Solomon Alexander Kaplan, MD, one of the original founding members of the Lawson Wilkins Pediatric Endocrine Society, died on January 2, 2017, at the age of 92 (Fig. 1). Sol’s record as a clinician, teacher, researcher, mentor to trainees, and service to the field of pediatric endocrinology was accomplished over an amazing span of more than 60 years. Sol was born in Johannesburg, South Africa in 1924. He graduated from the University of Witwatersrand School of Medicine in 1945 and completed his internship at the Johannesburg General Hospital (1946–1947) and residency at the Transvaal Memorial Children’s Hospital (1947–1948). In 1949, Sol was awarded a Mead Johnson Fellowship under the auspices of the Society for Pediatric Research. Sol (along with his brother, Sam Kaplan) came to the Children’s Hospital of Cincinnati, where he was a Research Fellow and Instructor in Pediatrics, studying with Drs. George Guest and Samuel Rapoport. In 1953, he was appointed as Assistant Professor at the State University of New York (SUNY) in Brooklyn. In 1954, he began 2 years of active duty in the U.S. Naval Reserve at the Naval Medical Research Institute Bethesda. Sol returned to SUNY in 1956 and was recruited to the Children’s Hospital Los Angeles (CHLA) in 1959 as Associate Professor at the University of Southern California. He held the positions of Chief of Endocrinology and Director of Laboratories at CHLA until he was recruited to the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) School of Medicine in 1968 at the rank of Professor, where he was Chief of the Division of Pediatric Endocrinology for the next 21 years.

Sol began his research career in 1949, carrying out basic, translational, and clinical research addressing a multitude of questions. As a Research Fellow at the Children’s Hospital of Cincinnati, early research focused on the
physiology of fluid and electrolyte balance and renal function, culminating in one of the first reports of the clinical features and inheritance of nephrogenic diabetes insipidus (DI) in 1959. Seventeen years later in 1976, his group at UCLA was one of the first to report on the effectiveness of DDAVP treatment in central DI, followed, in 1981, by a report of the use of DDAVP in the differential diagnosis of DI. Following the discovery of “sulfation factor” (insulin-like growth factor-I or IGF-I) in 1963, Maurice Kogut and Sol reported on its use as a bioassay for growth hormone in children with growth retardation, now a standard practice employed by all pediatric endocrinologists. In 1969, a study of growth hormone (GH) pharmacokinetics carried out by Doug Frasier and Sol contributed to calculations of the optimal dosing of GH in the treatment of GH-deficient children. From 1971 until 1985, Sol was Director of the UCLA General Clinical Research Center. In 1971, Barbara Lippe and Sol were among the first to investigate and report on the diagnostic utility of GH stimulation tests in children, including the impact of estrogen priming and the application of various secretagogues in assessing both GH and pituitary-adrenal function. The thyroid gland was not neglected; in 1965, PJ Collipp and Sol were among the first to report an improvement in intelligence quotient in children with congenital hypothyroidism treated with thyroid hormone. In the late 1970s on into the 1980s, the UCLA group undertook a series of clinical studies describing treatment, laboratory monitoring, and prognosis in children with Graves’ disease, culminating in the seminal description by Barbara and Sol of a 25% remission rate every 2 years in children with Graves’ disease treated with antithyroid drugs.

During his illustrious career, Sol received several RO1 awards from the NIH to study mechanisms of hormone action. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Sol and co-workers, including Mitch Geffner, turned their attention to the physiology and dysregulation of insulin and the insulin receptor in several disorders, including type 1 diabetes, cystic fibrosis, and leprechaunism. This work was extended to the GH receptor, when, in 1980, David Golde and Sol reported that patients with Laron dwarfism were unresponsive to GH. In 1987, Mitch and Sol took the next step, demonstrating that tissues from Laron dwarfs were responsive to IGF-I. Sol’s career-long interest in GH, growth factors, and growth came full circle with his 2007 publication of “The Somatomedin Hypothesis: 50 Years Later” in the Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism, written at the age of 81 years! As is apparent, Sol did not focus on a single research area; rather, he chose to investigate issues of emerging significance. Sol’s career follows the Wilkins tradition, which taught that investigations of unique patients led to the most important scientific findings.

Sol was a member of the Review Panel for Drug Efficacy for the National Academy of Sciences from 1967 to 1972. He served two terms on NIH Study Sections and on several NIH ad hoc review committees. Sol’s record of service to pediatric endocrinology includes serving on the Pediatric Endocrinology Sub-board of the American Board of Pediatrics for 3 years (1984–1987) and then as Chair of the Sub-board for another 4 years (1987–1991). He served on the editorial boards of many scientific journals including the American Journal of Diseases of Children (now the Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine) and the Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism. Importantly, Sol served as the guest editor (and an author) for an issue of Pediatric Clinics of North America (PCNA) devoted to Pediatric Endocrinology published in 1979, and as sole editor (and an author) of the classic text “Clinical Pediatric and Adolescent Endocrinology” (1st edition 1982 and 2nd edition 1990). The PCNA issue and Sol’s text were essentially the first to cover the field of pediatric endocrinology since Wilkins’ classic text and, at that time, served as “the” resource for practicing pediatric endocrinologists.

Sol was an outstanding teacher; he was the recipient of the Robert Neerhout Housestaff Teaching Award in 1975 and the prestigious Sherman Mellinkoff Faculty Award of the UCLA School of Medicine in 1988. Sol trained 26 fellows over a 25-year span as Program Director and Division Chief. Sol’s legacy is embodied by the fact that seven of his former fellows have gone on to head divisions of pediatric endocrinology and three have served as presidents of LWPES. Sol’s most compelling memories come from the fellows he trained. “For me, it was his incredible grace that I remember the most” (Alan Cortez). “Dr. Kaplan was a huge influence because of his humanism” (Anna Haddal). “For me his smile will be something I will never forget – and while what he taught me and so many others are things we think we won’t forget, what we remember has to be the smile” (Barbara Lippe, second fellow at UCLA). “His mentoring reverberates for all of us decades after fellowship ended” (Norman Lavin, third fellow at UCLA). Sol’s devoted wife, Marie, preceded him in death last year. Sol was a mentor and friend of all he came into contact with over his lifetime and his presence will be sorely missed.

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