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Obituary

Farewell pioneer[☆]

Adios pionero

On January 3rd, 2016, the life of a pioneer of anesthesia in Colombia, Dr. Roberto Nel Peláez, came to an end. With a degree in Medicine from the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, he ended up working in the field of anesthesia due to his sense of responsibility.

An unfortunate emergency intervention on a soldier, in which he had to participate as an anesthetist, aroused in him a desire to learn this profession. He received his academic training in the San Juan de Dios Hospital, in Bogotá, finishing in 1954. With this training, he moved to the city of Cali where he was a pioneer in the transition from the anesthesia administered by nuns to the professionalization of anesthesia. With his work and dedication, he contributed to the development of some of the most important clinics of the region.

His link to university life dates back to the beginnings of the Hospital Universitario del Valle, where he administrated anesthesia for the first time in a heart surgery carried out in the institution. He also participated as a professor, training future anesthesiologists for several decades, leaving a mark in these generations with his advice, always focused on patient safety.

In addition to the most important institutions of the region, such as the Centro Médico Imbanaco and the Hospital Universitario del Valle, Dr. Roberto Nel witnessed the opening and was a pioneer of the Sociedad de Anestesiología del Valle del Cauca.

The last activity in which Dr. Peláez shared some of his lessons and experiences with younger anesthesiologists was in a conversation with anesthesiology residents from Universidad del Valle in 2013. This valuable moment was registered and recorded on video by the Sociedad Colombiana de Anestesiología y Reanimación (S.C.A.R.E.). In this video, stories, both entertaining and telling of the reality of the first days of anesthesiology in Colombia, can be heard. In one of those stories,

Dr. Roberto Nel tell us how he was located to attend to an emergency while he was enjoying a film in a movie theater with his wife. The whole projection was stopped and the lights were turned on, to the confusion of the entire audience.

There are still valuable witnesses of the birth of anesthesiology in Colombia among us. They are the ones that the S.C.A.R.E. has immortalized in its book "Pioneros e ilustres" (The Pioneers and The Distinguished). Let this be a call for recent generations to glimpse this not-so-ancient history and to enjoy the privilege of hearing it first hand from the voices of the pioneers that are still among us throughout the country, because they gave us the philosophy that frames our profession, this vocation to serve, of unity and leadership that we have today as a legacy and a greater heritage.

Farewell, pioneer. Thank you for your legacy. Rest in peace.

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