

William F. Collins Jr., M.D.

An obituary

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Dr. William Collins Jr. passed away on June 17, 2009. He was born on January 20, 1924, in New Haven, Connecticut. After attending secondary school at The Choate School, he entered Yale University in 1940. He joined the Navy in 1942 and in December 1943 was assigned to the V-12 Unit at the Yale University School of Medicine. Using some of the credits from courses in the medical school and from some courses taken in Yale's Sheffield Scientific School during medical school, he obtained a B.S. in 1945 and an M.D. in 1947 from Yale University.

Dr. Collins had a 2-year internship in general surgery at Barnes Hospital in St. Louis under Dr. Evarts Graham, including a rotation on the neurosurgical service of Dr. Ernest Sachs. In 1949, he volunteered for the Army Medical Corps, and after service in the Far East and Europe, he returned to Barnes in the fall of 1951 for a residency in neurosurgery under Dr. Henry Schwartz. On finishing the 2-year clinical rotation, he received a National Foundation Fellowship in Neurophysiology under Drs. Bishop and O'Leary at Washington University. At its completion, he accepted a faculty position as an Instructor of Neurosurgery, under Dr. Frank Nulsen, at Western Reserve University School of Medicine in Cleveland, Ohio, where he stayed for 8 years, attaining the rank of associate professor. His next position was as Professor and Chief of Neurosurgery at the Medical College of Virginia in Richmond. After 4 years in Richmond, he accepted the position of Professor and Chief at Yale University School of Medicine in 1967. In 1970, he was appointed the Harvey and Kate Cushing Professor of Surgery and remained Chief of Neurosurgery at Yale University School of Medicine and Neurosurgeon-in-Chief at the Yale–New Haven Hospital until 1984 when he was appointed Chairman of the Department of Surgery at Yale University School of Medicine and Surgeon-in-Chief of the Yale–New Haven Medical Center. He retired as Chairman of Surgery in July of 1993 and assumed emeritus status in the Department of Surgery on July 1, 1994.

Dr. Collins was a giant in academic neurosurgery. His keen intellect and ability to identify quality in research, clinical care, and people helped national neurosurgery adopt more rigorous academic standards and outcomes-based clinical care. His sense of integrity and discipline in patient care permeated his teaching and left a lasting impact on generations of Yale neurosurgery residents.

He received the Wakeman Award for Scientific



Fig. 1. Photograph of William Collins Jr., M.D.

Achievement from Duke University in 1990, the Cushing Medal from the American Association of Neurological Surgeons in 1991, a Distinguished Service Award from the Society of Neurological Surgeons in 1995, and a Distinguished Service Award from the Neurosurgical Society of America in 1999. He has been president of the American Board of Neurological Surgery, the chairman of the Residency Review Committee for Neurosurgery, the president of the Neurosurgical Society of America, the president of the Society of Neurological Surgeons, and the editor of the *Journal of Neurosurgery*. During the past 6 years, he has wintered in San Diego and was appointed clinical professor of Neurological Surgery at the University of California at San Diego and the University of Southern California.

In 1950, while Captain of the Army Medical Corps in Munich, Dr. Collins met and married Gwendolyn Davis, who predeceased him in 2004. Dr. Collins leaves 3 children, William F. Collins of Port Jefferson, New York, Peter D. Collins of Avon, Connecticut, and Ruth E. Collins of San Diego, California, as well as 2 grandchildren, Mary B. Collins of Santa Barbara, California, and Brendan B. Collins of Washington, D.C. (DOI: 10.3171/2009.6.09973).

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