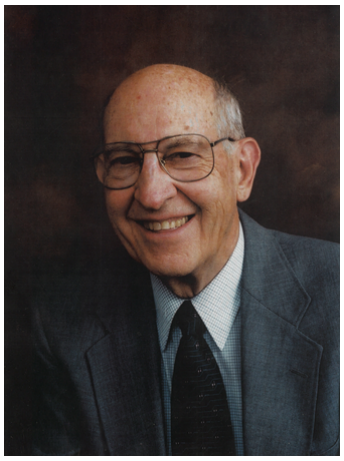


Joseph R. Newton, MD (“Doctor Joe”)

August 26, 1924 ~ November 24, 2024

We lost our beloved “Doctor Joe,” on November 24th. One of the greatest of the greatest generation died at age 100, an apropos number for one who aced every test he ever took. Joe was born on August 26, 1924. He was raised on Bryan Avenue in Salt Lake, suffering the worst of the depression when his father lost his job. He was a sickly child whose family survived on canned tomatoes during those darkest days. With no advantages beyond a loving family and a sharp mind, he graduated from South High at 16 and the U of U Med School at 22, *phi beta kappa*.

After graduating, he was sealed to his sweetheart, Betsy Ross Young, in the Salt Lake Temple by Elder Herald B. Lee, thereafter, celebrating 76 anniversaries before Betsy’s death in 2023. Betsy fell in love with Joe for his many qualities but mostly, she admitted, for his skill as a dance partner. They danced their way through life until Betsy could no longer walk at 89. Betsy’s sorority sisters voted Joe “Favorite Guy of Alpha Chi,” in 1945, an award he cherished as much as his *Phi Beta Kappa* key. One co-resident of his independent living facility dubbed him “the oldest living chick magnet.” Betsy and Joe raised six children, then Grandpa Joe was chief physician for 23 grandchildren and most of his 57 great grandchildren.

Before he could begin his private practice, he was sent to the Korean conflict, arriving in North Korea just after his 24th Infantry Division was overrun by the Chinese. Replacing a doctor who had been killed, he commanded the operations that transported wounded soldiers from the aid stations to the M.A.S.H. unit in North Korea. You can imagine his reassuring demeanor calming infantryman suffering from mortar wounds: “You’re going to be fine.” Did he have smarties in Korea?

As a top medical student, Dad had his pick of specialties but chose the least lucrative, pediatrics, because he loved it, building prized, generation-spanning, relationships with thousands of Salt Lake families.

During his 40+ years of private practice, he served as a Clinical professor of Pediatrics at the U, and President of both the Intermountain Pediatric Society and the Utah Academy of Pediatrics. Joe was heavily committed to the Primary Children’s Hospital, the hospital his aunt May Anderson as General Primary President had founded two years before he was born. He served on its Governing Board, as Staff President, and as Department Chair. He was a brilliant diagnostician, always available to other pediatricians for consultation. He was the last pediatrician to give up house calls. “They don’t make them like Dr. Joe any more” quipped one fellow pediatrician. Dad saved the lives of countless children in the valley as well as thousands of Russian children by his instruction at the Medical School in Ekaterinburg Siberia. Betsy and Joe served an 18 month medical mission there. Russia was losing many of their sick babies during transportation between delivery hospitals and their neonatal hospitals. The infant resuscitation procedures he taught the Russian medical students were adopted as official procedures in the Sverdlovsk Oblast

(state) and later in all of Russia. Through USAID and the church, he obtained the donation of a specialized ambulance for the purpose. How he got the ambulance through the corrupt Russian bureaucracy is a story for another day.

Apparently he didn't get enough undergraduate schooling in his youth. After retirement he organized his buddies (mostly physicians) to attended nearly 50 additional semesters at the U of U, noting last month that 15 of his fellow students had "graduated" having "passed" in the permanent sense of the word. Now it's 16.

His serious and somewhat deprived youth was more than compensated for in his adult and retirement years. He learned to ski with his children, then became a ski patrolman and eventually a NASTAR ski racer taking a gold medal at 70. He racked up two gold medals in tennis at the Huntsman World Senior Games. Joe and Betsy were exuberant fans of U of U Basketball, the Utah Symphony, and Pioneer Memorial theater. They also travelled the world. Before every travel adventure, Joe mastered the history of every country they visited, usually knowing more than their guides. He learned to paint at 65 and taught his grandchildren oil painting. He finished 75 paintings that are treasured by family members. Betsy and Joe loved life and relished every minute of it.

In addition to his mission to Russia, Dad's church service included 14 years of temple work, scouting, Elder's Quorum President, and Bishopric. Most of his 70s and 80s were spent in the Saint Mary's ward High Priest Group leadership serving in every capacity.

For all his intellect and accomplishments, he was as modest and unassuming as they come. He never pushed his well-studied opinions, never spoke a crude word, never complained, but always peppered his conversations with a sparkling wit and expressions of gratitude. He was a delight to be around, even as his strength failed. In his last months, with a walker and oxygen in tow, he accompanied each of his guests through the dining room of The Ridge introducing every resident and staff member by name and with a compliment of some sort. He lifted everyone he met. This social grace is hard work, especially for one whose strength is gone and whose recall is waning. In his strength he taught us the power of Christ-like service; in his infirmity he taught us the power of gratitude. It's who he was to the core. He loved his country, he loved learning, he loved the Utes, he loved his patients, he loved his family and his friends, he loved God, and most of all he loved his "beautiful bride" Betsy. Once again Joe Newton has aced the test, the test of life.

Doctor Joe is survived by his six children, Joseph Steven Newton (Karen), Mary Gay Williams, Raymond Young Newton, Betsy Lee "Bee" Jorgensen (Dean), Peggy Scott (Steven), and Bruce Young Newton (Julie).

A viewing will be held at Larkin Sunset Lawn Mortuary, 2350 E. 1300 S., Salt Lake City UT on Sunday evening December 1st from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. Funeral services will be held Monday, December 2nd, at the Monument Park Stake Center, 1320 S. Wasatch Dr., Salt Lake City, beginning at 11:00 a.m. with a viewing before the services beginning at 9:30 a.m. Dr. Joe will be interred at the Larkin Sunset Lawn cemetery.

To watch the recorded service, please click on the Watch Service button above.