

Heritage Funeral Home & Crematory

Edward George Rockwell, MD

(December 31, 1933 - December 27, 2012)

Edward George Rockwell passed away on December 27th, 2012. He was born December 31, 1933 in Detroit, Michigan. He was the first child of Edward and Angela Rockwell, and grew up with two siblings, Tom and Judy. They recall their brother as responsible and very industrious. He always seemed to have a job: painting houses, mowing lawns, working for the post office and the city sanitation department. As a student, Ed got very good grades and looked forward to taking new classes. Summers were filled with trips to the lake and collecting turtles and reptiles- and, to his mother's dismay, occasionally bringing them into the house. He loved being a member of the track and cross country teams in high school, and seemed born to run. Ed received a Bachelor of Business Administration from the University of Michigan. Despite his dad's encouragement toward law school, he chose his own path and set his sites on medical school. He graduated with a MD in 1959 from the University of Michigan. Ed and his brother Tom were both dishwashers at Alpha Delta Pi sorority at the U of M, where Ed met his first wife, Nancy Ann Murphy. Ed ran on the University track team, and set his sights on an adventure out west, where he had seen his first mountains on an earlier car trip to Montana with his father. During two of his summer breaks in medical school, he packed his bags and, against his dad's advice, headed to Alaska. These trips planted the seeds for hiking, exploring and climbing that grew over the next 40 years. Ed married Nancy while he was in medical school in 1959, and they moved to Seattle, Washington for his residency at the Virginia Mason Hospital. Ed and Nancy made the very best of their early married years, what with the limited income of a resident and the long hours of work. They built many priceless friendships, began raising a family, embraced their new home "out west" and spent countless weekends camping and exploring. Ed's dad always said that Nancy brought out his more social qualities. Ed was eventually commissioned as a surgeon for the US Army, and served in Frankfurt for several years at the 97th General Hospital. He and Nancy covered every corner of Europe during those years, often with kids in tow, and always with a desire to learn about the local culture and customs. Ed was bitten by the photography bug while in Europe and he took the camera with him almost everywhere he went for the next 20 years, leading to his voluminous slide collection. This is a collection he couldn't wait to share with anyone that happened to drop by the house on Holidays over the years. Ed and family finally settled down in Spokane where he set up an internal medicine and general surgery practice. His boundless energy, curiosity and love of people has had a grand impact on many people in the Spokane area over the years. He wore many hats: doctor, family man, loving husband, great

neighbor, friend, aerobic ambassador to the community. Adept at rotating and juggling them often, with one ending up on the bottom of Spirit lake in a particularly long running joke with his close friends and family. Ed and Nancy built many priceless friendships in Spokane. They always had their door open for friends (and sometimes strangers) to drop in: but it might cost you a stint working in his famous vegetable garden. Ed's knack for including people could get him in hot water though. The perennial multi-family summer backpack trips always had a classic "Ed" episode where he persuaded all ages to go climb the highest mountain in site, regardless of the time of day that the other adults wanted their kids back in camp. Ed's idiosyncrasies are legendary in some circles, from going out for a quick jog and returning with armfuls of litter he had picked up along the way, to asking the "20 questions" of complete strangers as a way to get to know anyone he met. He so loved people, loved to know the personal life stories of all he met. Throughout all is his adult life he was out to find the good in things and make life better for those around him. His grandkids and other children remember him for his Crabwalking skills and animated play times. Most of the Spokane runners community remember being passed by the running doctor with the "winged chicken" left arm movement. True to his nature of pushing people to do their best, he would offer words of encouragement when passing you during a running race. Ed helped organize the 5-mile "heart runs" in Spokane. He played a pivotal supporting role in many of the early Bloomsday races, served as medical director for many years, and eventually served as the Bloomsday Board President. He ran dozens of marathons, yet was most proud of helping Bloomsday grow into the nations top road running event, and to have befriended so many in the Spokane running community. Ed transitioned from private medical practice in the late 1980s and took his surgical skills over to the VAMC for a few years. He eventually settled in at the Spokane Military Entrance Processing Command as the medical director before retiring in 2003. In 2002, Ed married Wendy Miles, and for the last ten years, she has been his source of happiness. Wendy has been at his side as a constant companion and support. Ed always referred to Wendy as his "Wonderful Wife Wendy" and he had tremendous peace of mind because of her love and support. Ed is preceded in death by his first wife of 41 years, Nancy Murphy Rockwell, and their fourth child, Paul. Ed lost Nancy in 1999 as a result of her alzheimer's disease, shortly after their 40th anniversary. He is survived by his wife, Wendy; and his three children, Ann, Matt (Monica) and Tim (Christy Lynn) Rockwell; grandchildren Hannah, Oscar and Stella and Wendy's son Aaron (Monica) and their children Ella and Asa. In lieu of flowers and gifts, the family requests that donations be made to the Spokane Alzheimer's Association at <http://www.alz.org/inlandnorthwest/>. A Memorial service will be held at the Heritage Funeral Home in Spokane on Saturday, January 5th at 1 PM. For those unable to attend, please visit and add to Ed's memorial website at <http://memorialwebsites.legacy.com/edrockwell/> - friends and family can enter their own memories of Ed and share

pictures.