



Dr. Rodney Y. Wolf

October 29, 1936 - March 27, 2021

Dr. Rodney Y. Wolf, innovator of cardiac surgery in the Mid-South, died on March 27, 2021, at his home in Memphis. He was 84. Born the son of a baker in Knoxville, Tennessee, Dr. Wolf spent nearly 50 years in the practice of cardiac, thoracic and vascular surgery at Baptist Hospital in Memphis, where he performed over 10,000 open heart procedures. He was known as a surgeon of the highest integrity who took no shortcuts—one who accepted and succeeded in critical, high-risk cases.

Dr. Wolf worked tirelessly over the years to champion quality and innovation in the operating theater. Early in his career, when cardiac surgery was in its infancy, he was the first to employ cutting edge technologies in the operating room and beyond. He pioneered minimally invasive coronary bypass surgery and minimally invasive heart valve surgery at Baptist, and established the first cardiac ICU in Memphis. It is because of his efforts that the Baptist cardiac program is recognized as the finest in the Mid-South. He also served as Chief of Surgery and Chief of Staff during his tenure at Baptist, and upon his retirement served as President of the Baptist Memorial Healthcare Foundation.

Dr. Wolf also loved teaching young doctors, and for 30 years trained countless vascular surgeons, many of whom are still in practice in all parts of the country, including his son, Dr.

Bradley Wolf. He started the cardiovascular programs at hospitals in Jonesboro, Arkansas, Bowling Green, Kentucky, and Florence, Alabama.

Dr. Wolf received his medical degree from the University of Tennessee, where he also served his general and cardiothoracic internships. He also trained at the Mayo Clinic under Dr. Dwight McGoon. After his training, he served as a Major in the United States Air Force in Dayton, Ohio. As an avid aviator from the age of 15, Dr. Wolf used his Air Force GI Bill benefits to become instrument qualified on twin-engine aircraft.

After leaving the Air Force, he established the Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery Association with Brewster Harrington and Glen Crosby, which grew to be the largest cardiovascular surgery practice in the Mid-South.

A lifelong Tennessee Volunteer, Dr. Wolf was a fixture at the University of Tennessee's

Neyland Stadium during football season. In 2002, the Wolf-Kaplan Center was dedicated at Neyland Stadium. In 2014, the Rodney Y. Wolf, M.D., and Brenda C. Wolf Scholarship Endowment was founded by his children at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center.

Dr. Wolf is survived by his wife, Brenda Cook Wolf, sons Dr. Bradley Wolf and Gary Wolf, daughters Kelly Wolf Burkholder and Dory Wolf Sims, and eight grandchildren.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Baptist Memorial Health Care Foundation, Temple Israel, or St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

Cemetery

Temple Israel Cemetery

1708 Hernando Road

Memphis, TN, 38106

Comments



“ Brilliant man who saved my father's life. I will never forget him. Condolences to the family.

Anne-Marie Karash - March 31 at 05:29 PM



“ Dr. Wolf was one of the kindness men I've ever met. he was genuinewith a smile that would like up a room(when he smiled. I am so happy to have met him and the rat of the wonderful Wold family.... He will be missed.... in loving memory... From Viola Dawson



Viola Dawson - March 30 at 05:36 PM



“ I just learned of Dr. Wolf's death. I worked for him from 1984-1990 as his pilot. He and Brenda were wonderful to me as it was my first real job as a corporate pilot. Dr. Wolf loved to fly and was a very good pilot. He flew the aircraft we had very well and next to UT games was probably his 2nd passion. Being with a man like Dr. Wolf was a once in a lifetime experience. I learned so much from him that I carried forward in my life. I think of him often and will think of him forever. Dr. Wolf was a cool guy in everyway. His was a master at his craft and master at human interaction. We are the lucky one's who were touched by his intellect, his kindness and his incredible work ethic. Thank you Dr. Wolf.

Sid Garwood

Sid Garwood - March 29 at 11:09 AM



“ I worked at Baptist for over 40 yrs, so knew a lot of doctors & their bedside manner, so when it came time for my Mom to have open heart surgery, I knew there was only one Thoracic Surgeon to do her procedure, I understood that he had a lot of surgeries, but he took time that evening to do her surgery. She made a full recovery. I will pray for his family as they grieve his loss.

Ann-Barri Munday - March 29 at 10:31 AM



“ I am Blessed to have known and worked such a wonderful and gifted man. You will be missed my friend. As we always spoke, Go Vols!!! Bless you!!

Bob Wrenn - March 29 at 02:49 AM



“ Dorothy M. Garrison lit a candle in memory of Dr. Rodney Y. Wolf



Dorothy M. Garrison - March 28 at 10:57 PM



“ A green candle because Dr. Wolf represented life and the memories he left behind is life. He lives today in the work he did and the people he gave life back too. Gone but never forgotten!

Dorothy M. Garrison - March 28 at 11:01 PM



“ Dr Wolf was one of a kind. He loved his patients and demanded they get the care they needed. He tried surgeries nobody else would try; He was a wonderful man inside and out. He told it like it was with care and kindness, he delivered good and bad news like a friend would. Dr Wolf saved many people, who are still walking around. Yes, Dr Wolf was an angel on earth; BUT God needed him to be with him....so of course, Dr Wolf went. He will be missed but also always remembered. Prayers are lifted for the family and his close friends....Alice A Berry

alice berry - March 28 at 08:58 PM