, Dr. Jonathan D. Wirtschafter died on August 9, 2004 at the age of 69 years. He was admired for his kindness, compassion, and genuine interest in others, in addition to his creative and inquisitive mind. Dr. Wirtschafter taught residents and fellows to first understand the patient's needs, and then to address the ophthalmologic concerns. He treated all people with respect, regardless of their life role or socioeconomic class.

Dr. Wirtschafter grew up in Cleveland and graduated from Reed College in Portland, Oregon in 1956. He completed Harvard Medical School in 1960 and a master's in physiology at Linfield College in McMinnville Oregon in 1963. Dr. Wirtschafter was one of few neuro-ophthalmologists with training in both neurology and ophthalmology. After a neurology residency at Good Samaritan Hospital in Portland in 1963, Dr. Wirtschafter completed his ophthalmology residency at The Wilmer Institute, Johns Hopkins Medical School, in 1966. He was then a fellow at Columbia Presbyterian Hospital in New York City.

Dr. Wirtschafter's first academic position came immediately after his training when he accepted a position as Director of the Division of Ophthalmology at the University of Kentucky College of Medicine. Dr. Wirtschafter subsequently became the first Chair of the Department of Ophthalmology in 1974. During his 10-year tenure, he started a residency program at the University of Kentucky. He was known for both his stewardship of the department and for his vision to bring quality eye care to all areas of Kentucky.

In 1977, Dr. Wirtschafter joined the faculty at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis where he held the Frank E. Burch Chair and was known as being a visionary. At the University of Minnesota, he developed his research on blepharospasm. He participated in early trials of botulinum toxin and, later, his laboratory research led to the use of FDA-approved doxorubicin injections for blepharospasm. He was also the first president of the Benign Essential Blepharospasm Research Foundation.

Dr. Wirtschafter's passion for teaching was well known to medical students, residents and fellows. He believed that knowledge of anatomy was the key to being a successful orbital surgeon. He received the Resident's Award for Best Teacher for four years in recognition of his inspiring and animated teaching style. An infectious enthusiasm for learning resulted in collaboration with medical students, residents, and fellows on several publications. His kindness, collegiality, humility, and high ethical standards are ideals that serve as a legacy to all who worked with him. A lectureship has been established in his honor at the University of Minnesota.

The dedication to excellence and scholarship that defined Dr. Wirtschafter led to his devotion of time, energy, and guidance in the formative years of the North American Neuro-Ophthalmology Society. He served as President of the organization from 1996 to 1998.

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Dr. Wirtschafter was known for his ability to encourage broader participation in NANOS, particularly among women neuro-ophthalmologists, and to establish standards for fellowship training in neuro-ophthalmology.

Dr. Wirtschafter had a sincere interest in people and was a friend to many. He listened intently and was clearly interested in our questions, our life activities, and our families. He adopted many of us as his “academic children” as we progressed through our training. Jonathan continued to let his positive spirit shine in his final weeks. He enriched our lives and we will miss him. He will also be missed by his wife and companion of 44 years, Carol, his five children, Joshua, Jacob, Benjamin, David, and Brooke, their partners, and his ten grandchildren