

# IN MEMORIAM

**EDGAR L. RALSTON, M.D.**  
**1911 – 2003**

Dr. Edgar L. Ralston was born on December 27, 1911 in Dubois, Pennsylvania. In 1933 he earned his bachelor's degree from Muskingum College in New Concord, Ohio. He received his medical degree from The University of Pennsylvania in 1937 and was elected to Alpha Omega Alpha Medical Honor Society in his junior year. He served as an intern at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania and as a resident and fellow at the New York Orthopaedic Hospital, Columbia / Presbyterian Medical Center. From 1942 through 1946 he served overseas with the United States Army and retired with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He then returned to join the orthopaedic faculty at The University of Pennsylvania in 1947.

He was a consultant in orthopaedics at the Valley Forge Army Hospital from 1951 through 1971, was a visiting surgeon at the Children's Seashore House in Atlantic City, and was Chief of Orthopaedic Surgery at the Frankford Hospital. In 1969 he was awarded the Surgeon General's Outstanding Civilian Service Medal, and in 1975 he received a Distinguished Service Award from Muskingum College.

Ed Ralston was Acting Chairman of Orthopaedic Surgery at Penn from 1960 through 1963 and served as Chairman of the Department from 1963 through 1977. He was the first recipient of the Paul B. Magnuson Professorship, established in 1974. He retired from the Department in 1980.

During his long and distinguished career he published several scientific articles and chapters, edited a textbook on fractures, delivered many lectures, and was a member and officer of a number of prestigious medical societies and organizations. He served as Vice President of the American Orthopaedic Association. He was an excellent teacher, surgeon and physician. He taught his students and colleagues not only through formal instruction but perhaps even more important, by his personal example. He cared very much for his patients and their families, and they in turn were devoted to him. In the days when Professors were often tyrants, he was anything but! He was a gentleman in the true sense of the word. He treated his students, his colleagues and his patients with dignity and respect. In his own modest and unassuming way he was responsible for tremendous growth and development of our Department. Under his leadership it

grew from one hospital with five full time faculty and six residents to eight hospitals with over thirty faculty and forty residents and fellows. Working with Carl Brighton and Bert Friedenberg, he helped establish the McKay Laboratory of Orthopaedic Research and took our Department to a position of international prominence.

Despite his many accomplishments, he was a humble and unselfish man. He never sought the spotlight for himself. Quite the opposite! He preferred to work behind the scenes to encourage and support his younger faculty in their professional careers. He was greatly admired by his residents and colleagues. As a testimonial to him they endowed the Edgar L. Ralston Library, the Ralston Library and Education Fund, and the annual Edgar L. Ralston Lectureship in the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery at Penn.

The son of a Presbyterian minister, he remained active in the Presbyterian church throughout his life. He was a generous contributor to a number of charities and was especially devoted to the cause of world missions. Most recently he was instrumental in supporting a medical dispensary in an area of Central America, which was badly in need of medical care.

He and his wife, Mary, opened their home to his residents and staff and made us all feel that we were part of their family. They loved to travel and they shared their adventures with us through their slides and movies. He was very much interested in baseball and often surprised us with his knowledge of the sport.

Edgar L. Ralston died peacefully in his sleep on Monday, January 13, 2003. He was devoted to Mary, his wife of 59 years, who died in 2000. During the last few years of her life when she was unwell, they shared adjoining rooms at the Quadrangle and he was constantly at her side. He is survived by his sister-in-law, Jeanne Ralston, by a niece, Martha Ralston-Braem, a nephew, Walter J. Ralston, and five grand nieces and grand nephews.

Ed Ralston was a very special person who will be missed by all who knew and loved him.

Marvin E. Steinberg, M.D.