



ORLO CLARK MD
Professor Emeritus, UCSF
1941 – 2022

Orlo Clark MD was a giant both physically and in the kindred spirit way for endocrine surgeons worldwide. He spent his entire career, from Intern through to Professor Emeritus at the University of California, San Francisco. Orlo was responsible for establishing endocrine surgery at an international level, a commitment which continued throughout his career. In 1978 Peter Heimann, Professor of Surgery in Bergen, Norway, wrote to his friends to say he was dying of gastric cancer and stated his fervent wish that an international endocrine group of surgeons be formed. The first meeting of that group at the SIC Congress in San Francisco included Orlo Clark who was elected as Secretary-Treasurer, Selwyn Taylor as President, and a small international committee which included Norman Thompson (USA), Hajo Bruining (Netherlands), Richard Egdhal (USA), Yoshime Fujimoto (Japan), Per-Ola Granberg (Sweden), Tom Reeve (Australia), Hans Roeher (Germany), Witold Rudowski (Poland), and Sam Wells (USA). The IAES has continued to meet with the SIC/ISS every two years since that time and Orlo has attended every meeting, being elected as President of the IAES from 1995 to 1997.

Orlo studied Zoology at Cornell University from 1959-1963 before entering Medical School at Cornell graduating in 1967. He moved to UCSF where he was intern (1967-68), resident (1968-70), senior resident (1971-72), and chief resident (1972-73). He then completed a fellowship at the Royal Postgraduate Medical Centre, Hammersmith Hospital in London with Selwyn Taylor before returning to the staff of UCSF in 1973. He was Chief of Surgery at Mt Zion Medical Center and Vice Chair of the Department of Surgery. In addition to his role with IAES he has been President of the American Association of Endocrine Surgeons, the American Thyroid Association and the Pacific Coast Surgical Association. He has authored over 450 peer reviewed articles, sixteen books and numerous book chapters. He was also the recipient of the prestigious AAES Oliver Cope Meritorious Achievement Award.

Orlo however will be most remembered for his unconditional support of his residents, fellows, and colleagues worldwide. LD recalls visiting UCSF as the USA Travelling Fellow of the Royal Australasian

College of Surgeons in 1988. On arrival in San Francisco, there was the invitation to stay at Orlo's home sharing the basement guest room (with his dog), and sharing meals with Carol and his children whilst visiting the department at UCSF. It was at that time the concept of establishing an international fellowship in endocrine surgery in Sydney started. His strong support for his own fellows was subsequently demonstrated when he put forward a candidate for that same fellowship (phone call from Orlo) "I am calling to twist your arm to take the best ever candidate for your fellowship...". After the usual discussion, Orlo is asked the standard question of his plans for the candidate if the application is unsuccessful ...(response from Orlo) "that's not going to happen because if you don't take my fellow, I'm not going to twist your arm I'm going to break it". Needless to say a very successful fellowship year ensued.

Orlo travelled extensively, not only to attend meetings and congresses, but also to visit endocrine surgery centers and meet esteemed colleagues in the IAES. JZ recalls, as a young and fairly inexperienced endocrine surgeon, going with great respect and almost a little fear to pick him up at the airport. It was not difficult to distinguish Orlo from the surrounding; his stateliness and charisma made him easily recognizable. The fear one might have felt before meeting this true giant quickly disappeared, as he was extremely friendly, encouraging and very socially gifted. Respect was maintained, but you soon felt like a friend to Orlo. For the young surgeon, it was a joy to associate with him as he willingly shared his vast knowledge, experience and wisdom. But he also liked to talk about things other than endocrine surgery, and asked interested questions about life and family - the latter Orlo memorized and could therefore ask adequate follow-up questions at the next opportunity. When traveling by car, Orlo (doubled up in the passenger seat) liked to tell us about his own car, "the best car ever made!": his SAAB 99. This made at least one of us very proud..... During surgery, he was happy to teach his tips and tricks, and there was always a very friendly atmosphere around the operating table. It is easy to state that if all mentors had Orlo's attitude and capabilities, we would easily have happy and super competent endocrine surgeons all over the world. His importance for global endocrine surgery can never be overestimated.

Orlo was always interested in promoting quality in endocrine surgery and he vigorously researched clinical problems to encourage better outcomes. Orlo was also never shy about giving advice to his older, more senior colleagues, including the avoidance of complications – amongst them post-operative bleeding. During one of his earliest visits to Sydney he was in the OR with TSR. Tom recalls - on finishing a

thyroidectomy I asked for a drain. Orlo said “if the wound is that dry, why do you need a drain” I told him I always drained the neck. He said “I would not close the neck unless the wound was that dry”. Drains disappeared my surgical armamentarium the next day. Meticulous hemostasis was critical and a message for all the trainees. I attended countless international meetings with Orlo over many decades. To be at a meeting in San Francisco always meant a meeting with Orlo, Carol and other endocrine surgeons from around the globe and it was always a convivial and enjoyable time with acknowledged leadership.

Orlo will also be remembered for his interests outside surgery including history and art. Together with his wife, Carol, he undertook a tour of European Art Galleries leading to the publication of a book “The Remarkables: Endocrine Abnormalities in Art” detailing the depictions in art galleries of the range of endocrine abnormalities. He also co-authored a history chapter in *Surgical Endocrinopathies* (Pasioka and Lee, 2015) on Thomas Dunhill, the Australian surgeon considered to be the father of modern thyroid surgery.

Orlo was honored as one of the American College of Surgeons Icons in Surgery in 2016, and this year in Vienna he was awarded the International Society of Surgery ISS/SIC Honorary Fellowship. Orlo Clark will long be remembered as one of the greats of endocrine surgery.

Tom S Reeve, IAES President 1985-1987

Leigh Delbridge, IAES President 2009-2011

Jan Zedenius, IAES President 2022-present

