



Anatolio Benedicto Cruz, Jr., MD, Captain, MC, USNR (ret)

June 20, 1933 - May 21, 2023

Anatolio Benedicto Cruz Jr., MD, Captain, MC, USNR (ret)

Founding faculty member of the University of Texas Medical School at San Antonio and renowned oncologist and surgeon, Dr. Anatolio Benedicto Cruz Jr., died Sunday, May 21 in San Antonio, Texas. He was 89.

Dr Cruz, known to friends as Tony, was born in Manila on June 20, 1933, to Anatolio Benedicto Cruz, Sr., and Francesca Fermin Cruz. When his father, a surgeon in the United States Armed Forces in the Far East, opted to fight with the guerrillas against Japanese occupation in WWII, Tony, as the oldest of nine children, assumed many of his father's responsibilities at just nine years of age.

Dr Cruz's experiences during WWII shaped a personal philosophy that would guide him for the remainder of his life. It started with a commitment to always be honest, consistent and to keep things simple. He summed up his approach to every action in his life to "always do the right thing."

He later reflected, "I began to understand that to serve one's country is honorable and to do things well is do it with honor and dedication. Courage allows you to accomplish your goals, especially in the face of great odds."

After the war, Tony graduated from the University of the Philippines in Quezon City with a degree in chemistry and biology. It was there that he met his future wife and lifelong friend, Rosalina “Rose” Sedillo Cruz. They were married April 28, 1955.

In 1957, Dr Cruz earned his MD from the College of Medicine, University of the Philippines, followed by an MS in surgery from the University of Minnesota Graduate School in Minneapolis, MN.

In 1963, while working with Dr. C. Walton Lillehei, Dr Cruz devised a free-floating heart valve, a significant advancement in medicine at the time. The valve was later modified and was patented as the Lillehei-Cruz-Kaster artificial heart valve.

After general surgery residencies at Mount Sinai and Ancker hospitals in Minnesota, Dr Cruz practiced in the Philippines and Canada before moving his family to San Antonio in 1966 where he began a remarkable career at the UT Medical School at San Antonio, which evolved to the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio. In a career that spanned more than forty years, Dr Cruz served as a surgical instructor, professor, and founding chief of surgical oncology.

The tradition of service to the United States begun by Dr. Cruz’s father in World War II was furthered by Dr Cruz, who served as a physician in the United States Navy Reserve, deploying as a surgeon on the USNS Mercy during the first Persian Gulf War. He retired as a USN captain after twenty years of distinguished service. Tony’s oldest daughter, Raquel Cruz Bono, became the first Filipina and female surgeon to achieve the rank of vice admiral in US Navy history. Raquel’s brother, Anatolio “AB” Cruz III, also attained the rank of rear admiral, making them the first brother and sister ever to serve at Flag rank concurrently.

Dr Cruz was the recipient of the Thomson Gale American Men and Women of Science award; the Outstanding Educator award from the University of Philippines Alumni Society of America; the First Honorary Lecturer, Most Distinguished Alumnus, Phi Kappa MD Frate and was recognized as the Best Clinical Teacher by the Junior Class UTMSSA.

During his career, Dr Cruz made substantial contributions to the advancement of medicine and surgery. His work and legacy lives on through the over 10,000 medical students he helped graduate, and the physicians and surgeons he taught, molded, and mentored. He was a leader in breast oncology clinical trials and an author of numerous studies which revolutionized breast cancer treatment. Dr. Cruz was a pioneering advocate for breast conserving surgical care, holding steadfast to this even in the face of significant peer criticism. Breast conserving treatment is now the standard practice for most breast cancer patients. Dr. Cruz served as president of the American College of Surgeons, South Texas Chapter, and the president of the San Antonio Surgical Society.

Dr Cruz and his wife Rose were devoted parishioners of Holy Spirit Catholic Church in San Antonio, where he served as the president of the Holy Spirit school board from 1970-1972. He was also a member of the Antonian Prep School Board.

When he wasn't spending his time in service to his patients, the community, or the adopted country he loved so much, Tony loved to read, study history or work on classic cars. An involved and engaged father, Tony always found time to umpire his sons' CYO baseball games, cheer at his daughters' swim meets and tennis matches; and remained a frequent advisor and confidante to all of them into their adulthood.

In addition to his wife, Tony is survived by his children; Raquel Cruz Bono and husband Art Dwight, Anatolio “AB” Cruz III and wife Jill Lynch Cruz, Roselle “Pinky” Cruz Osterman. He was predeceased by his son, Anthony “Tony” Cruz, who is survived his wife Honor Hulo Cruz. He also leaves eight grandchildren, Corey Cruz, Caroline Cruz, Taylor Bono, Lauren Osterman, Ben Cruz, Ana Cruz, Grace Dwight, Aly Dwight; two great-grandchildren, Luka and Link Cruz.

He leaves his brothers Walter and Lincoln and his sisters Ileana, Nancy, Frances, Glory, and Virginia. He was predeceased by his brother Wally.

Rosary will be recited at 9:15 a.m., prior to the 9:45 a.m., Mass of Resurrection at Holy Spirit Catholic Church on Thursday, June 1, 2023. Interment to follow in Ft. Sam Houston National Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations in the memory of Dr Anatolio B. Cruz, Jr, to Holy Spirit Catholic Church (<https://www.holyspiritsa.org>) or the Department of Surgery, UT Health, San Antonio (<https://lsom.uthscsa.edu/surgery>).

Cemetery Details

Ft. Sam Houston National Cemetery

1520 Harry Wurzbach
San Antonio, TX 78209

Previous Events

Rosary

JUN 1. 9:15 AM - 9:45 AM (CT)

Holy Spirit Catholic Church
8134 Blanco road
San Antonio , TX 78216

Mass of Resurrection

JUN 1. 9:45 AM - 10:45 AM (CT)

Holy Spirit Catholic Church
8134 Blanco road
San Antonio , TX 78216

Graveside Service

JUN 1. 11:15 AM (CT)

Ft. Sam Houston National Cemetery
1520 Harry Wurzbach
San Antonio, TX 78209

Tribute Wall



“ *Mission Park Funeral Chapels & Cemeteries created a Webcast in memory of Anatolio Benedicto Cruz, Jr., MD, Captain, MC, USNR (ret)*



Mission Park Funeral Chapels & Cemetery - May 25, 2023 at 04:49 PM

GO

“ *As a new father many years ago Tony gave me valuable tips on how to successfully raise my children. Always keep your promises no matter how hard and to always do the right thing. I observed him demonstrate these principals throughout our friendship in and out of business and I have tried to emulate his example in my life. Tony will be missed!*
Greg Oveland

greg oveland - June 01, 2023 at 10:42 AM

EV

“ *Efren V. purchased the Rose Remembrance for the family of Anatolio Benedicto Cruz, Jr., MD, Captain, MC, USNR (ret).*



Efren V. - May 30, 2023 at 09:08 PM

EV

“ Efren V. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Anatolio Benedicto Cruz, Jr., MD, Captain, MC, USNR (ret).

Efren V. - May 30, 2023 at 09:08 PM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Anatolio Benedicto Cruz, Jr., MD, Captain, MC, USNR (ret).



May 30, 2023 at 06:25 PM



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Anatolio Benedicto Cruz, Jr., MD, Captain, MC, USNR (ret).



May 30, 2023 at 01:44 PM

RF

“ Roger & Elvie Espiritu and Family purchased the Lavender Reflections Spray for the family of Anatolio Benedicto Cruz, Jr., MD, Captain, MC, USNR (ret).



Roger & Elvie Espiritu and Family - May 29, 2023 at 05:27 PM

UL

“ I was a 15-year-old pre-med student at the Univ. of the Philippines when I first met Tony B.Cruz. At 17 he was a dashing, handsome ROTC cadet 2nd Lt commanding the 1st platoon of Fox Company in which I was one of the "soldiers". He always looked dignified and authoritative as he barked orders while we marched on the drill grounds of the campus carrying our heavy albeit unarmed M1 Garand rifles. I remember that if we didn't follow Tony's commands properly the company commander (not Tony) made the entire company squat as punishment.

Then I met him again as a classmate in medical school. He was always studious, full of knowledge, and willing to share his wisdom with his fellow classmates.

I lost track of him after we both graduated as M.D. Years later, at one meeting of the American College of Surgeons in Atlantic City, NJ we met each other again. I was then a resident in general surgery. He was ahead of me in our post-graduate education and gave me important guidance on how to become a Fellow of the College. I learned a few tips from him on how to do basic research which inspired me to investigate peak lactic acid production which helped me obtain a Masters's Degree in Physiology.

Every life that God creates sooner or later dies. But the passing of a great friend and outstanding mentor is always felt as a deep loss by the living. May God bless Tony's soul as well as his surviving and loving family. Tony, Carolyn, and I have always included you and your family in our daily rosaries. May you rest in peace!

Uriel R. Limjoco, UPCM 57
CAPT. (Ret) USNR

Uriel Limjoco - May 29, 2023 at 12:34 PM

EI

“ Dearest Tony Cruz who was my friend and my mentor, my educator and the smartest person I knew. Incidentally, he saved my life nearly 30 years ago.

Eileen - May 29, 2023 at 11:36 AM



“ Florist Choice Bouquet was purchased for the family of Anatolio Benedicto Cruz, Jr., MD, Captain, MC, USNR (ret).



May 28, 2023 at 04:20 PM

SS

“ ABC, Jr.

I call him Ninong Junior, meaning Godfather-the first cousin my father, Nestor had chosen to be my godfather when I was baptized. We were still very young when he went abroad to continue his studies /work and eventually settled in the us to raise his young family. We didn't get to know him personally well but how we all knew what's going on the other side of the pond was through our Tita Pista, youngest sister of his father, Anatolio Sr. She kept us abreast of all family happenings especially abroad. We all knew of his great accomplishments and his successful career, giving his outmost contribution to the betterment of any individual. A person who had lived and promised to do his best to serve the people of the world. My only regret was that I never had a chance to speak to him personally when I had matured, had my own career and eventually raise my own family- that would've been great listening to what he had to say. I wished I had...

We will all miss you, Ninong Junior. We know your legacy will continue through the great works of your own children, who are as accomplished as you were and your wife, Ninang Rose.

May you Rest in Peace in the Hands of our Lord.

Sandra SantaMaria (née Garcia)

Sandra Garcia- SantaMaria - May 28, 2023 at 01:05 PM

ND

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Nancy Cruz and Gerry Dienel - May 27, 2023 at 04:06 PM

RE

“ There is not enough words to pay tribute to my cousin, Dr. Anatolio "Tony" B. Cruz II, for his thoughtful generosity and inspiring wisdom to which I attribute what I became today. This also includes his influence to our children, Sam and Jennifer, who also became physicians. Our youngest son, Joseph, a retired navy helicopter pilot was lovingly referred to by his Uncle Jun and Aunt Rose as their "favorite pilot". I always addressed Dr. Cruz as Manong Jun. "Manong" in our culture generally refers to someone who is highly regarded with respect, which he certainly well deserved.

May you rest in peace Manong Jun. We'll miss you!

*Roger F. Espiritu, MD
Captain, MC, USN (Retired)*

Roger Espiritu - May 26, 2023 at 07:57 PM

JP

“ Jun, as UPCM 57 classmates call him, is well-liked, respected, and admired by all. I, in particular, have fond memories of him as we first came to know each other as freshmen in 1952. We became close friends after surviving a grueling hazing to be members of the Phi Kappa Mu fraternity. During our clinical clerkship year, the year before the internship, we had a double date with two lovely young ladies to attend the annual Medical Ball. Dressed to the nines, we arrived at the front entrance of the Manila Hotel riding an original olive green painted open US military jeep that was loaned to him by his father, a high-ranking officer in the Philippine Army. Everyone else arrived in cars, limos, or taxis. Obviously, this foursome hit it well together. I ended up marrying my date, Donna who left me a widower 3 years ago. Jun married Rose and you all know the rest of the story. Our last time together was from November 28 to December 1, 2018, in San Antonio when our medical school class celebrated our 61st reunion with Rose and Jun as graceful hosts. That was the 63rd anniversary of the eventful event that led to our blissful married lives till death us do part as our marriage vows promised. Rest in Peace my good friend and brod. Joe Peczon.

Jose D Peczon - May 26, 2023 at 03:09 PM

JP

“ Jose Peczon purchased the Serenity Wreath for the family of Anatolio Benedicto Cruz, Jr., MD, Captain, MC, USNR (ret).



Jose Peczon - May 26, 2023 at 02:16 PM

MN

“ Mission Park North lit a candle in memory of Anatolio Benedicto Cruz, Jr., MD, Captain, MC, USNR (ret)



Mission Park North - May 22, 2023 at 05:31 PM

AO

To the Cruz family, I am so sorry to hear of Dr. Cruz' passing. He was an amazing man and surgeon. Prayers for all of you during this difficult time.

Amy O'Shea - May 25, 2023 at 10:35 AM

JR

My thoughts and prayers go out to the whole Cruz family, Dr. Cruz. Jeff Rockwood

Jeff Rockwood - May 25, 2023 at 02:11 PM

MR

Sending my thoughts and prayers to the family 🙏 I had an amazing experience and such wonderful memories of Dr. Cruz he will truly be missed,. Maria Rivas

Maria Rivas - May 26, 2023 at 08:38 AM

FE

Was his caregiver and he became more than a client. A very intelligent, Friend, and a gentle soul. Will miss his Smile. Angels are gonna fall in love with this one. REST ON PA.. FRED.

Fred Epeagba - May 26, 2023 at 09:03 AM

BG

Dr. Cruz was more than a physician to my family and I. My mom first met Dr. Cruz at University Hospital when she became his surgical tech in the operating room. They worked together for many years and when she was diagnosed with breast cancer, he was there in the operating room taking care of her. He later treated my mom's two sisters who were also diagnosed with breast cancer. After mom retired, he remained her physician as well as a very close friend. When he wouldn't hear from her, he would make a house call to check up on her and make sure she was doing well. In 2005 he became my physician and we also remained close friends. I would always reach out to him when ever I had a question or concern about my health, my mom and even my daughter. He was never too busy to take my calls or response to my text messages. During our talks, he also always had a way of keeping me calm and assuring me everything would be alright. If anyone has ever been a patient of Dr. Cruz, you know his bedside manners were a rare kind. He would always make you feel like you were the only patient he had. To this day, I always measure physician's bedside manner to those of Dr. Cruz. He was a remarkable physician and friend. Dr. Cruz, I will miss you so much. I will miss talking to you and texting you. When God made you, He made no other as great as you.

My deepest and sincere condolences to the Cruz family.

Betty Moya Guzman

Betty Moya Guzman - May 28, 2023 at 06:40 PM

MS

*Dr Cruz I saw as patient many years ago, He was such kind, sweet, warm and a very gentle man. You just felt his goodness. To the Family, please except my deepest condolences,
Mary Samano*

Mary Samano - May 31, 2023 at 08:49 AM

VP

Our condolences to the Cruz Family. A donation to Holy Spirit Catholic Church will be made to honor this great and patriotic American. Vito A Pampalona-Chairman, Yellow Ribbon Fund

Vito Anthony Pampalona - June 02, 2023 at 12:28 PM

MC

Dear Cruz Family: Dr. Cruz was my father's classmate since grade school and I am immensely grateful for their shared memories. The last time they were together was at the UP Class of '57 reunion in San Antonio. I send my heartfelt condolences and prayers during this difficult time.

Michelle Violeta Conde

Michelle Conde - July 08, 2023 at 09:35 PM