Milagros Colon De Lopez:  
A World Class Ophthalmic Nursing Leader

Great things come in small packages. So often in life, truly great achievers go about their work never knowing their contribution is HUGE! Milagros is one of these people. Milagros has been instrumental in developing ophthalmic training programs both nationally and internationally all of her adult life. Millie as she is nicknamed graduated from Bayamon District Hospital School of Nursing in Bayamon, Puerto Rico. Years later she earned a Bachelor of Science and Master’s degree in Health Management from Beverly Hills University in California. During her employment at the University Hospital she was offered an opportunity to study ophthalmic nursing at McMillan Hospital of Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. Upon her return she was offered the position as the general supervisor in the Department of Ophthalmology at the University of Puerto Rico.

In 1962 she joined the Army Nurse Corp and retired with the rank of Full Colonel in 1991. While working at the Mather Air Force Base in Sacramento California she met a nurse who showed her the ophthalmic assisting home study course from the American Academy of Ophthalmology. She completed the course and sent in the test. Dr. Guillermo Pico, her supervisor in Puerto Rico had received a letter about a nurse named Edna Ashy, who was starting an ophthalmic nursing society. Milagros was a charter member of ASORN in 1976.

Working along side Dr. Pico, she began working on an ophthalmic technician course and graduated the first class in 1978. She also developed the visual acuity assessment of pre-school and first grade students island wide. She considers this a most rewarding experience. The International Eye Foundation approached the University of Puerto Rico to help develop to start a Primary Eye Care Program in the Dominican Republic. Milagros was selected to direct these efforts. She developed a complete curriculum for the training.

In 1993 she was elected as the President of the Puerto Rican Eye Society and remained in this post for 14 years. The mission of this organization was to work on projects to prevent blindness. She coordinated the selection and production of all the educational materials that came through the society. To date this society has more than 29,000 members! She has presented her work and background of the Puerto Rican Eye Program in the United States and Milagros was the recipient of the Dr. Manuel Miranda award for distinguished service in the development of Ophthalmology for over 45 years.

Milagros, at 81 years of age is still very active. Her goals are to continue developing and offering education, training for many years to come and to translate materials into Spanish and other languages.

Great things come in small packages, and in Milagros’ case she is small but mighty. She is most deserving of the 2012 Edna Ashy Award.

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