



The JOURNAL of Phi Rho Sigma

Volume 116

Winter 2021

Phi Rho Sigma Mourns The Passing of Dr. Steven C. Beering



Phi Rho Sigma National President, Dr. Julie Best said it best when she said we lost a Phi Rho star upon hearing of the death of Dr. Steven Beering. Dr. Beering was initiated into Chi Chapter at the University of Pittsburgh and remained actively involved in our medical society over the years.

Beering was born in Berlin in 1932 and immigrated to the U.S. when he was fifteen. The family settled in Pittsburgh to be near his grandparents. He had much education to catch up on, yet he set his sights on becoming a physician due to seeing so much disease and other problems during the war years. He made straight A's and then went on to the University of Pittsburgh with the help of scholarships and income earned teaching French and German. Dr. Beering was awarded the Mellon Fellowship, a full scholarship, to attend Medical School at the University of Pittsburgh where he graduated in 1958.

He then spent 11 years in the Air Force Medical Corps, rising steadily in rank to become a lieutenant colonel and chief of internal medicine at Lackland Air force Base in San Antonio, Texas. There he served on the medical support teams for the Mercury, Gemini and Apollo space programs. His research into hormonal changes that occur in the body as a result of environmental stress were particularly relevant to the early space program.

In 1969 he joined the Indiana University School of Medicine faculty as professor of medicine and assistant dean. Among his many contributions to the school and state was his leadership in establishing the Indiana Statewide Medical Educational System. This system established community based regional centers for medical education in Evansville, Fort Wayne, Gary, Lafayette, Muncie, South Bend, and Terre Haute.

Dr. Beering was named Dean of the School of Medicine and

Director of the IU Medical Center in 1974, becoming the youngest dean in the school's history. He served in this position until 1983 when he was selected to become the ninth president of Purdue University.

Indiana University has honored Dr. Beering in many ways. In 1983, the IU School of Medicine established the Steven C. Beering Award to honor internationally recognized individuals for outstanding research contributions to the advancement of biomedical or clinical science. The award is presented annually and the winner receives a medal and a \$25,000 prize. Eight Beering Award recipients have also received Nobel prizes. He received an honorary degree from Indiana University and was also given the IU's President's Medal for Excellence, the highest honor an IU President can bestow. In 2016, IU recognized his commitment to medicine and higher education by naming the medical education wing at the IU School of Medicine - West Lafayette the Steven C. Beering Medical Education Wing.

During Beering's leadership (1983-2000), Purdue expanded its international efforts, grew its liberal arts program, promoted diversity, greened and beautified the campus, added 20 major buildings and took fund raising to new levels.

After retirement, Dr. Beering continued his service to his country by being a member and later chair of the National Science Board which is an independent body of advisors to both the President and Congress. He had also served on the Board of Directors of many corporations as well as many Indiana civic organizations.

Dr. Beering never forgot Phi Rho Sigma and his experiences at Chi chapter. He served on our leadership team for many years and served as a role model for both medical students and alumni. In 1990 he was awarded the Griffin Medal for his service to the society and then in 2009 was the recipient of the Cutter Medal for his outstanding contributions to medicine. He will be greatly missed by all who knew him.

Dr. Beering passed away in April of 2020 and was laid to rest next to his wife, Jane, at Slayter Hill on Purdue's campus. He is survived by three sons and their families.

Past Presidents Share Their Personal Reflections Of Dr. Beering

I have many fond memories of Dr. Beering, and when I look back on my life, it is amazing what a profound impact he had upon it. I met Dr. Beering for the first time as a medical student, when he had recently been selected as the new Dean of the Indiana University School of Medicine. I also joined Phi Rho Sigma, Pi Chapter, in Indianapolis, which Dr. Beering was particularly devoted to and within which he maintained a visible presence. To a significant degree, Dr. Beering was one of a small cadre of other national Phi Rho leaders that were largely responsible for the sustainment of fraternal societies at a time when interests were turning toward other competing opportunities for engagement. What a shame that so many individuals never had the perspective and mentorship that organizations like Phi Rho, and leaders like Dr. Beering, had to impart upon participants.

Dr. Beering was a gift to all he touched. I was a civilian flight instructor long before medical school, although not yet in the United States Air Force. Dr. Beering had previously served in the Air Force at Wilford Hall Medical Center in San Antonio, and had also been involved in the Apollo Space Program. Our common interests spawned a relationship that lasted over 40 years. I loved hearing him talk about the Apollo program and physiological issues they were addressing in this brave new frontier, including the Apollo One tragedy. I also remember him describing himself as a “giblet endocrinologist” owing to a time when the field was dominated by as much anatomy and physiology as it was microbiology and complex pathways or genomics. I recall meetings of Pi Chapter or other small gatherings at his home, where Mrs. Beering would always serve homemade lemon pie. For all of Dr. Beering’s greatness, Mrs. Beering and her pie was legendary.

During my Junior year of medical school, I had the opportunity to participate in the development of the Medical Reserve Officer’s Training Corps (a new, national multiservice program) with another healthcare giant, Dr. John Jesseph, Chief of Surgery at the time. Dr. Beering was enthusiastically supportive, and helped us to design and gain approval for this program that would serve many medical students across the country for years to come. Later, as a surgery intern, I was offered the opportunity to do something fairly unique at that time.....take two years off traditional medical training and go through USAF Pilot Training as an active duty, full-time officer. The concept was nearly blasphemous, and both family and friends thought I had lost my mind to step out of surgery training to pursue this “folly”. I suppose I had quite a bit of trepidation myself, but I loved aviation nearly as much as I loved medicine. Dr. Beering, ever the wiser, as well as Dr. Jesseph, and Dr. Peter Yaw, IU’s trauma surgery chief (who would later become my “uncle-in-law”) all told me life was short, yet I had plenty of time to complete my training. They

all recognized my passion and the uniqueness of the opportunity. Each enthusiastically encouraged me to pursue this path, and return to complete residency at an appropriate time. It was Dr. Beering that started it all, and I am forever grateful, as that would lead to many years of flying fighter aircraft (F-4, F-16), including aerospace medicine as it turned out, and a military service career that spanned 36 years and culminated with service as Special Assistant to the Commander, and Chief of Staff of United States Africa Command as a dual-rated line officer / medical officer.

When I returned from active duty and continued my service in the National Guard, it was apparent to me that the burden of my obligations would actually make it difficult to complete my surgery residency. Furthermore, while serving in a variety of relatively rural locations during pilot training, I remained engaged in general practice on the side and “discovered” primary care medicine. I really enjoyed caring for a broad patient demographic in a comprehensive manner. I felt there was tremendous need there, and it would mesh well with my flying career. Once again, it was Dr. Beering who asked if I had considered switching into Family Medicine. Mind you, he was an academic internist, researcher, and administrator. I told him folks already thought I was foolish when I took leave of absence to fly jets. What would they think when they learned I was considering leaving surgery for a career in primary care? Once again, his great mentorship changed my life as he told me I had my answer, and that I needed to make the change, which he then facilitated at IU’s FP Residency Program. After a short period of practice following residency at IU, I returned to Indiana University and helped to rebuild a new Family Medicine Department under expanded leadership and opportunity.....rare for an academic institution at the time. Eventually, I had the opportunity to serve as Director of that program. In fact, the new Department Chair, Debra Allen MD was the first female department chair of a clinical program at Indiana University.

Years later, I recall during my own Presidency of Phi Rho, having the Grand Chapter meeting in Las Vegas at the MGM. Dr. Beering was right there, inspiring us all with his insights into the future of healthcare, and nearly reciting a new release at the time, “Megatrends 2000”. Everyone was spell-bound as this great orator walked us through amazing perspective on the future of healthcare, and society in general. It was shortly before this time that he had transitioned to the role of President, Purdue University, where he served for 19 years. I thought how fortunate we were to have this great sage inform and guide us....truly a gift for which I am forever grateful. My last memory of Dr. Beering was perhaps three or four years ago as his cognition

was failing. I was saddened to see this great mind altering with age. Another Phi Rho, Nick Hrisomalos MD, myself, and our wives took Dr. Beering to dinner at his favorite place, which I believe was an Appleby's or something similar. He was living in an assisted living memory care unit at the time, and was accompanied by his son, Peter, an attorney and local government official. I was happy that Dr. Beering appeared to recognize me and we enjoyed the typical interaction, insights, and a little "pontification" that Dr. Beering so enjoyed, and was so superior at. I will never forget the way he could hold my attention for hours, and narry a dubious opinion or statement came forth. Indeed, he had a profound impact on me at multiple junctures throughout my professional life. Simply a brilliant man who provided wise mentorship, tremendous friendship and never-ending support, always in the spirit of Phi Rho Sigma.

Worthe Holt, M.D.
Past National President



Dr. Steven C. Beering with wife, Jane

Dr. Martin Wice's reflections...

Steve Beering and I first met at the Phi Rho Sigma biannual convention in Chicago in the mid 1970's. Steve was part of the leadership of Phi Rho Sigma. He always spoke with great insight and vision. He uplifted everyone around him. I quickly saw him as a role model, both as a physician and a team leader. By the 1980's medical fraternities were having to redefine their purpose. Steve was instrumental in developing both a short and a long-term strategic plan for Phi Rho Sigma to address this challenge.

However, what impressed me the most about Steve Beering was his kindness and willingness to help others. At a later Phi Rho Sigma convention, I asked him for advice on how to best address bureaucratic roadblocks significantly interfering with one of my son's high school education. Steve outlined various options and offered to arrange for one of the Purdue faculty/administrators to write a letter on my son's behalf. Several years later when my son was interviewing for colleges, Steve took the time to take my son out for lunch at Purdue to discuss the best learning environment/options for him, both at and outside of Purdue. (Little did Steve know how helpful that advice was, as my son would go on to have a successful academic career and would be asked to join the Indiana University Medical School faculty 14 years later.)

I will remember Steve Beering for his exceptional skills of being "in charge". I will remember Steve Beering for his support of those "in his charge". But of all of Steve Beering's stellar attributes, I will remember him the most for being a true mensch.

Martin Wice, M.D.
Past National President

Medical School Experience Changes Life

My name is Matt Downen and I am a Phi Rho Sigma Mu Chapter graduate from the class of 2012. I work as a private practice hospitalist in Wichita, KS. My passion, however, is Haiti. I serve on the Board of Directors and as Medical Director for two nonprofits engaged in humanitarian work in Haiti. As cliché as it sounds, my life was changed on a short-term medical mission while I was a medical student at the University of Iowa.

My first exposure to Haiti was two years after the devastating earthquake that left a major city in shambles and hundreds of thousands of its people displaced. Even prior to the earthquake, Haiti had the unfortunate moniker of "The land of a thousand NGOs (nongovernmental organizations)" referencing the countless nonprofits that called Haiti their home. I traveled with a team under the banner of one of those thousand. We stayed in guest houses equipped for American visitors. We traveled in a couple large trucks. We saw patients in an open courtyard using local interpreters. Handed out a few pills. And then we left.

I stayed. I stayed for three months on my first trip. And the reason I stayed was because the leaders of the nonprofit understood that short-term medical trips were a band aid. Long-term benefits needed sustainability and a focus on public health, so that was my project. I oversaw a community needs assessment which meant I went out into the rural community and talked to people in their homes. By engaging people on their own turf, I believe I was able to experience a more authentic side of the culture.

Like so many projects in Haiti, the needs assessment I completed did not lead to major new programming. Also, like many projects in Haiti, it was duplicated in the exact same region a few years later by someone else. Institutional memory can be lacking. But my time was not wasted. Through the relationships I made I connected with ServeHaiti – a nonprofit operating a hospital in rural Eastern Haiti.

ServeHaiti became my second home and its staff became an

...Continued on page 4

extended family. During my family medicine residency, I would travel to their hospital for my vacations. My bags would be loaded with whatever medical supplies I could get my hands on. My clothes would fit neatly in my carry-on. I worked alongside Haitian staff seeing patients in the clinic in the morning, receiving emergencies throughout the day, and often aborning with an expectant mother in the maternity ward at night. It was the full-spectrum medicine that fed my soul.

As my years of service piled up, so did my involvement in the ServeHaiti organization. ServeHaiti's mission is simple – Improve the quality of life of the residents of Gran Bois, Ouest, Haiti. We operate a Haitian-staffed hospital and clinic with a pharmacy and delivery suite. We employ two dozen community health workers that provide point of need care and community education. We have a social worker that helps coordinate programs for HIV patients, malnutrition, and water treatment. Our region was ground zero for a cholera outbreak, so we partnered with the Haitian government to identify contaminated water sources and ensure people had treatment systems.

Nine years after my first trip I find myself as the Medical Director helping coordinate a schedule for six Haitian residents assigned to work in our clinic. Our hospital now includes three satellite clinics. ServeHaiti supports several elementary schools in the area. We operate a micro-lending program. Our organization has grown and shrunk as it has needed. We have persevered through hurricanes, cholera outbreaks, mudslides,

earthquakes, droughts, political turmoil and now a pandemic. Instead of word of mouth and feel-good stories we now have a social media coordinator and track our outcomes on spreadsheets. Our Board of Directors has enough turnover to generate fresh ideas but also enough institutional memory to avoid replication of past, failed projects. I count myself lucky to work with such a dedicated team.



My travel is more limited now that I work full time. But I am also to the point where I recognize that my greatest impact may not be seeing patients in the ServeHaiti clinic. Supporting our Haitian staff with financing and supplies is a better use of resources and continues toward the direction of sustainability. Yet, there is still a part of this practicing adult hospitalist that enjoys the challenge of earning the trust of a toddler with gripe and the jubilation shared with a family after a successful akouchement. I will always look forward to my next trip and am always in search of ways to support the mission.

Working the Front Lines during the COVID Pandemic

By Mildred Willy, M.D.



What can I say? The year of 2020 started off well for me with a relaxing trip to Florida with my girlfriends, followed by learning the latest updates for my clinical practice at the annual Michigan College of Emergency Physician's Winter Symposium, and my annual ski trip with my husband. Shortly after returning from Colorado in February, we started dealing with the pandemic as a national crisis. I was initially concerned after the first cases were described in China at the end of 2019. I recalled my experience with SARS COV-1 in 2002. At that time, friends were being quarantined in Toronto and I started seeing cases of SARS myself. I specifically remember caring for a young man who was quite ill, rapidly declining, requiring most of my attention during that shift, and ultimately needing to be transferred to a facility capable of providing ECMO. I thought back and remembered that it took me 8 hours to find a bed with a ventilator and ECMO capabilities and said to myself and others at that time, "If things get much worse, we are really in

trouble." I also remember the respiratory therapist commenting that we were using most of our bipap machines and that we should start thinking about what additional steps we may need to take. Thankfully after a few short weeks, it seemed to calm down. I was relieved. When SARS COV-2 made its appearance, however, I immediately thought back to those moments I had previously experienced with a certain amount of concern and anxiety.

This time around, I wasn't sure if this would be contained again. I admit I somewhat expected it to be like the previous experience, however, knowing we have direct flights from Detroit in and out of China and reading about the experiences of Chinese physicians and patients, I thought this might be different. As the cases in Detroit grew, I was worried about my colleagues working in those emergency departments and we often called to check on each other. These included previous residents I had trained, friends, colleagues, mentors, and some of my idols. I heard stories of

...Continued on page 5

people intubating patients once every hour during their shift and of nurses and doctors becoming ill and getting treated in the ICU not doing well. I could see the fear and concern in my colleagues and a hint of PTSD. There was so much we didn't know. So much uncertainty. I started reading as much as possible, my eyes grew fatigued, my husband asking, "Why are you reading that on your phone? Use your computer please." One weekend, I could not stop, and I started feeling as though it was my responsibility to know as much as possible. People would ask me questions and I had to know the appropriate information to share, and the best ways to keep them safe. I grew more concerned each time my shifts grew near. The reality was, as someone over 50 with asthma and hypertension, I was at high risk. Others felt as though this was like military service for them. For me it was different. I struggled with the many years of compromise and service already given, my individual risk, being the primary provider for my family, and one of my dad's caregivers. What happens if I get sick? Who will take over? What will happen?

The preparatory side of me kicked in and I immediately called my attorney to verify some items in my trust and that I had signed whatever paperwork was needed. I then called friends I trusted to encourage me to be brave. Then my shifts arrived. The staff, PA's, nurses, and doctors all came together with their knowledge and idea sharing. We were clearly a team facing this pandemic and arming ourselves with information and PPE. I was so grateful to have access to PPE and for the administration's focus on our safety with videos about using the PAPR and CAPR devices and donning and doffing strategies. I thought to myself, "I can do this." Many of my colleagues have not been this fortunate as there has been much variability in how PPE was distributed to hospitals with many of us using our masks designed for single use encounters multiple days in a row. On one of my first shifts, I entered the ED and there were many people moving around quickly. I could feel the tension. Someone quite ill had come in, likely with COVID and with an aerosol treatment going, started by EMS. People were upset as the patient traversed the department. This made it seem real. We were now "in it," in my mind. I was impressed by the courage of the EMS personnel and of the nursing staff. Even the cleaning staff seemed to go about their jobs without complaint. Once again, the people around me inspired me with confidence. After all, this is what we do; take care of those in need, all comers, any time of the day, 24 hours a day. There have been other infectious diseases I have been exposed to and afraid of previously such as Hepatitis C, Meningitis, HIV and AIDS to name a few. Once again, I thought, "We can do this." As I became a little more used to my new working environment of wiping down my workspace and new regimen of decontamination post work, others around me had not yet come to this point. There were those in the community or workplace who were now afraid of me and my colleagues. I had friends whose children were turned away from daycare and family who didn't seem like they wanted us around just yet. It was one of the first times that I experienced that type of shunning from the community. This was new for

me. My neighbors supported me with a self-created poem and note to show their support. I was blessed to have their encouragement. Our medical school clinical partners began regular updates throughout the week with the latest disease information, testing capabilities, health department updates, and plans for approaching the situation as they rapidly changed; sometimes changing multiple times a day. They also included sessions to support our mental health and deal with the current uncertainties. We began practicing gratitude and our local psychiatry physicians started debriefing sessions for our faculty. It was an excellent time to share our fears, solutions, and our appreciation. I remember one of my colleagues sharing her concern about the patients and their lack of ability to communicate with their families particularly those who were most ill. She brought in her iPad so they could Facetime with family. I was so proud to call her colleague. Realizing I was consumed with my own fears, being reminded of the fears our patients face, was humbling. As I entered some rooms of patients with full gear as I call it, you could see the concern on their faces as well. They were not used to this yet and were facing this new situation without their family and normal support system. I practiced compassion as much as possible.

Now we have our new reality as we call it. I have faced a death in my family during COVID. My father was hospitalized with COVID ultimately surviving, somewhat to my surprise. I was once again impressed by the courage and care given to him by another emergency physician and his pulmonologist in Northwest Indiana. Both of whom went above and beyond to communicate with me during the time he was hospitalized. Now I know what it feels like to have it in my inner circle, if you will. Lately, every shift starts with a combination of COVID patients in the ED on bipap, on a ventilator, on O2, often waiting for beds upstairs, and with stories from my colleagues about the various ways this disease presents differently in our patients. Now I'm growing tired of the donning and doffing, difficulty breathing in my N95, fogging of my shield, sweating with use of the plastic gowns, and what seem like longer workdays. Now I'm growing tired of the lack of opportunity to eat out, enjoy New Year's Eve out with friends, travelling to new places, and planning for big events. I am grateful, however, that I have been able to spend more time with my family, my husband, and my dogs. I am grateful that life slowed down a bit. I am grateful for technology which allows me to do video chats and decreases my need to commute. I am grateful to those who donated coffee to front line providers and for those who showed support to healthcare workers by displaying signs in their windows. Most of all, I am grateful for my health and ability to work and serve. I am hopeful at the same time having received my 1st dose of the COVID vaccination. I am hopeful this is a gamechanger. We are now at a year and have very few treatments that are beneficial. I hope the vaccine is as good as they say, and others understand the

The Journal of Phi Rho Sigma

P.O. Box 90264

Indianapolis, IN 46290-0264

PRSRT STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
INDIANAPOLIS, IN
PERMIT NO. 593

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Volume 116-Winter

The Journal of Phi Rho Sigma

6

importance of the vaccine. We need a gamechanger and I think this is it. I remain hopeful that we will again be able to experience the wonderful things that life offers us, and I know we can still experience joy in our everyday if we practice gratitude.

Dr. Willy, Pi chapter, is an Emergency Physician practicing in Mt. Pleasant, MI. She also is the Associate Dean of Student Affairs at Central Michigan College of Medicine.

Phi Rho Sigma Foundation Helps Fund Service Trips For Eta Members

Several members from Eta Chapter at Creighton University took service trips to Indian reservations last spring in conjunction with the CURA Project. One group visited the Rosebud Reservation of the Lakota Tribe. In addition to learning about all of the health care problems affecting our Native Americans, the students were also enlightened about the unique struggles these people continue to endure. One of the students wrote that learning about boarding schools and cultural trauma was the most impactful part of the trip for him.

A second group of students went to the Pine Ridge Reservation at the Red Cloud Indian School and Our Lady of the Lourdes. There the students worked with the children and were most impressed with learning about the hardships of reservation life and the resilience the children showed in their pursuits of learning, sports and preserving their rich cultural heritage.

**The Journal of
Phi Rho Sigma**

(ISSN: 0022-3581)

Volume 116-Winter 2021

**Published By:
Phi Rho Sigma Medical Society
P.O. Box 90264
Indianapolis, Indiana 46290**

**Distributed without charge to
every member.**

**Central Office email:
hrodenbe@sbcglobal.net
World Wide Web:
www.phirhosigma.org**

Editor:

**NEIL KNIGHT M.D.
P.O. Box 90264
Indianapolis, IN 46290**

**Address all correspondence
concerning the society to:
Gabriel Cuka, M.D.
Secretary-Treasurer
P.O. Box 90264
Indianapolis, IN 46290-0264**