



Estelle Phyllis von Wachtel-Torres

October 11, 1919 - May 12, 2012

Wachtel-Torres, M.D., Estelle Phyllis

Leesburg, VA

Age 92, died Saturday, May 12, 2012 at Evangelical Home - Saline. Estelle was born October 11, 1919 in Chicago, IL, the daughter of Stanley Zenon Wachtel of Lwów Poland and Gertrude Wieckowska of Chicago. Estelle attended Wayne State University Medical School where she met Raul M. Torres, M.D. and married him on May 1, 1943. They conducted their combined OB/Gyn-Surgical medical clinic in Hamtramck, raised four daughters in Detroit and entertained family and friends at their cottage on Lake Michigan, located at the old Getts Farm Zoo in Holland. Dr. Estelle Torres is preceded in death by her husband Raul and her daughter Alicia R. Petrucci. The tragic and sudden loss of her youngest daughter this past Christmas Eve left Estelle disconsolate. Dr. Torres is survived by her daughters Estelle Phyllis Torres-Bessette M.D., Mary Irene Wachtel-Torres de Pearlman, M.D. and Paula Marcella Torres-Stein, M.D. and her much appreciated son-in-laws Mel Pearlman, M.D., David Stein, M.D., and Dennis Petrucci. Estelle's six grandchildren will truly miss her: Angie McKee (Scott), Jennifer Spitael (Jeroen), Christy Hughes, Lisa Pearlman, Allan Pearlman and Erik Stein. Estelle's six great-grandchildren were a source of sheer delight: Duncan, Connor & Grace McKee and Ian, Sofie and Cameron Spitael. Dr. Torres' transgenerational and transcontinental friendships were a testimonial to her unique style, warm spirit and cosmopolitan perspective. Estelle was a lifelong participant in American-Polonian activities including: Friends of Polish Art (Detroit), Polish American Arts Association (Washington, D.C.) and the American Council for Polish Culture. A celebration of Estelle's life will be held on Saturday, August 11, 2012 at the American Polish Cultural Center in Troy for all to share good food, good memories and drink. Please- in lieu of flowers- memorial contributions may be made to one of the following organizations:

Wayne State University Medical School Scholarship Fund

E.P. Torres/R.M. Torres Endowed Medical Loan Fund (code #601611)

c/o Rebecca Geisler

4201 St. Antoine

Mailbox 253
University Health Center 6F-12
Detroit, MI 48201

ACPC Literary Competition/Scholarship Fund
The American College for Polish Culture, Inc.
c/o Mary Ellen Tyszka
27562 David Givens
Warren, MI 48092-3533
www.polishcultureacpc.org

Inquiries regarding Estelle's celebration of life or memorial contributions may be made to estellememorial@gmail.com.

The Autobiography of Estelle Phyllis von Wachtel-Torres, M. D.

Estelle Phyllis von Wachtel-Torres was the only child of Pioneers of the Professional Polish Stage in the United States and Pioneers of Polish Radio Broadcasting in Detroit, Michigan. She was born in Chicago, Illinois, as was her mother, Gertrude Irene Wiéckowska. Her father, Stanley Zenon Wachtel, however, was born and educated in Lwów before arriving in this country in 1912. When Estelle's parents met they realized that they were ideal for each other in the amateur theatrical circles where they first performed. Without much ado, they got married in 1914 and set about establishing professional reparatory acting troupes with whom they acted full time in the Polish Theaters of Chicago of which there were twelve in that day. When their baby, Stasia, was born in 1919, the young family ventured forth to try new venues in Detroit, Cleveland, Newark and Buffalo. At each fresh location they encountered audiences thrilled to witness plays in Polish performed by such exhilarating young actors. Stanley took on the mantle of producer, director, actor and playwright, while Gertrude assumed the multiple tasks of logistics, properties, costuming and acting. Their stage life became the life of their daughter. She felt part of the troupe, performing and reacting on command. Fellow actors treated the little one among them affectionately and she thought them part of her family. Not unexpectedly, she knew no English until she started kindergarten. In 1928 the Government of Poland awarded Stanley Zenon Wachtel its Polonia Restituta Medal of Honor in recognition of his role in the preservation of Polish Culture and Language in the United States. The Wachtel family effected a major life style change when they embarked on careers in Polish language Radio work in 1933. Stanley debuted on Detroit's Station WEXL on the Ted Zajac Evening Program with a series of his original detective mysteries. The plays became wildly popular and quickly engagements on the Jarosz Morning Program on

Station WMBC followed, then the Leskiewicz morning hour at WJBK. This was the heyday of Polish radio and Stasia found herself in the thick of it. At 15, teenager Stasia was the moderator of a Saturday children's program called "Prszyjaciolka Stasia." In her best Polish, she entertained youthful listeners with scripted stories, poetic recitations, educational quizzes and cleverly worded riddles. After a whole summer's run, The Lutnia Cultural and Singing Society of Detroit presented Stasia with a handsomely engraved medal for her work with Polish American Children. The premier Polish Radio program, hit the air about 1939 when John Lord Booth of Station WJLB, called upon Mr. Wachtel to literally conjure up a spectacular Morning Variety Program for the new station. He was given a full studio orchestra, magnificent vocalists, Reiter connected news commentators and a cast of experienced actors to work with. The resulting enterprise was a commercial and cultural triumph. But it came to an abrupt end in 1944 when all foreign programming was suspended for national security reasons. It was, also, time for Stasia, Estelle now, to pay attention to her new obligations at Wayne State University College of Medicine. Estelle's studies did not entirely preclude her involvement with Polish American organizations. She continued membership in such Fraternals as the Polish National Alliance and the Polish Falcons; she had been an officer in the Filaret Society for three years and remained actively supportive of it. At Wayne, she met classmate Raul Marcelino Torres whom she married in their senior year. After completing medical training, they established their practices in Detroit. They raised four daughters who attended their Alma Mater in that city. Aside from their respective medical societies, they became active members of the Polish American Medical Dental Arts Club, The Friends of Polish Art Club of Detroit and the Kosciusko Foundation. Estelle Wachtel-Torres, M.D. became custodian of the Wachtel vast library of manuscripts, plays, professional photographs, and theatrical\radio artifacts after the demise of her mother, Gertrude Wieckowska Wachtel. Estelle capably assisted Dr. Emil Orzechowski of the Jagiellonian University in collating material for his book published in Poland, "Teatr Polonijny W Stanach Zjednoczonych" in 1989. All matters relating to works of Stanley Zenon Wachtel are archived at the Burton Historical Library of the Main Public Library of Detroit. The Stanley Wachtel Collection is catalogued at the US Library of Congress. Estelle Wachtel-Torres again provided the primary source material about Polish Radio Broadcasting in Michigan to Joseph Migala for his thorough review published in the United States in 1987. The organization AMERICARES offered Dr. Estelle in 1990 a vital opportunity to assist the poor and disadvantaged in Poland. Jan Wydro, it's Polonian coordinator, invited her to join in its Christmas Airlift of gifts and candy bars for children in hospitals and orphanages in Warsaw. She was enjoined on that first visit to help implement a program of distributing gluten free milk to children with phenylketonuria. Following fundraising, publicity events, and two visits to the Poznan Pediatric institute of Endocrinology, the distribution system was successfully launched and maintained. In retirement, Estelle served on the Board of

Directors of the Friends of Polish Art for three years where she initiated the first PAAA Short Story Competition. She was a sustaining member of the Michigan Opera Company, The Founders Society of the Detroit Art Museum, The Copernicus Society at Univ. of Michigan, The Ambassador's Club at Orchard Lake, the John Paul II Foundation of Michigan, and the American institute of Polish Culture in Miami. After moving to Virginia, Estelle became a board member of the Polish American Arts Association of Washington, and its president in 1999, 2000, 2002. 2004. She was editor of the PAAA Bimonthly illustrated Newsletter for seven years. The Polish American Congress presented Estelle with a Certificate honoring her leadership of the PAAA. Estelle von Wachtel-Torres, MD, the title, she adopted socially in retirement, was involved with the American Council for Polish Culture since 1986, serving on the Board of Directors for 7 years. In 2004 the Council honored her work with bestowing upon her its prestigious Founders Award. She served on the Board of The American Center of Polish Culture for 5 years. In 2004 The Polish American Historical Society recognized her with a certificate for "her contribution to understanding the Polish Experience in the United States". She maintained a sustaining interest in The John Paul II Foundation, The Polish Library, The Polish American Health Association, The Polish American Congress (Metro Division), and The Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences. Later, the activities she attended to included The Literary Competition Committee of the ACPC which she had chaired since its inception in 1996 and The PAAA Scholarship Award project which she had chaired annually since 1999.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life Service

AUG 11. 2:00 PM - 5:00 PM (ET)

American Polish Cultural Center
Troy, MI

Tribute Wall

SS

“ *Suzanne Szlag sent a virtual gift in memory of Estelle Phyllis von Wachtel-Torres*



suzanne szlag - June 27, 2012 at 10:30 PM

SS

Such a warm and caring person who was always so kind. When I had to go see her as a child the fear went away the moment I saw that face. Dr. Estelle would be so proud to know that her daughter Dr. Bessette gave her patients the same warm and caring feeling that her mom gave to us. What a wonderful family. God Bless you all.

suzanne szlag - June 27, 2012 at 10:34 PM

BB

“ *Barbara Butkis lit a candle in memory of Estelle Phyllis von Wachtel-Torres*



Barbara Butkis - June 06, 2012 at 12:44 PM

BB

My family and I have the fondest memories shared with Estelle both as a caring physician and loving friend. She will be dearly missed.

Barbara Butkis - June 06, 2012 at 01:08 PM

EJ

“ *Our heart felt sympathy goes out to the family and friends of Dr. Estelle. We were patients of Dr.'s Raul, Estelle and Phyllis. Thank you for extending the opportunity to share in the memories. Always there to calm your fears when the children were sick. I remember once when my husband was on strike, we got a little behind on a bill. No problem Mrs. Jones...we have four daughters..we'll just repossess your son ! To coin a phrase "They just don't make'em like that any more!" My husband and I have spoken of them often. So many memories, indeed!*

God Bless

Gary and Wilma Jones

Edw. Gary and Wilma Jones - June 05, 2012 at 09:27 AM

AN

“ *Antoinette Nowicki lit a candle in memory of Estelle Phyllis von Wachtel-Torres*



Antoinette Nowicki - June 04, 2012 at 09:55 AM

AN

Dr. Estelle treated many of my family members and friends. She will be remembered very fondly.

Antoinette Nowicki - June 04, 2012 at 09:57 AM

SN

“ *We will remember Dr. Estelle forever. She was the Queen of Queens. How very gracious and humble she was - a truly spiritual being through and through. A faithful daughter to her parents, husband Raul, children, patients, friends, and especially to her homeland of Poland. One fond memory of her was when our family shared a special holiday meal together with her in 1985. She brought the little buttered lamb which graced our Easter table. After dinner, our nephews played traditional Armenian music on their instruments, and we gathered around them with much pride, and Dr. Estelle laughed and smiled with great delight. As I write this little tribute to her, I'm actually in the room where we sat enjoying each other's company. May Dr. Estelle's family and her extended family of friends feel much comfort and peace in knowing that she touched so many lives all around the world. We love you Estelle.*



Sincerely,

Alice & Sandi Nigoghosian of Detroit, Michigan.

Sandra Nigoghosian - May 25, 2012 at 11:31 PM

FO

“ *1 file added to the album New Album Name*



foofie - May 20, 2012 at 09:01 PM

FO

“ 1 file added to the album *New Album Name*



foofie - May 20, 2012 at 08:58 PM

DT

“ 1 file added to the album *New Album Name*



Dr. T-S - May 18, 2012 at 04:24 PM

DT

“ 1 file added to the album *New Album Name*



Dr. T-S - May 18, 2012 at 04:22 PM

DH

“ 1 file added to the album *New Album Name*



Dr. & Mrs. Ulli Hierlwimmer - May 18, 2012 at 04:02 PM

JS

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Jen Spitael - May 16, 2012 at 12:58 PM

PT

“ 1 file added to the album *New Album Name*



Paula M. Torres-Stein, M.D. - May 15, 2012 at 03:21 PM

LL

I remember Dr. Torres when I worked at North Detroit General Hospital-She was very professional and yet very kind.

L. Lindsey - June 04, 2012 at 11:25 AM