

Remembering Mitchell Ede, MD, (A&S '43, M *45)

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When Mitchell Ede, MD, (A&S '43, M *45) passed away this October at the age of 101, he concluded a life that was remarkable not only for its longevity but for being exceptionally well lived. A dermatologist for more than 70 years, Dr. Ede's Tulane education set him on a course that touched countless lives.

Dr. Ede grew up in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, milking the family goats and drinking Coca-Cola at the general store his parents ran. Both parents had emigrated from Lebanon, and the family's passion for the transformative power of education was well-evident with several of the children ultimately taking advanced degrees.

Dr. Ede was a standout from his earliest days, occasionally being called upon to step in as a substitute teacher for his high school — while still attending high school. By senior year his passion for science led to acceptances to Tulane University, Auburn University, the University of Alabama and a full scholarship to Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Already there was a part of Dr. Ede that was perhaps both practical and sentimental. “He chose Tulane because the train from Hattiesburg to New Orleans was the last train to leave. He wanted to stay with his mom as long as possible,” recalls his daughter Ann Boyle.

At Tulane he worked toward his undergraduate degree, picking up Latin, joining Beta Mu and becoming a noted flirt before continuing on for his medical degree. Boyle dryly remarks, “I think that [reputation as a flirt] was during pre-med. I’m assuming he didn’t have any time during med school.”

Upon graduation, he was all set to have a leading career as an obstetrician and gynecologist. However, he’d obtained his degrees during World War II. Eager to serve his country in the medical field, he joined the Navy immediately after completing his medical degree.

He was sent up to Walter Reed, which was then a new institution, having been established less than a decade earlier. Upon his arrival, he was informed that his specialization was in fact going to be in the then-emerging area of dermatology.

Entirely unruffled, Dr. Ede used his training as an internist to his advantage, often reflecting that to know what is going on with the skin, you need to know what is going on in the body. He would spend more than seven decades as a dermatologist, only retiring at 97 when the COVID pandemic made in-person visits dangerous for himself and his patients.



His service at Walter Reed offered another advantage for Dr. Ede. It was there he met a lovely young nurse named Ruth Koch, with whom he would enjoy a 45-year marriage and welcome four children.

“When he moved to Cincinnati, he went into a practice with a dermatologist that had had polio,” says Boyle. “Their office hours started about noon and went until about eight. My mother would have a hot meal for him at eight o’clock, even after she had made dinner for us.

“They certainly had an Ozzie and Harriet family.”

Dr. Ede led a thriving practice in the Cincinnati and Hillsboro, Ohio, communities and served as a professor in the dermatology department of the University of Cincinnati.

With his soft voice and soothing manner, patients felt comfortable to fully explain their troubles, leading sometimes to long waits for their fellow patients — and to accurate and effective diagnoses as Dr. Ede understood the context from which a condition had sprung.

Boyle laughs, “He was a very loving, caring dad. Family came first — as long as there weren’t patients who needed him.”

Still, he was getting on a bit. So, Dr. Ede trained a young rising doctor to take over the practice when he retired. Eventually, Dr. Ede outlasted his replacement, genuinely enjoying his interactions with patients and students, and perhaps a little puzzled as to why anyone would want to do such a thing as retire. Shortly before the pandemic struck, Dr. Ede renewed his medical license and signed another six-year lease on his office building.

Though he spent long hours in the office, Dr. Ede brought the same incisive mind that characterized his work to play. Games of chance hardly deserved the name when Dr. Ede sat down at the poker or bridge table, and he followed horse racing with a precision and attention to detail that often saw his race predictions quickly turning into fact.

And though he lived in a quiet and leafy neighborhood of Cincinnati for most of his life, he never forgot his time at Tulane — or his experiences as a young man during Mardi Gras.



His office had a king cake following Epiphany each year. And even as he recovered from a broken hip in his late 90s, he nevertheless donned Mardi Gras beads when Fat Tuesday came around.

Tulane itself was also a cause for celebration for Dr. Ede. When neighbor Peter Hines (B '23) received his acceptance, Dr. Ede was over the moon, delighted to see a talented young person about to embark upon the same journey he took ... if, admittedly, just a few years later.

And though Dr. Ede officially gave up seeing patients when the pandemic struck, he never, ever stopped being the Dr. Ede he first became at Tulane. “He liked to be known as Dr. Mitchell Ede,” says Boyle who recalls her father offering a diagnosis on one of his last days.

“He prescribed something and said to come back in a week.”