



Passing of Dr. Ronald W. Estabrook

August 7, 2013

To the UT Southwestern Community:

It is with sadness that I write to inform you of the death of Ronald W. Estabrook, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus and longtime Chairman of the Department of Biochemistry at UT Southwestern. He died on Monday, at the age of 87, and he leaves an enduring legacy of important contributions to the field of biochemistry and the development of UT Southwestern into an internationally recognized Medical Center.

Dr. Estabrook was born in Albany, NY on January 3, 1926. He joined the Navy at the age of 17, attended officer's training school at Princeton, and then served as navigator on a ship sweeping minefields in the Pacific. When he returned, he pursued his undergraduate studies at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and then went on for a Ph.D. at the University of Rochester. He did postgraduate work at the University of Pennsylvania and studied at the Molteno Institute at the University of Cambridge.

Dr. Estabrook came to UT Southwestern in 1968 to serve as Chairman of Biochemistry and held the Virginia Lazenby O'Hara Chair in Biochemistry. Under his leadership, the Department became widely known for its outstanding research and education. Dr. Estabrook also served as the first Dean of the UT Southwestern Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences. In 2006 he was named an Ashbel Smith Professor, one of the highest honors bestowed by the UT System Board of Regents for excellence in teaching and scholarship. Dr. Estabrook was elected to the Institute of Medicine in 1975, and in 1979, he became the first UT Southwestern faculty member elected to the National Academy of Sciences.

By the time he arrived at UT Southwestern, recruited by Dr. Charles Sprague, Dr. Estabrook was among the most cited researchers in the country for his breakthrough work on the hemoprotein molecule known as cytochrome P450. His work over the years on the biological functions of cytochrome P450 significantly furthered scientific understanding of how the body metabolizes drugs, pollutants, and environmental chemicals, including carcinogens. After fourteen years as a department chair, Dr. Estabrook stepped down to return full-time to his laboratory and the study of P450 enzymes.

He received numerous awards and honors for his contributions to biochemistry and to medical education, including honorary degrees from the University of Rochester and the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, Sweden. It is fitting that one of the six colleges here at UT Southwestern Medical School is named in his honor, recognizing Dr. Estabrook's decades-long commitment to teaching, research, and service.

Please join me in extending condolences to his wife, June, and their family. A private family service is planned.

Daniel K. Podolsky, M.D.
President, UT Southwestern Medical Center