

Los Angeles Pediatric Society E-Newsletter

Volume 4 No. 3

December 2017

Alvin A. Miller, MD, FAAP
1926 - 2017



“Al Miller was one of a kind”; “He was a force to be reckoned with”; “He was a great guy and a devoted physician. Honest as could be, with no put-ons.”; “He was passionate about medicine”; “I will never forget the “Miller Law” which will forever impact my perspective on life, education and my future career: ‘The smaller they are, the sicker they are. The greater the challenge, the bigger the reward.’

These are just a few of the comments that fellow physicians, friends and students shared about LAPS Life Member, perinatal/neonatal medicine specialist, teacher and beloved Coordinator of the Valley Eve & Gene Black Program, Dr. Alvin Miller. (See additional tributes at the end of this document.) Dr. Miller’s practice of medicine spanned over 60 years and touched the lives of countless babies, children, parents, doctors and future medical professionals.

Born in Chicago, Dr. Miller received his M.D. at University of Illinois College of Medicine in Chicago and did his residency at LAC+USC - how fortunate Southern California was to have this energetic, whirlwind of a physician come our way! He began his pediatric practice at Kaiser in Panorama City and long before there was phototherapy, Dr. Miller coordinated “exchange transfusions” for hundreds of babies with high bilirubin or Rh disease. As a result of his extensive experience, despite the lack of fellowship training, Dr. Miller was certified in Neonatal Medicine in 1975 and then in 1977, he went on to help establish the NICU at Kaiser Panorama City.

As the only San Fernando Valley NICU until the mid-eighties, it was a busy place, accepting transfers from other area medical centers. The staff that trained in Dr. Miller’s unit later went on to become the nucleus for other NICUs created in the Valley. Always looking to improve neonatal care, Dr. Miller was a long- time advocate for and instrumental in, the creation of the Regional Perinatal Network for the 10 area Kaiser Permanente Hospitals, which often transferred to outside, non-Kaiser facilities. This network continues to provide outstanding prenatal care today.

Over the course of his demanding career, Dr. Miller shared his vast knowledge by participating/chairing countless committees, writing numerous articles and teaching at LAC+USC

Hospital, Cedars-Sinai NICU and serving as a Clinical Professor of Pediatrics at USC and UCLA Schools of Medicine. He will be remembered by many as always advising them to be a clinician...“get the in-utero history, the birth history and then look at the baby... not the lab work or the X-ray - the baby will give you the diagnosis, if you look at the baby.” In 2012, Dr. Miller delivered the keynote address at the 18th Annual Neonatology Conference, giving an overview of how this discipline had evolved over the last 50 years. You may view Dr. Miller’s keynote lecture [here](#).

Somehow this busy physician also found time to do international volunteer work. In 1990, after the fall of communism, Dr. Miller went to Romania to create a neonatal curriculum for physicians and nurses. Project “Newstart” continues today as a part of an ongoing educational curriculum that is used throughout underdeveloped communities in Eastern Europe. He was a recipient of the 2012 University of Illinois Alumni Humanitarian Award for his work.

Dr. Miller retired from Kaiser at age 65, but could not stay idle for long. He continued in private practice in the Valley and in 2008 helped establish Simi Valley Hospital’s NICU and served as its 1st Chair. This Renaissance man also played the violin in both the Moorpark and Los Angeles Doctors Symphony Orchestras and it was not surprising that his initial email address started with “hyperAI.”

In 2006, at a time when most octogenarians would be relaxing, Dr. Alvin Miller took on another big challenge. At the urging of fellow LAPS member Dr. Katherine Galos, he rescued the Eve & Gene Black Summer Medical Career Program in the Valley by signing on as a Coordinator. As a result of his enthusiastic guidance, the Valley program went from 2 students to 12. His “wannabees” had a hard time keeping up with the daily schedules that he arranged for them, which involved numerous departments at three or more area Hospitals and countless private practices! As a result of his selfless mentorship, in ten short years, Dr. Miller not only inspired over 100 students to continue their education in medicine but also encouraged numerous medical professionals to become involved in this life-changing program. At the 2010 Brennemann Lectures, LAPS was proud to honor Dr. Miller with a plaque acknowledging his tireless efforts on behalf of the Eve & Gene Black Program.



What a huge, full legacy Dr. Alvin Miller left; he will be sorely missed by the many people who were lucky enough to find themselves in his mercurial obit. If you wish to acknowledge the passing of Dr. Miller, notes of condolence can be sent to eseaman@lapedsoc.org and at Dr. Miller’s family’s request, donations can be made to the Eve & Gene Black Summer Medical Career Program. You may click [here](#) to make donations online or send a check payable to the Los Angeles Pediatric Society. Mail to P.O. Box 4198 Torrance, CA 90510-4198.

And so we close our heartfelt memorial to Dr. Miller, with *his* plea for the Eve & Gene Black Program that was so near and dear to his heart: “After 62 plus years of practicing medicine, I realize the progress in healthcare today needs to be passed on to future providers. We need to nurture the ambition and dreams of these capable youngsters who will carry the torch for us in future years. They are interested, ambitious, committed and capable. I believe we owe this to those who want to follow us in a medical career. **Get involved.** You will have the feeling of leaving something to the world of medicine, the world that you have enjoyed!”

The following page has additional reflections on Dr. Miller from his LAPS colleagues.

“Al was a great guy and a devoted physician. He was one of a kind. Honest as could be with no put-ons. What you saw and heard was what you got. He will be sorely missed.”

Marshall Goldberg, MD

“Dr. Miller was passionate about medicine. I was always impressed about how he stayed on top of the latest research and advocated for best practices with regards to CT scan imaging in children. It was always fun to engage in discussions with him at Ken Saul’s Town Hall meetings.

He was a true mentor to the many of students he worked with rotating through the Eve and Gene Black Summer Program. He was a wonderful contribution to the Los Angeles Pediatric Society.

May his memory be an inspiration to us all.”

Paula Whiteman, MD, FAAP, FACEP

“Al Miller was a role model for all of the physicians who worked with him. He was an excellent clinician and instructor - “forget about algorithms and look closely at the patient for clues.”

I was fortunate to work with Al Miller at Panorama City Kaiser for 30 years. He was a superb clinician and outstanding pioneer in the field of neonatal intensive care. His ability to stabilize micropremies in a matter of minutes was amazing which led to his nickname of “HyperAl”. As a caring pediatrician he devoted long hours during the night at the bedside of unstable premature infants. Thanks to Al’s skills there are hundreds of 40 to 50-year-old ex-premies walking the streets of the Valley today because of extraordinary care they received as newborn infants.

Over the past 10 years Al was a coordinator of the Los Angeles Pediatric Society Medical Career Program. He was instrumental in launching the program at Los Robles and Simi Medical Centers after it had been curtailed at Panorama City Kaiser. Al enjoyed being a mentor for the students and they bonded with him. They sent letters and E-mails to him about their progress in college. The students entering Medical School came back to thank him for the inspiration he instilled in them and to share the joy of their accomplishments.

Our program was very unique as we started with 4 students and at Dr. Miller’s insistence was expanded to 12 students, which was logistically a difficult schedule. Al was very enthusiastic and set up a superb schedule. His organizational skills were excellent and the students appreciated the expansion of the program. When Al stopped being co-coordinator of the LAPS program due to illness last year, he left us with the axiom “You never know when you pluck the heart strings of a youngster’s heart that it may lead them to their destiny”.

Thank you for including my thoughts to the memorial for Dr. Miller. He was an exceptional physician and a great friend.”

Katherine Galos, MD