



Atrium
Medical Center

FOUNDATION

LEGENDS

FROM THE HILL TO THE ATRIUM

*A Tribute to the Men and Women
Who Made It Happen*

ISSUE 21

William Dwain Langworthy, MD



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William Dwain Langworthy, MD, age 84 – known as “Langer” to family and friends – says he never really retired; he just “faded away

from the scene.” Recruited in 1968 out of his orthopedic residency at the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine by Raymond Kiefhaber, MD, Dr. Langworthy moved his family to Middletown to work for more than 45 years as a beloved friend and trusted colleague of Dr. Kiefhaber at what is now Premier Orthopedics. Dr. Langworthy has been a dedicated supporter of Atrium Medical Center Foundation. In addition to a memorial fund he established for son David, Dr. Langworthy has supported the Foundation’s annual campaigns and recently created an award for specialist physicians, funded by an endowment he established.

During his association with Atrium Medical Center (and its previous iterations as Middletown Hospital and Middletown Regional Hospital), Dr. Langworthy served a term as chief of staff in the early 1980s and also

held the chief of surgery position along the way. In addition, he served on the ethics and finance committees, among others. “But I was never a political animal,” he says. “I was always drafted into service.”

Leaving everyday practice did not end Dr. Langworthy’s medical career. He was still seeing patients two to three half days per week through 2012 and volunteering to help younger partners in the operating room.

“I always loved what I did, and there was nothing I hadn’t seen,” he says, “so why not share my knowledge?” Dr. Langworthy was known for his kindheartedness. He often took younger doctors, and even young people thinking about the medical profession, under his wing, both mentoring and inspiring them. There are physicians in practice today at Atrium Medical Center who remember Dr. Langworthy not only for his expertise but also for his humility, compassion, and generosity of spirit.

From the Farm to Medical School

Dr. Langworthy was born in 1934 during the Great Depression on his parents’ farm outside Salem, Missouri, a small town in the Ozarks, where the physician was paid in bushels of apples for his service. The Langworthy family moved into the town of Salem in 1941. He graduated from high school there in 1952 and went on to graduate from Central College in Fayette in 1956 with a major in mathematics and a minor in physics.

Dr. Langworthy met his wife, Marilyn, in college. They married in 1956. “She was homecoming queen and star of the campus,” he recalls. A tomboy in her youth, Marilyn, also born on a farm, drove a tractor and



didn't shy away from working in the fields with her father. For many years, Marilyn worked as a committee member for the annual Charity Ball, sponsored by the Middletown Area Federation of Women's Clubs. In 1987, she chaired the event. Marilyn was also active in a number of community organizations as well as in the United Methodist Church, an affiliation Dr. Langworthy still enjoys today.

Until the children came, Marilyn was a physical education teacher in the Cincinnati Public Schools. By the time the Langworthys moved to Middletown, they had three children – David (deceased), Cheryl, and Denise. Their fourth child, Deena, was born in Middletown with Rubinstein-Taybi Syndrome, a challenging genetic condition. The Langworthy family has worked – and continues to work diligently – to give Deena a fun and fulfilling life, which includes regular trips to Disney World. Marilyn gave her husband flying lessons for Father's Day one year, and the family kept a small plane at Middletown Regional Airport. After his workday, Dr. Langworthy often took Deena flying along the Ohio River – outings they both enjoyed.

The Langworthy clan also includes five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Marilyn Langworthy died in 2013 at age 77. She is remembered as a devoted wife, mother, and friend, as well as a tireless community supporter. In recent years, Dr. Langworthy and Pat Skimming, a retired nurse and widow of internal medicine physician Louis Skimming, MD, have been enjoying life together. They have known each other since 1968 and have found joy in sharing their lives.

On the Way to Middletown

Dr. Langworthy graduated from medical school at the University of Cincinnati in 1961. After his internship, he served in the Navy for two years, first on a destroyer during the Cuban Missile Crisis, where he tended to the injured aboard ship, and then in a Navy recruiting office. Upon his discharge, Dr. Langworthy returned to Cincinnati to complete a four-year residency in orthopedic surgery. It was there, during grand rounds, that he met his soon-to-be partner, Dr. Kiefhaber.

Asked why he became a physician, Dr. Langworthy explains that when his family moved off the Missouri farm, his mother went to work as an office helper for the physician who had delivered him. Here he got a taste



for what it meant to be a doctor. He knew he didn't want to sit behind a desk all day, and Marilyn encouraged him to apply for medical school. When he was accepted, she worked to help put him through.



Dr. Langworthy himself supplemented the family income by working as a nurse at Cincinnati General Hospital. Due to a major nursing shortage at the time, the hospital was hiring medical students to fill the void. He credits this experience with shaping his lifelong deep respect for the nursing profession.

And why choose orthopedics as a specialty? Dr. Langworthy had a friend who was going into orthopedics. “He impressed me. I liked the idea,” he recounts. “I enjoyed the discipline of the operating room and working with my hands.”

Reflections

Ruminating on the role of physicians and the future of Atrium Medical Center, Dr. Langworthy praises the vision and goal-setting shared by the hospital’s founders and subsequent leaders. He notes, however, that while it takes savvy administrators to run a hospital, the front-line people – the ones who get up in the middle of the night to serve others – are the real heroes. “We’ve always had an advanced medical staff,” he notes.



Looking back at his career, Dr. Langworthy regards orthopedics as a “great profession” in which progress has been phenomenal. “In my early days,” he recalls, “we saw people of all ages with a variety of issues.” Orthopedists relied on pain medications and anti-inflammatories like cortisone injections. Total joint replacement was not widespread in the 1960s and early 1970s. With the advent of new techniques and tools like bone cement, however, the situation changed rapidly, leading to both arthroscopic and microscopic procedures, as well as to a host of specialties and subspecialties from the elbow and hand to the neck, back, foot – and more.

Dr. Langworthy considers medicine the pinnacle of service to humankind. “I like to make people feel good,” he says, “and I have always tried to be honest and ethical. I’m proud of my family,” he continues, “and of my association with Dr. Kiefhaber. To sum it up, I have loved my life.” And there is no doubt that the people around Dr. Langworthy have loved and continue to love him, too.

This article is the 21st in a series of profiles celebrating the 2017 centennial anniversary of Atrium Medical Center (formerly Middletown Hospital and Middletown Regional Hospital). The series honors the men and women whose civic-mindedness and genuine caring for others helped Greater Middletown grow and contributed to the first-class medical center the region boasts today.

Past Legends focused on:

Paul Galeese, *Issue 1*; E.O. Bauer, MD, and John L. Bauer, MD, *Issue 2*; Educating Our Caregivers, *Issue 3*; Russell L. "Rusty" Malcolm, MD, and Albert S. Malcolm, MD, *Issue 4*; Ann and Arthur Bidwell, *Issue 5*; Atrium Auxiliary Middletown, *Issue 6*; Dr. Dick and Charlotte Nisbet, *Issue 7*; The Wilbur Cohen Family, *Issue 8*; Middletown Area Federation of Women's Clubs, *Issue 9*; Dolly Frieman Casper, *Issue 10*; The Sawyer Family, *Issue 11*; Southwest Ohio Businesses, *Issue 12*; Dr. Raymond and Jean Anne Kiefhaber, *Issue 13*; Richard "Dick" Slagle, *Issue 14*; Celebrating 100 Years, *Issue 15*; The Levey Family, *Issue 16*; Walter H. Roehll Jr., MD, *Issue 17*; Atrium Medical Center Foundation, *Issue 18*; The Breiel Family, *Issue 19*; Our Medical Staff, *Issue 20*.

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