



## Wesley William Emmons Jr,

Obituary - Wesley William Emmons, Jr.  
January 2, 1928 - May 23, 2011.

The Jogging Jeweler is Laid to Rest.

Emmons, Wesley, 83, of Center City, Philadelphia, on May 23, 2011, of natural causes and complications from Alzheimer's, died peacefully with his family at his bedside at home.

A truly interesting man, he succeeded against all odds, going above and beyond expectations. Supported by his wife of 59 years, Ellen, and a dogged determination, he served as an artistic and athletic role model, teacher/mentor, an art collector music enthusiast, a community cornerstone, and a family man.

Born in Langhorne, Pa, raised in Takoma Park, he moved to Frederick, MD in 1942 and graduated from Frederick High School in 1945. He served in the US Army Air-Corps, stationed in occupied Japan from Jan 1947 to Oct 1949, honorably discharged at the rank of Sgt.; it was here that he acquired a deep and lifelong love of Japan and the Orient. He then spent 1 year at the University of Maryland where he met and married Ellen Frances Kehne in 1952.

Much against his parents protest (they wanted him to go to the Naval Academy), he up-rooted himself and attended the Philadelphia Museum School of Art on south Broad Street (after getting lost in his search for the Philadelphia Academy for the Fine Arts on north Broad Street). From 1950-1954, he studied under Virginia Cote and Richard Reinhardt, and graduated with a BFA in Jewelry and Silversmithing (the Museum School became the Philadelphia College of Art, PCA, and is now known as the University of the Arts). He also spent two years studying at the Barnes Foundation in Media, PA (1952-1954), studying under Violetta de Mazia.

An apprentice for 3 years to David Hillerson and Steve Skversky on Jeweler's Row, working for 5\$ a week, he opened his own Jewelry store on 1521 Pine Street in 1954. He served as a crafts and jewelry instructor for the PCA from 1954 to 1966 with Olaf Skoogfors. His mother, a conservative German woman, did not understand his fascination with art. She asked him many times, "When are you going to get a real job?" He started at the bottom, believing in the past but anticipating the future. His beliefs were simple: be willing to start small, do your homework, learn the basics, give it your best, maintain your integrity, and be true to yourself.

The store was relocated to its current location on 16th and Spruce in 1964, initially in the basement, then the 1st floor, while he and his family lived in the 2nd-4th floors (where they remain to this day). He also had private jewelry students of his own until 1970, and his shop and store served as a melting pot to allow a variety of local talents to express themselves, including Mike Delgado (whom he regarded as his right hand man), Gordon MacLean MD, Peter Renzetti, Jaac Abel, Tony DiRienzi, Don Pywell, Bob Natalini, Bob Weintraub, Henri David, Ira Jaffee, Jean Spengeman-Jaffe, Don Tompkins, and Doug Randall. His artistic style flourished in the 1960s and 1970s, and his store, being apart from Jeweler's Row, celebrated this uniqueness.

He designed jewelry for Eleanor Roosevelt, George Jessel, John F. Kennedy, the Rev.

Martin Luther King Jr, Buddy Rich, and J. Robert Oppenheimer. He designed the Neo-graphics Award, an altar piece at Old Zion Church on north Broad street, the Curtis Institute of Music Award presented in 2001 to cellist/conductor Mstislav Rostopovich, silver medallions given to the UArts students with the highest GPA (Commencement Ceremonies, 2004 - present), and belt-buckle awards given to the finishers of the Edward P. Weston Ultradistance Run. He designed works for Grover Washington Jr, and the Rev. Carter Merbreier (TV's "Captain Noah").

His work was shown at the Hickok Jewelry Exhibition, the Philadelphia Art Alliance, the Philadelphia Museum of Art (1974 Touch of Gold), the Woodmere Gallery, the Museum of the Philadelphia Civic Center (Craftsman 67). He was also commissioned by leading museums and galleries to restore priceless treasures. A "Wesley Emmons: Retrospective" was exhibited in The University of the Arts' Arronson Gallery in 2003.

He was awarded the 1986 PCA Alumni Association Silver Star award for individual achievement in his discipline and his contributions to the ideals and service of the College. He won the 2003 AFLAC Community Service Award, given by the Center City Proprietors Association, as the small business owner who was a model of community commitment through volunteer efforts and leadership. He was a member of the Center City Resident's Association.

He created custom jewelry and rejuvenated estate jewelry, as well as restorations, repairs, and appraisals. A contemporary, self-employed, artist-jeweler who worked his craft for 61 years, he believed his hand-crafted items should be as technically excellent as they were well designed. "People must

rebel against the status quo, and seek relief in the personalized touch that the artist-craftsman presents." His wife trusted him and, much to her parents' dismay, traveled from the safety of her small hometown to the Brave New World of jewelry, craft, and art in Philadelphia.

While his artistic prowess was becoming legendary, his life took on a new persona in the mid 1970s through the 1990s. He converted himself from a cigarette-smoking, cigar-chomping overweight middle-aged man into a runner, starting with a few miles at the local YMHA (thanks to Dave Brier and Avi Doar), eventually running not just marathons but multi-day ultra-marathons, not just locally in Pennsauken NJ (the only participant to run all 11 Edward Payson Weston 6 day ultra-marathons), but nationally (Harrisburg to Pittsburgh, Philadelphia to Atlantic City, the length of New Jersey from Highpoint to Cape May, the JFK 50 Mile Hike in the Appalachians), and internationally (three 6 day ultramarathons in England). Although never the first placer, he was usually the oldest and always the most popular competitor! He did, however, establish the US record for men aged 60-64 for a 6 day run, with 287 miles covered in 1988. He was known as the "Jogging Jeweler" and was featured in the Philadelphia Inquirer's Sunday Magazine, "Today" on October 12, 1980.

His love of music, especially classical, spanned decades. He was known to stay up all night to finish a customer's piece, fueled by desire and LP records of classical music playing on the stereo. He discovered the Curtis Institute of Music, and attended nearly every performance for almost 30 years. Curtis stands as one of his beneficiaries.

He was also known as the "Mayor of 16th Street", and he worked hard to meticulously clean the sidewalk in front of his house. He loved sweeping, and hated litter. What is not well known is that he and his wife often allowed young artists to stay in their house, for weeks to months at a time, until they could

get themselves established.

His greatest possessions and accomplishments remain his family. An only son, he is survived by his wife and muse Ellen (nee Kehne); devoted father of Wesley W. Emmons, III, M.D., and Hoyt Emmons, he is also survived by 4 grandchildren (Gwen, Natalie, Hoyt II, Marissa).

In lieu of flowers, contributions in his honor may be made either to the Lutheran Church of the Holy Communion, 2110 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia PA 19103

([www.lutheranchurchphiladelphia.org](http://www.lutheranchurchphiladelphia.org)), The Curtis Institute of Music, 1726 Locust Street, Philadelphia PA 19103 ([www.curtis.edu](http://www.curtis.edu)), or to the University of the Arts, c/o the Wesley and Ellen Emmons Scholarship in Jewelry/Metalsmithing, 320 S. Broad Street, Philadelphia PA 19102 ([www.uarts.edu](http://www.uarts.edu)).

Viewing and funeral services will be held at the Lutheran Church of the Holy Communion, 2110 Chestnut St., Philadelphia PA. Burial will be private, in the family plot at Mount Olivet Cemetery, in Frederick MD.

# Previous Events

## Visitation

MAY 26. 12:00 PM - 2:00 PM (ET)

Lutheran Church of the Holy Communion  
2110 Chestnut Street  
Philadelphia, PA

## Visitation

MAY 26. 4:00 PM - 5:45 PM (ET)

Lutheran Church of the Holy Communion  
2110 Chestnut Street  
Philadelphia, PA

## Service

MAY 26. 6:00 PM (ET)

Lutheran Church of the Holy Communion  
2110 Chestnut Street  
Philadelphia, PA

# Tribute Wall



“ Wes was always a competitor and a gentleman. The late eighties was a great time for ultra -races in the Philadelphia area and Wes ran in many of them. Many miles to run in the races and many stories were told in the hours and days it took to run the races. Wes was always fun to run with in these events.##imported-begin##Patrick Cooper##imported-end##

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May 26, 2011 at 05:51 PM



“ May God keep you, and that your family find strength in his love to always remeber the laughs, and good time you all have shared. Always in my prayers

Arnell & Eugene Davis##imported-begin##Arnell Davis##imported-end##

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May 25, 2011 at 12:11 PM