

Face to Face Face to Face
Photos courtesy of the Pauly family.

Dr. Tom Pauly with his sons, Mac and Sam.

Editor's Note:
In October 2004,
Dr. Thomas H. Pauly
died of complications
of pancreatic cancer.
He was 56.

If you had asked Dr. Tom Pauly if he had done anything extraordinary with his life, he probably would have said no. He probably would have told you he was just doing his job. It's not that he didn't do anything extraordinary. He did.

Just ask any of the nurses and doctors who worked with him during his years as a neonatologist at UK Hospital. Or you could ask any number of his patients whose lives he helped save and whose lives he touched with his kindness. You could ask the parents of those patients, who were comforted by Dr. Pauly under the worst circumstances - during the illness of a child. You could ask

his family, his friends, even those who met him only once, and they would all tell you the same thing: They were blessed to have known Tom Pauly.

THE MED SCHOOL STUDENT

After graduating from high school in his hometown of Covington, Kentucky, Pauly spent 15 months at Marianist Novitiate Seminary in New York. He considered becoming a priest, but chose to become a doctor instead. He earned a Bachelor's of Science in Chemistry from UK and entered the UK College of Medicine in 1970.

Dr. Warren Webb, '74, an Ohio pediatrician, remembers fondly his classmate and their years together in medical school. The times were tumultuous, Webb says. In the spring of 1969, arson on campus resulted in classes being cancelled. Students entering medical school in 1970 were photographed and their pictures given to faculty to confirm participation in class, Webb says. It seems Pauly's appearance had changed so drastically since the photo was taken that the Community Medicine instructor didn't rec-

Alumni Profile

REMEMBERING

THOMAS H. PAULY, M.D., '74

By Melanie P. Jackson

"His smile said it all: I know who you are, I care about you, and I am glad to share this moment with you."

- Heinrich

Werner, M.D.

ognize him. Therefore, he was not counted as present during the course.

"In those days, the most cutting-edge course was Community Medicine, in which the student determined the final grade," Webb says.

"When it was announced that Tom Pauly had failed the class, he turned the palest shade of white. After hearing the explanation, he went home and shaved and got a haircut. Tom holds the unique distinction of being the only student in UK history to fail this course."

Dr. Nirmala Desai, a Department of Pediatrics faculty member, also met Pauly during his medical school years. She joined the UK College of Medicine faculty in 1972. In 1974, she met Pauly when he was a fourth-year medical student completing an acting internship in the pediatrics department. Her first impression: He was a hard worker.

"Whatever he did, he always did it with full dedication," Desai says. "He would have been a success at anything he did because he worked so hard."

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SERVING UK AND THE
COMMUNITY

During clinical rotations, Pauly was naturally drawn to pediatrics because of his love of people, particularly children, Webb says. After graduating from the College of Medicine, Pauly completed his residency in pediatrics at UK. In 1976, he was among the first to become a UK Fellow in Neonatal Perinatal Medicine. Pauly joined the UK faculty in 1978 as an assistant clinical professor of pediatrics in neonatology.

At the time, neonatology was a new and emerging field. In the early '70s, UK Hospital had only a premature nursery. So, Pauly was involved with UK's neonatal unit from conception to fulfillment. He remained on the faculty at UK while directing neonatal intensive care service at Central Baptist Hospital, where he led in the creation of a Level II neonatal nursery. Pauly's leadership roles at UK included serving as chief of the Division of Neonatology, associate chair of the Department of Pediatrics, and medical director of UK Children's Hospital. He also served as president of the UK Medical Alumni Association.

Dr. Heinrich Werner, a UK Department of Pediatrics faculty member, met Pauly when he interviewed for a faculty position in 1994. "When a department wants to impress a candidate, they showcase their most outstanding faculty, and that clearly described Dr. Pauly," Werner says. "Tom and I quickly became friends, while he took on the role as my big brother."

Besides contributing to the careers of physicians such as Werner and many others who considered him not only a friend but a mentor, Pauly made a lasting impact on the quality of neonatal and pediatric care at UK Hospital. Under Pauly's leadership, UK's neonatal intensive care unit joined the Vermont-Oxford Network, a nonprofit, voluntary collaboration of health care professionals dedicated to improving the quality and safety of medical care for newborn infants and their families. Pauly led the neonatal transport team, introducing state-of-the-art

technology, such as extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO) and high-frequency ventilation. Through these and other efforts, Pauly helped bring national recognition

to UK.

"He took leadership positions on the national level that brought attention and recognition to UK's Neonatology unit, put it on the national level," Desai says. "He made the University of Kentucky shine because of this. He always made sure we were the leaders and not the followers."

Pauly was a leader, and he had a rare style. He was the first to admit he didn't really enjoy the administrative side of his job. He didn't like to say negative things or to reprimand staff, Desai says.

"A good leader is able to motivate, make people do things they don't necessarily want to do," Desai says. "People would do it because it was for Tom. People just loved him. Few people can lead the way Tom did. He cared about nurses, doctors, patients, and their families. He cared so much about them that they were willing to do anything for him."

Pauly's people skills proved priceless during more than 20 years of working with UK and bringing together diverse groups from the community to

were well-known and respected, but the fact that he valued people as individuals is what truly set him apart. Rice and Whitehead say Pauly respected people from all walks of life. When parents from rural areas came to the hospital, they were sometimes intimidated and had many fears about their child's condition. He was able to comfort parents and explain their child's condition in a way they could understand. Families often said he made them feel important.

To Pauly, each and every patient was important. He went out of his way - sometimes literally - to serve his patients. Whitehead and Rice share the story of a critically ill premature baby boy in the NICU some 17 years ago. The boy was on a special high-frequency ventilator, the only one of its kind in the state. The ventilator began to malfunction, and Pauly knew the boy would not survive without it. He located another ventilator in Indianapolis. Despite his fear of flying in small aircrafts, he got on a small plane and flew to retrieve the ventilator. That boy is now a healthy high school student.

PRIVATE PRACTICE

His happiest professional time was also the most brief. Pauly left UK in 2000 to start a private practice with Jim Wilkes, '75. He was able to focus on what he loved most: Helping people and spending time with his

work toward common goals.

"UK has never had a better ambassador."

- Warren Webb, M.D., '74
"He got different

groups of people in the community to set aside their objections and work together with UK to improve care for all of Kentucky's children," Webb says. "Tom succeeded where others had failed. In my opinion, UK has never had a better ambassador."

Nurses Deborah Rice and Vicki Whitehead know all about the teamwork Pauly inspired. Both worked with Pauly in the UK Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, and both agree he was a compassionate leader, a wonderful person, and a talented clinician and teacher. His knowledge and expertise

family. He had more time to spend with his wife, Julie, and their three children, Allison, Mack, and Sam. He had more time to spend outdoors, hiking, camping, and rock climbing, especially at Red River Gorge. He had more face to face time with his little patients.

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"It was in private practice that Tom found the stage to best display his magic," Webb says. "On a daily basis, he transformed himself from Dr. Pauly to 'Tom Terrific,' which was the nickname he earned during his internship. So, what started out as a terrifying trip to the 'healthcare provider' turned into a fun visit with their favorite Doctor Tom. His true gift was his ability to make patients feel as if he were a part of their family."

It was Pauly's warmth that instantly dispelled any fears his patients may have had. He had a way of calming even the most frazzled child or parent. His style as a doctor was casual, Desai says, down to earth. His patients and their parents trusted him. "He didn't put doctors way up here and others down there. I had seen him in the clinic become like one of the kids. He had that magic," Desai says. "That's why he was such a success ... A successful physician is one who can cultivate the trust of patients and family members. A lot of people have to work at that, but it came so naturally to Tom. He cultivated that trust so instantly."

Pauly was trusted, respected, and loved by his patients and colleagues because of who he was, rather than who he pretended to be, Werner says. Patients and their parents could sense his genuineness and his humility. His colleagues could sense the same. "Tom was one of the most honest and humble colleagues I have had," Werner says. "He was a kind and gentle man with a keen sense for the needs and pains and worries of others. I greatly admired Tom as a physician and as a human being. I miss him terribly."

Sarah Clay and her family miss their incredible doctor. Their oldest son, Quin, still asks, "Are we going to see Dr. Pauly?" Clay says her children loved visits to Dr. Pauly and would actually fight to get in the car.

"Every visit, he would immediately go to the child's level, before he even talked to the parent," Clay says. "He showed children they were important. He really listened to them."

Make no mistake, Pauly did not ignore parents. He was always concerned about the

physical and emotional health of parents as well as the children, Clay says.

"He wasn't just the kid's doctor but the

mother's therapist,"Clay says."He made each patient feel like his only patient. He did that for everyone. I don't know how he did it ... There will never be another Dr. Pauly."

Pauly exceeded Clay's expectations at every turn. When her youngest son, Catesby, was only four months old, it was recommended he have tubes placed in his ears. Naturally, Clay was apprehensive. Her son was, after all, so young. She saw Pauly the day before and expressed her concerns, telling him she would feel better if he could be there. Pauly assured her Catesby was in good hands, and there was no need for him to be there.

"The next day, Dr. Pauly showed up at Central Baptist at 5:30 in the morning," Clay says. "He said he couldn't sleep because he kept thinking about my son. He was there, and he took him back to surgery and stayed with him."

"He had that magic."

- Nirmala Desai, M.D.
REMEMBERING

When asked what she wants Tom Pauly to be remembered for, Nirmala Desai's answer is immediate: His warmth. "He exuded warmth. People could relate to him, at any level. He was so approachable. People could talk to him about their problems," Desai says.

Heinrich Werner wants us to remember Pauly's warm smile. "Tom would look in your eyes, and give you this smile, even during his last days," Werner says. "His smile said it all: I know who you are, I care about you, and I am glad to share this moment with you."

How can we honor a man who honored so many with his presence? Desai would like to see the continuation of the Tom Pauly Memorial Lecture in Neonatology, which has

hosted one lecturer thus far. Warren Webb would like to see a forum for discussing differences and solving problems dedicated to Pauly. "This was Tom's special gift to UK, and UK is better for it," Webb says. Sarah Clay would like to see UK's NICU unit dedicated to Pauly, who gave so much of his life to UK.

No matter how his friends, colleagues, and fellow alumni choose to remember and honor Pauly, he will be sorely missed. Desai

says she lost not only a close colleague, but a dear friend.

"Sometimes I still have difficulty believing he is gone," she says. "He was an avid jogger ... I see someone with a bald head jogging or biking, and I have to do a double take and think it might be Tom ... All of our lives have been better to have known him." |

If you are interested in ways to honor Dr. Pauly, please e-mail medalum@uky.edu or call 859.323.5834.

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Remembering our brother, Tom

By Nancy Pauly Brinker

It's difficult to imagine that brilliant, gentle physician who was my brother Tom as a little boy.

Thinking back, there are a few things that stand out. My earliest memories of Tom include his favorite outfit, a pioneer look, topped with a raccoon-skin cap with a long tail at the back like the one Daniel Boone wore. He was never without it. Perfect for a Kentucky boy! We should have known at the time that Tom would have a pioneering spirit - one that served him well later in his medical research.

In his young years, Tom was not into the healthy regime that later became central to his life. He was the eldest of five children, and we younger ones barely got a bite of the junk food that Mom brought home after her Saturday grocery trips. Tom ate it quickly before we could get our hands on it. He could polish off a whole package of Oreo Cookies in an hour while watching Sunday morning cartoons. I remember shopping trips with my mom and the difficulty we had buying Tom his back-to-school clothing. He needed "husky size" pants! So, that athletic body of his was something he really worked on - by nature he would have rather been eating the cookies!

Tom's later love of motorcycles and cars was presaged by a special childhood vehicle. Tom had a little car that he built with my dad. He called it a "jitney." It was his prized possession until the neighborhood bullies threw it into a lake. I remember Tom's frustration, but I don't ever remember him getting mad, except for once - and he was mad at me! Tom loved to build model cars, airplanes, etc. Once after he had completed a rather elaborate ship, I knocked it off his bureau. I was swirling around in some dress-up outfit, and my tulle shawl sank the ship. Tom pinned my elbows to the floor with his knees, and I saw my life pass before my eyes. For those who knew Tom as a gentle giant, this story may be particularly hard to believe.

All of these stories seem rather small, but Tom was a real person. The loving, gracious doctor that he became was the result of a rather simple childhood, occupied with the day to day activities of a little boy growing up in a large, suburban family. Tom, however, was always

dreaming of doing something big. The everyday was not a part of his vocabulary later in his life. When Tom was 18, following a brief stint preparing to be a Marianist brother, he left home for the University of Kentucky and was admitted to medical school after only three years in college. From that moment on, none of us saw Tom as much as we would have liked. He was deeply involved in medicine. When he did take a break, it was always for a bit of adventure. Tom's three brothers are all significantly younger than he, so their memories of his early days are just little snippets, and they all involve adventure.

Tom exposed them all to the great outdoors. He couldn't stand for anyone to relax! He always needed to do something exciting. His days with Oreo Cookies and television were officially over. He organ

ized canoeing, biking, backpacking, camping, hiking, or raft

ing trips. These are all activities that my brothers still enjoy

and share with their own young sons.

My memories of Tom, the adult brother, are extraordinarily special. For me, although he was not physically around, he was simply a strong, gentle presence. I can't count the times that I called him to seek council on my children's illnesses, or simply to talk about life. He was totally non-judgmental, and his love for his family was unconditional.

The introspective man that we all loved also had a silly side, and the right music could get him to bust a few moves on the dance floor. I especially miss the huge grin and hug that I got every time he walked through the door and back into my life.

We all learned so much more about Tom through his friends and colleagues in Lexington who supported and nurtured him through his illness. We learned that our big brother, who we knew as a good and simple little boy, and we thought to be a great man and doctor, was really a magnificent human being.

"Tom, however, was always dreaming of doing something big."

