

Remembering Dr. Ed Baum



Dr. Ed Baum with a patient, Cathy Humikowski, in 1977. Today she is a pediatric intensive care physician who writes about survivorship and resilience.

It is said that a person who helps a child helps the whole world. If that's true, then the world is a better place because of Dr. Edward S. Baum, who passed away at the age of 83. The world of pediatric oncology has lost one of its most inspiring, caring professionals, but the lives of millions of children and families are richer because of his work.

"Ed would have been successful in any field he chose. We're all just lucky he chose medicine," said Charlie Marino, a parent of one of Dr. Baum's patients in 1975 at Chicago's Children's Memorial Hospital (now the Ann and Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago). "All of the pediatric oncologists there were superb, but Dr. Baum stood apart because of his burning passion to help patients and their families with more than chemotherapy."

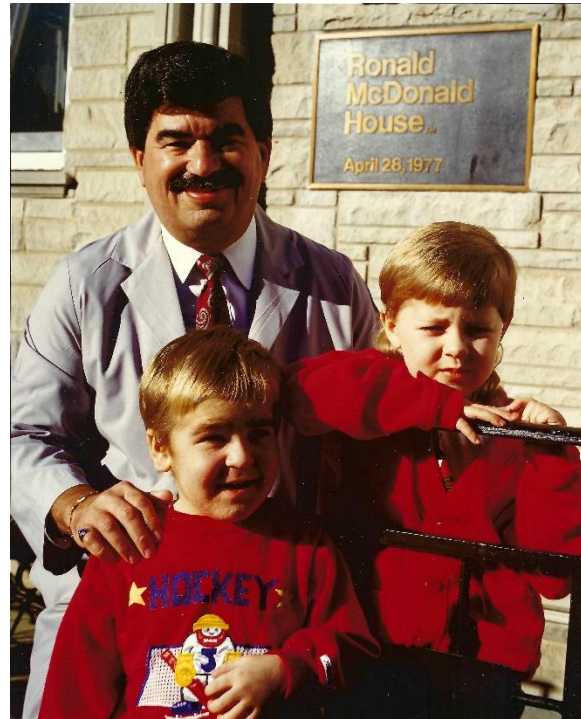
He understood that when a child has cancer, parents wanted to stay by their side at all costs. But they were hard pressed to manage that, when they needed a place to rest, take a shower, share a meal and strengthen themselves for the next day at the hospital.

And so Ed and Charlie joined with McDonald's Owner/Operator Bill Chunowitz as Founders of the first Ronald McDonald House in Chicago, and the second in the world, in 1977. "Dr. Baum was my mentor," recalled Bill. "He was such a motivator who cared so much about helping others -- a pioneer with a vision, always looking for ways to do more. He just didn't sit still."

Ed had an uncanny way to connect with people. He believed that if a system of support for families with seriously-ill children could happen in Chicago, it could happen anywhere. Over the next several years, Ed traveled the country with Jimmy Murray, one of the Founders of the first Ronald McDonald House in Philadelphia, making hundreds of presentations to medical professionals, parents, and McDonald's Owner/Operators and other potential donors, who formed the foundation of support in cities nationwide.

"Ed knew that people would trust you when you do good things. They'll get on your bandwagon – especially when you're giving back and helping others," said Chunowitz. "And so he inspired people from all walks of life, who opened their arms to help."

But Dr. Baum didn't stop there. He also led the creation of Camp One Step at a Time in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, the first camp for children with cancer in the Midwest. He felt very strongly that even chemotherapy, blood monitoring and other medical needs should not prevent children from having a normal camping experience. And once again he energized others, as similar camps opened nationwide. In fact, he appeared on the *Oprah* show with four patients talking about the camp. Ed wrote: "One hundred years from now it won't matter what kind of car I drove or house I lived in, what will matter is that I, Ed Baum, and One



Dr. Baum and kids at the opening of the first Ronald McDonald House in Chicago in 1977.

Step at a Time Camp were important in the lives of our campers, counselors, leaders and supporters.”

He supported another project, the American Dream Flight, after two of his patients had died. One of the dads was an American Airlines pilot, who secured a plane every 18 months to transport children, parents, chaperones and medical personnel to Disney World and Sea World, with hotel rooms, meals and VIP passes to the parks all donated. Especially in those years when life expectancy for cancer patients was much shorter than today, Dr. Baum wanted to find ways to bring as much joy into their lives as he could.

Ed’s path to medicine was indirect. His undergraduate degree was in Business Statistics from the University of Oklahoma, and for several years he worked for the Bendix Corporation doing pioneering computer work. Longtime friend and fraternity brother Stan Rosenfield described how much his years in Pi Lambda Phi meant to him and his pride in winning its highest honor for lifetime achievement, the Big Pi Award, in 2000.

Ed left Bendix to enter medical school at the University of Missouri, followed by U.S. Army pediatric training in El Paso, Texas, and an Army-sponsored pediatric hematology-oncology fellowship program at Denver Children's Hospital. Dr. Torrey Mitchell remembers training with Ed in Denver. “He was larger than life -- both loved and respected by co-workers. He was a stickler for detail, tough on nurses and resident physicians, making sure his patients received proper treatment.” Following his fellowship, Ed completed military active duty at Ft. Bliss in El Paso. He transferred to the Army Medical Corps reserves, later retiring with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.



At the Opening Dedication of the Ronald McDonald House near Lurie Children's Hospital in Chicago in 2012. (L to R) Charlie Marino, Dr. Ed Baum, Jimmy Murray and Bill Chunowitz.

He joined the faculty of Northwestern University Medical School and the staff of Children's Memorial Hospital in 1974, retiring as Professor Emeritus of Pediatrics (Hematology, Oncology, and Stem Cell Transplantation), from Northwestern's Feinberg School of Medicine. "Dr. Baum had immense love and passion for the children and families he cared for, and expected the same commitment and level of expertise of everyone that he demanded of himself," said Dr. Stewart Goldman, Division Head of Oncology,

Neuro Oncology, Hematology & Stem Cell Transplant at Lurie Children's Hospital. "He was a gentle giant, assuring the best for all aspects of holistic treatment for the children under his care. He was and will always remain a role model for those in the field of Oncology." Other awards Ed received included "Father of the Year" award from the City of Chicago in 1980, and the "As They Grow" award from Parents Magazine in 1991, for which he appeared on the *Today* show. In 1998 he received the Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from Aurora University for compassionate service to children.

When Ed and his beloved wife Ann moved to Charlotte, North Carolina, in 1993 he saw that his new home town did not have a Ronald McDonald House, yet the need was there. Saying "I have one more House in me," he formed the same kind of group of supporters as in Chicago: parents, medical professionals, hospitals, McDonald's Owner/Operators and other donors, and led the effort to build the 305th



A Gala for the opening of Ronald McDonald House of Charlotte (With Ronald, L to R) Jimmy and Dianne Murray, Ed and Ann Baum.

House in the global system, which opened on May 9, 2011.

Ed passed away October 3, 2020 with Ann at his side, and is also survived by five children: David (Julie), Daniel (Abigail), Jacqueline Peterson (Tad), Gabrielle Kramer (Martin), and Mark (Kristi), and 16 grandchildren. He battled Parkinson's disease for 30 years and, true to his indefatigable spirit, courageously inspired others with his fortitude right until the end. He will be buried in Arlington National Cemetery.



Left to Right with Ronald McDonald at the 40th Anniversary of the first Chicago Ronald McDonald House: Bill Chunowitz, Dr. Ed Baum and Charlie Marino.

Charlie Marino summed up Dr. Baum's life-changing influence. "Ed took such wonderful care of our daughter Gage, who survived leukemia and went on to live a full, beautiful life. But that was just the beginning. My wife Gay and I felt we had been given a miracle, and we wanted to pay it back by finding a way to help other families -- they needed a little house near the hospital where they could be near their children. Ed said, 'We beat cancer -- we can do this, too.' And he was right."

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Ronald McDonald House Charities of Chicagoland & Northwest Indiana: <https://rmhccni.org/donate/>, Ronald McDonald House of Charlotte: <https://www.rmhofcharlotte.org/donate.html> or Camp One Step at a Time <https://camponestep.org/donate/> On-line condolences may be shared at www.mcewenpinevillechapel.com