

## **Obituary, Perry Orlo Stearns**



**Perry Orlo Stearns, MD, MPH**

Dr. Perry Stearns, 84, passed away at his home in Arvada, CO, Sept. 16, 2008. Cause of death was congestive heart failure and complications of metastatic prostate cancer.

Born in Milwaukee, WI., on 26 Nov. 1923, the son of Atty. Perry J. and Mae Belle (Brook) Stearns, Dr. Stearns followed his father and two older brothers in attendance at Harvard College. His schooling was interrupted by WWII when he served in the Navy as leader of an UDT (Underwater Demolition Team), precursor of the US Navy SEALs. Anticipating the invasion, his unit was sailing towards Japan as the atomic bombs were dropped and the war ended. One of the fortunate few among thousands of returning veterans, Stearns was accepted for medical education at Boston University, graduating in 1951. The following year he was in residency at Fitzsimmons Army Hospital, near Denver, Colorado, later serving as Battalion Surgeon in Europe. On return to the States, he completed residency at Sparrows Point Veterans Hospital in Maryland.

After serving his country during two wars Dr. Stearns entered private practice in Stroudsburg, Penn. After practicing in that community for about 10 years and following a summer with a Roman Catholic Church (Dominicans) clinic in Guatemala, he earned his Master's degree in Public Health from Columbia University, New York, in 1964. Following residency in Pennsylvania, among the institutions he worked for were the Maryland Health Department with extended duty in Prince George's County; Dept. Public Health, State of Michigan in Wayne County; and the Arizona Department of Public Health in Maternal and Child Health.

A strong interest in the health implications of the emerging OSHA led Dr. Stearns

to accept employment with several copper companies in Globe and Miami, AZ, where he was instrumental in reconciling work practices with new work rules for the mining industry. Boarded in Public Health and Industrial Medicine, Dr. Stearns spent his last years in practice in Albuquerque, NM, retiring to Arvada, CO. in 2001. In addition to professional memberships and the Rocky Mountain Harvard Club, Stearns was a lifelong Unitarian, most recently a communicant at Jefferson Unitarian of Golden, CO.

Perry married Frances Limberg, daughter of Wayne Limberg and Inez Doris Anderson on 18 May 1946 in Washington, D.C. She survives him along with a son, P. Conrad Stearns, both of Arvada. His oldest son, Forrest Wolfgang, predeceased him in 2007. Also surviving are an older brother David of Las Vegas, NV and a younger sister Rhodora Leyse of Idaho Falls, ID. An older brother, Forest, died in 1999.

Perry was a champion swimmer in his Shorewood WI high school and Harvard years. He loved outdoor activities especially those associated with water. He also enjoyed flower gardening and reading which occupied much of his time since retirement. A quiet and soft-spoken man, he is responsible for several significant reforms in the public health sector. He will be missed by his immediate family as well as by numerous adoring nephews and nieces living in California, Denver, Wisconsin and Virginia. His cremated remains will be committed at Arvada Cemetery, Arvada, CO, in the spring of 2009. At his request, there will be no other ceremony.