Lorenz E. Zimmerman (1920 – 2013)

“Ophthalmology has lost a star and ophthalmic pathologists have lost a giant, a mentor and a friend. Dr. Lorenz E. Zimmerman was laid to his rest on Saturday, March 16, 2013.” ... Mark OM Tso, MD. D.Sc., Professor of Ophthalmology and Pathology Wilmer Eye Institute

“In November 1978, Dr. Lorenz Zimmerman visited the Ophthalmic Pathology Laboratory at the Hospital Santo Toribio de Mogrovejo, downtown Lima. His visit encouraged all of us to continue working in Ophthalmic Pathology. This Lab is still a very important part of the Peruvian National Eye Institute. He influenced not only in the ophthalmologists from Peru but from all Latin America with his valuable teachings and human qualities. I will always keep fond memories of him.” ... Francisco Contreras, MD, Founding Director of the Peruvian National Institute

“Dr. Zimmerman was devoted to the training of ophthalmic pathologists in Latin-America. He was a distinguished member of the Pan-American Association of Ophthalmology and help to adjourn the Sociedad Panamericana de Patología Ocular, later renamed Sociedad Panamericana de Patología Ocular “Lorenz E Zimmerman”. We learn and enjoyed his enlighten “Seminars of Ophthalmic Pathology”, directed by Zim and his favorite co-equipper Ramon L. Font, in several countries of South America.” ... Juan Oscar Croxatto, MD, President, Sociedad Panamericana de Patología Ocular “Lorenz E. Zimmerman”

Born in Washington, DC on November 15, 1920, Dr. Zimmerman was educated in the City of Washington, graduating from the George Washington University for both his undergraduate and medical degrees. He served an internship at the DC General Hospital and then completed a general pathology residency at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in 1950. The start of the Korean War coincided with the end of his residency, and Dr. Zimmerman became the pathologist in charge of a field hospital pathology laboratory where he served in Korea until 1952. For this service, he was awarded the Bronze Star and the Legion of Merit.

Upon his return to Washington, D.C. in 1952, Dr. Zimmerman was again stationed on the campus of the Walter Reed Army Medical Center, this time at the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology. This was the turning point in Dr. Zimmerman’s career. Although he had not had specific training in pathology of the eye and ocular adnexa, Dr. Zimmerman eventually became Chairman of the Department of Ophthalmic Pathology in 1954. This was the start of a 52-year stint at the AFIP, during which time; Dr. Zimmerman was a prolific author, lecturer, and teacher.

Dr. Zimmerman was co-author of the original Hogan and Zimmerman Ophthalmic Pathology text, first published in 1962. He contributed to subsequent editions, and the latest, Spencer’s Ophthalmic
Pathology, is now 4 volumes. He has also authored over 300 articles in peer-reviewed journals, many of which are landmark contributions. He has delivered over 80 named lectureships including the 1960 Jackson Memorial Lecture. The American Academy of Ophthalmology has previously honored Dr. Zimmerman with the creation of the Lorenz E. Zimmerman lecture, given at the Annual Meeting. He was a founding member of the Verhoeff Society for Ophthalmic Pathology; in 1998, to honor Dr. Zimmerman’s contributions, the Society voted to change the name to the Verhoeff-Zimmerman Society.

Recognized as the founder of modern ophthalmic pathology, Dr. Zimmerman has dedicated his life to the study of the pathologic basis of ocular disease. As a scientist, investigator, writer, but most significantly as a teacher, no physician has had a greater impact on ophthalmic pathology. Dr. Zimmerman has trained over 150 fellows in the field of ophthalmic pathology, who are now located worldwide.

Organizations from all ophthalmic sub-specialties have honored Dr. Zimmerman. He has been the recipient of numerous medals including The Ernst Jung Prize for Medicine, the Helen Keller Prize for Vision Research, the Pisart award, the Donders Medal of the Netherlands, and he is the only non-ophthalmologist to receive the Lucien Howe Medal of the American Ophthalmologic Society. He was also voted by his peers to be one of the 20th century’s ten most influential ophthalmologists. Dr. Zimmerman holds an honorary degree from the University of Illinois.

Despite all of these honors, Dr. Zimmerman remained an unassuming, modest, and unpretentious individual. When asked about his accomplishments, Dr. Zimmerman stated that his greatest fortune was to be able to interact with so many of the young, brilliant and talented physicians and scientists over the years. Students of Dr. Zimmerman admire him for his honesty, in his scientific endeavors, in what he demanded of his students, and in his personal life. Through his work, Dr. Zimmerman was able to make seminal contributions to the practice of ophthalmology including the recognition of various entities causing leukocoria and the management of ocular melanoma, but his family remained his top priority.

Dr. Zimmerman is survived by his wife, Stasch, their 6 children, 14 grandchildren, and 9 great-grandchildren.

(http://www.aao.org/about/awards/laureate/zimmerman.cfm)