



## **Philip O. Lichtblau, M.D., Award**

### History:

Dr. Lichtblau was born on October 13, 1921 in New Jersey and graduated from Tulane Medical School, Class of 1945. He then served in the United States Navy in WWII in the Pacific as a ship's surgeon without formal training due to the urgency of the times. There is an anecdote of his performing an appendectomy on board a small ship while being directed through a radio by a surgeon who was airborne. This was a medical highlight of his wartime experience.

After WWII he directed his attention to Orthopedics during a time before the founding of formal residency programs. He spent 7 years in training and practice at the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York City with completion of his training in 1953. After leaving New York City, he relocated to West Palm Beach where he provided orthopedic care from 1953 until his death on December 5, 2001. In addition to his many positions and achievements in his discipline, Dr. Lichtblau contributed wholeheartedly and willingly to provide care to all with equity regardless of their ability to pay. Some significant features to highlight a little of the measure of his contributions include:

- Dr. Lichtblau was a social innovator and had the first non-segregated office practice in Palm Beach County in the early 1950's – long before Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech in 1963.
- He mixed the poor with the affluent and took care of everyone with the same outstanding attention and expertise.
- The late, great African American Henry (Hank) Aaron chose Dr. Lichtblau as one of his doctors in the 1950's.

### Dr. Lichtblau's Contributions:

He worked in his office until the last day of his life – seeing 17 patients that final day prior to his stroke at the age of 80 years.

He was accepted by all in his community and was considered an exceptional community role model as one of the last of an era of physicians; he was non-confrontational with a great sense of humor, a smile and a twinkle in his eye.

He served as CMS Medical Director for Palm Beach County for almost three decades (1953-2001) – leading the care for those children who needed help the most.

He filled numerous leadership positions over the years as Chief of Orthopedics, Chief of Surgery, and Chief of the Medical Staff at St. Mary's Hospital in West Palm Beach.



His unique ability as a member of the Jewish community is highlighted in a vignette in which he was even invited to give a eulogy for a deceased priest. As others recall it from St. Edwards Parish, Dr. Lichtblau rose to the pulpit and, with that rare combination of humor, respect, and equality, he said: "Father, I don't know why I am here in the pulpit..." Then, he went on to eulogize a member of another faith but with whom he strongly believed he shared the same humanity.

These are only a few of the many contributions which made Dr. Lichtblau such a salient character in the advancement of the medical field.

Both as an orthopedist and child advocate, he was respected by nurses, staff, administrators, his fellow physicians and his community. He demonstrated a perfect blend of both medical knowledge and political acumen. He adroitly proved consummate diplomatic skill in navigating the mine fields of medical practice and the health care community to make it better. Numerous children from Palm Beach benefited from his leadership of the CMS program for many years under his guidance and for many years to follow. His legacy is most noticeably seen in the thousands of children who grew up to become more self-assured and healthier adults.