



J. ROY WITTWER 1930-2015  
*Jim Hercher, MD and Ed Olsgard, MD*

“Jakie” Roy Wittwer was born in April 1930, in Missouri. His family moved to Santa Monica when he was seven years old. Roy worked in his parents’ grocery in downtown Santa Monica while he was growing up. He received his B.S from UC Berkley in 1952, and his M.D. from Stanford Medical School, San Francisco, in 1956.

Roy and I met while we were both interns at Sacramento County Hospital (now UC Davis Medical Center), we and decided to practice together as soon as we fulfilled our military obligation. We chose Eureka as the best coastal area to practice family medicine on California’s North Coast.

Roy did a year of General Practice Residency at Sacramento County Hospital, and then served two years on an Indian Reservation in Minnesota as a Public Health Service physician. He began practice in Eureka in 1960, I joined him in 1962, when we opened Eureka Family Practice.

Our general practice was incredibly broad and included: obstetrics, with us performing 15-20 deliveries a month; pediatrics; hospital surgery, including appendectomies, breast biopsies, D&C’s, hemorrhoidectomies and tonsillectomies. Roy did four or five tonsillectomies a month at Hoopa while the solo practitioner in Hoopa administered open drop ether anesthesia. Roy reeked of ether for two days after. Roy developed a technique for injecting varicose veins in the lower extremities with hypertonic saline with good results.

Roy and I built our own state of the art office on Buhne St. in 1964. It had a full lab and a radiology office across the parking lot. We shared night and weekend calls with Bill Davis and Halvor Braafladt. There were no emergency room doctors until Brian Craig came in 1972, so all

M.D.'s on the hospital staff rotated on ER call. During our first decade in practice we were paid mostly cash because medical insurance did not exist. Medicare and Medi-Cal started in 1965, but most of our patients were not covered.

Ed Olsgard joined our practice in 1974, and we enlarged our office in 1978. We eventually grew to eight Family Practice physicians in the practice.

When Roy became interested in an activity he jumped into it wholeheartedly. When we met as interns his interest was camping and hiking. Our off weekends that year were spent on beaches and in the Sierras. Other interests he pursued in turn included: archery with an archery range built at Big Lagoon; sailing in a, specially made-to-order Kestrel sail boat; planting an orchard at his home; and opening Wittwer Winery in a barn on his property.

In the late 1960's my wife, Betty, suggested we visit McLellan orchid growers in the Bay area and we invited Roy to go with us. The half dozen plants he brought home grew into the extensive greenhouse complex at his home on Table Bluff. He had an international wholesale trade in orchids. Roy developed several new varieties of orchids and received at least one international award for a white orchid he developed.

Above all, he was my partner and friend of 59 years, and I write this to his memory.

*Jim Hercher MD.*

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I met Roy Wittwer in 1973. He and Peter Burgess were my models. Roy was making wine, a magical thing for a guy from Minneapolis, and Peter had all those girls jumping into his pond. I made one batch of Colombard in 1976, and then again in 1977. The results were such that I decided to drink other peoples' wine instead. I think Roy stopped making wine when he moved

out to Table Bluff in 1987. But his commercial orchid operation seemed like a full time job, at least as seen from a distance.

I joined Jim Hercher and Roy in 1974, and over a decade our practice grew to an eight person family practice. Roy was a wise and patient mentor, a masterful diagnostician and skillful technician. He also had all those hobbies, which, in retirement probably defined him more than his professional role as a physician.

Roy died of dementia, and was cared for by his loving wife Frae at home. He had planned to live to be 130. That didn't work out. Hal Braafladt, Bill Davis, and Roy Wittwer all died of dementia. Jim and I wear hearing aids, but short term memory is still intact. Carpe Diem.

*Ed Olsgard, MD*