



Association of Women Surgeons

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Association of Women Surgeons March 2012

We are saddened by the loss of one of our own members. **Kimberly Ephgrave MD, FACS** was a wife and mom, and a friend to many within our organization. (November 9, 1956 – March 6, 2012)



During Kim's year as AWS President, she led the organization in a number of successful endeavors.

- Kim chaired a committee that drafted the AWS Code of Conduct, which was published in collaboration with the ACS. The Association of Organ Procurement Organizations has endorsed this as the standard of practice for transplant surgeons.
- Work began on the development of maternity leave guidelines for residents and for practicing surgeons.
- The nomination and selection of Dr. Barbara Barlow as the second winner of the Alma Dea Morani Renaissance Woman Award – following Dr. Morani, who was the first recipient.
- The second edition publication of the *AWS Pocket Mentor*.
- Other notable records
 - Membership reached 1,400
 - 17 Applications were received for the Visiting Professor Program
 - 36 Grant Applications were received
- Our Governor, Peggy Kemeny, received a seat on the ACS Committee on Women's Issues. (now WiSC)

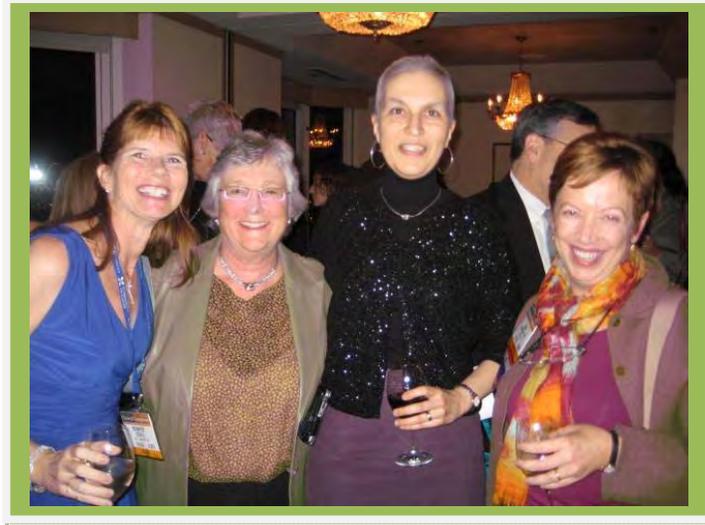
Kim was a member of AWS from 1990 to the present. During those 22 years she touched so many lives. Here are a few comments from some of the AWS members who knew her well:

- I remember coming on the Council and being very intimidated by how cool, calm and collected Kim was. I thought she was one of the most elegant people I had ever met. She ran a very effective meeting and always seemed to cut through the “hoo-ha” and get to the point. I remember she accomplished what I thought was a great deal at the time. Later I found out about her love for students and her sense of humor. She certainly rose to the occasion of her illness, and used her situation to take the opportunity to show us all the depths of courage and compassion in the human heart. We were all gifted by her blog and musings during her illness. It is a rare opportunity for people dying to be able to openly look back and share their thoughts on their lives and say goodbye. I, for one, am very grateful to her.

Betsy Tuttle-Newhall MD, FACS

- Kim always saw to the heart of things. She was focused like a laser-beam on what was important and getting it done. The most vivid memory I have of her was a lunch we shared years ago in San Francisco. We realized that we both had mothers who had played a traditional role in the home. But Kim’s mother, as had mine, had let her know that she felt stifled, bored. That honesty was a gift that made Kim much more comfortable with some of the choices we had made in life for ourselves.

Margaret Dunn MD, FACS



Leigh Neumayer, Peggy Kemeny, Kim Ephgrave and Margaret Dunn at the AWS 2009 Awards Dinner where Kim was presented the Olga Jonasson Distinguished Member Award

- I got to know Kim more through my involvement in ASE as a resident, then fellow, then junior faculty member with an interest in surgical education. She was always incredibly kind and encouraging of me. Both from my knowledge of her in those days, as well as following her illness, I would describe Kim simply using the word “grace.” It was the character that always imbued her interactions that I saw with others, and it was what shined through as she reinvented herself and created a rich life after her diagnosis. While I’m mostly going to miss the lady who wrote them, I’ll definitely miss her blog tales of Spanish class, art class and working at the clinic in Iowa City.

Amalia Cochran MD, FACS

- Kim’s writing ability was incredible – she was so facile with the English language. Both her professional documents and more creative personal musings oozed talent. Had she not been drawn to a career teaching and helping people by curing their diseases, she could have found success writing professionally. While her professionalism and astute leadership abilities were always on display publically, I cannot help but think her written communications skills were her secret weapon.

Nancy Gantt MD, FACS

- “Courageous” is the word that comes to mind when thinking of Kim. She exhibited courage in her selection of surgery as a career, her role in AWS, her steadfast support for the things and people she believed in and finally her battle with cancer. Sharing her journey with this disease while continuing her life as if it were going to last forever is the most courageous thing I have ever known anyone to do. She once again set an example for all of us and taught us an invaluable lesson.

Pat Numann MD, FACS

- Kim was amazing and I am awed by her courage and her family’s support.

Christine Laronga MD, FACS

- I have thought so much of Kim ever since I met her long ago. She was straightforward and totally convincing in her positive approach to everything; always dependably honest and without guile. For me she personified what I love most about the American Midwest. I lived in Minnesota for a long time. It's not exciting like San Francisco and New York, but it is possible to feel at home there as I never have anywhere else. That's how Kim was. I have always felt comfortable around her, confident of her intelligence and good will. What she did after being diagnosed with lung cancer is absolutely typical; she turned in multiple creative directions and shared with us all. Knowing Kim was a gift.

Susan Kaiser MD, FACS

- Kim was in her third year at the VAMC when I was the chief resident. One day she didn't show up for rounds. I called her to find her sleepy and disoriented. "Where are you?" I asked. And calm as always she replied, "Well, I really don't know." Not the typical answer one would expect, but that was Kim; honest and to the point. I will miss her and the example she set for all of us.

Mary McCarthy MD, FACS



In 2009 Kim is seated with three other AWS Past Presidents:

Mary McCarthy, Hilary Sanfey and Peggy Kemeny

- I remember a very interesting AWS Council Meeting a number of years ago when a representative from another organization came to visit us and to share his insights as they pertained to a closer working relationship between our two associations. Kim, who was the immediate past president, was sitting beside me when he made an extremely sexist comment. Kim, normally so cool, calm and collected jumped up out of her chair and let him have it. For one minute we all thought she might climb across the table and do bodily harm. We're all still smiling.

Hilary Sanfey MB, BCh, MHPE, FACS

- I remember running into Kim at a meeting some time after she was diagnosed. I casually mentioned that I liked her hair short. She looked at me somewhat perplexed and then realized I had no idea. I honestly thought she just got her hair cut short! She just smiled. She taught me so much about humility and strength through her journey. Her appreciation for life and living was truly inspirational.

Rosemary Kozar MD, PhD, FACS

- I always think of Kim as being the stable force when she was on the AWS Council. She seemed to be on such an even keel, always a go-to person as far as I was concerned. I remember she used to have a lab, teach, and do surgery, so she was one of the original triple threats, and was a mother as well. I was in awe of her ability to do all that and stay completely sane. She will always represent a real force in AWS.

Peggy Kemeny MD, FACS

- I remember Kim as always level-headed and pragmatic in deliberations. When others were stubbornly addicted to their ideas, or lost their temper, Kim managed to stay distanced and reasonable. Kim showed an indomitable grace under incomprehensible pressure. She showed us how to live, what is important to all of us and how to end our lives on earth. She attacked and won against issues most of us cannot discuss. As always, Kim led quietly, competently and completely. I will miss her greatly, but she will always be with us.

Linda Phillips MD, FACS

- Kim and I met in the very early days of AWS. While we never worked together as physicians or surgeons, I have always felt very close to Kim. We shared a room in Chicago when a number of AWS leaders and members met to develop our mission statement and our first long range goal setting for the organization. We stayed up half the night just talking and sharing experiences about our lives as women surgeons, starting families, dealing with challenging colleagues and so forth. It seemed more like a junior high sleep-over!

One of the weird things I remember from that conversation was her discussion about how even a small amount of sugar water could help prevent stress ulcers (or was it shortening post-op ileus?) in her lab animals. She could not get anyone to pay much attention to this finding as I recall and I don't know if she was ever able to finish the research. She was frustrated because it wasn't flashy or glamorous enough to get funding. I am certain that my memory on the details is sketchy, but I did believe her, and ever since then started feeding patients early on post-op. It seems that her theory has been proven with all the current clinical pathways that encourage early feeding, and have shortened post-op stays.

As far as Kim's contributions to our AWS meetings, she was always calm and gracious, very thoughtful and insightful. These last couple of years were remarkable for the continued tenacity and wonderful spirit she embodied. Kim was a wonderful role model for many students and residents, and these last two years she continued as an inspiring role model for all of us. Her courage and good humor, her energy and curiosity in the face of a fearful and uncertain future were formidable. Although we never spent a lot of time together, I will always consider Kim my friend. My thoughts and prayers go to Kim's family.

Joyce Majure MD, FACS

- Kim always struck me as having unimpeachable integrity, which I saw her bring in particular to the role of chairing the Code of Conduct tasking. I was also impressed how she always seemed so totally comfortable in her own skin. I feel I got to know her so much better these past few years through her blog, and I will so miss seeing the "New Update for CarePages" in my e-mail inbox! She faced an unimaginable problem with unblinking courage and honesty and with such grace. She touched the lives of so many.

AJ Copeland MD, FACS

- Kim was one of the most supportive people I met in the AWS when it came to how to deal with pregnancy and motherhood while a resident. She shared her stories of how she handled being a woman in surgery residency at a time and place where that was an anomaly. She discussed the day she told her Chair that she was pregnant and how she managed to be unapologetic about it. Her slight frame, easy smile, and seemingly quiet demeanor hid a true lioness - bold and confident when it mattered the most. I will also remember her for her passionate insistence on the development of the ACS Ethics policy, ensuring it contained more than a superficial commentary on the importance of integrity for surgeons. And finally, I recognize her as one of the pioneers in establishing that an Academic Career in Surgical Education is not only acceptable, but necessary and valuable. She was as beautiful on the inside as the art she created.

Danielle Walsh MD, FACS

- Kim was an amazing woman, wife, mother, surgeon and mentor. I am blessed to have had her as a friend and colleague through all the years, not only through the AWS (our first connection), but also through the VA surgeons, the ASE, the VA hernia study and other VA endeavors. Kim showed her stamina and skill, time and time again. A few examples I know:
 - Residency at Parkland when the number of women surgery residents in the nation was countable on two hands
 - Success in many national surgical organizations when women in leadership positions were few
 - Keeping Henry B. from shutting down the VA hernia trial (despite his many efforts at every DSMB meeting—my deepest thanks to her for that)
 - More recently, putting this cancer to shame for 3 years.

Kim's personal guidance to me as I was raising my kids was invaluable. Her calm demeanor, despite storms around her, calmed me and has given me strength to continue to push for what I believe in. Kim influenced so many lives and truly embodied the mission of AWS, enabling and encouraging women (and men) to succeed. We thank her for all she has given.

Leigh Neumayer MD, FACS

- I remember Kim's quiet ways and thoughtful smile. Kim and Leigh gave me the opportunity to get involved in AWS at the Council level. She was thoughtful and considerate of others. The last few years were truly inspiring.

Vivian Gahtan MD, FACS

- I first met Kim when I joined the AWS Council in 2000, and I was immediately struck by her grace and poise. She was really great at running a meeting; making sure that everyone had an opportunity to voice her thoughts and opinions, and engaging the whole group. She was also very good at distilling issues down to the most critical points. One of the critical issues we were working on at that time was the Code of Conduct with the ACS, which was a very significant accomplishment. I remember when we were discussing the issue of harassment in the workplace, Kim commented, "Oh, that's what that was" -- indicating both how subtle some of the behaviors were and how immune so many of us had become to it in our day-to-day work experiences.

One of my favorite AWS meetings was the year that Kim and Margaret Dunn moderated a workshop on how to deal with difficult situations in the workplace, which included educational, gender, and several other critical leadership issues. The cases were great and the discussions were very deep and thoughtful.

Kim was a great mentor, advisor and leader. When I started the ELAM program, I asked her for advice on how to gain the most from the experience. She was humble as always. She encouraged me to read ahead and prepare assignments as she felt that she didn't invest enough in this way. I met several women in her Learning Community at an ELAM event and they shared how much they admired her. Like so many of us in our "rush a day world" she was certain that others were giving more, but the truth was everyone was just as stretched and stressed as she was. Most importantly, Kim taught us all to live each day "a little fuller."

Mary Hooks MD, MBA, FACS

- Kim was one of the first woman surgeons that I knew. I landed at Parkland in the midst of some very strong women residents and one PhD faculty member, who mentored us all: Jureta Horton, PhD (deceased). We were the earliest trained surgeons in the Southwestern/Parkland Program. The first was Rebekah Naylor, my dear friend (finishing in 1973). Number 2-7 were Mary McCarthy (1983), Karen Borman (1984), Anne Williams (1985), Kim (1986), Cathy Burnweit (1987) and me (1988). I first met Kim early in my internship when she was my 3rd year resident and Cathy Burnweit was our 2nd year resident on a general surgery service. It was quite unusual to have three women on a service in 1983. I did one of my very first hernias with her and it must have been a real challenge for her as I did everything wrong. She maintained her perfect demeanor throughout and I learned a lot. I met Tom that month as well and enjoyed their stories of being geeky adolescents and teenagers in love. They shared life for so long.

Kim continued to mentor me, befriend me and show me the way, personally and professionally. We exchanged Christmas cards/letters for most of 25 years as our boys have grown. She enjoyed her boys as much as I enjoy mine and I loved hearing her stories and sharing mine. She had chess players and scientists and I have cowboys, outdoorsmen and history majors. The dedication that Tom and Kim had to each other and their families over the years is inspiring.

The past three years, Kim showed us how to live. Facing her mortality, Kim focused her abundant talents in ways that have been lessons to behold. She was an amazing role model. I love her and I hope she knew that we cherished and admired her. She touched so many.

Patricia C. Bergen, MD, FACS

- It was July 2000 and AWS was holding its fourth and last Summer Conference at the Hyatt Hotel in Beaver Creek, Colorado. The meetings ended around noon on Saturday and Peggy Kemeny and a couple others on the Council decided it would be a wonderful idea to take a little hike and enjoy the out-of-doors. I, personally, was looking forward to resting by the pool followed by an afternoon cocktail, when the group invited -- no, twisted my arm -- no, insisted that I join them. I was assured it would be fun. Then I remembered that I didn't bring appropriate shoes. Wouldn't you know it, there was Kim, standing in the lobby watching this banter about life and health, etc. She stepped in not to save me but to offer her leather, rubber-soled mary-jane shoes – the type with the buckle. While they were only one-and-a-half sizes too big, all assured me they would be fine. I will always be grateful to Kim, not only for her shoes, but for stepping in and encouraging me to go on this little quest. Kim probably knew that this would become one of my very, very fond AWS memories.

Kim was supported by her family. Tom, Zeb, Dan and Noah provided extreme love and hope to Kim. Thank you to them for all they have done, not just in these last three years but through her entire life.

Kim was always gracious, kind and accommodating. She made so many wonderful memories for her family and for all of us. She will always be on my mind and in my heart.

Judy Keel, Executive Vice President, AWS



AWS President 2000 – 2001
AWS Council 1993 – 2002