In memoriam: John D. Rouse, MD

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John D. Rouse, MD

Associate Clinical Professor of Psychiatry John Dashiell Rouse, MD, son of Anne Colonna Rouse Burnette and the late John Dashiell Rouse, passed away peacefully at his home in San Francisco on April 26, after an illness of several months.

A native of Newport News, Va., John graduated from Yale University with a BA in the history and theory of music. During his time at Yale, he sang in the Freshmen Glee Club, the Spizzwinks, the University Chapel Choir, the Yale Glee Club, and the Whiffenpoofs. He later became a founding member and longtime tenor soloist with the Yale Alumni Chorus, a group that traveled worldwide, most recently performing in Hanoi and Singapore. John also performed for forty years in the San Francisco Bay area as a tenor soloist with the Lamplighters Music Theatre, where he made many lifelong friends.

He attended the University of Virginia Medical School and came to San Francisco to complete his residency in psychiatry at Mount Zion. He had planned to become an analyst in private practice, but found that he was fascinated and energized by working in the emergency room.

He joined the UCSF Department of Psychiatry in 1981 as an attending physician in the SFGH Psychiatric Emergency Service, and began teaching UCSF psychiatry residents in 1982 with the then new integrated SFGH-Mount Zion-UCSF psychiatry residency program. He later joined intensive case management programs on the Crisis Resolution and Citywide Linkage Teams. From 2013 until recently, he served as an attending psychiatrist in the Acute Psychiatric Inpatient Service at Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital and Trauma
Center, first on the African-American Focus Team and then on the LGBT and HIV Focus Team.

He was praised by clinical trainees throughout his career for his kind and conscientious interpersonal style, and his modeling of effective interviewing styles and techniques with challenging patients. Trainees also appreciated his deep understanding of the social and environmental factors which influence patients living with serious mental illness, and his ability to translate that knowledge into effective clinical assessments and interventions. His colleagues greatly appreciated his collegiality and leadership abilities, and he will be remembered as a man who was "generous, genuinely kind and interested in others, centered, witty, [and] incisive, with a uniquely humane and helpful touch."

John was a tireless and passionate advocate for the mentally ill. He served as co-chair of the Physicians’ Organizing Committee’s Northern California Commission on Psychiatric Resources, where his decades of experience in mental health were invaluable in shaping policy. In 2015, the group honored him with its Civic Engagement Award “in recognition of his active participation in advocating for the mental health needs of the seriously mentally ill and his activist stance in demanding that government entities live up to their responsibilities to the needs of the mentally ill.”

He is survived by his mother, his sister Sarah Burnette Conrad and her husband Roger, and their children Nate, Annlouise, and Stuart of Alexandria, Va., as well as by many Burnette, Colonna, and Rouse cousins. He was predeceased by his father and stepfather, and by his longtime partner, Pasqual Calabrese.

Celebrations of John’s life will be held at a future date on both the east and west coasts. He will be laid to rest at the Rouse family gravesite in Smithfield, Va.
