

Letters

Sad news about Joe LaDou

Robert Harrison, MD, MPH¹

¹ UCSF Occupational Health Services, University of California, San Francisco

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Dear colleagues and friends,

I am sad to let you know that our colleague Joseph “Joe” LaDou of Aspen, Colorado, died unexpectedly on November 10, 2023, after a brief illness.¹

Joe was born in Salem, Oregon, to parents who had ventured west looking for opportunity during the Great Depression. He was raised in San Diego, with his older sister and younger brother, then moved to San Francisco for medical school. Joe remained in the Bay Area for the rest of his career, and raised his two daughters there.

Joe was an occupational and environmental medicine physician who started an occupational medical practice in 1967 in the area later known as Silicon Valley, and taught at University of California, San Francisco (UCSF). He was appointed the first Chief of the UCSF Division of Occupational and Environmental Medicine in 1983, where his continuing medical education courses taught more than 2,000 physicians over a period of twenty years. Joe was the editor of the major textbook in the field: *CURRENT Diagnosis & Treatment: Occupational & Environmental Medicine*, and the founding editor-in-chief of the *International Journal of Occupational and Environmental Health*.

Joe was well known as a fierce advocate for workers in the United States and internationally, and an inspiration for occupational and environmental health activists from around the world. His activism began when he noticed patients in his clinic suffering from the effects of toxic chemicals commonly used by the semiconductor industry. He authored the first [article](#) exposing the semiconductor industry for its lack of protections for workers. He was one of the founders of the International Campaign for Responsible Technology (ICRT). Joe later studied the global migration of hazardous materials, which led to international efforts to control occupational and environmental hazards around the world. He traveled to more than 50 countries, working with local public health agencies to develop programs to protect the health of workers. He did not hesitate to name multinational corporations and international agencies as causes of epidemics of worker illnesses. In the last month of his life, Joe presented a paper on the semiconductor industry at a conference in Italy, fulfilling his promise to never stop fighting for workers’ rights to a healthy workplace.

In addition to his career accomplishments, Joe was best known by those close to him for his generosity and sense of humor. Colleagues knew him as the person who would



connect anyone with just the right person or opportunity to further their career. Joe also loved to make people laugh. His dry wit and comedic talent made life more fun. Traveling with Joe meant taking picture after picture of him posing with statues, sculptures, food, and other props so he could send them to friends.

Joe moved to Aspen in 1993, after years of visiting in the summers to attend the Aspen Music Festival. His summers were about music; he rarely missed a performance. Joe’s greatest joys were traveling, good food, classical music, fine art, museums, and hiking. He hiked Aspen Mountain every morning, sun or snow, for 30 years.

Joe is survived by his daughters, Ana and Marisa, two granddaughters, his beloved sister, Leah, and many others who considered him family.

Please share your memories of Joe, I know his family would appreciate it greatly.

Bob Harrison, MD

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¹ In lieu of flowers or gifts, please donate to the [International Campaign for Responsible Technology \(ICRT\)](#) or the [Halo Trust](#).



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