

Leroy K. Young

April 25, 1914 — March 2, 2005

Leroy K. Young, M.D., a 45-year resident of Ithaca and Professor, University Health Services, died March 2, 2005 at age 90. Leroy was born in Philadelphia on April 25, 1914. When he entered the University of Pennsylvania in 1931, he was the first Chinese-American from Philadelphia's Chinatown to attend college. After graduating with his B.S. degree in 1934, Leroy enrolled in the University of Pennsylvania Medical School, receiving his M.D. degree there in 1938. He then completed a residency at the Pennsylvania Hospital in Philadelphia, specializing in Internal Medicine.

Leroy took a trip to California in the summer of 1938 to further his studies in Chinese. While visiting friends in Oakland, he met Ruth Chue, whom he subsequently married in April 1942. Leroy and Ruth then moved to Portland, Oregon where Leroy worked for the FBI during World War II. His lifelong interest in foreign languages gave him unique skills in the field of crypto-analysis, and he became a member of the small team that successfully decoded an intercepted message, leading directly to the aerial interception of Admiral Yamamoto over the Solomon Sea in April 1943.

Leroy subsequently joined the U.S. Public Health Service and after three years at USPHS regional headquarters in Savannah, Georgia, he was sent in March 1946 on a "three month" temporary duty assignment to Manila as a USPHS commissioned officer to provide consulting services to the Philippine government in tuberculosis control. The three months lasted for several years and he eventually served as Chief of the Tuberculosis Control Division and was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Army.

In 1951, Leroy established a private practice in Manila, providing medical care to U.S. and Allied citizens, serving the U.S. Embassy and the World Health Organization's Western Pacific Headquarters. On the side, he and Ruth formed the Bach Society of the Philippines and sponsored numerous concerts and performances during their time there.

In 1957, Leroy spent a year in Ithaca, eventually earning his M.B.A. degree in the first graduating class of the Sloan Institute of Hospital Administration in Cornell's School for Business and Public Administration. He returned to the Philippines in 1958 to be the first hospital administrator for St. Luke's Hospital in Quezon City, a brand new state-of-the-art complex sponsored by the Episcopal Church.

In 1961, Leroy received a joint appointment at Cornell University to teach Hospital Administration at Cornell's Business School, and to provide health care to students at the Gannett Clinic. In the mid 1960s, he assumed a full-time position as Assistant Professor of Clinical and Preventive Medicine in Cornell's Department of University Health Services, serving there until his retirement as Professor Emeritus in 1979.

Leroy received numerous awards and honors during his long career as a medical professional and was a long-time member of the Tompkins County Medical Society. In 1995, he was honored as an Outstanding Asian-American with a citation from the Pennsylvania House of Representatives acknowledging "his outstanding lifetime achievements and for setting a standard of excellence in his professional and government service."

Throughout his lifetime, Leroy shared his passion for medicine, travel, opera, classical music, photography, literature and foreign languages with friends, relatives, patients, and colleagues. He had a photographic memory, enabling him to speak and read eleven languages, including French, Swedish, German, Hebrew, Latin, Japanese, Mandarin and Cantonese. Leroy will be remembered for his love and respect for life, which was evidenced by his devotion in caring for his patients, his clever wit in capturing the moment, and his charming ability to engage all who came in contact with him.

Kathleen Crown, James Macmillan, Allyn B. Ley