

## IN MEMORIAM

**Alan M. Levine, MD**

1995 OTA President



10/09/09 - Dr. Levine, OTA faculty member at the 2009 OTA Comprehensive Fracture Course for Residents in San Diego, California

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By Andrew Pollak, MD

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Dr. Alan Levine, eleventh President of the Orthopaedic Trauma Association, died suddenly on October 25, 2009 at the age of 61. Alan was born and raised in Schenectady, New York with the exception of several years during his early childhood that he spent in Baltimore while his father was an orthopaedic resident at Johns Hopkins. After high school Alan attended Brown University for four years during which time he earned both Bachelors and Masters Degrees.

Alan was always very proud of his connection to Yale University where he went to medical school and did his residency in orthopaedics. Between the two, he served an internship at the University of Colorado, and between the first and second years of his residency, he did a fellowship in musculoskeletal oncology at the National Institutes of

Health while he served in the Public Health Service. Several years after joining the faculty at the University of Maryland, Alan took a sabbatical and spent four months in Europe studying spine at the Rizzoli Institute in Bologna and with Professor Roy-Camille in Paris.

Alan had an unbridled passion for education and was one of the premier educational leaders in orthopaedics in the United States. In addition to serving as Chair of the Council on Education for the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, he was very involved in organizing a musculoskeletal tumor review course for the joint AAOS/MSTS course held during the MSTS annual meeting. He developed a weekly spine conference

at Sinai for residents and fellows as well as a multidisciplinary tumor conference. While at the University of Maryland, he developed a regular multidisciplinary musculoskeletal tumor conference as well as a multidisciplinary spine trauma conference which he held regularly. He was a frequent recipient of the resident teaching awards and regarded by all as an outstanding educator in the areas of trauma, spine and tumor.

While at the University of Maryland, Alan built the institution's first musculoskeletal tumor program and served as a dominant force for 17 years in the spine program. He was a prolific writer and researcher as well as an educator and clinician and rapidly rose to the rank of Professor prior to leaving in 1998 to develop the cancer center at Sinai Hospital of Baltimore. He moved to Sinai with a vision for a broad-based cancer program and brought with him both the energy and resolve to develop one. Alan served as the founding director of the Alvin & Lois Lapidus Cancer Institute at Sinai, and under his leadership the institute became a Mid-Atlantic referral center, not only for musculoskeletal tumors, but for cancer in general. Alan and the Lapidus Cancer Institute became world renowned for treatment of spinal tumors particularly for the use of stereotactic radiosurgery for the treatment of metastatic disease of the spine.

As a testament to Alan's commitment to education, he developed the "LifeBridge Health Leadership Academy." The purpose of the academy was to make sure the managers throughout the organization had the leadership and management skills necessary to succeed in their roles.

Alan had no particular title, assignment or charge from the institution to develop this tool for future leaders, he just did it because he recognized the need and was committed to creating educational opportunity wherever he saw that it was necessary.

Alan was a longstanding member of the Cervical Spine Research Society, the North American Spine Society and the Musculoskeletal Tumor Society. He is best known, however, in the orthopaedic trauma world for his leadership roles in the Orthopaedic Trauma Association. Alan was the first chief financial officer of the Orthopaedic Trauma Association, and in that role he established the Orthopaedic Trauma Research and Education endowment. Alan's initial vision was for an independent endowment that could fund young orthopaedic trauma investigators early in their careers. His vision has now developed into a nearly \$4,000,000 endowment fund that combines with ongoing donations to fund over \$500,000 a year in research awarded by the OTA Research Committee and Board of Directors.

After serving as chief financial officer for the Orthopaedic Trauma Association, Alan was elected to serve as its eleventh president. Consistent with his commitment to education, Alan oversaw the first OTA residents' course during his presidential year. In his presidential address, Alan succinctly described a vision that included a fellowship match, better hospital support to limit nighttime surgery and better overall infrastructure support to allow orthopaedic traumatologists to remain in the subspecialty throughout a career. Many of the actions Alan prioritized as president can be directly linked to the success orthopaedic traumatology has enjoyed in the ensuing years.

Those who knew and worked with Alan understood his commitment to and focus on his patients and to ensuring the best care possible for them. While this was true for all of his patients, whether they be trauma patients, tumor patients or spine patients, he had a special relationship with his pediatric patients. He was well known by them and appreciated by them for the efforts he went to make them comfortable. One of his best known methods was to make teddy bears for them to help explain their medical condition. He described the bears, which were featured in the AAOS *E-Motion Exhibition of Orthopaedics in Art*, as "a nonthreatening way for some of my younger

patients to deal with scoliosis". He combined his skill for teddy bears and medical care at home by running an open clinic for injured teddy bears from his community many of which would arrive in his driveway with devastating injuries which he treated without regard for ability to pay.

One of Alan's proudest professional accomplishments was his service as the editor of the Journal of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons. In that role, he shepherded the journal from infancy to PubMed listing and oversaw its expansion to a monthly publication. JAAOS is now the widest circulated journal in the field of orthopaedics thanks to his vision, dedication and leadership.

Alan's leadership, mentorship and vision will be sorely missed but fondly remembered by all of us who knew him and worked with him. Alan is survived by his wife Barbara, his son Dana, his daughters Alissa and Andrea, his father Leon, and his sister Francea. On behalf of the Orthopaedic Trauma Association and the entire orthopaedic trauma community, I offer his family our deepest sympathies. Those of us who knew him and learned from him are eternally grateful for his leadership, his mentorship and his commitment to excellence in patient care.

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