

IN MEMORIUM
O. BRIAN CRAIG, M.D.
1946 - 2016

by Join Luh, M.D.

After obtaining his M.D. from UCSF in 1972, Dr. O. Brian Craig moved to Eureka, CA to begin practicing at St. Joseph Hospital Emergency Room where he practiced for 20 years. Sometime during this period, he spent 5 years in Los Angeles writing music and musicals and produced some of his most witty and humorous compositions (i.e., a piano lounge song about Wilson's disease). He ultimately became the Medical Director of the Eureka Veterans Clinic, where he practiced until his retirement in June 2013.

Outside of medicine, he was a member of Jerry and the Pacemakers (a doctors' band that became very popular in Humboldt County), and made use of every opportunity to pay tribute to Elvis by microphone. He was the editor of "The Bulletin" the Humboldt Del Norte County Medical Society newsletter from 1975 to 1995 (20 years!), and for several of those years, he served as chair. He was also the medical society's spokesman and did several health alert spots on the local radio stations.

He served as the team doctor for the Eureka High and St. Bernard's High football teams, as the resident physician for sports and Boy Scout physicals, and as a primary care physician to veterans who bravely served our country. He was always ready to help, as shown by one of his son's team mates seeking out "Dr. Craig" in the Henderson Center to reset his dislocated shoulder, knowing he would be there walking his dog. The boy's shoulder was reset on site, reflecting community medicine in a bygone era. Imagine the screams from the risk management department if something like that were to happen today.

He was a dedicated family man and was proud of the accomplishments of his three children, Matthew (an engineer with a MBA), John (an ear nose and throat surgeon), and Maggie (an attorney). He was a leader and role model in his Mormon Church community.

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I first met Brian by phone when taking care of mutual patients in 2007. He and his wife Nancy, as well as Dr. Rodney Swenson opened the doors of the Eureka Veterans Clinic (at the previous location) for a grand tour for me and an internist friend who was visiting Humboldt County and on staff at the VA in Little Rock, AR.

When the San Francisco VA failed to send me the CD's of a sarcoma patient's pre-op CT images which I needed for post-op treatment planning, Nancy let me into the clinic during lunch so I could view the images on their networked computers and take pictures of the images on my smart phone (which I subsequently deleted after review, just in case a HIPAA compliance agent is reading this).

But I really got to know Brian and Nancy when the medical society decided to revamp the physician talent show in 2011 after a long hiatus. It was then that I got to hear his legendary Elvis voice, see and hear his Grand Piano (a full sized Steinway purchased in San Francisco and carefully shipped to Eureka), and sample some of his witty original compositions (many of which remain unpublished). We organized and coordinated 3 successful talent shows together from 2012 to 2013 with physicians coming out of the woodwork to showcase their skills.

Shortly after his retirement, he was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Brian and Nancy made a

permanent move to San Francisco where he received all his cancer treatment and he enthusiastically participated in clinical trials for the benefit of cancer research. Thus, our last talent show in 2014 was held in his absence. We kept in touch with updates on his treatments, and he was always in good spirits. I last spoke with him at the end of August 2015, when he was about to attend his daughter Maggie's wedding and permanently relocate to Michigan to be close to his two sons. He spent a memorable holiday season with Nancy, their children and grandchildren before he died peacefully on New Year's Day 2016.

We will miss you, Brian. Please tell Elvis we wish he could have done a cover of Queen's "Crazy Little Thing Called Love."

In lieu of flowers, the Craig family requests donations to CPMC Foundation, 2015 Steiner Street, San Francisco, CA 94115. Please make checks payable to CPMC Foundation and note on the check that it is for clinical research and patient education at CPMC with Dr. Ari Baron, in memory of Dr. Brian Craig.