

ALEX FRAZER, M.D. 1950 - 1996

I first met Alex Frazer in the Spring of 1991, when through a mutual friend, we discovered that we had both attended medical school in Guadalajara at the same time. Those of you who have studied out of the country can appreciate how wonderful it was to discover someone “from the homeland,” as it were. We were able to dredge up memories, that while we were living them were terrifying, but had softened and become funny over time. From this fortuitous set of circumstances we founded Los Gringo Perdidos (The Lost Gringos) which soon metamorphosed from a nostalgic, blast from the past luncheon gathering at any one of a number of Mexican restaurants, to an intellectually challenging political activist discussion group.

For Alex was nothing, if not instinctively political. Together we would argue over the entire political landscape, almost always taking opposite sides. We was one of the most articulate, interested, and interesting men I’ve ever met. He read the Wall Street Journal, and I read The Nation. We argued, laughed and stimulated some wonderful creative energies. We often tried to implement some of the ideas we spun into our own practices.

Alex was always interested in the larger picture. “How can we make the system better?” “What can be, as physicians do, to improve the delivery of services, before someone decides for us?” “We, as physicians must take charge of our future, and not be dictated to by a bunch of administrative bean counters.” It was toward those ends that he helped organize the access to care committee, and got very involved in Medical Society affairs. In fact, he served as president of the Medical Society from 1994-95, and it was during his tenure that Humboldt-Del Norte physicians formed the IPA, and took the early steps toward forming a community based health plan for local businesses and employers.

He and I served together on the editorial committee of the Medical Society, and he made it a great committee. Even Penny admits that our meetings were a lot of fun. His sense of humor was infectious, and his wit could cut like a sword.

The range of his interests and energy was enormous: witness the dairy farm, his collection of cards, his pilot’s license, his radio talk show, his boat, not to mention his full-time practice of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. This from a man who’d had a heart transplant in 1990!

Alex was never one to talk about his own health, preferring instead to just “get on with it,” moving on to the next task: delivering a new calf or doing a rehab consult. To him, the joy was in the doing. Actually, if he had any weak spot at all, it was his unconcern for his own health. He developed cardiomyopathy in 1990, underwent heart transplantation at Stanford in the Spring, and then seemed to go back to work almost immediately.

Up until the end of his life he never complained or mentioned anything at all about his health. We didn’t realize how sick he was until the end of his life when the pain and organ failure became overwhelming. He was 46 years old; far too young to be done. But in that short time he touched all of us, and certainly, for me, made life a little better and a lot more fun. I already miss

his “cow talk,” and his infectious energy.

Alex, you are sorely missed.

by Stephen Kamelgarn, M. D.