



Samuel Alan Yousem MD (born October 17, 1956, died August 17, 2021)

Sam Yousem, age 64, passed away on August 17, 2021, with his three children, brother and mother by his side after a long battle with an aggressive lymphoma, diagnosed in May of 2020.

His tumor was resistant to every therapy that was tried, including chemotherapy, radiotherapy, immunotherapy and CAR-T therapy. He endured multiple courses of treatment at University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC) and the NIH; his tumor proved resistant to all efforts to defeat it.

He went through all of this while steadfastly curious, interested and involved in the lives of friends and family. Tom Colby, his longtime friend and peer in pulmonary pathology, visited him on the last day of his life. Sam apologized to Tom for being tired and not sitting up to make conversation. That was Sam, the Sam we all knew!

Sam's Early Life

Sam was born in Baltimore Maryland to Herbert Leonard Yousem, an OB-GYN physician at Sinai Hospital of Baltimore, and Stella Platnik Yousem, a MSW social worker who worked at Jewish Family Services. Dr. Herbert Yousem was stationed in Chinon France for military obligation, so Sam moved to France for ages 1-3 before returning to Baltimore City where he was educated. He went to Cross Country Elementary School (where he was captain of the Safety Guard in charge of safely escorting children across the streets), Pimlico Junior high (where he did 3 grades in 2 years), and then moving to Baltimore County where he graduated from Pikesville Senior High in 1973 at 16 years of age (member and student coach of the tennis team and Honor Society member).

He matriculated at Duke University in 1973, graduating Phi Beta Kappa and Summa Cum Laude in 1977. He attended the University of Maryland Medical School, graduating Alpha Omega Alpha and Magna Cum Laude in 1981. Younger brother David would earn his medical degree at

the University of Michigan in 1983. His mother, Stella, was heard to say of her medical family in 1994 that, “the family that works together stays together.”

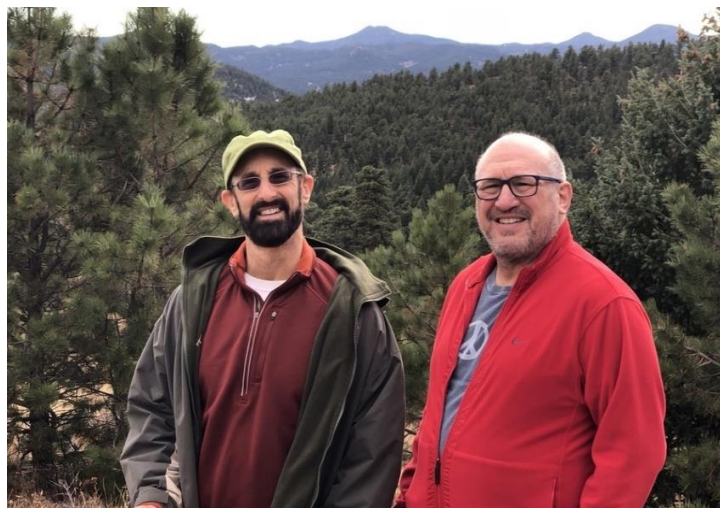
From early in his life, Sam was on the GO and definitely on the fast track. His ambition, intensity and passion contributed to his extreme myopia. A colleague once asked him, “Why are you wearing safety glasses?” He was passionate and competitive in everything he did, and he hated losing. In high school, he won a tennis tournament in Ocean City, Maryland. On a different occasion he won a hot dog eating contest.

Sam's youth was punctuated by many obligations including family chores required to maintain the family's home on six acres of land with a stream and large pond. Sam was an avid butterfly enthusiast, gardener, tennis player (with his mom as a big advocate), played catcher in Little League, and played the clarinet for music lessons. Sam's youth was also marked by annual fishing trips to Florida with his father who enjoyed deep sea fishing and many local trips with his dad to Seligman's pond (bluegills and perch) as well as on chartered boats in the Chesapeake Bay (for Rockfish and Blues).

Sam the son and brother



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Sam the Pathologist



During his junior and senior years in medical school, Sam initially applied to ophthalmology residency programs and was accepted to one in an early residency match. However, he had a change of heart and switched to pathology. He was a classmate and a good friend of Dr. Lawrence Weiss who became a premier hematopathologist. The pathology chair at the University of Maryland was ecstatic when he found that the top medical students in graduating class of 1981 were going into pathology, as are we all.

Sam completed anatomic pathology training at Stanford university from 1981 to 1985. He was so ambitious that he arrived at Stanford a few weeks before the start of his residency program and read Rosai's Surgical Pathology textbook in its entirety BEFORE the start of his program. To him this was a given, and he often wondered why other residents would not do the same. To Sam, the static images on glass slides represented a living being and he had the ability to provide insightful stories regarding the pathologic process. Not many have this gift. While Sam is best known as a pulmonary pathologist, many do not realize that he was an excellent general pathologist. You could show him anything and he would have a very solid understanding of the process. . Years later in reflecting on Sam's unique ability to do this, mentee and colleague Humberto Trejo Bittar said that he "made the most complex diagnoses a story that was easy to recall and explain to others. It was his passion and dedication to teach pathology that got me into becoming an educator myself." He certainly came from the Juan Rosai school of pathology.

It was at Stanford that Sam developed his interest in pulmonary pathology while working with Charles Carrington, one of the giants of pulmonary pathology at that time. He published about a dozen papers in peer-reviewed journals during his time at Stanford, including the first detailed descriptions of obliterative bronchiolitis (OB) following lung transplantation. (*Anecdote from that time: he did not recognize his first case of OB; Charles Carrington had to point it out.*)

Sam then moved to the Pulmonary division at the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology (AFIP) where he remained from 1985 to 1987. He was very prolific, publishing well over 30 peer-reviewed publications during this period. (*Anecdote from that time. One had to be efficient to have so many publications and one of Sam's ploys was to give the draft to his boss with a note that said something like "If I don't hear any comments back by __# weeks I will submit the manuscript."*)

Sam was recruited to the University of Pittsburgh in 1987 where he remained for the rest of his career. He started as an assistant professor but quickly moved up the ranks to become Professor with tenure, the Leon Barnes Professor of Pathology, and Executive Vice Chair of Anatomic Pathology, positions which he held until 2020. He held a number of other leadership roles including Residency Director. His longtime Chair and colleague, George Michalopoulos, wrote, "I always knew that I had made the right decision by appointing Sam Yousem as the Executive Vice Chair for Anatomic Pathology, around 1997. The benefits of his legacy will be with us for a very long time to come."

Sam receiving an award



Sam served in several important administrative roles over the course of his career, including as residency program director from 1992 to 1998. All residents and fellows in late 1990s were well aware of Sam's approach to cases as "fast and furious". In another words, if trainees "messed up" the case – for example forgetting to order the stains or submitting inadequate sections – it was crucial to find a moment to deliver this message to "the Boss" (as he was called), otherwise you should be ready to get an unedited assessment of your future as a pathologist. There was also a little catch. Friday after 4PM trainees and others could hear the Lion King soundtrack, particularly "Hakuna Matata" (No trouble), coming from his office. It was a perfect time to knock. It was not clear why, after so many years, Hakuna Matata had such a positive impact on him. ABBA's best hits were another favorite, but the outcome was more variable. Dr. Sanja Dacic, speaking on behalf of all trainees, said it was a rare privilege to learn thoracic pathology from the Boss, with or without Hakuna Matata.

Professionally Sam was always curious, innovative, and forward thinking. While Sam was a generalist, par excellence, he realized that the time for a general pathologist at an academic center was limited. In 2001, as Vice Chair, he took the risk of converting the UPMC Anatomic Pathology Division into an organ-based Center of Excellence subspecialty system. UPMC was one of the first institutions in the country to convert to the subspecialty system. Sam was a strong advocate of new techniques in pathology such as molecular diagnostics, FISH, etc. He also was an innovator in peer review and in the incipient stages of telepathology. He established and nurtured relations across many American and foreign institutions because of his novel ideas across the breadth of pathology administration. He assembled the faculty and technical personnel for a section of anatomic pathology that could serve as a model for the 21st-century.

Sam's forward thinking can be seen in his curriculum vitae which includes early descriptions of many entities that we now take for granted. Some of these include early descriptions of light chain disease in the lung, myoepithelioma of the lung, alveolar adenoma, bronchiolocentric interstitial pneumonia, respiratory bronchiolitis associated interstitial lung disease, intravascular lymphomatosis, HPV in lung cancer, clonality in pulmonary Langerhans cell histiocytosis, genetic studies of pulmonary IMTs, and many others.

Sam is best known in the lung pathology world as one of the prime movers in the description of the pathology of lung transplantation and biopsy surveillance for rejection. He literally wrote the book in this area (as well 114 citations in PubMed). He trained visitors from around the world, in person and with his extensive teaching collection. As an internationally renowned lung pathologist at the top of his field he was asked to give talks all over the world. Prior to PowerPoint this was done using carousels loaded with 2 x 2" Kodachrome slides. Ever the problem solver, Sam was very proud of his traveling carousel holder: a large bag (about 18" by 12" by 12") that held six carousels! He could load his carousels at home or in the office and carry them onto the plane. He traveled lighter with the advent of digital presentations and thumb drives.



Sam the Person

Sam's professional curiosity carried into his personal life. He loved traveling. Pittsburgh winters could be long and cold for Sam. On a trip to Arizona and Sedona he insisted on wearing shorts even though it was barely 50°! Sam was well-read and had opinions on many topics. He agreed with some and not with others. He was to-the-point and did not mince words and was brutally honest. He enjoyed art and was a perpetual student of many things. Despite his battle with lymphoma he continued taking online courses on a variety of non-medical topics. He was infatuated with butterflies since childhood and knew more than most about dragonflies, cherry blossoms, current events, history, and the professional sports scene in Pittsburgh.

The most important thing in Sam's life, rich as it was in the professional arena, was his family and his children. He is survived by his daughters Bailey and Emilie, his son Jack, his brother David (Kelly), his mother Stella, and his extended family. Fondest memories of Sam include the joy with which he happily prepared a meal for whichever of his children was visiting. At his funeral, daughter Bailey reminded others that Sam was not defined by his lymphoma. She asked that we remember him this way.

“My Dad wasn't lymphoma.

He was butterflies and frogs.

He was both the Stones and the Beatles.

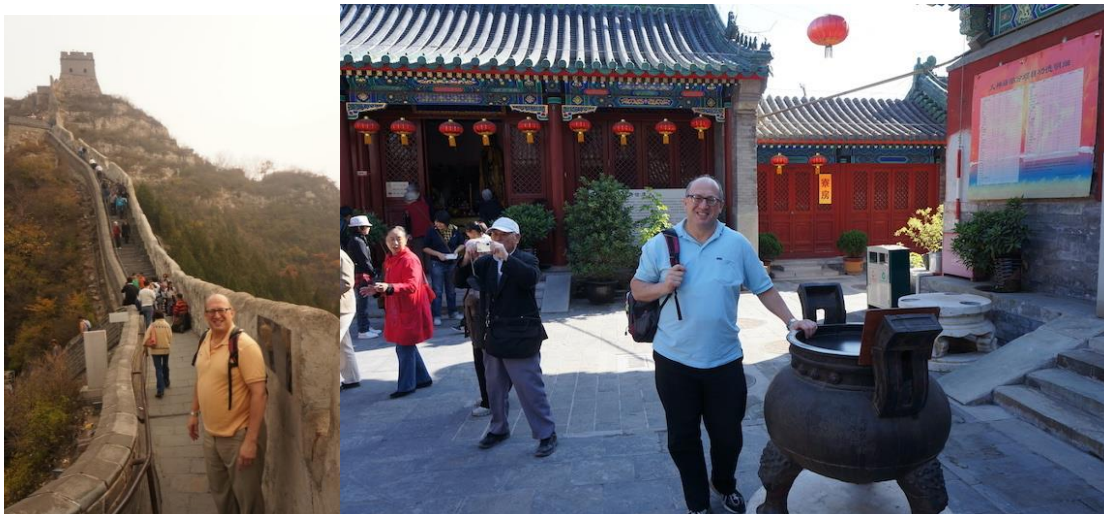
He was his rugby shirts and homemade cutoff Navy jeans.

He was Pittsburgh's bridges, Palo Alto's mountains, and, of course, the family's home base of Baltimore.

He was ice cream after a long day's hike.
He was an office in a house full of tribal masks and magical pieces of artwork.
He was friendly pranks and the best bedtime stories.
He was the blackest black coffee in the morning, and the occasional Dogfish Head Seasonal at night.
He was the perennial plots in our childhood garden.
He was love and respect for his parents, and pride in his brother.
He was my high school and college diplomas.
He was the good I see in myself."

Sam at home; mom, his children; Sam the chef; Sam the traveler





Comments/Recollections from Friends, Colleagues, and Family (Note: Some of this text included above)

David Yousem, Sam's brother

Sam was all in with family. He was the driving force around the annual extended family gatherings in Rehoboth Beach Delaware (even though he secretly admitted he hated the beach). Sam would drive the many Yousem Children and cousins to the Jungle Jim River Safari Water Park and get the most giggles in the world from children he would launch into the deep water from his strong shoulders and arms. One year he bought 25 "Yousem-mania" T-shirts to celebrate our summer vacation together -- a trip which was punctuated by Sam besting the family in miniature golf at the Putt Putt course. I have vivid happy memories of my massive older brother getting into kid's go-carts at the Midway Speedway Park on Route 1 in Delaware and trying to run his pre-teen children off the road to get to the finish line. Sam worked hard and played hard but in his heart he was always a softie.

George Michalopoulos:

I always knew that I had made the right decision by appointing Sam Yousem as the Executive Vice Chair for Anatomic Pathology, around 1997. This was, and continues to be, a time of massive intellectual expansion of Anatomic Pathology, as research in tissue biology has become the best means for determining pathogenesis of every disease, and the finding of that research created massive opportunities for diagnostics and therapeutics. In addition to expanding the depth and scope of our department, he and I worked together to make the academic center a team of deeply subspecialized pathologists, so that we would provide the best diagnosis not

only for our immediate hospitals, but also for all the 30-some community hospitals and centers owned by UPMC. By handling all their difficult cases in the academic center, we ensured that any physician in any UPMC community hospital had all the benefits of in-depth diagnostics of the academic center.

In the years that followed, Sam and I worked closely together towards maintaining a high caliber of faculty, both in the academic and the community hospitals.

I will miss Sam as a friend and partner. Even though he is gone, the benefits of his legacy will be with us, for a very long time to come.

Clayton Wiley

While Sam and I worked together closely in anatomic pathology, I would like to focus my comments on our personal interactions. About 20 years ago Sam moved his family to Fox Chapel to a home that is a literal stone's throw from my family's home. Since Sam's home was on top of the ridge and mine in the valley, it was our inside joke that Sam always looked down on me. Nevertheless, both my wife Arlene and I shared Sam and Penny's curiosity of world cultures and particularly cuisines. This naturally led us to attempt to quench our collective appetites through world travel together. Our two families enjoyed vacationing with Sam and his family in Florida and then with just the 2 couples on a Portugal adventure. It was a true pleasure to explore new places with a naturally curious person like Sam.

Over the past decade, many of my interactions with Sam centered around our men's book club. A diverse group of guys sharing each other's interest in the world's literature. Sam always provided his independent and frequently "contrarian" (Sam's word) perspective. He was a challenging friend to all of us and that is the best type of friend, someone who will listen to you and freely exchange points of agreement and disagreement. We already miss him.

Humberto E. Trejo Bittar: Dr. Yousem the teacher

I remember vividly the first time I signed out with Dr. Yousem. I was most impressed by his attention to normal histology and how calmly he answered questions. It felt like he was reading to me the slide and he was a great storyteller. Dr. Yousem loved signing out with his trainees, not matter how busy he was, he wouldn't stop until things were clear to everybody. He made the most complex diagnoses a story that was easy to recall and explain to others. It was his passion and dedication to teach pathology that got me into becoming an educator myself.

Being Dr. Yousem one of the most prestigious thoracic pathologists in the world, and we can all recognize that he published at least one research article regarding each of the most important lung diseases, he was very humble about it. He would never make anybody feel embarrassed about not knowing a histologic feature and he would never ask trainees questions until they didn't know the answer. In one of my first cases with him (and I was trying to impress him as I wanted to become a thoracic pathologist), I completely missed diffuse alveolar septal amyloidosis. He paged me to his office, and he walked me through the case, again being the storyteller he was, until I realized my mistake. While I was terrified about having disappointed

him, he said “I am sorry Humberto that I didn’t go over things enough with so you wouldn’t miss it”. That was in essence Dr. Yousem. I feel extremely thankful for the countless hours I got to spend with him while at UPMC, as resident, fellow and faculty. Teachers like him are not easy to come by.

Tom Colby

Sam Yousem: no better friend AND colleague!

Jeff Myers

In the last week of Sam’s life, Eileen and I went to see him. Twenty-seven years ago we were present at his wedding; later that same year he was present at ours. The first night we saw him in the hospital to which he had returned for palliative care, and the second night at his apartment for dinner. He insisted that our visit include dinner. He selected takeout Thai food with care, after grilling us in advance about culinary preferences filtered against available options. On both occasions he was most interested in what we were doing while in Pittsburgh, saying that typically when he hosts visitors, he likes to drive them around and show them his favorite places. He called to make sure that we knew of his favorite bakery that served delicious French pastries and said he had made some calls only to be disappointed that he could not get us tickets for one of his favorite tours. He made clear that The Warhol was a must-see for anyone visiting Pittsburgh and thought a trip to the ballpark would be worthwhile despite the Pirates losing season. He speculated that three innings, including a hot dog and a beer, would be sufficient to appreciate the experience.

He did all of this while dying – and living – in the company of family and friends, steadfastly curious about their lives while paying little attention to his own. A week later Tom Colby arrived from Arizona and spent time with Sam and his brother David. Sam was too weak to speak or sit; Tom held his hand as Sam periodically roused himself to apologize for not being a better host. After his visit, Tom called to say that the end was near. Sam died that night with his family around him.

Sam was and is the sort of friend and colleague hard to describe, and impossible to replace. In reflecting about his journey as friend and patient, it seems to me he taught me far more about life than he did the lungs. Truth is he taught me plenty about both.

Life lessons I learned from Sam

- When someone offers friendship, offer friendship in return.
- The rewards of academic life have little to do with AAMC benchmarks, and everything to do with the relationships and opportunities that we are privileged to nurture and maintain.
- Caring for patients, their families, and their providers with kindness is what healthcare is all about. Healthcare is at its best when caring and kindness also extend to those with whom we work as well as those with whom we live our lives.
- Never miss an opportunity to tell someone what they mean to you. And when they need you, hold their hand.
- Hope matters, no matter how improbable it may seem to those who are well.

- We mostly tell stories of patients whose outcomes are cause for victory celebrations and pride. Those who bravely confront impossible odds and cling to hope, only to succumb to the incurable diseases for which we still have no answers, are victors too and worthy of our praise and celebration.
- Life is short.
- Be curious.
- Butterflies, dragonflies, and cherry blossoms are more interesting than you think.

Acknowledgments

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