



Dr. Wilbur Wilson Oaks Jr.

October 12, 1928 - June 13, 2015

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Dr. Wilbur Wilson Oaks, Jr. of Gladwyne, PA, beloved husband of Mary Ann Skelton Oaks and renowned Hahnemann University Hospital physician, passed away at home on June 13 surrounded by his loving family. According to the calendar, Dr. Oaks lived 86 years, but those of us fortunate enough to have known him will suggest that we need another scale to properly account for the life of a man who made time for everyone in his expansive, and ever-inclusive, community of friends and loved ones. As a physician, devoted alumnus of Lafayette College, and adoring husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, he approached every aspect of his life with enthusiasm, optimism, generosity, and humility.

Growing up in Bala Cynwyd, Dr. Oaks (that is, “Billy” or “Oaksie”) loved playing sports. Turning his slight build to his advantage, he honed his speed, scrappiness, and good-natured competitive spirit on the basketball court and soccer field. After attending Lower Merion High School, he enrolled in Lafayette College, where he served as captain of the soccer team and graduated with the class of 1951. He would later attribute his success as a physician to lessons in perseverance, accountability, and team-based leadership that he learned on the athletic field.

Dr. Oaks received his medical degree from Hahnemann Medical College in 1955. He went on to complete his residency and internship at Hahnemann and then joined their faculty, where he later became the Chairman of the Department of Internal Medicine and served on the Board of Trustees for both Hahnemann and the College of Physicians of Philadelphia. Energetic and approachable, he excelled as a diagnostician not only because he was knowledgeable but also because he listened to every patient's story with equal care and attention. His gentle bedside manner, heartfelt healing touch, love of learning, and "athletic rounding style," which mandated that his students and residents take the stairs rather than the elevator while making rounds to see patients, were signatures of his approach to medicine as an embodied and collective practice. During his medical career, Dr. Oaks received the Christian R. and Mary F. Lindbach Foundation Award, the William Likoff Clinical Excellence Award, the Dean's Award for Excellence in Clinical Teaching, the Hahnemann University Gold Medal Award for Distinguished Service, the Herbert S. Waxman Voluntary Faculty Teaching Award, as well as numerous others to recognize his innovation as a teacher and clinician.

As a volunteer for Saint John's Hospice, Dr. Oaks provided mobile medical care to members of the Philadelphia homeless community. In recognition for this work, Dr. Oaks received the 1000 Points of Light award from President George H. W. Bush. He also started the Saint John's Hospice Homeless Soccer program, and he routinely participated in conditioning, practices, and games.

A Lafayette Leopard through and through, Dr. Oaks avidly supported his alma mater throughout his life. He served in numerous volunteer capacities on campus, and many student-athletes and coaches revered him as a cheerleader, mentor, and friend. Among his many honors and accolades received from Lafayette, the most distinguished were the Joseph E. Bell '26

Alumni Distinguished Service Award, his induction into the Maroon Club Hall of Fame, an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Public Service, and the coveted Lafayette Medal for Distinguished Service.

In honor of the 60th anniversary of his graduation, the Oaks Leadership Academy was endowed in his name at Lafayette. The Academy develops, challenges and supports student-athletes and coaches in their quest to become effective leaders in athletics, academics and life.

Dr. Oaks is survived by his wife of 61 years, Mary Ann, who he first charmed on the beaches of the Jersey Shore, and their three daughters, Susan Oaks Little (Stewart), Cynthia Oaks Linville (Judson), and Sally Lou Oaks Loveman (Mitchell), nine grandchildren, Kristen Tapson Widenhoefer (Ross), Lauren Tapson, Kelly Tapson, Madison Linville, Cameron Linville, Lucy Linville, Marin Loveman, Carly Loveman, and Billy Loveman, and two great-grandchildren, August and Margot Widenhoefer. For Dr. Oaks, who was always "Papa" to his grandchildren, his family was his proudest accomplishment. He encouraged his daughters to support and protect each other with a policy he called "that's my sister," and he led by example. He adored his wife, he motivated his children and grandchildren with enthusiasm and positivity, he celebrated the accomplishments of others, and he made the effort to take part in the social worlds of every member of his family.

Relatives and friends are invited to a celebration of life on Saturday, June 20 at 11:00 a.m. at the St. Christopher's Episcopal Church, 226 Righter's Mill Road, Gladwyne, PA. Additional parking will be available at Beth David Reformed Congregation, 1130 Vaughan Ln, Gladwyne, PA(off of Conshohocken State Rd.). Shuttle service available.

The family asks that donations in Dr. Oaks' name be made to either the Dr.

Wilbur Oaks '51 Leadership Academy Fund at Lafayette College,
Development Office, Box 3000, Easton, PA 18042
(development.lafayette.edu/give). Click "Areas of Your Choice" and click "Dr.
Wilbur Oaks '51 Leadership Development Fund" or to the Department of
Medicine at Drexel University College of Medicine PO Box 8235 Philadelphia,
PA 19101 which supports the Wilbur W. Oaks, Jr. MD Distinguished Lecture
Professorship.

Previous Events

Life Celebration

JUN **20**. 11:00 AM (ET)

St. Christopher's Episcopal Church
226 Righters Mill Road
Gladwyne, PA 19035

Tribute Wall

SL

“ Mrs Oaks, children, and their families,
I was so very sorry to hear of your loss of your husband/father last year. I don't know why I didn't write at the time, but since he just celebrated his 2nd birthday in heaven, I had to write. What an incredible man! I was head nurse of Pediatrics and Pediatric ICU at Hahnemann Hospital many years ago; (1969 - 1975, when I moved away). I don't remember when I met him, but he became my personal physician not long after my arrival at Hahnemann. I remember his instructions about walking up and down the stairs: "Walk 2 flights up and 3 flights down." I NEVER saw him in an elevator; he was always running up and down the stairs to visit his patients, and as well as others who were not his patients, but wished they were!. I moved out of the area in 1975, but I always asked a friend still living in Philly how he was, because I just had to keep track of him! When I found out he had passed away I could hardly believe it. I don't know why, but I always thought he would live forever. He cared so much for me and all his patients. It is a huge loss for all of us that he's gone. He always wore a smile, and had a kind word for everyone. I don't know of a single soul who didn't love him. My very deepest sympathy to his entire family.
Sue Leferson
Manassas, VA

Sue Leferson - October 14, 2016 at 09:21 AM

BB

“ With deepest sympathy to you all! It's been a long and happy association through Hahnemann and Harcum College. Sorry that I only just found about your great loss.
Bea Carpenter Durham Blackman

Bea Blackman - July 03, 2015 at 01:56 PM

KP

“ I met Dr. Oaks as a new nurse at Hahnemann Hospital. I met this wonderful, instructive, respectful, kind and warm physician. I instantly fell in love with him and looked forward to seeing his big smile which was infectious. You could never have a bad day after seeing him. He stood as a stellar example of our profession. A beacon shining the way for all, leading us all to a higher dedication in service to others. Never a cross word, never a sour moment. There was only one event which could remove that smile and that was at the death of a beloved patient and God knows he loved them all. Even still he was always the one who came to comfort both the family and the even the staff. What a great man.

I even choose him as my own physician. I knew he would always look out for me. I was certain of him. Not many men inspire that kind of comfort or trust. I remember asking for a certain medication which was a new and popular drug for weight loss. He refused to give it to me and told me his reasons. I was so upset and left with my head low and pouting a little, but resigned to his direction as if he was a father and physician. Imagine just how relieved I was that I followed his instruction when that drug was later found to be responsible for the cardiac death and compromise of so many. He just cared about me.

Please know Oaks family that he was well loved by all. I know no man who had a cross word about him. Who could not love this man. So professional. So caring. So genuine.

So gentle. So much a part of all of our families. The world is a smaller world without him.

I know he is getting some well deserved rest family. Yet I have a feeling he is still watching over us all from above.

My prayers are with you Oaks family.

Klm Phillips - June 27, 2015 at 05:45 AM

DR

“ Susan, after reading about your dad and seeing his picture with the welcoming smile, I'm sorry I didn't get the chance to know him personally. You and your family are in my thoughts and prayers.



Debbie Ross

Debbie Ross - June 19, 2015 at 02:32 PM

JM

“ Always a rôle model, an approachable teacher and then a wise colleague, eventually an affectionate friend during my career in medicine. You shall be missed, your spirit abides. Ave atque vale.

Julio Kuperman MD

Julio Kuperman MD - June 19, 2015 at 11:43 AM



“ I met Dr. Oaks when I was a 19 yr old patient in the RICU @ Hahnemann . He was not my doctor, yet he came over & introduced himself and that was the beginning of a 38 year long friendship! From that day, he came to see me everyday!!He became both my parents doctor & mine as well! When I got married,he became my husbands doctor too.Morning, noon or night, No matter what the time was, "Oaks" would be there for me. Every time I had surgery,when I woke from anesthesia, Oaksie was holding my hand and the first face I'd see. I loved him dearly!! One time in a snow storm my mom was not able to get out of the car due to mounds of snow. No problem for Oaks, he came out to the car and gave her a check up in the car!!
Dr. Oaks saved my life in so many ways! I feel blessed to have had him in my life!!
My heartfelt sympathies to his family and all hearts he has touched in his lifetime!
God speed my friend.

Robin McCann

Robin McCann - June 19, 2015 at 09:29 AM



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Dr. Wilbur Wilson Oaks Jr..



June 18, 2015 at 10:30 PM

LC

“ I remember Dr. Oaks coming late at night to check on patients before he would finally leave and go home. He was always approachable to the nurses. He will be missed
My deepest sympathies to the family.

Linda Celia - June 18, 2015 at 07:17 AM

SH

“ I am grateful to have had the privilege of working for this amazing, caring, wonderful man. He was always smiling, laughing, loving life and caring for his patients. He will be missed. God Bless my Oaksie, Condolences to his family.

Love
Stephanie Hawthorne
West Deptford, NJ

Stephanie Hawthorne - June 17, 2015 at 10:20 AM

SH

“ My heartfelt condolences to the Oaks family. He always had a kind word and ready smile. He was a compassionate physician and I am grateful to have been one of his residents.
Sara Hawes

sara hawes - June 16, 2015 at 09:08 PM

JK

“ Dr. Oaks and I met on 4/13/1980 (or he met me), when I suffered an Brain aneurism, which burst. Dr. Oaks was my doctor at Hahnemann Hospital (Surgeon-Dr. Perry Black). I did not know Dr. Oaks was the attending Doctor for 2 wks because I was in coma. But, Dr. Oaks look in on me and my wife frequently. When I came out of the Coma, Dr. Oaks was there. Because Dr. Oaks' care I made almost full recovery, could not back on the Phila. Police Dept. but, I did go on to Helping other disabled people thru a 18 1/2 yr. position at Liberty Resources Inc. and I would not have done this without Dr. Oaks.

With deepest sympathy,

John P. Kane

john p. kane - June 16, 2015 at 05:49 PM

BS

“ Billy Oaks was our Chief Resident in Medicine in 1961-62. I have never forgotten his infctious desire to teas. As a teacher he was one of the best I ever had from 1958 to the present. His greatest asset was as a role model with enthusiasm, energy and integrity. Thanks and Blessings to his family for sharing him with us.
Bill Strong '62



Bill Strong - June 16, 2015 at 03:40 PM

ST

“ Dr. Oaks touched so many of us. I know that those of us who played field hockey and lacrosse for Lafayette felt the love and support from Dr. Oaks. From his wonderful smile and positive words to a bag filled with candy for the rides home. We were so blessed to have such a kind and loving man supporting Lafayette athletics.

Sallie Lurton Taylor - June 16, 2015 at 08:23 AM

BM

“ What a great person. Dr. Oaks will surely be missed by all of those he touched. As a member of the Lafayette soccer team and then a Philadelphia resident post graduation I got to see Dr. Oaks a bit and he was always so happy and positive. I know the entire Lafayette community hold him in the highest regard and will miss him.

Brian Mahoney - June 15, 2015 at 06:09 PM

KC

“ Such a great loss to all of those who had the privilege of knowing Dr. Oaks. My sincere and heartfelt condolences to the Oaks family.

Kim Beasley - Lafayette College - June 15, 2015 at 02:47 PM

RL

“ Reid Glynn, LLP purchased the Pure Faith Pillow for the family of Dr. Wilbur Wilson Oaks Jr..



Reid Glynn, LLP - June 15, 2015 at 02:25 PM

NQ

“ *Nelneeta Lytle Quash lit a candle in memory of Dr. Wilbur Wilson Oaks Jr.*



Nelneeta Lytle Quash - June 15, 2015 at 01:59 PM

NQ

Susan, you and your family I our deepest sympathy, love Sterling and Nel

Nelneeta Lytle Quash - June 15, 2015 at 02:01 PM

CJ

Wilbur: I can see you now..five rows closer to the screen at the Egyptian theater..as you stood up being introduced as the captain of the Bala Cynwyd Junior High soccer team. The audience cheered and they never stopped all these decades later. But your focus was always on others- for sure on Skelt and the wonderful family the two of you raised together.

Here's to you and the Cynwyd Clowns from ChazReilly, a Bala Boy, and Joan.

*The Reillys
Palm Beach Shores, FL*

Charles Reilly, Jr. - June 16, 2015 at 06:57 AM