

Editor's Notes

Arthur O'Neil McGowan, M.D., Our Own "Invisible Hero"

By Stephen Jackson, M.D., Editor



June 24 was the final day in the life of Dr. Arthur O. McGowan, one of our specialty's true heroes. Art, as we liked to call him, suffered a cardiac arrest several years earlier, and the resultant severe hypoxic encephalopathy relegated him in his final years to being a mere shell of the special human being he was to all of us who knew and loved him. For Bonnie, his wonderfully supportive wife and supreme caregiver, June 24 felt like his second passing. Still, what an extraordinarily exceptional life Art did lead! All California physicians have been enriched by his having walked amongst us, by his showing us the way.

To those of us who were well acquainted with Art, he held the stature of our "invisible hero." Why so? Well, Art, although soft-spoken, was simply a brilliant independent thinker, able to discern and distill the essence of what really matters, then to draw logical and reasoned solutions, and, most importantly, only then to *act* decisively on the courage of his convictions, seeing them through to their fruition. Yes, with Art, it was *deed*, not just *creed*. His superior *courage*, *nobility of purpose*, and *self-sacrifice* empowered him to achieve the goals and objectives for causes he championed on innumerable occasions. Although his "under-the-radar-screen" leadership in guiding our profession through the passage of MICRA legislation to solve the medical malpractice crisis of 1975 is the most widely known of his accomplishments, Art's contributions to local, state and national medical organizations over the succeeding decades are legendary, many documented in the "In Memoriam" pieces on the pages that follow.

My connection to Art grew out of CSA leadership, but more than anything else, from his being my predecessor Editor of the *Bulletin*. After he passed the baton to me, he generously and tirelessly served as my teacher, mentor, enabler and confidant; and he remained so until the catastrophic event that effectively took him from us. Indeed, it is Art's dogged commitment to excellence that I hold up as the role model to which I aspire.

Editor's Notes (cont'd)

When all is said and done, Art will be remembered by those of us who really knew and admired him mostly for his gentle and reserved nature, his personal integrity and strength of character, his deep-seated value of virtue, his intense sense of fairness, and his determined pursuit of excellence. This was our gift: an immensely good, talented and caring human being. Farewell, our wonderful friend.

*I see, in his frank eyes,
The hero's soul appear...
The light that on the past and distant gleams,
They cast upon the present and the near,
With antique virtues from some mystic land,
Of knightly deeds and dreams.*

(from Heroes, by Emma Lazarus)

