

Words of Remembrance

Dr. David J. Grignon 1955-2020



I want to thank Theo van der Kwast for asking me to say some words of remembrance for David Grignon – our immediate Past President and great colleague and dear friend of many in this room tonight. I am sure that most of you have heard that David passed away on January 28th after a short battle with pancreatic cancer. The old adage – “Life can change on a dime” – seems appropriate in this circumstance. Many of you saw David in his usual fine form at the International Society of Urological Pathology (ISUP) Consensus Conference in Nice last September. I have fond memories of David holding court in the lobby bar of the Hotel Negresco surrounded by colleagues from around the world. I had the privilege of speaking at his American Society of Clinical Pathology Urologic Pathology review course in November and everything seemed fine at that time. I also spoke to David in late December, after his dad had died, and there was no indication of any medical issue. In fact, we were actively planning a trip to South East Asia. Apparently, David had developed some back pain which was followed by jaundice in mid-January and he died within a week after being diagnosed with advanced pancreatic cancer with hepatic metastasis. After his diagnosis, I was able to speak to David briefly on three occasions and I will cherish those conversations forever.

I would like to make some comments now about David Grignon as an academic urological pathologist and then Dave as a person and family man. I first met David about 35 years ago when he was a resident at University of Western Ontario (UWO) in London. I had just completed my fellowship at MD Anderson Hospital and David was interested in my experiences in Houston because he was planning to follow a similar route. Dave had come to UWO from the small town of Haileybury in Northern Ontario – population 3000 - and had completed both undergraduate science and med school in London. UWO was known as a very social university and rumor had it that David enjoyed partying in his undergraduate years and there may have been some med school classmates who voted him least likely to succeed. Boy did he prove

them wrong! After completing his Fellowship at MD Anderson, David practiced in 3 different university settings – UWO in London from 1988 – 1992, Wayne State University in Detroit from 1992 – 2007 and Indiana University from 2007 – until his death. In each location, David excelled in areas of service, education, research and administration. David was a sought-after consultant, a brilliant educator, and a prolific researcher especially in collaborative and clinical trials work. For many years he was the principal genitourinary pathology reviewer for the RTOG. David was also a talented and fair leader and administrator. In the latter regard, David rose to the position of Department Chair at Wayne State and held that position for 7 years. When he decided to move to Indiana University and focus on the urological pathology service, David still had significant administrative responsibility as Centennial Professor and Vice-Chair for Clinical Programs.

The metrics on David's curriculum vitae are impressive – more than 370 peer reviewed papers, more than 350 published abstracts, 6 textbooks including 2 AFIP fascicles, 35 book chapters, over 60 guideline documents. I have to say that some chapters that David wrote on kidney and bladder tumors would still be considered best in class. David was involved in the series 3 and 4 WHO Bluebooks and active in several ISUP consensus conferences. He led the development of the four urothelial tract datasets for the International Collaboration on Cancer reporting (ICCR). This output attests to his remarkable drive, work ethic and his meticulous analytic ability. He was also the recipient of several awards and honors including named lectures and professorships. In 2016, David received the Koss Medal, the highest award of the ISUP, for career level contributions to urological pathology.

David did not shy away from difficult leadership challenges which he had while in Detroit and more recently with the ISUP and its relationship with United States and Canadian Academy of Pathology (USCAP). He spent countless hours and endured sleepless nights to get the ISUP reinstated as a companion society of USCAP. We are all indebted to David for these selfless activities.

In looking over David's professional accomplishments I think the area that he enjoyed the most was teaching, especially continuing medical education. I had the privilege of co-directing his first course on the surgical pathology of the urothelial tract given at the Canadian Association of Pathologists meeting in St. John's, Newfoundland in 1990. Since then David delivered more than 150 courses and slide seminars, not to mention the 212 invited lectures on 6 continents. Parenthetically we had been planning to visit Antarctica in the near future and we had even talked giving some GU talks (tongue in cheek) on the seventh continent. David was a gifted speaker who could explain the most challenging nuances of urological pathology to his audience. He also had the most incredible collection of images that I have ever seen and was continuously updating this material. On the educational front, John Eble recently told me that David had interviewed virtually all med students who were interested in pathology residency at Indiana University, not to mention all fellowship candidates as well. Once in the program, David was a wonderful mentor to these trainees.

Turning to Dave as a human being there are several descriptors that come to mind. He was altruistic, thoughtful, kind, inclusive and fair in dealing with others. David was a devoted family

man who married Laurie, his high school sweetheart, over 40 years ago. He was an adoring father and role model to his 2 sons, Robert who is a lawyer in New Zealand and Mark who is a businessman and entrepreneur in San Francisco. Dave and Laurie gathered the boys and partners last August for a 40th wedding anniversary trip to New Zealand and by all accounts they had an amazing time.

David was by no means mono dimensional. He had diverse interests including reading – always had a novel with him when travelling, history and visiting museums and early Hollywood movies. Some of you may remember him using movie images in talks to illustrate various points. He enjoyed classic rock music, but only on vinyl! David was a foodie, beer connoisseur and wine collector. He could put away more beer than men twice his size and still be perfectly coherent! We had many memorable dinners but the one I remember the most was *El Celler de Can Roca* in Girona, Spain, which was rated #1 on the San Pellegrino Top 50 restaurants in the world list. The place was booked up for months but somehow Esther Oliva secured a reservation after a party had fortuitously cancelled. Everyone was impressed by the massive wine bibles presented to us on cart. Needless to say, it was a wonderful dinner. However, I think David needed a second mortgage to pay for the meal since he had invited his son and partner along and was responsible for 4 shares.

From what I have said, you can see that David was a remarkable pathologist and human being and one whom we should remember and honor. I spoke to Theo earlier and there is an appetite to create an award in his name. Given David's love of teaching, I think that it should have an educational focus. So, I therefore propose that the society establishes the **David J. Grignon Excellence in Education Award** to be given to a practicing urological pathologist who emulates David's dedication, enthusiasm and talent in the educational arena. Terms of reference will be developed, and a committee established to review nominees.

To conclude, David Grignon lived his life large with enthusiasm and zeal. The world is a better place because of him. David was a giant in modern urologic pathology who touched many colleagues and students throughout the world with his writings, lectures and courses. At a personal level we will dearly miss his warm personality, his Santa Claus-esque smile and infectious laughter. Somehow the USCAP meeting will not be the same without David's presence in the lobby bar.

I ask everyone to stand now so we can observe a moment of silence to honor David Grignon's memory.

John R. Srigley MD, FRCPC, FRCPath, FRCPA(Hon.)

ISUP/USCAP Los Angeles

Feb. 29, 2020