

CU's medical campus remembers Dr. Chip Ridgway as a humble helpful man

By Corrie Sahling

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The flag at Anschutz Medical Campus flew at half-staff on July 31 to honor a man who never gave himself credit.

Dr. E. Chester "Chip" Ridgway died at age 72 from pancreatic cancer at his home in Greenwood Village, surrounded by family.

Ridgway wore many hats, including as head of the Division of Endocrinology at the University of Colorado School of Medicine from 1985 to 2007. But his colleagues remember him as much more.

"He was probably one of the greatest leaders in endocrinology in the country," said Dr. Bryan Haugen, professor of medicine and head of the Division of Endocrinology, Metabolism and Diabetes.

Haugen said that as he trained under Ridgway, their relationship went from mentor to colleague to friend.

His colleagues say he never had a visible ego.

"It was never about him; it was always about the person he was talking to," Haugen said. "He was always walking in their shoes."

Robert Anderson, senior associate dean for education at the CU school, called Ridgway a "terrific individual."

"There was not an ounce of selfishness about him. He was a big giver, no taker in him," Anderson said.

Some credit Ridgway's attitude to his upbringing — born in 1942 in Cody, Wyo., he had a whole other life as a true Westerner, according to Lilly Marks, executive vice chancellor at the CU school.

Elk Creek Ranch in Sunlight Valley is Ridgway's family's ranch. He helped start the ranch, and blazed many of the riding trails on his horse, Strip, used in the summer riding program offered there for teenagers.

"I wish I would have ridden horses with him," Haugen said. The two rode bikes together — Ridgway loved biking and even completed the Triple Bypass, a 120-mile ride which goes over three mountain passes, at 70 years old.

Marks said that Ridgway's accomplishments speak for themselves, and that the medical school feels blessed to have him.

"He was more than smart," she said. "He was wise."

With a degree in philosophy, Ridgway completed a pre-med program at Dartmouth College before attending CU medical school. He went to Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston for his internship, residency and fellowship and spent two years with the Navy as a medical officer.

He is survived by his three children, Emily, Eli, and Abi; his brother Hap; and his longtime friend and partner, Carla Donelson.

There will be a celebration of Ridgway's life on Friday at 2 p.m. at the Anschutz Medical Campus in Aurora. The memorial will be held in the Education 2 South building, in Auditorium Room 11