

Karl Sussman, MD

Karl Sussman, MD, a former President of the American Diabetes Association, passed away on 28 October 2005, while traveling through small colonial towns of Central Mexico.

Karl was born in Baltimore on 29 May 1929 to the family of a young cardiologist. Later, when elder Dr. Sussman joined the military, the family moved frequently, and Karl attended high schools in Maryland, Virginia, Florida, and Panama (the Canal Zone). Following his early interest in pre-Columbian art and culture, Karl spent two summers as an exchange stu-



Karl Sussman, MD, President of the American Diabetes Association, 1984–1985.

dent in Morelia, Mexico. In 1947 he enrolled into Johns Hopkins University, aiming at a future career as a Foreign Service Officer. Midway through his undergraduate studies he switched to science and premedical education. He graduated in 1951 and matriculated in the University of Maryland Medical School. He graduated in 1955 and in the same year married his wife Joan Flah.

The young couple moved to Saint Louis, Missouri, where Karl did his internship in Internal Medicine at Barnes Hospital, Washington University. He then served 2 years at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) before becoming a resident and a Chief resident at the University Colorado Medical School in Denver. He went on to do a fellowship in diabetes at Joslin Clinic and returned to Denver as an Assistant Professor in 1962.

At the University of Colorado his career led him to a number of leadership positions, both in clinical medicine and in research. Karl was a Chief of the Division of Endocrinology, a Chief of Medical Service at the Denver Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center, and eventually, an Associate Chief of Staff for Research and Development. His research in the field of insulin secretion was continuously funded by the NIH and VA. He published several monographs and over a hundred articles in the leading biomedical journals. In 1984 he became a President of the American Diabetes Association. He was

also an exchange scholar in Ulm (1970), Jerusalem (1981), and Pisa (1991).

Karl retired in the mid 1990s and switched his attention away from science and medicine to photography (a life-long hobby), sculpture, pre-Columbian art, and foreign policy analysis. He was a master in all these fields. Steamboat Springs Botanic Garden, in Steamboat, Colorado, displays his sculpture in the Child Garden Section. Karl was elected a President of the pre-Columbian exhibit support group of the Denver Art Museum for 3 years. He became one of the most popular teachers of the Vivo Adult Education program of the University of Denver, where he taught courses in foreign policy, such as “Cultural differences in politics,” “Globalization and democracy,” and “Backlash against market economy.” What a remarkable breadth of interests and knowledge!

Shortness of breath and chest pain struck Karl when he and Joan were staying in Morelia, Mexico, the same town where Karl spent at least two summers as an exchange student. He died in the local hospital shortly after. His family lost a loving father. His students lost a wonderful mentor. His friends lost a remarkable and exceptionally bright man. The diabetes community lost one of its leaders and pioneers.

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