Max Fine was born in 1908 in Warsaw, Poland. He received his undergraduate Bachelor of Science degree at New York University in 1927. He received his MD degree from the University of California, San Francisco, School of Medicine, in 1932 and completed an internship in internal medicine there in 1933. During the following year, he was a resident at the Stanford University Hospital in neuropsychiatry.

Max Fine’s association with the Department of Ophthalmology at Pacific Presbyterian Medical Center (PPMC) began with his residency in ophthalmology at Stanford University Hospital (PPMC’s predecessor at this site). He completed his residency in 1936 and became an instructor on the faculty of Stanford University. It was during the time shortly after his residency, that Dr Hans Barkan suggested to Max that he travel to New York City to observe Dr Ramon Castroviejo who was just beginning to perform the first successful penetrating keratoplasties in America. Max heeded Barkan’s advice, spent some time with Castroviejo, and returned to San Francisco to become the pioneer corneal surgeon of the West Coast. From 1936 to 1941 Dr Fine was the director of the Ophthalmology Clinic at Stanford University Hospital which was directly involved in teaching the residents. He served as a major in the US Army Medical Corps from 1942 to 1946. During this period, he was promoted to Assistant Clinical Professor at Stanford, a position which he held until 1952 at which point he became an Associate Clinical Professor. He was also the director of the Stanford Eye Bank from 1950 through 1959.

It should be noted that Dr Fine performed the first corneal transplant in the Western United States around 1937. His assistant at that memorable operation was Dr Jerome Bettman. The first corneal transplants were square and held in place by overlaid sutures. After World War II, there was significant difficulty in obtaining tissue for transplantation. Dr Fine set about to found the Eye Bank of San Francisco which was the predecessor of the current Lions Eye Bank. Initially, Dr Fine stored eyes in his home refrigerator until the Eye Bank was able to procure its own refrigerator. He also helped to get an old Victorian house for the Eye Bank of San Francisco that served for many years as its headquarters. Max was instrumental in getting the Lions Clubs involved in the support of the Eye Bank and helped get the Eye Bank under their support, aegis, and name where it remains today.

Fine’s direct association with the Department of Ophthalmology at PPMC began as soon as Stanford University turned the grounds over to the Presbyterian Hospital. He became Clinical Professor of Ophthalmology here in 1974 and held that position until his death. In addition, he was Associate Scientist at our sister research institution, the Institute of Medical Science, from 1965. He was a regular participant in the clinical and teaching program at PPMC and gave multiple courses on surgery, especially corneal transplantation, over the years. In the early 1960s, he gave as many as five courses a year. Thereafter, he gave the corneal update as part of the annual PPMC “Highlights of Ophthalmology” course. He could always be depended upon to give lectures and conferences for the residents. He was a regular participant and contributor to the monthly corneal conferences held at PPMC. Many residents in the program rotated through his service at Mt Zion Hospital. In addition to his involvement in the teaching program at PPMC, he also participated in the teaching program at the University of California, San Francisco.

His professional and academic activities were legion. He gave multiple courses and papers at the American Academy of Ophthalmology and was invited to speak all over the world. He published 68 papers, mostly on corneal transplantation and related subjects. Although Max Fine’s contributions to the art and science of corneal surgery are well known, what is less well known about Max was that he wrote papers on several other topics in ophthalmology. These included: cataract, therapy of syphilis, essential iris atrophy, retrobulbar neuritis, gumma of the orbit, a light for gonioscopy, mycotic obstruction of the nasal lacrimal duct, effects of ACTH on iridocyclitis, an early paper on topical corticosteroid therapy, neuroophthalmology, a new motility implant, ocular tuberculosis, sarcoid neuroretinitis, internuclear oph-
thalmoplegia, orbital metastatic disease, and ocular care of the preschool child. Truly, his interests and knowledge were wide-ranging.

He received numerous awards including the honor awards of the American Academy of Ophthalmology and Otolaryngology, the Northern California Transplant Bank, and the State of California Assembly. He was a member of Alpha Omega Alpha. In 1979, Dr Fine received the Castroviejo medal. He was given the Public Service Award of the City of San Francisco and the Commander Award of Letterman Army Medical Center. He also delivered the Goar Memorial Lecture for the Houston Ophthalmological Society.

His ophthalmologic contemporaries were effusive in their praise of his capabilities. Personal anecdotes from his colleagues usually mentioned his extraordinary clinical judgment, honesty, dependability, and his accomplishments as a teacher. Clearly, he was a pioneer surgeon who not only brought sight to many who would otherwise have been blind, but taught his art to his fellow ophthalmologists. He was also noted for his sense of humor. In the early days of intraocular lens implantation, these procedures provided a busy patient load for corneal surgeons. In honor of this contribution to his clinical activity, Max had a necklace made of the intraocular lenses that he removed during keratoplasty. Max was also mindful of the community in which he lived and showed considerable community spirit in terms of his giving of time, energy, and money.

We here at Pacific Presbyterian Medical Center are grateful for Max’s many contributions to ophthalmology in general and to our program in particular. We are proud, honored, and privileged to have known him and to have had him as a part of our distinguished heritage.

Ten Important Publications of Max Fine, MD In Corneal Transplantation