

## PETER E. SHEPTAK, M.D.



Peter Edward Sheptak, age 86, of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, passed away peacefully on Friday, January 26, 2024, after a brave battle fighting leukemia. Beloved husband of 61 years to Gracia (Venetos) Sheptak; loving father of Peter J. (Shana) Sheptak and Alexa Sheptak Recchi; cherished grandfather of Christina, Cameron, Austin, and Samantha Recchi; Peter Christian Sheptak, John Sheptak, and Kayla Peterson; brother-

-in-law of Irene (Paul) Koett; Uncle of Matthew (Tara) Koett.

Peter was born in Butler, Pennsylvania to Peter and Stella Sheptak on August 27, 1937. Graduating with high honors from Butler High School in 1955, he was a football and track standout winning the WPIAL Javelin title in 1955. He completed his undergraduate studies with high honors at the University of Notre Dame in 1959. While there, he participated in freshman football and continued to throw the Javelin with the Notre Dame track team. He went on to receive his Doctor of Medicine from the University of Pittsburgh in 1963 and completed his Neurosurgical residency training at Pitt in 1968. He was awarded an NIH postdoctoral research fellowship in 1965 where he researched electrophysiology of the brain.

Following the completion of his training, he devoted his professional career to neurological surgery as both a teacher and practicing surgeon. He, along with several neurosurgeons, developed a successful clinical practice (Oakland Neurosurgical Associates) and was on the staff of many local hospitals, most notably Presbyterian, Montefiore, and Shadyside hospitals. As a faculty member of the Department of Neurological Surgery at Pitt, he began his teaching duties with medical students and residents. As his responsibilities increased over time, he was appointed Clinical Professor and Vice Chairman of Neurological Surgery. His teaching legacy includes contributing to the training of close to 100 residents now practicing in the United States and overseas.

Over the years, he served the medical community with great distinction, performing innovative, investigative, and clinical work relating to spinal degenerative disorders, pain management, cerebral vascular disease, and brain tumors. He had a major interest in skull-based tumors, especially acoustic tumors. He was a pioneer in developing the use of tissue adhesives to treat brain arterio-venous malformations and aneurysms. Other achievements include the publication of numerous articles in professional journals and textbooks. In 1988 Butler High School honored him with their Distinguished Graduate Award. To further honor the career and achievements of one of the department's most influential physicians and teachers, in 2006, the University of Pittsburgh established the Peter E. Sheptak Endowed Chair in Neurological Surgery. He was known as a consummate, energetic, and gentlemanly surgeon.

Dr. Sheptak also served as team Neurosurgeon for Pitt Football for 12 years and the Pittsburgh Penguins for 35 years - where he was rewarded with five Stanley Cup rings.

He retired from active clinical practice in 2008 and cherished his time with family and friends in Hilton Head Island, S.C., and Pittsburgh.

In 1960, Peter met his loving and devoted wife Gracia while both were students at the University of Pittsburgh. They were married in June of 1962 and blessed with two children Peter and Alexa and seven loving grandchildren who call him their "Papou". Being a kind and dedicated father was of the utmost importance and he cherished the time he spent with his family. Peter and Gracia's love of traveling took them on adventures to Europe, Japan, India, and Africa. He treasured their family vacations in Hilton Head, tarpon fishing in Islamorada, and ski and golf trips. His grandkids saw him as a true role model and their "hero". Night-time walks on the beach searching for ghost crabs, golf cart rides through the "magic forest", fishing, and quiet talks on the deck overlooking the ocean are treasured family memories. He had an immense passion for golf and visited many excellent courses in the US, as well as courses in Europe and the British Isles. He was a long-time member and past president of the Pittsburgh Field Club. He also loved reading and fast cars (raced Formula Fords). He quietly spent many hours creating colorful paintings in his art studio at home. He was a dedicated husband, father, Papou, loyal friend, and mentor whose driving force was to always help others. He did this with great strength, wisdom, compassion, and grace. He was a gift to us all.

The family will receive friends Friday, February 2nd from 4-8 pm at the WEDDELL-AJAK FUNERAL HOME, 100 Center Ave., Aspinwall. A Funeral Mass will be held Saturday, February 3rd at 10 am at Christ the King Parish, St. Joseph Church, 342 Dorseyville Road, O'Hara Twp.

In lieu of flowers, the family respectfully suggests memorial contributions to the University of Pittsburgh / Peter E. Sheptak Chair. Please make checks payable to the University of Pittsburgh and mail to: University of Pittsburgh/ Attn: G. Dubin, PO Box 640093, Pittsburgh, PA 15264-0093. Donations can also be made to the Mario Lemieux Center for Blood Cancers to support cancer research. Checks payable to the University of Pittsburgh and mail to: UPMC Hillman Cancer Center, UPMC Cancer Pavilion, St.1B, 5150 Centre Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15232; via credit card online, [www.upmchillman.com/donate](http://www.upmchillman.com/donate), or 312-623-4700. In memory of Peter E. Sheptak, M.D.

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