



## HOWARD ALLEN PEARSON

### “Spirit of ‘51” Award

**H**oward, your positive impact on the world has been extraordinary. As a medical pioneer in pediatric hematology and oncology you have saved countless lives. Your inspiring work as a founder and builder of The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp (THITWGC) has enriched the lives of thousands of children with cancer and other life-threatening diseases. You have risen to the top of your field as a superb teacher, clinical researcher, patient care practitioner, and as president of its professional organization, the American Academy of Pediatrics. Wherever you have been involved, you have made a vital difference.

Your remarkable career started right here in Hanover where you were one of 24 members of our class hand-picked by then-Dean Rolf Syvertsen for admission to Dartmouth’s two-year medical school. The special bonds forged within that group and with the wives of its members are as strong today as they were 66 years ago.

You finished your medical degree at Harvard. From there your path led to stops at the U.S. Naval Hospital in Bethesda, Maryland; the University of Florida (where you became a full professor in six years); and finally at Yale. You spent 40 years at Yale, 13 of them as Chair of Pediatrics.

Two examples illustrate your important contributions to pediatric medicine. You devised early techniques for diagnosis and treatment of sickle cell anemia in young children that saved the lives of many of them. Similarly, you spearheaded changes in established practice that reduced the incidence of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome by 40-50 percent.

You have said that being called “Doc” at THITWGC is the proudest title you’ve ever had. The heart-warming story of your involvement with the camp began when the actor Paul Newman was searching for a medical director to help implement his vision for such a place. You dove in and quickly addressed the many sensitive strategic, political, and medical issues to be planned for and dealt with. The camp had to be built (you enlisted the dean of Yale’s School of Architecture). Campers had to be recruited. Perhaps most important, the special place that Newman envisioned called for creating a rare esprit, an inspiring atmosphere.

You spent the next 12 summers at THITWGC, helping to fashion that unique place. The original mandate expanded to include not only children with cancer but also those with serious blood diseases like sickle cell anemia and hemophilia. Later, young HIV/AIDS sufferers were added. You saw the need to involve parents of the campers, as well as their healthy siblings who too often felt left out by their parents’ focus on the sick child.

As for esprit, the camp soon buzzed with clowns, animals, and ziplines. Hugs were encouraged. The name “infirmary” gave way to The OK Corral. You were featured on stage as the rear end of a horse. You carved nine large, whimsical totem poles (painted by your wife Anne) that captured the special qualities of the place. In combination, these many imaginative ingredients helped thousands of kids to heal emotionally. One camper summed up his experience in these five words: “Camp makes my heart blossom!”

We salute you today not just for the lives and spirits you have enriched or for your gamechanging contributions to pediatric medicine. You stand out as well for your rare human qualities – your “just plain decency.” We are proud to present you with our Spirit of ‘51 Award.

*Hanover, New Hampshire*

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