

Evelyn E. Watson, 1928–2016

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Evelyn E. Watson, an internationally recognized expert in internal radionuclide dosimetry, passed away on November 4, 2016, at the age of 87. Evelyn's life story is truly remarkable and inspiring, ascending to the pinnacle of her field as a *self-taught* nuclear scientist.

Virginia Evelyn Egner was born on December 15, 1928, in Corbin, KY, to Edgar Mattison Egner and Bertha Mayfield Egner. One of 3 children, she grew up in Kentucky and attended Cumberland College (Williamsburg, KY), receiving an AA in English and Chemistry in 1946. She continued her education at Lincoln Memorial University (Harrogate, TN) and then at the University of Kentucky at Lexington, earning a BA in English in 1949. She then worked in the Kentucky public school system, first as a mathematics and science teacher at Lynch High School and then as an office manager for Whitley County schools. She married Earl Greene Watson on November 10, 1953, and the couple relocated to Oak Ridge, TN, which would become her adopted and beloved hometown. Evelyn and Earl's daughter, Nancy Eileen Watson, arrived on January 12, 1955, and their son, Philip Allen Watson, on August 4 of the next year.

In 1959, Oak Ridge Associated Universities (ORAU) hired Evelyn as a record clerk, beginning a 35-year career that would culminate in an indelible legacy in radionuclide dosimetry. At ORAU and under the mentorship of Roger Cloutier, a fellow pioneer in the field of radionuclide dosimetry, Evelyn assiduously taught herself nuclear science and radiation biology. Through her self-education, she became a research associate and laboratory technician in the Radiation Safety Office at ORAU. Her work for the following decades would focus on nuclear medicine, specifically, radiation dosimetry. In 1974, she succeeded her mentor and went on to become the program director for the Radiation Internal Dose Information Center (RIDIC) in 1988. There she mentored Michael Stabin, PhD, James Stubbs, PhD, and Richard Sparks, PhD, among many others. That same year she coauthored the *MIRD Primer* as a member of the Medical Internal Radiation Dosimetry (MIRD) Committee of SNM.

She retired from ORAU in 1994 but continued to serve on the MIRD Committee as chair from 1994 to 2006. She was a mentor and role model for a number of its members, among them Stephen Thomas, PhD (who succeeded Evelyn as MIRD Committee chair), Wesley Bolch, PhD, Darrell Fisher, PhD, Roger Howell, PhD, Jeffrey Siegel, PhD, and



Barry Wessels, PhD. After stepping down as chair of the committee, Evelyn traveled the world, attending conferences on radiation dosimetry and related topics for many years.

During her 35-year career at ORAU, Evelyn received numerous scientific awards and held a number of extramural leadership positions. In 1981, she received the Distinguished Service Award from the East Tennessee Chapter of the Health Physics Society. In the same year, she became an associate editor of *The Journal of Nuclear Medicine*. She regularly served as a consultant to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration Radiopharmaceutical Advisory Committee and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. She was also an active member of the Oak Ridge Chapter of the Scientific Research Society, the Health Physics Society, and the Association for Women in Science.

In 1993, near the end of her professional career, Evelyn received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the East Tennessee Chapter of the Health Physics Society. At her retirement as program director of RIDIC in 1994, she was honored with the Lifetime Scientific Achievement Award from the East Tennessee Chapter of the Association for Women in Science as the inaugural recipient of this honor. Even after retirement, Evelyn was recognized with numerous awards and honors. In 2000, she received the Marshall Brucer Award for Distinguished Service to the Nuclear Medicine Community from the Southeastern Chapter of the SNM. In honor of her outstanding leadership of RIDIC and her seminal contributions to the field, she received the SNM's Loevinger–Berman Award for Excellence in Medical Internal Radiation Dosimetry in 2007.

Generations of physicians and scientists owe an eternal debt to Evelyn for her contributions to and leadership in the field of internal dosimetry. In addition to being an outstanding and visionary scientist, she was a devoted wife, mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother. Those of us fortunate enough to have known Evelyn personally will forever remember her as one of the kindest and most gracious individuals we had ever met. As so aptly stated by James Adelstein, MD, PhD, Evelyn "...combined the charm and grace of a southern belle with the incisive mind of a knowledgeable scientist." We mourn the passing of a truly beloved colleague but are buoyed by our good fortune in having known her.

Biographical information provided by Jayme Watson, granddaughter of Evelyn Watson, is gratefully acknowledged.