Ralph Spencer Overman

June 30, 1916 — September 10, 1953

Ralph Overman was born in Huron, South Dakota on June 30, 1916. He was brought up in Urbana, Illinois where he attended the public schools and graduated from Urbana High School in June, 1934. During his high school days he was very active in Boy Scout work and became an Eagle Scout. Dr. Overman was graduated from the University of Illinois in 1938 with a B.S. degree. He continued his education at the University of Wisconsin where he received degrees of M.S. and in 1942 a Ph.D. in Biochemistry. While at Wisconsin he worked under Professor Karl Paul Link and participated actively in the isolation and synthesis of the coumarin derivative, Dicumarol. These studies were reported in a very significant series of publications and the use of Dicumarol, the first of the coumarin derivatives to be used as an anticoagulant, opened up enormous new vistas in the study of blood clotting mechanisms and in the treatment of thromboembolic diseases of the heart and blood vessels. Dr. Overman was coauthor in a number of these reports.

In 1942, Dr. Overman joined the staff of the Maltine Company of Brooklyn as Assistant Director of Research for this organization. While there he was instrumental in the further development of preparations, including thromboplastin, which were of value in the study and treatment of thromboembolic conditions.

In 1946, he became associated with the Vascular Research Laboratory of the Department of Medicine of the Cornell University Medical College and the New York Hospital, here working closely with Dr. Irving S. Wright. He acted as Chief of the Laboratory for this research group with the title of Assistant Professor of Biochemistry in Medicine. During the remainder of his life he made numerous scientific contributions in his chosen field.


Dr. Overman was a member of the American Chemical Society, the New York Academy of Science, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, The Harvey Society, and the scientific fraternities of Sigma Xi, Alpha Chi Sigma, Phi Lambda Upsilon and Gamma Alpha.

Dr. Overman was married to Josefina Maldonado.

Dr. Overman was an investigator of outstanding integrity. His contribution in education was largely confined to graduate fellows and the resident physicians of the New York Hospital staff. He was a wise counselor and many young men turned to him for advice in all types of problems dealing with the mechanism and pathogenesis of blood clotting. He was ever willing to share with these young men and his older confreres his knowledge and carefully conceived thoughts in these fields.

The work of Dr. Overman has been of a permanent nature and information which he has contributed will be used throughout the civilized world for many years to come. He was seriously ill for months prior to his untimely end. His confreres record with deep regret the passing of this fine man and splendid investigator before he had achieved the high goals which he had set for himself.

I. S. Wright