Winchell McKendree Craig was born in Washington Court House, Ohio, April 27, 1892, one of the six children (four brothers and a sister) of Eliza Orelia Pine Craig and Thomas Henry Craig. He died at St. Mary’s Hospital in Rochester, Minnesota, with which he had been associated professionally for 31 years, February 12, 1960. By the same sort of unhappy coincidence so often observed in this and other medical specialties, this distinguished neurosurgeon died of a primary brain tumor, arising from the third ventricle and the hypothalamus and histologically identified as a reticulum-cell sarcoma.

Dr. Craig is survived by his wife, Jean Katherine Fitzgerald Craig, and by four children. His only daughter and third child, Jean Mary Patricia Craig is a graduate nurse with a B.S. degree from the University of Oregon, and is on the staff of nurses at St. Mary’s Hospital in Rochester, Minnesota. His oldest son is Captain Winchell McKendree Craig, Jr., USMC. His son, James Stewart Craig, now lives
and is employed in Rochester. His son, Graham Fitzgerald Craig, is a student at the University of Minnesota. Dr. Craig is also survived by two brothers, Thomas H. and Robert A., who still operate the family’s large department store. The original “Craig tribe,” as Dr. Craig liked to call his family, were a closely knit group, and his intense loyalty to his own wife and children and to his friends was undoubtedly a reflection of his own happy childhood and youth.

Dr. Craig’s early education was received in the public schools of Washington Court House. After a year (1911) at Culver Military Academy, he matriculated at Ohio Wesleyan University, from which he was graduated with a B.A. degree in 1915. Four years later he received the M.D. degree from the Johns Hopkins Medical School. After completing an internship at St. Agnes Hospital in Baltimore, he was appointed a fellow in general surgery at the Mayo Clinic, where he was to remain for all of his active professional life.

In 1924, after he had completed his internship in general surgery, Dr. Craig decided to specialize in neurosurgery, undoubtedly at the urging of Dr. Alfred Adson, the brilliant chief of the service. After the training usual in those days, that is, work in the neurological sciences, chiefly medical neurology, he was assigned as the second permanent staff member of the section of neurological surgery.

In 1927, Dr. Craig was appointed Instructor in Neurological Surgery at the University of Minnesota, in the Mayo Foundation Graduate School. In 1930, he received the M.S. degree. In 1932, he was promoted to Associate Professor and in 1937 to full Professor.

When Dr. Adson retired in 1946, Dr. Craig became Chief of the Section of Neurological Surgery, a position he held until April 1, 1955, when he became Senior Consultant. He retired from active practice July 1, 1957.

Retirement, however, did not fit into Dr. Craig’s philosophy of life. First, he became Director of Civilian Defense for the City of Rochester, bringing to that post a sense of urgency not always felt by those who hold it. Early in 1959, he was appointed field representative of the Council on Medical Education and Hospitals of the American Medical Association. Soon afterward, he was invited to Washington, D. C., where he served on the staff of Dr. Arthur S. Flemming, Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, until his terminal illness began at Christmas, 1959.

Dr. Craig’s professional work at the Mayo Clinic and the University of Minnesota was interrupted by his military service in World War II. It seemed that fate had prepared him for the new assignment. Perhaps his brief experience at Culver Military Academy had aroused his interest in military affairs. At any rate, as soon as he was graduated from Johns Hopkins, he joined the Naval Reserve, in which he was active during the period between the World Wars. He was mobilized for active duty immediately after Pearl Harbor and, within a few short months, he had shed his mantle of “second man” in a famous neurosurgical department to become “top man” in one of the major military services.

He was sent, with his Naval Hospital Unit, to the West Coast, but, because there was very little for specialists to do in those early days of the war, he was assigned to a lecture tour of naval installations, to indoctrinate newly arriving medical officers in the traditions of Naval medicine. One of these trips took him to Washington and to the Bethesda Naval Hospital, and it was a case of love at first sight for the Naval officer and the Naval Hospital.

His first appointment was chief of the surgical service. Soon he became an un-
official adviser to Admiral Ross T. McIntire, Surgeon General of the Navy. Later, he was made Chief Consultant in Neurosurgery for the Navy. He carried on the duties and responsibilities of all of these positions throughout the war. With his genial personality, his capacity for hard work, and his unfailing devotion to, and enthusiasm for, the Navy, he found himself representing the Surgeon General on assignments all over the world, as a sort of roving ambassador for his office. That he performed his duties with distinction is shown by his promotion soon after the war, to the post of Rear Admiral, the highest rank ever bestowed upon a civilian doctor by the Navy in any war.

It would be impossible to list, in the space available, all the honors that came to Dr. Craig in the course of his professional life, but a few of them might be mentioned. He received the honorary D.Sc. degree from his Alma Mater, Ohio Wesleyan University, in 1937. His services in the Navy during the war brought him the Legion of Merit and the Bronze Star. He was elected president of the Society of Neurological Surgeons in 1946, of the Harvey Cushing Society in 1948, and of the Association of Military Surgeons of the United States in 1953. He was a member of the American Surgical Association, the American Neurological Association, the Western Surgical Association, and the Southern Surgical Association. He was a founder member of the American Board of Neurological Surgery and was also Chairman of the Editorial Board of the *Journal of Neurosurgery*.

Dr. Craig will always be remembered for his professional achievements. He left an enduring mark on neurosurgery, by his technical achievements as well as by the practical fact that he perfected the first completely satisfactory operating table for surgery in the upright position. He worked hard at whatever task was assigned to him. He was essentially an organization man, and he preferred the role of peacemaker to controversial taking of sides whenever that was honorably possible. When it came to principles, however, there was never any compromise, and his ideals for neurosurgery were always of the highest and noblest.

But Wink Craig will be remembered for other things by his contemporaries and his students. He was a kind and lovable man, and a friendly man. He loved people and people loved him. He had many friends among the great and the near-great, but, after knowing him for 32 years, I was never surprised to have fishing guides, golf caddies, and men and women of every economic status inquire of me, “And how is my friend, Dr. Craig?” He was never too busy to sit down and talk with a friend. He enjoyed life to the fullest, and his family and friends can take comfort in the remembrance that his last illness was mercifully brief and that he suffered relatively little.

I first met Wink Craig in 1927. His chief, Dr. Adson, had kindly invited me, a young neurosurgeon just out of Harvard and Peter Bent Brigham, to visit the Mayo Clinic and observe what was being done there in sympathetic nerve surgery. On the morning of my first visit, two neurosurgical operating rooms were being used simultaneously. In the one that I entered first, things were clearly not going well. Everything seemed to displease the surgeon. The tension was high, so high, in fact, that after an hour’s observation I found it too embarrassing to remain, and I slipped away to the second operating room, where a young neurosurgeon by the name of Craig was performing exactly the same operation, which was going very well indeed. Everything in this room was calm, quiet, and peaceful. There was no tension. I must confess that I had never seen such calmness in any neurosurgical
operating room in my previous experience. The pioneers in this specialty richly deserved their reputation for giving their associates and operating room assistants a very hard time.

Calmness under fire was a Craig trade-mark. No matter how rough the going, the atmosphere, wherever Wink worked, was calm, quiet and peaceful. I know that I myself—whatever my reputation—was better for what I saw in Wink’s operating room in 1927. Thereafter, whenever I lost my temper and spoke sharply to an assistant, a nurse, or an anesthetist, I would later reproach myself, remembering that Wink Craig would not have done it that way. As might have been expected, a man so in control of his emotions became a great surgical technician, perhaps one of the greatest who ever lived.

Many Craig legends will be quoted for younger men for generations to come. One of them is that Wink made the Navy a respectable place for neurosurgeons to live and work. Another is that while he closed out every late party with a song fest, he was the brightest of the lot on hand to hear the first papers at the meeting next morning. And, as my own observation testifies, he was the first man who showed that it is not necessary to have atrocious manners in the operating room to be a brilliant neurological surgeon.

R. Glen Spurling, M.D.