



Dr. George A. Bannayan

December 15, 1931 - June 4, 2021

Dr. George A Bannayan, 89, died peacefully at home in San Antonio on June 4, 2021, with Odette, his wife of 61 years, by his side.

George was born in the Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem's Old City on December 15, 1931, to one of the oldest Armenian families in the Quarter. His father, Abcar Bannayan, was a blacksmith, mayor of the Armenian Quarter, and amateur musician. His father's ironwork remains on display throughout Jerusalem's Old City, including the decorative iron that adorns the Armenian Chapel of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

In 1948, the family, consisting of his father Abcar, his mother Suzanne (nee Sultanian), his younger brothers Maurice and Elie, and his older sister Madeleine, emigrated from Jerusalem to Amman, Jordan. After finishing high school in Amman, George began his studies at the renowned American University of Beirut, receiving a bachelor's degree in 1953 and then a medical degree in 1957. During medical school he met Odette Hanna, a native of Beirut, Lebanon, who was working as a secretary at the American University. He and Odette were married in September, 1959.

As George would be the first to tell you with tears of gratitude, his family sacrificed for him to attend the American University of Beirut. His mother sold her wedding ring and his sister Madeleine sent him a portion of her monthly

earnings from teaching English. Devoted to his family, he sold his plasma each week to make ends meet and would later pay for his younger brothers to attend University.

In return for the scholarship that he received from the Jordanian army that helped him pay for medical school, George joined the Jordanian medical corps in 1957 as a Captain and army physician. One of his primary duties was to treat Bedouin families in the Jordanian desert, often staying with them overnight while he cared for family members. He routinely purchased medications with his own money to help treat families in need. During his nine years of service in the Jordanian army, he was well-known and beloved among the Bedouins.

In 1960, his daughter Suzanne was born in the Italian Hospital in Amman. In 1966, George, Odette, and Suzanne immigrated to the United States where George interned for one year at St. Joseph's Hospital in Denver, then spent four years in pathology residency at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland, and one year at Sloan-Kettering Memorial Hospital in New York City.

In July 1971, while he was a resident at Johns Hopkins, George published an article in the medical journal Archives of Pathology that described a congenital syndrome that had not been previously identified. In 1982 the condition was named Bannayan Syndrome, now also known as Bannayan-Riley-Ruvalcaba Syndrome.

After completing his postgraduate training in New York in 1972, George accepted a position of tenured associate professor of pathology at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio (UTHSC) and was promoted to tenured professor in 1977. During this period, he emerged as a definitive authority of kidney pathology, receiving numerous accolades for his

contributions to the education of his students. His knowledge of kidney transplant pathology reached an international audience and was instrumental to the success of kidney transplant programs.

In January 1982, George accepted a position of associate medical director of laboratories at Methodist Hospital in Dallas. He returned to San Antonio in May of 1986 as medical director of laboratories at Methodist Specialty and Transplant Hospital. Beginning in 2001, until his retirement from private practice in 2015, he provided anatomical pathology services to Methodist Hospitals in San Antonio through his work with the distinguished pathologists at South Texas Pathology Associates (STPA). In addition to his private practice, he maintained his position as clinical professor of pathology at UTHSC through 2017.

Over the span of his long career, George had forty manuscripts and abstracts published in medical journals, written alone or in collaboration with others, and contributed to chapters in textbooks on kidney disease.

In 2003 George received the Gift of Life Award from the National Kidney Foundation. In 2016 he returned to New York, where he received the prestigious Ellis Island Medal of Honor, awarded to native or naturalized American citizens who have made a significant impact on their communities through a life of service.

Throughout George's life, beginning with the school years at the American University of Beirut, his residency at John's Hopkins Hospital, his tenure at UTHSC, his time at Methodist Hospital in Dallas, and then with STPA in San Antonio, he developed lifelong friendships with many colleagues. They came to know him for who he was: a kind, humble, and generous man with a relentless intellectual curiosity, a great sense of humor, someone with the

ability to make complex concepts lucid in the classroom, and someone with extraordinary expertise in kidney transplant pathology.

In addition to his enthusiasm for pathology, George had a passion for exotic foods, wine, and opera. He and Odette were lifelong members and contributors to the San Antonio Symphony and the Houston Grand Opera.

George was especially passionate about his Armenian heritage, cognizant of the suffering of the Armenian people, who have endured and even flourished through periods of strife, persecution, and genocide. He and Odette have been staunch supporters of the Armenian General Benevolent Union for many years.

A true polymath, George was equally capable of discussing the history, geography, and politics of Europe and the Middle East, the novels of Tolstoy, or the methods of fermenting various grapes. He was fluent in Arabic and Armenian as well as English. He loved to read, often being in the middle of two or three books that he stacked on the family room table. He was re-reading the classics. His bookmark now rests within the last quarter of Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*, the latest classic that he was tackling again but unable to finish.

Although his intellect and achievements were extraordinary, George's greatest joy was always his family. His devotion to Odette, Suzanne, and his grandchildren was steadfast and profound.

George is survived by his wife Odette Bannayan, his daughter Suzanne Rostomian, his grandchildren George and David Rostomian, his brother Maurice Bannayan and wife Sonia, his brother Elie Bannayan and wife Taline, niece Aline Bannayan, and nephews Abkar Bannayan, Aram Bannayan, Sevan Bannayan, his brother-in-law John Hanna and wife Georgette, their

children: George, Joe, Jenny, and Joslyne Hanna, and numerous relatives in the United States and abroad.

Special thanks to Dr. Marvin Forland, excerpts of whose wonderful profile of George have been used here.

A memorial service will be held at the Eilan Hotel and Spa, 18603 La Cantera Terrace, San Antonio, TX 78256 on Saturday, July 17th, at 11:00 a.m. Valet parking only.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to the Armenian General Benevolent Union, 55 East 59th Street, New York, NY 10022-1112, ph.# (212) 319-6383.

Previous Events

Memorial Service

JUL 17. 11:00 AM (CT)

The Eilan Hotel and Spa
18603 La Cantera Terrace
San Antonio, TX 78256

Tribute Wall



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Dr. George A. Bannayan.*



July 14, 2021 at 03:58 PM



“ *For as long as I live, I'll remember George as a first class human being, my friend and teacher. Cristina and I will pray for Odette and the Bannayan family. We will contact the Armenian Benevolent Fund.*

Victor Saldivar, MD - July 12, 2021 at 02:25 PM



“ *My condolences to those who share in the lost of us here but rejoice in he's eternal presence before our Lord God. Too many thing/anecdotes to say of this incredible soul. He always had a positive and cheerful outlook in every situation. He could be quite funny. The one thing that truly amazed me was his memory. He remembered details of past or current work, as if he was reading it off a script. You are truly missed, God Bless you .*

Daniel Robledo - July 08, 2021 at 12:53 PM

DL

“ Dawn Lafreeda purchased the Treasured Lilies S
pray for the family of Dr. George A. Bannayan.



Dawn Lafreeda - July 06, 2021 at 02:03 PM

JH

“ I recruited Dr. B back to SA in 1986 and he elevated the Pathology
expertise of the Hospital to a world class level. John Hornbeak

john hornbeak - June 28, 2021 at 02:15 PM



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for
the family of Dr. George A. Bannayan.



June 25, 2021 at 02:38 PM



“ Divine Peace Bouquet was purchased for the
family of Dr. George A. Bannayan.



June 25, 2021 at 02:28 PM

PF

“ *Paula Larson and Alan Farris purchased the A New Sunrise Spray for the family of Dr. George A. Bannayan.*



Paula Larson and Alan Farris - June 24, 2021 at 05:09 PM

RS

“ *odette & family: my condolences for george's passing. He was not only a personal friend from whispering Oaks, but a highly respected learned colleague in medicine. As a local urologist at MST WE HAD MANY GRAT MEDICAL AND WONDERFUL conversations . He was greatly loved and respected by all the physicians. It was a great loss when he retired. His pathologic expertise was unsurpassed!! God bless you in your sorrow . Randy & Marsha Singleton*

Randall Singleton - June 22, 2021 at 12:44 PM

WM

“ *George was a wonderful man, a well respected pathologist, one with a delightful sense of humor. We had many "fundays" when as the pathologist he would come to the operating room with his diagnosis just to visit. He was always curious about what was being done in surgery. He truly enjoyed his profession and was a joy to know for many years. He will be missed by anyone having known him. W. David McInnis, MD*

W. David McInnis - June 20, 2021 at 03:27 PM

HG

“ George was a highly esteemed key member of the medical community in San Antonio. This was illustrated by his Friday afternoon standing room only tumor boards with freshly chef prepared gourmet meals paired with incredible wines in the 1990s. In the physician lounge George was central to animated discussion on current events, music, politics and travel. He was always welcoming to new physicians joining the community. George was not only a colleague to me but a good friend who welcomed me into his family. He cherished his family-his lovely wife Odette and daughter Suzanne(who he was so proud and protective of) and grandsons George and David(who I got to watch grow up into 2 wonderful young men). He will be always be very fondly remembered by us who were fortunate to have known him.

*Helen Goldberg M.D.
Santa Fe, NM*

Helen L Goldberg - June 17, 2021 at 10:41 AM



“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



Mission Park Funeral Chapels & Cemetery - June 16, 2021 at 05:30 PM