Dr. Raymond Kiefhaber’s family and close friends call him “Senator,” a moniker his medical school fraternity brothers gave him because his name resembled that of Estes Kefauver, a popular U.S. senator at the time. The nickname stuck; even the woman who would become his wife, Jean Anne, did not know his real name until they’d already been on several dates.

In Middletown, however, the medical community and a host of grateful patients and families know the name Dr. Raymond Kiefhaber, the pioneering orthopedic surgeon who in 1972 performed the hospital’s first total knee replacement. Among his many medical and civic accomplishments, Dr. Kiefhaber also was among the group of leaders who in 1984 established the precursor to the hospital foundation.

Born and raised in Columbus, Ohio, Ray Kiefhaber, now an energetic 88, attended The Ohio State University. Inspired by the example set by his family doctor, Ray decided to pursue a career in medicine. Ray and Jean Anne, now a lively 85, married in 1953 after “Jeaner,” as friends call her, graduated from the University of Cincinnati, where she studied English, economics and home economics. A native of Hamilton, Ohio, Jean Anne worked as a senior financial secretary for Woodward High School in Cincinnati until the Kiefhabers’ first child was born.

After Ray graduated from the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine in 1954, he completed a year-long internship at Cincinnati General Hospital. The Kiefhabers lived in Guantanamo, Cuba, from 1955 to 1957 while Ray served as a lieutenant in the Navy’s surgery service. Their home was not far from the Gulf of Mexico shore where Fidel Castro and 82 fighters landed in 1956 to launch the Cuban Revolution.
Ray gained a good deal of knowledge about orthopedics while he was in the Navy. Upon returning home, he was accepted into an orthopedic residency at the University of Cincinnati.

The Middletown Years Begin

In 1960, Ray opened his practice in general orthopedics on Stevens Avenue, now University Avenue, in Middletown. There were few subspecialties in orthopedics at this time. One of the reasons Ray cites for enjoying his chosen specialty is that it allowed him to care for all types of people – men, women and children – from birth through old age. Ray became certified by the American Board of Orthopedic Surgery in 1963 and was a member of the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons, as well as a fellow of the American College of Surgeons.

In 1966, the Kiefhabers built their “forever home” overlooking Middletown’s Wildwood Golf Course. There they raised two children: Thomas, a world-renowned hand surgeon, and Anne, a health policy expert and tour guide in Washington, DC. Asked about her greatest accomplishment in life, Jean Anne is quick to answer, “Our children.” Ray and Jean Anne are blessed with three grandchildren – Tom, Kate
and Alexander – and are great-grandparents to Millie, Ray and Grace. Both Jean Anne and Ray have enjoyed playing golf. But Jean Anne’s favorite hobby was flying her four-seat, single-engine Cessna 172. She earned a general aviation license in 1978 and flew often for about 10 years before giving the plane to her son.

**Time to Grow**

By 1968, Ray was feeling the pressure of a rapidly growing practice. It was time to expand. William D. (Dwain) Langworthy, MD, joined the practice in 1968. He and Ray developed a strong professional relationship and deep personal friendship based on shared values and goals. That friendship continues today. Eventually, the one-doctor office Ray had opened on Stevens Avenue in 1960 grew into Orthopaedic & Sports Medicine Consultants. Over time, 14 doctors practiced in the office located on Breiel Boulevard. Ray retired from the surgical aspect of orthopedic medicine in 1992.

Over the years, Ray worked alongside four hospital presidents – Walter Mischley, Jim Flynn, Doug McNeill and Carol Turner. When Ray retired
completely in 2010, his partner and friend Jerry Magone, MD, threw him a rip-roaring, although somewhat bittersweet, retirement party. Ray notes that he is proud of how he and Dwain, working with a team of accomplished colleagues, built a practice that took care of everyone in need. Asked about how he has seen orthopedics evolve since he first became a doctor, Ray cites significant improvements in infection control, procedures, surgical techniques and instrumentation such as arthroscopy, and implant materials that enable surgeons to repair joints more anatomically.

Giving Back
Since arriving in Middletown in 1960, the Kiefhabers have enthusiastically supported the hospital. Jean Anne has been a patron of the hospital auxiliary for 50 years. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, she and Ray eagerly participated in one of the hospital's most popular fundraisers, the High Fever Follies. From 1971 to 1973, Ray served as chief of the hospital's medical staff and was a trustee on the board of
Middletown Regional Hospital for 27 years, serving as chair from 1990 to 1992. He’s served in various capacities on the Foundation board and on a number of hospital committees.

Along with their dear friends, Patti and Robert Gage and Anne and Doug McNeill, the Kiefhabers were ardent supporters of the new Atrium Medical Center campus, which they believed would not only enable service upgrades but also bring prestige to Middletown and facilitate outreach to surrounding communities.

When Atrium opened in 2007, Jean Anne and Ray gifted the hospital with two bronze sculptures by internationally known sculptor Tom Corbin: Girl with a Dove, which graces the hospital’s main entrance, and Young Dancer at Rest, which is the focal point of an interior courtyard.

Knowing that hospitals can be foreboding, stressful places, the Kiefhabers intended the sculptures to radiate the inspiration and serenity so important to wellness. In 2011, the Kiefhabers co-created the Outdoor Artwork and Landscape Feature Endowment to help ensure Atrium Medical Center patients, staff and visitors experience the beauty of fine art and the natural world.
The Kiefhabers have also volunteered much of their time to support the Middletown community. Jean Anne has served on the Middletown Symphony Board of Trustees and a number of Charity Ball committees, has co-chaired fundraisers for Arts-In-Middletown and is a 40-year member of the Middletown Garden Club. Ray has served on the boards of the Middletown Community Foundation, Chamber of Commerce and Arts-In-Middletown. In the earlier days of Doty House (now Abilities First), he acted as the agency’s orthopedic consultant. In 1989, thanks to the hard work of his determined fund-raising team ($32,000, the most ever to date), Ray won a stint as guest conductor of the Middletown Symphony. This prominent surgeon’s choice of music? “Mack the Knife,” of course.

A Source of Pride

Ray and Jean Anne believe that the hospital’s founders – both civic leaders and physicians – would be proud that they provided the impetus for Middletown’s high-quality health care, education opportunities and preventive services. Today, Atrium Medical Center delivers all that while also having a tremendous economic impact as the city’s second-largest employer.

Dr. Ray Kiefhaber, with his wife of more than 60 years by his side, has not only witnessed much of this growth firsthand, he has helped make it happen. Thanks, Senator!
This article is the 13th in a series of profiles celebrating the 2017 centennial anniversary of Atrium Medical Center (formerly Middletown Hospital and Middletown Regional Hospital). The series honors the men and women whose civic-mindedness and genuine caring for others helped Greater Middletown grow and contributed to the first-class medical center the region boasts today.

Past Legends focused on:
- Paul Galeese, Issue 1; E.O. Bauer, MD, and John L. Bauer, MD, Issue 2;

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