

2011 Health-Care Heroes Awards

Loughlin Remembered for Devotion, Friendship

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This year, Atlanta's health-care community lost a giant and a friend. Here, we pay tribute to one of the city's most important medical figures.

Edward Loughlin is described as a brilliant surgeon and a dedicated family man. A founding member of Peachtree Orthopaedic Clinic, he dedicated much of his career serving as a champion for Grady Memorial Hospital. Passing away from a sudden stroke on March 19, Loughlin leaves behind a strong legacy of compassion and commitment to the field of medicine.

"He was a consummate surgeon and he was very serious about his work," said Mike Irby, his stepson, who was 8 years old when Loughlin married his mother. "He was also a very loving family person and loved his friends and family."

A graduate of the University of North Carolina, Loughlin attended the University of Pennsylvania Medical School and completed a fellowship at Saint Bartholomew's Hospital in London. He completed an internship at Emory Hospital and his orthopedic residency at Grady. He joined the Funk, Wells and Dimon medical group in 1964, which eventually became Peachtree Orthopaedic Clinic.

A longtime member of the board of the Fulton-DeKalb Hospital Authority, Loughlin served as its chairman for three years, during which time he always fought for Grady's future. He was instrumental in bringing the expansion and new addition to the hospital and negotiated with various parties to ensure the project was done on time and under cost. Today, the Grady Radiation and Oncology Building is named in his honor.

"He fought for Grady. It was sort of his life's mission," Irby said. "He always used to say, 'Where there is a low rung of society, there will always be a Grady.'"

Along with his dedication to medicine, Loughlin was a devoted family man. He married Linda Beth Irby Loughlin after the death of her husband in 1977 and for 32 years raised her three children as his own. Loughlin also had three children from a previous marriage.

"He was an accomplished surgeon and community leader in terms of his board service and his personal surgical practice and he also took over a second family and raised us from the time we were young children, so he was a pretty incredible guy from that respect," Irby said.

Gifted with a photographic memory, Loughlin loved to argue politics and was very quick-witted and intelligent. A very social personality, he loved meeting new people and made others laugh with his dry sense of humor. "One of his quirky traits was that he knew everybody," Irby said. "He would go to a restaurant and the first thing he would ask the waiter is, 'Where are you from?' and he would inevitably find a connection."

Loughlin took his charismatic personality into work with him and always made time to help others. He took an interest in patients, colleagues and students and carried a booklet in his pocket where he kept the names of people he could call to solve any problem, recalls Tom Moore, chairman of orthopedics at Grady.

"He always took time to find out the background of medical students and residents," Moore said. "He should be remembered as an achiever, but a person with compassion that in everything he did, he did well."

Moore also remembers him as a forceful character that was very understanding of different personalities. A firm decision-maker and self-declared sports expert, Loughlin was enjoyable to talk to in both professional and social settings. "One of the biggest compliments I ever received was that my personality was described somewhat like his," Moore said.

Even after his retirement from Peachtree Orthopaedic Clinic in 2007, Loughlin continued to volunteer at Grady's orthopedic clinic. A twice-a-week mentor, Loughlin was considered an integral part of the clinic. "He came religiously and was really an excellent role model both for the medical students as well as the residents," Moore said.

David Apple, medical director emeritus of Atlanta's Shepherd Center, met Loughlin in 1958 at medical school and became one of his partners at Peachtree Orthopaedic Clinic. He said Loughlin had a keen ability to work out difficult situations, whether in the operating room, at Grady or in his personal life. "When things weren't going exactly smooth he could always figure out a way to correct the situation. He liked to have a crisis no matter if it was personal or professional because that is where he shined the most, was crisis management," Apple said.

Apple said he will never forget his longtime friend's strong opinions and that Loughlin's lifetime highlights were his orthopedic surgery, his time spent at Grady and his family. "I think he would like to be remembered as being an excellent orthopedic surgeon who didn't mind speaking his mind," Apple said.