



# Ralph Walter Richter

APR 18, 1931 - MAY 28, 2021



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## Ralph Richter Obituary April 18, 1931 – May 28, 2021

Dr. Ralph Walter Richter was born in Elizabeth, New Jersey to Marguerite and Rudolph Richter, who had emigrated to the United States from Magdeburg, Germany. Dr. Richter completed his undergraduate education at Columbia University, where he spent his senior year studying at Union Theological Seminary, followed by his medical education at Columbia University College of Physicians & Surgeons and his residency at The Neurological Institute of New York. He served in the U.S. Navy as a Lieutenant Commander at the U.S. Naval Hospital in Oakland, California.

Following completion of Dr. Richter's medical training, he served as assistant dean of Columbia medical school under H. Houston Merritt, M.D., who was then dean. A person of deep faith, Dr. Richter felt it was important to help underserved and at-risk patients and he asked Dr. Merritt to assign him to work part time at Harlem Hospital. He established the hospital's Department of Neurology and was its first director. He built a department that focused on caring for patients, as well as teaching students and resident physicians. He guided the department to respond to critical medical needs in Harlem, including an epidemic of heroin usage and alcohol dependency. In response to the medically devastating consequences of uncontrolled hypertension, he helped create a Regional Stroke Program, which was federally funded and one of the nation's leading treatment programs. Dr. Richter was concurrently on the faculty of Columbia University's Neurological Institute and rose to full professor of Neurology.

In 1975 he left Columbia University to help establish the medical school at Oral Roberts University in Tulsa, Oklahoma and was the school's Director of the Neurology Division and Clinical Professor of Neurology. He later became a Clinical Professor in the departments of Neurology and Psychiatry at the University of Oklahoma College of Medicine. A nationally recognized expert on Alzheimer's disease, he was a distinguished speaker and author or co-author of over 150 papers and editor of several books on the medical aspects of drug abuse and Alzheimer's disease. He led ground-breaking research into advanced therapeutic drugs through



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his company Tulsa Clinical Research LLC, which was a center for clinical research in neuropsychiatric and behavioral disorders. He also had a private practice of neurology in Tulsa for almost forty-five years.

Throughout his lengthy medical career, he was a dedicated and compassionate physician and was a renowned diagnostician. He loved neurology and his patients, but he also considered himself a teacher and mentor to young physicians. He believed greatly in the power of faith in patient outcomes and felt counseling patients to be his most important calling. He received multiple honors for his commitment to medical organizations, including his service as a board member of the Tulsa City-County Health Department, Director of the Alzheimer's Disease Research Unit at St. John Medical Center in Tulsa, and Board of Visitors of the University of Oklahoma College of Public Health. He completed a residency in psychiatry in 1992 at the University of Oklahoma so that he could better understand the psychiatric implications of neurological diseases. He continued to counsel patients until he retired in 2019 to pursue his love of reading history and poetry.

Dr. Richter is survived by his loving wife Julia Craft Richter, daughters Kimberly Richter Shirley (Jon) of Medina, Washington, Amy Richter Bankhead (Roy) of Nichols Hills, Oklahoma, and Victoria Richter of Dallas, Texas, stepson Dan McClain of Dallas, Texas, stepdaughter Amy Craft Vineyard (Jack) of Broken Arrow, Oklahoma and grandsons William Bankhead and Christopher Bankhead of Nichols Hills, Oklahoma. He is preceded in death by his daughter Karen Lee Richter. The family would like to thank Christy Lisenbee and Sadie Fuller for all their love and support through the years.

In lieu of flowers, please direct memorial contributions to the Alzheimer's Association [www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org)

To send flowers  
to the family or plant a tree  
in memory of Ralph Walter Richter, please visit our floral store.

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## Tribute Wall

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**Susan Coats** posted:

When my husband was ill Dr. Richter was the most loving, caring doctor I have met. He made sure we knew that our help would come from our Savior. I will never forget everything he did for us. This happened 2011-2014 and since then I have kept Dr. Richter in my prayers. I thank God for bringing such a wonderful man to us.

June 1 at 2:49 PM



# Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Ralph by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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