



**Howard Haldeman Steel, MD, PhD**  
1921-2018\*

Howard H. Steel passed away on September 5, 2018, in Kalispell, Montana. Howard and his family enjoyed a long relationship with northern Montana and Glacier National Park, and were just completing their annual summer trip when he became ill. He was vital and engaged throughout his 97 years.

Howard was born in Philadelphia on April 17, 1921. Two weeks later he and his family moved to Atlantic City, where his father developed a confectionery business. Steel Fudge is still in existence and is the oldest family-owned business in the Atlantic City community.

Howard and his brother Paul were orphaned when he was 7. He was “raised” by the Guarantee Bank & Trust Company in Atlantic City. Following completion of high school, he moved on to Colgate University, where he majored in chemistry. Howard excelled academically while immersing himself in “the Colgate experience.” He lettered in hockey, football, and track, and served as Class President and President of the Theta Chi fraternity. He maintained his commitment to Colgate University as a trustee beginning in 1972.

Howard fondly recalled his Colgate years and his lifelong relationship with Andy Rooney, his college roommate and friend.

Howard entered Temple University School of Medicine in an accelerated post-war program and graduated in 2.5 years. He continued his postgraduate training at Temple, completing his residency in 1951 before joining the orthopaedic faculty. He became Chief Surgeon at Shriners Hospital in Philadelphia in 1965 and held that position until 1986. He remained Chief Emeritus until 2010. He directly participated in the education of hundreds of residents and thousands of medical students. The education and mentorship of others was certainly one of his special talents. His former residents are proud to have been part of that unique experience, and the vast majority have maintained a lifelong friendship with their “Chief.”

Howard achieved several advanced degrees, including his PhD in anatomy. He presented his thesis, “Anatomical Mechanical Considerations of Traumatic Interruption of the Atlanto-Axial Articulation,” as part of his introduction into the American Orthopaedic Association (AOA) in 1962. In 2013, he was honored by the AOA at their annual meeting in Denver, in tribute to his 50 years of membership.

Howard authored and coauthored over 100 peer-reviewed articles, 40 of which appeared in *The Journal of Bone & Joint Surgery*. His writing style was characterized as “facile, deft, and humorous, a wonderful and colorful addition to scientific writing.” He lectured worldwide, and for his unique incorporation of humor was referred to as “the Bob Hope of Orthopaedics.”

His surgical innovations included the triple osteotomy of the innominate bone, which is often referred to as the “Steel osteotomy.” This procedure was designed to address hip dysplasia in older patients and revolutionized the surgical management of that patient group. He played an integral part in the development of the internal hemipelvectomy for treatment of malignant tumors of the pelvis with limb preservation.

Howard was a renaissance man. He was a devoted scholar with a long list of interests and talents. He was a voracious reader and was dedicated to the expansion of his knowledge on a daily basis. He was an accomplished sportsman, sailor, fly fisherman, horseman, downhill skier, skater, and organizer of sports activities.

Dr. Steel organized and established the Eastern Orthopaedic Association in 1970. With justifiable pride, he has watched it mature into a valued and respected regional organization.

A sustained part of the Steel legacy will be the Howard Steel Orthopaedic Foundation, which was established in 1981 by a group of grateful patients. Eight separate orthopaedic organizations have benefited through its funded lecture-ship directed to topics outside of medicine and dedicated to Howard’s goal of broadening the educational scope of orthopaedists.

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Howard is survived by his devoted wife of 54 years, Elizabeth Clack Steel (“Betty Jo”) and their children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren.

Howard Steel will be remembered fondly at many levels, including for his surgical talents; his clinical skills; his ability to

engage patients, students, and residents; his unique humor; his thirst for knowledge; and especially for his love of friends, family, and life. His was a life well-lived.

*T.L.S.*

*G.P.D.*