



## Dr. Mary Allen Engle

January 27, 2008

Dr. Mary Allen English Engle died peacefully at her home in Easton, Maryland on January 27, 2008, after a lengthy cancer illness, one day following her 86th birthday.

Dr. Engle made profound contributions to Pediatric Cardiology, caring for children with heart disease, from fetal life into adulthood. When she arrived at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in 1942, the field did not exist. She was told in medical school lectures on cardiology that this was an infrequent condition and that there was nothing that could be done. Dr. Engle devoted her career to bettering this situation. Across an exciting half-century, she combined academic research, teaching and writing, with direct care for children suffering cardiovascular diseases across the United States and in many other countries. In so doing, she provided teachings and inspiration to physicians who have followed in this field.

Compassionate and caring, she was devoted to patients and students. One of her former patients recalled: "She forged ahead to create a department in a field that was new and did it as a woman in what I am sure was a man's domain. She had a reassuring voice, smile, and demeanor that spoke volumes to this child that everything was going to be all right as long as she was there."

Born January 26, 1922 in Madill, Oklahoma, Mary Allen English grew up in Dallas, Texas. She moved to Waco for her senior year of high school and later graduated first in her class at Baylor University, with a B.A. in Chemistry and Biology. At Johns Hopkins School of Medicine in Baltimore, Maryland, she was elected to Phi Beta Kappa and Alpha Omega Alpha Honorary Society, graduating first in her class in 1945. On graduation day, she married medical school classmate, Dr. Ralph Landis Engle, Jr.

While a medical student, Mary Allen English was invited by Dr. Alfred Blalock, Chairman of Surgery, to be the first woman on the surgical house staff at Hopkins. She also was mentored and worked closely with Dr. Helen Taussig in pediatrics, and was invited and chose to serve on the pediatrics house staff. During the renowned first "blue baby" operation, she stood beside Dr. Taussig, watching the baby's color improve. As blood began to flow properly through the heart, Dr. Taussig remarked "what a lovely pink color", and Mary Allen decided then to become a Pediatric Cardiologist. She completed one of Dr. Taussig's first Pediatric Cardiology fellowships, where she was first to diagnose certain nuances of congenital heart disease, making treatment possible.

This was followed by a fellowship and appointment in Pediatrics at The New York Hospital-Cornell Medical Center in New York City, where she initiated the program in Pediatric Cardiology. She and her husband drove together daily to this hospital where her husband also had an appointment, a hematologist in the Department of Medicine. At The New York Hospital, together they devoted more than 90 years to medical care and academic medicine. Her many research breakthroughs included delineation of pulmonic stenosis; early recognition of the most common anomaly, ventricular septal defect; and recognition and treatment of cardiac failure during infancy. As a surgically trained Pediatric Cardiologist, and devoted to the life-time welfare of her young patients, Dr. Engle and her surgical team developed a new surgical

incision pattern for less visible scars later in life. Her most recent contribution was identification of a treatment procedure for Kawasaki disease which terminated the illness and prevented coronary abnormalities.

Dr. Engle's research, prolific teaching and patient care resulted in more than 400 papers, invited chapters, editorials, and edited books. For more than 40 years, she served on editorial boards of cardiologic journals and professional committees. In 1957, she helped establish Pediatric Cardiology as the first sub-specialty section within the American Academy of Pediatrics. She served on the Board of Directors of the American Heart Association, the Board of Trustees and Board of Governors of the American College of Cardiology, study sections of the National Institutes of Health, the Medical Advisory Board of the United States Information Agency, and President Nixon's Advisory Panel on Heart Disease. She participated in establishing the Association of European Pediatric Cardiologists. She served on the international committee of four World Congresses of Pediatric Cardiology, including as president of the executive board and chairman of the organizing committee of the Second World Congress, held in New York during 1985.

As a medical ambassador, Dr. Engle contributed to international medical education, lecturing in 83 countries via the joint auspices of the U.S. Department of State and the American College of Cardiology. In 1977, following Chairman Mao's death and President Nixon's first visit into China, the Chinese Medical Association invited a small team of 8 U.S. cardiologists, with Dr. Engle as the Pediatric Cardiologist, to share knowledge and offer advice about ways to improve hospitals and medical schools in major cities. Among many early memorable experiences in China, Dr. Engle addressed dignitaries in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. For the ensuing decade, Engle served on the medical advisory board of Beijing's Fu Wai Hospital, China's chief heart hospital. She also hosted the first

Chinese medical team to visit the U.S.

In 1973, Dr. Engle initiated a program at the New York Hospital to treat children in Greece with severe congenital heart disease. With backing from Aristotle Onassis, Stavros Niarchos, and other donors, Engle's team cared for more than 200 children, mostly infants, whom they had flown to New York. The project also helped develop a Pediatric Cardiology capability in Greece. Niarchos established an endowed chair at The New York Hospital-Cornell Medical Center; Dr. Engle was named the Stavros S. Niarchos Professor of Pediatric Cardiology at Cornell.

Dr. Engle was honored with the Master Teacher Award of the American College of Cardiology on three occasions; she received the Award of Merit from the American Heart Association as well as the Helen B. Taussig Award from the Maryland chapter; and the Cummings Humanitarian Award of the American College of Cardiology, twice. She was accorded the Woman of Conscience Award by the National Council of Women of the USA during the International Year of the Child, 1982. She received an honorary degree from Iona College, the Founders Award from the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Distinguished Alumna Award from the Baylor Alumni Association, election to the Society of Scholars of Johns Hopkins University and the Detlev W. Bronk Award from the New York Alumni Chapter. The Johns Hopkins University Distinguished Alumna Award was conferred in 2003, that institution's highest honor. She often expressed gratitude to Hopkins for giving her both her family and her career.

She was inducted as one of the first women into the American Clinical and Climatological Association, served on the board of this honorary medical society, and was selected as President in 2005. Since 1983 she has been a member of the Royal Society of Medicine. Among many Who's Who listings, she was in the first edition of Who's Who of American Women,

and is in Who's Who in America and Who's Who in the World. At The New York Hospital-Cornell Medical College, she received the Honorary Alumnus Award, the Greenberg Award for outstanding service to the medical center, the Stavros S. Niarchos Professorship of Pediatric Cardiology, and the naming of the Dr. Mary Allen Engle Division of Pediatric Cardiology. Even in retirement, she continued to publish and deliver invited talks at conferences, including the American Academy of Pediatrics in 2006. She delivered the DeBusk lecture at the University of Florida in 2006.

She embraced each day with enthusiasm and was devoted to her family. There were many memorable family trips throughout the U.S. and in other countries. Her favorite activities, with Dr. Ralph Engle always at her side, included dancing, traveling, crewing on her son's sailboat, and cultivating an award-winning garden.

Dr. Engle was predeceased by her beloved son, Ralph Landis Engle III, in 1975, and by her husband, her lifelong partner, in 2000. She is survived by her daughter, Marilyn Elizabeth Engle, and two grandchildren, Andrew Schuyler Varela and Elizabeth Van Cortlandt Varela.

A memorial service will be held at St. Mark's United Methodist Church, Easton, MD at 3 p.m. on Sunday, February 3, 2008.

Interment will be at the Huguenot Memorial Presbyterian Church, 901 Pelhamdale Ave, Pelham Manor, New York, 10803 on February 10th, 2008.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine Scholarship Fund, 100 N. Charles St., Suite 217, Baltimore, MD 21201.

Arrangements are by Fellows, Helfenbein and Newnam Funeral Home, P.A.,

Easton, MD.

# Tribute Wall



“ *Dr. Mary Allen Engle*

October 26, 2023 at 06:42 PM



“ *Dr. Mary Allen Engle*

January 28, 2023 at 12:44 PM



“ *Dr. Mary Allen Engle*

January 28, 2023 at 08:03 AM