



Sheldon C. Kravitz

Age 83 An oncologist and hematologist, he taught at Hopkins and was first medical residency director at St. Joseph

July 10, 2008 | By Frederick N. Rasmussen | Frederick N. Rasmussen, Sun Reporter

Dr. Sheldon C. Kravitz, a retired Baltimore oncologist and hematologist, died Tuesday of kidney failure at Gilchrist Hospice Care. The Roland Park Place resident was 83.

Dr. Kravitz, the son of a garment worker, was born in Passaic, N.J., and raised in Brooklyn, N.Y., where he graduated with honors in 1941 from Boys High School.

In 1945, he earned a bachelor's degree from Cornell University and was a 1948 graduate of Cornell University Medical College.

He completed his internship in internal medicine at New York Hospital-Cornell Medical Center and his residency at Sloan-Kettering Institute, where he was a Damon Runyon Fellow in medical oncology.

Dr. Kravitz, who was known as Shelly, met his future wife, the former Ruth Bayless, on their first day of classes as undergraduates at Cornell.

They were married in 1945 and moved to Baltimore in 1952, when Dr. Kravitz joined the Epidemic Intelligence Services of the U.S. Public Health Services.

He established a private practice on Eutaw Place and later had offices at St. Joseph Medical Center and Union Memorial Hospital.

Dr. Kravitz was also an instructor in medicine at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine for four decades.

In 1968, he was appointed the first director of the medical residency program at what is now St. Joseph Medical Center. He was chief of the division of hematology oncology at Union Memorial Hospital for 25 years until retiring in 1994.

At Union Memorial, he also directed grand rounds and the annual Joseph S. Keelty lecture.

"Those trained by him consider him one of the greatest teachers," said Dr. Alberto Diaz, one of his residents who later became his personal physician.

"His ability to make diagnoses and come up with the simplest explanations for the most complex and difficult cases was unique. He made us better physicians," Dr. Diaz said.

"Not only was he himself a dedicated physician, but he donated his time to us without regard to where we came from. An entire generation of doctors remembers him with love and gratitude," he said.

Dr. Frank X. Carmody, a Baltimore internist, was also a former resident who studied with Dr. Kravitz.

"Shelly taught me everything I know about blood disorders. He had a knack at taking complicated topics and making them incredibly simple. It really was a gift that he had," Dr. Carmody said yesterday.

"He was an extraordinarily friendly and warm man who had a wide range of interests beyond medicine and hematology," Dr. Carmody said.

"He had grown up in Brooklyn and was a big fan of the Dodgers and old Ebbets Field until they moved away to Los Angeles," he said. "I think if he had a choice in life, he would have played shortstop for the Dodgers, but actually he made a much better hematologist," Dr. Carmody said, laughing.

"When Dr. Kravitz retired, what his patients missed most was his human touch," Dr. Carmody said.

Dr. Kravitz, who was an avid reader of history and patron of the arts, was with his wife a longtime subscriber to the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, the Baltimore Opera Company and Center Stage.

"When Painters Mill Music Fair existed in Pikesville when I was young, my dad would take my mom and me to all of the musicals that came through there," said his daughter, Betsy K. Gamse of Mount Washington.

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A former longtime Mount Washington resident who moved to Roland Park Place last year, Dr. Kravitz was a life master bridge player.

Even though he had suffered a cerebral hemorrhage, his longtime bridge partner, Mike Dennis, would pick him up and they would finish first in local contract bridge events, family members said.

Dr. Kravitz was a member of the Woodholme Country Club where he enjoyed playing golf, and the Key Biscayne Golf Club in Florida, where he maintained a winter home.

A son, Richard E. Kravitz, who lives in Hamden, Conn., said his father's greatest love was for his wife.

"They were inseparable. They just never stopped being in love, holding hands, dancing and going out for romantic dinners," he said. "Dad would serenade Mom every evening, playing the most beautiful piano and singing her the sweetest love songs."

Dr. Kravitz was a member of Temple Oheb Shalom.

Services will be held at 1 p.m today at Sol Levinson & Bros., 8900 Reisterstown Road.

Also surviving are two other sons, Kenneth G. Kravitz of Keeseville, N.Y., and Robert N. Kravitz of Ramsey, N.J.; fourteen grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

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