

Marshall M. Parks, M.D. (1918-2005)

Marshall M. Parks, M.D. passed away on July 27, 2005 after a long and fruitful life. Born in Old Mission, MI, son of Ruth and Rueben Parks, he survived four siblings: twin Elvin, and sisters and their spouses Eileen and Henry Van Pernis, Marion and Robert Ellis, and Patricia and Roy Shourd. Dr. Parks and his late wife Angeline Miller Parks raised eleven children. He is survived by five daughters and their spouses: Gwendolyn Parks (GA), Ann and Tom Napp (MN), Grace and Dr. Paul Mitchell (CT), Mary and Dr. Marnix Heersink (AL), Joan and Scott Whitlow (MA); and five sons and their spouses: John Parks (AK), James and Sara Parks (MN), Mark and Maria Parks (VA), Paul Parks (CA), and Philip and Tambetsu Parks (CT). Beloved son Peter Michael Parks predeceased him. Committed to faith, family, and children, Dr. Parks and wife Martha McSteen Parks resided in Washington, D.C. Together they celebrated 25 grandchildren and their spouses: Diana and Tim Curran, and Erica and Bill Turner; Stephen and Carrie Napp, and Amanda Napp; Jessica and Darren Standish, David and Cecilia Mitchell, and Sarah and Shane Doyle; Virginia and Iona Parks; Angeline, Joshua, Justin, Andrew and Brock Parks; Damion, Sebastian, Bayne, Mila, Marius, and Christiaan Heersink; Zachary, Matthew, and William Parks; and Alexander and Emily Whitlow. Among his treasured 10 great-grandchildren are: Conrad and Olivia Curran; Christopher and Nathaniel Turner; Ava and Sophia Mitchell; and numerous nieces and nephews. Dr. Parks also maintained a summer retreat in Maine, which he lovingly referred to as his “sacred place.”

Recognized as a founder of pediatric ophthalmology, Dr. Parks dedicated his life to improving vision care for children worldwide. No contemporary physician has had a greater impact on pediatric ophthalmology. A prolific writer, respected lecturer, and dedicated teacher, as the founder of the Costenbader Society he trained over 160 of the world’s leading pediatric ophthalmologists and was honored with the Marshall M. Parks Education Fund, created by the Costenbader Society to support fellows during their ophthalmologic training.

Dr. Parks earned his B.S. from Illinois College in 1939, and graduated from St. Louis University School of Medicine in 1943 before entering the United States Navy during World War II. He interned at the U.S. Naval Hospital, San Diego, CA, and proudly served his country on Sea Duty as a medical

officer on destroyers in the South Pacific arena. He completed his ophthalmology residency at the U.S. Naval Hospital, Great Lakes, IL. After being Honorably Discharged from the Navy, he studied pediatric ophthalmology under his mentor and preceptor, Frank D. Costenbader, M.D. the first pediatric ophthalmologist, and together they initiated the first fellowship-training program of any ophthalmology subspecialty at Children's Hospital in Washington, D.C.

Dr. Parks first entered ophthalmology in 1946 when there were no ophthalmology subspecialties. He had seen many children with vision problems, and was concerned that there was no specific subspecialty devoted to children's eye care. To meet their special needs, he expanded the pediatric ophthalmology program at the Children's National Medical Center in Washington, D.C. He was appointed to the following positions in the Ophthalmology Departments during his career as a full-time private practitioner in Washington, D.C.: as an attending physician at Children's National Medical Center; the Washington Hospital Center; Clinical Professor at George Washington University Medical Center; as Instructor at Georgetown University Medical Center; in Dallas, TX at Children's Hospital, Presbyterian Hospital; and Baylor Medical Center. He also served for forty years as Consultant at Bethesda Naval Medical Center and Walter Reed Army Medical Center. He achieved Emeritus status at the above institutions.

Dr. Parks maintained membership in numerous professional societies throughout his prestigious career: American Medical Association, District Medical Society, D.C. Medical Society, American Academy of Ophthalmology and Otolaryngology, Pan American Ophthalmology Society, American Association of Ophthalmology, Association for Research in Strabismus, Costenbader Alumni Society, American Ophthalmological Society, International Strabismological Association, Squint Club, American Association for Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus, American Academy of Ophthalmology, American College of Surgeons, and the Texas Society for Pediatric Ophthalmology. He was a longstanding member of the John Carroll Society and the Knights of Malta.

Dr. Parks is a founding member and first President of the American Association for Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus. He served on the Advisory Council for Ophthalmic Surgery of the American College of Surgeons, Chairman of the Scientific Committee of the Retina Foundation of

the Southwest, and as Diplomate of the American Board of Ophthalmology and President of the American Academy of Ophthalmology. As founder and Past-President of the National Children's Eye Care Foundation, he also dedicated himself to the Society for the Prevention of Blindness, receiving their Professional Service Award.

Dr. Parks was honored for his distinguished career and contributions to ophthalmology. As a junior medical student, he was inducted into the Alpha Omega Alpha Society. He received the Vicennial Medal from Georgetown University, and the Senior Honor Award from the Academy of Ophthalmology. The American Ophthalmological Society honored him with the Lucien Howe Medal, and the St. Louis Society for the Blind presented Dr. Parks with the Leslie Dana Gold Medal. He was inducted into the Knights of Malta, and was voted by a worldwide survey of ophthalmologists as one of the ten most influential ophthalmologists in the world during the twentieth century, and as one of the top ten living physicians of the millennium. *Ophthalmology Times* lauded him the Best Ophthalmologist in America. Decorated by the Department of the Navy with the Superior Public Service Award and by the Department of the Army, the Naval Medical Center dedicated the Conference Room in his name. He was presented the John Carroll Society Medal in recognition of establishing pediatric ophthalmology, and was awarded the International Strabismological Society Arthur Linksz Award. The National Children's Eye Care Foundation awarded him the Leadership Award and presented a commemorative medal minted in his name. The annual 'Marshall M. Parks Honorary Lecture' is a named lecture of the American Academy of Ophthalmology under the auspices of the American Association for Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus. The Academy of Ophthalmology recently honored him with a Life Achievement Award and the Laureate Recognition Award. Such accolades attest to the national and international magnitude of his many contributions.

Dr. Parks served as editor/assistant editor of the following: *AMA Archives of Ophthalmology*, *Clinical Proceedings*, *Survey of Ophthalmology*, and the *American Orthoptic Journal*. He has presented 45 named lectures, authored several books, contributed chapters to 30 others, and has over 70 published papers. An astute speaker, he was in demand for his expertise in pediatric ophthalmology and strabismus. As an innovator and pioneer in medicine, Dr. Parks' seminal contributions include the diagnosis and treatment of strabismus and amblyopia, description of the monofixation syndrome, the

benefits of early strabismus surgery, the management of infantile cataracts, and innovative surgical techniques. Patients and physicians alike have benefited immensely from his writings and teachings.

Dr. Parks' elected offices have included: Chairman, Department of Ophthalmology at the Washington Hospital Center and the Children's National Medical Center; President and Chairman of the Board, National Children's Eye Care Foundation; President, American Association for Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus; Director and Chairman, American Board of Ophthalmology; President, American Academy of Ophthalmology; and Director and Chairman of the Board, The Foundation of the American Academy of Ophthalmology.

Dr. Parks' gentlemanly manner did not reduce his effectiveness in strongly articulating his point of view when asked for an expert opinion. His boundless energy, his generosity of spirit, and his wisdom have profoundly contributed to the well being of countless patients and professional lives. His leadership in children's eye care and his deep commitment to his large family will be profoundly missed.

Obituary Written By:
Grace P. Mitchell and Paul R. Mitchell, M.D.