



Dr. J. Harper Gaston

November 2, 1931 - July 12, 2020

J. Harper Gaston IV M.D. died on July 12, 2020 in Atlanta, Georgia due to complications of dementia. He was a most caring father and grandfather, a loving husband of sixty-seven years, and an honorable, dedicated, and talented physician, who was beloved by his many patients, family, and friends. Dr. Harper Gaston worked for the Kaiser Permanente Medical Group of Northern California for over twenty years, and later founded and served as the first Medical Director and Physician-in-Chief of the Kaiser Permanente Southeastern Medical Group in Atlanta, Georgia. Dr. Gaston was 88 years old.

Dr. Harper Gaston was born on November 2, 1931 in New York, New York to Joseph H. Gaston III M.D and his wife, Louese Hays Gaston. Raised in Columbus, Georgia, where his father practiced orthopedic medicine, Harper Gaston attended Columbus city schools and was a high school graduate of the Darlington School in Rome, Georgia. After his father's death, Dr. Gaston worked as a grocery clerk to help support his mother and to earn his tuition money, and at age sixteen he entered Emory University, where he received both his Bachelor (C'52) and Medical Degrees (M'55). Dr. Gaston was a Board-Certified Internist and Cardiologist.

While attending Emory Medical School, Dr. Harper Gaston met and married the love of his life, his medical school classmate, Dr. Anne Elizabeth Hendrick

Gaston. Both doctors completed their internships and residencies at Grady Memorial Hospital, where Dr. Gaston was named the first fellow in Cardiology under the direction of world-renown cardiologist, Dr. J. Willis Hurst. Upon completion of his residency program, Dr. Harper Gaston enlisted in the United States Air Force and was stationed at Kessler Air Force Base in Biloxi, Mississippi, where Captain Gaston served as a general internist and (oddly) Chair of the Dermatology department while his wife, Dr. Anne Gaston worked as a civilian pediatrician in the Kessler Air Force Base General Hospital.

In 1961, Drs. Anne and Harper Gaston moved first to Oakland, and then to Piedmont, California, where they joined the Kaiser Permanente Medical Group in the KPMG's first medical office in San Leandro, California. Their decision was based primarily upon the fact that the KPMG was one of the only medical groups in the country which would allow a husband and wife to both practice medicine for equal pay.

Dr. Harper Gaston was appointed the Assistant-Chief of Medicine at the then new Kaiser Permanente Hayward Hospital in 1966; Chief of Medicine in 1971; Assistant Physician-in-Chief in 1976; and elected Physician-in-Chief in 1977-1984. In 1984, Dr Gaston was chosen to return to his home State of Georgia to establish the Kaiser Permanente Southeastern Medical Group, where he served as its founding Medical Director. In addition to his work with the Permanente Medical Group, Dr. Gaston also served as an Assistant Clinical Professor in Internal Medicine at Stanford University.

Dr. Harper Gaston was also active in the State of California Heart Association, where he served on the Board of Directors, and in the Alameda County Heart Association, where he served as President. Dr. Gaston's many years of work with the California Heart Association was responsible for securing and installing the first maned cardiac defibrillator station in a sports venue on the west coast at the Oakland Coliseum. This activism led to one of his fondest

memories where he acted as personal game-day cardiologist, sitting next to Charlie O. Finley, owner of the Oakland A's, for all of the home games in several world series from 1972-1974.

In Atlanta, Dr. Gaston continued his community service, by serving the Emory University Medical School in many capacities for over 50 years, including as an adviser to the Emory University System of Healthcare Board of Directors, as a member of the Emory Board of Visitors, and as Co-Chair with his wife of the National Council of Medicine. The Drs. Gaston also established the Gaston Service Scholarships for Emory University Medical School students who exemplified community volunteerism and service, where he stated: "Service in and of itself is the greatest reward that our profession can offer us. It is the heart of medicine." Dr. Harper Gaston was awarded the Emory Medal, Emory's Highest Honor, for his service to Emory and the community in 1997.

Dr. Gaston remained an avid sports fan of the Oakland A's, the Oakland Raiders, the Atlanta Braves, and the Georgia "Dawgs" for all of his life. He loved to travel and traveled with one of the first physician groups to ever visit the USSR in the late 1960s. He also loved horse racing and was a co-owner of Dogwood Stables in Aiken, South Carolina. His one disappointment in life was when Dogwood's horse, Summer Squall, won the 1990 Preakness, but despite being the favorite to win, came in second in the 1990 Kentucky Derby. His greatest achievement was his generosity of spirit and his tremendous love for his wife and family.

Dr. J. Harper Gaston is survived by his wife, Dr. Anne Elizabeth Hendrick Gaston, his only child, Lisa Anne Gaston, his son-in-law Michael Gerard Reff, and his two granddaughters and their spouses, Allison Elizabeth Stalla (Timothy Zeid Stalla) and Hayley Harper Swarbrick (Andrew John Swarbrick).

A private service will be held where Dr. Harper Gaston will be laid to rest at Greenville Presbyterian Church Cemetery. A public memorial service will be planned and announced at a later date.

Condolences can be expressed online at www.mckoon.com

McKoon Funeral Home & Crematory (770) 253-4580

Cemetery Details

Greenville Presb. Church Cemetery

645 Rocky Mount Road
Greenville, GA 30222

Tribute Wall

PS

“ Dr. Alberts said it best, Dr. Gaston was the embodiment of a Southern gentleman.

I had the honor of working with Harper at Kaiser Permanente in North Carolina and Georgia.

He was my mentor and dear and loyal friend. His humble, kind and generous nature in caring for people was a foundational virtue which set him apart from others. Harper was a leader, a physician, a healer, a mediator with integrity, he had vision, common sense and a positive energy that was contagious. Harper's enthusiasm never waned. He excelled at everything he did and motivated others to be their very best, to think outside the box, to have that confidence to stay out of step when everyone else was marching to the wrong tune.

Harper was my hero. He could see beyond the obvious, a linear thinker making connections with previously dismissed concepts resulting in new and unique ideas. Harper was energized by tough challenges.

I so miss our talks about family, medicine, sports, horses and cars. So many great memories we have shared through the years that will live with me forever. One memory in particular was going to the World Series game between the Braves and Yankees that went into extra innings. Lisa Anne thank you for getting those tickets and of course it went into extra innings....and yes we stayed the entire time enjoying the moment and the making of history. I will never forget this. It was my first World Series with a man I loved. I got home to NC about 5 am and went to the office at 7. It was what Harper would have done, but most likely he would have been there by 6am.

Dr. Anne I know how much Harper treasured you. You both were the best versions of yourselves when you were together. I saw that glow at your Wedding Anniversary celebration. He would light up like a Christmas tree when we talked about families. He adored all

of you and was so proud of you Lisa Anne, Allison and Haley. I know Harper is smiling and will always look over you and provide winks that he is near.

I will leave you with this Irish Blessing that I know my dear friend Harper would wish upon his family and friends;

May the road rise up to meet you.

May the wind be always at your back.

May the sun shine warm upon your face;

the rains fall soft upon your fields and until we meet again,

may God hold you in the palm of His hand.

Amen.

Paul Stetson

Paul Stetson - July 22, 2020 at 12:17 AM

JD

“ I was honored to have the acquaintance of Drs. Harper and Ann Gaston as mutual members of Greenville Presbyterian Church, Greenville, Ga. On occasion Dr. Harper and I had some very enlightening and interesting conversations at their beautiful home in Greenville. Through the Harper's generous benevolent and regular support the struggling Presbyterian church has managed to hold on and survive. In fact a few years ago, Dr. Harper purchased a small tract of land adjacent to the existing cemetery/church property and gave it to the church to expand the cemetery which needed additional burial space. The likes of Dr. Harper Gaston are vastly disappearing. He had a vivid memory of his youth and beginnings and was eager to share. His obituary outlines his great accomplishments. I knew him as a down to earth, salt of the earth, caring human being.
Rest in peace dear friend.

Jimmy Durham - July 21, 2020 at 06:05 PM

PM

“ I was sorry to hear about Dr. Gaston's passing. Dr. Gaston was my mother, Betty Conley, cardiologist when he was working at Kaiser Hayward, CA. Thanks to his care she lived longer than expected. I met Dr. Gaston a few times. Thank you for sharing him with his patients. Bless you all. Pat Conley Manrique

Pat Manrique - July 20, 2020 at 09:15 PM

GS

“ Dear Anne, I'm so sorry to learn of your loss. I'm so glad you and Harper had those many wonderful years together. I will never forget knowing the two of you during our mutual stints at KPMC-Hayward. You were the epitome to me of a match 'match made in heaven'. I've thought of you often over the years since those days and am certainly thinking of you now. With love, Gretchen Karnish Seifert

Gretchen Karnish Seifert - July 20, 2020 at 05:45 PM

WA

“ Harper Gaston IV, MD was the embodiment of a Southern gentleman. Courtly, kind, and proper in every way. I knew him as physician , business leader, and friend. He excelled at every endeavor. He and wife, Ann Elizabeth gave inspiration and support to all they encountered through kindness and respect. Too few of his quality and grace remain.

W. W. Alberts, MD

W. W. Alberts - July 19, 2020 at 08:46 PM

SN

“ I am surprised that this site is not overflowing with tributes for a man who was so respected and admired. I was fortunate to have spent 31 years at Kaiser in Hayward. My experience began in 1972. I have many very precious memories of my Kaiser time and Harper Gaston will always be a significant one. He epitomized the definition of “gentleman” for me. When I was 22 years old, put a patient in an exam room and he would say, “Thank you ma'am, it made me feel so respected. I send my most sincere condolences to the Gaston family and to all the Kaiser Hayward “Family” who celebrate this special man.

susan nekimken - July 19, 2020 at 08:37 PM

KK

“ Drs. Harper and Ann Gaston were great friends And inspiring physicians. Together they established a wonder atmosphere and practice quality. They were so helpful and kind in the early days of my career. You will always be a true friend. Ken Kentch, Medical Center Administrator (retired).

Kenneth P. Kentch - July 19, 2020 at 07:21 PM

AR

“ I am honored to include Harper (and Ann) among my finest memories in the late '70s. Harper was the Chief of Medicine and I the administrator of the Kaiser hospital and Permanente medical group where we worked together. His friendship was treasured and we managed until just a few years ago to keep in touch at Christmastime.

My wife and I are quite certain Harper has gone straight to Heaven because he loved the Medical profession and cared greatly for his patients and family.

We shall miss him and offer our condolences and love for Harper's family. May they all be blessed and loved,

With many prayers for you Harper.

Alice and Bill Rose

Happy Valley, Oregon

Alice and Bill Rose - July 19, 2020 at 06:58 PM

KB

“ My late husband, Elmer Earle Batts, M.D., enjoyed working with Dr. Harper Gaston and Dr. Anne Gaston at the Kaiser Permanente Hayward Hospital. Dr. Batts and I were honored to be present at the wedding of Lisa Gaston and at the lovely reception that followed the ceremony. May I offer my sympathy to Dr. Anne Gaston and her family. Katherine S. Batts

Katherine S. Batts - July 19, 2020 at 02:36 PM

MD

“ I remember Dr. J. Harper Gaston well as the ever gracious Physician in Chief of Kaiser Permanente Hayward. I chose to move my health care career to KP in 1980 after receiving excellent health care there myself since the mid-70s. I asked my doctor, Robert Ruskin, MD, why he had joined KP.

As a Harvard and Johns Hopkins graduate, he could have practiced anywhere but he explained that at KP he could focus on practicing medicine, free to care for his patients without worrying about their ability to pay or having to run a business, and that when he was off duty, his partners cared for his patients. Rob felt respected and valued by his chief, Dr. Richard Cherry, and his PIC, Dr. Gaston. A few years later, I moved to KP, where I was proud to serve for the next 36 years. In those early years, I saw first hand Dr. Gaston's steady, respectful leadership. Our loss as he moved back to Georgia, was definitely Atlanta's gain. It was a true honor to have had the opportunity to work on his team. My deepest condolences to his wife, son, and family. Melonee Dean, MS, retired Manager of Infectious Disease and HIV Services, KP San Leandro/Hayward/Fremont.

Melonee Dean - July 18, 2020 at 07:22 AM

VM

“ Dr Harper Gaston was my husbands cardiologist. He was the best doctor and gave extra years to my husbands life, after many open heart surgeries at Stanford, to replace mitral valves. Giving him and coordinating medication to keep him getting stronger. I will never forget the great care he received from Dr Harper Gaston. My deepest love and condolence to Dr Ann Gaston, who was my childrens pediatrician until she moved them on when they no longer needed a pediatrician. We attended Kaiser in Hayward California. love and prayers to the Gaston family.

Virginia Magalhaes

virginia a magalhaes - July 18, 2020 at 12:11 AM

PK

“ I have so many fond memories of Harper and Ann and my parents, Delaine and Morris Perkins. They had many great adventures together over the years, including Medical school. Please give my love to Ann! Much love,
Penny Perkins Kurland

Penny Kurland - July 17, 2020 at 06:59 PM

BL

“ I didn't join Kaiser in HAYWARD til 1982, but I definitely remember Dr. Gaston. He made a very good impression on me as a new RN to Kaiser's Medical Advice department. When I started Kaiser, I didn't really know what to expect, because I had spent most of my Nursing career til that point, being somewhat anti Kaiser. But the more that I got to interact with the physicians, the more I appreciated their quality and how they cared for patients. Good leadership always starts at the top, and Dr, Gaston was always a good example of an excellent physician and a quality leader. My condolences to the whole family, and you will all be in my prayers. May he rest in eternal peace. 🙏🌸
Sincerely, Barbara Lang, retired Kaiser RN

Barbara Lang - July 17, 2020 at 04:59 PM

NT

I was lucky enough to have known the Gastons' since the early days of the Kaiser Hayward clinic, and was in the group who went to the Raider football games together. My wife Ann and I always enjoy being with the two of them. But, my respect for Harper (and Ann) as physicians and humans was far greater than a casual friendship in the stands. I always looked up to Harper!

Sincerely, Norm Tompach

Dear Ann; My heart is with you. I recently lost my second wife and know what you are feeling.

Sincerely, Norm Tompach

Norm Tompach - July 22, 2020 at 03:27 PM