



George C. Heitzman, Sr., MD

MAY 22, 1923 - DEC 29, 2016



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George C. Heitzman, Sr., MD

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George C. Heitzman, Sr., MD, of Fayetteville, a surgeon who performed both the first coronary bypass operation and the first pacemaker implantation in Syracuse, passed away Thursday, Dec. 29, 2016, after a brief hospitalization. He was 93.

Dr. Heitzman was born and grew up in East Syracuse, the son of George and Katharine Cook Heitzman, graduating from East Syracuse High School, where he and his brother, the late E. James Heitzman, MD, played football. He attended Syracuse University and graduated from the SU College of Medicine, now the Upstate College of Medicine, in 1947.

His medical training continued with an internship at Rhode Island Hospital in Providence from 1947-49, a residency in pathology at St. Luke's Hospital in New York City from 1949-50, a residency in general surgery at Upstate Medical Center from 1950-53, service in the U.S. Army Medical Corps in France from 1953-55, a staff surgeon post at the VA Hospital in Iowa City, Iowa, in 1955, and a thoracic surgical residency at the National Jewish Hospital in Denver, Colo., 1955-57.

In 1958, Dr. Heitzman started the first open-heart surgery program at St. Joseph's Hospital in Syracuse. In 1963, he implanted the first pacemaker in Syracuse, and in 1970, he performed the first coronary bypass in Syracuse. He practiced as a thoracic surgeon until his retirement in 1988. A 2008 newspaper story headlined "To Touch Hearts" offered a retrospective of his career, including some of the lives he saved, and helped inspire him to write a memoir that was published two years later, "For the Record, My Life as a Heart and Chest Surgeon."

Dr. Heitzman's career and pioneering work in open heart surgery were also profiled in a segment of NBC's "Today" Show by Bob Dotson, author of "American Story, a Lifetime Search for Ordinary People Doing Extraordinary Things." Dotson and his crew came to Dr. Heitzman's home to interview him for the piece, which aired on Christmas morning 2014. The piece also showed Dr. Heitzman painting a picture, another of his talents; he was a gifted artist who studied under the noted portrait artist Joseph Kozlowski.



Obituary

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In 2015, Dr. Heitzman received the Distinguished Service Award from the Onondaga County Medical Society. He was a member of that society, as well as the American Medical Association, the American College of Thoracic Surgeons and Phi Beta Kappa, the national honor society. He was also a fellow of the American College of Cardiology.

He was a member of the Roman Catholic Church.

Surviving are his wife of 36 years, Gina A. Heitzman of Fayetteville, and their son, Jacob Heitzman of San Antonio, Texas. Dr. Heitzman is also survived by his children from a previous marriage, George C. Heitzman, Jr. of Syracuse, Donna Heitzman of Syracuse, Peter J. Heitzman and his wife, Karen Savoca of Munnsville, Jennifer Brown and her husband, Paul of Cold Brook, NY; granddaughters, Eden Skowronski and her husband, Artur, and Jacqueline D'Ambrosio and her husband, Michael; three great-grandchildren, and several nieces and nephews.

A Funeral Mass in celebration of Dr. Heitzman's life will be held at 11:00 AM on Tuesday, January 3, 2017 at the Church of Our Lady of Pompei/St. Peter. Private burial will be in Assumption Cemetery. A calling hour will be held from 10:00 -11:00 AM on Tuesday at the church, 301 Ash St., Syracuse.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Church of Our Lady of Pompei/St. Peter or to St. Joseph's Hospital Health Center.



Events


George C. Heitzman, Sr., MD

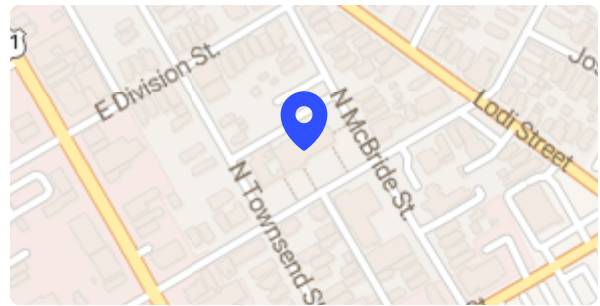
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Visitation

 **Tuesday**, January 3, 2017


 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM ET


 **Our Lady of Pompei - St. Peter Church**
301 Ash St., Syracuse NY 13208

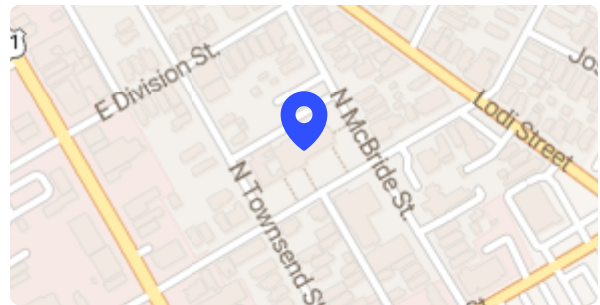


Funeral Mass


 **Tuesday**, January 3, 2017

 11:00 AM ET

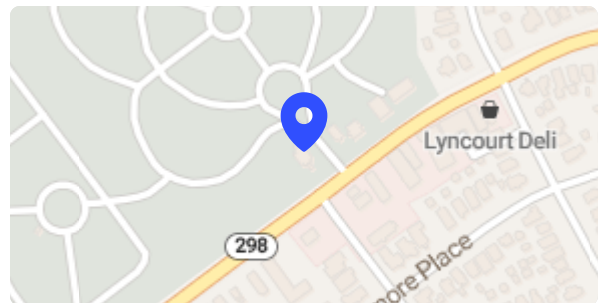
 **Our Lady of Pompei - St. Peter Church**
301 Ash St., Syracuse NY 13208



Cemetery Details

 **Assumption Cemetery**
2401 Court Street, Syracuse NY 13208

 **454-3841**





Tribute Wall

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SS

Suzanne Saulniers posted:

I would like to extend my condolences to all members of the Heitzman family from someone who grew up until 1953 at 211 west ave and remembered as a child George and Jimmy Heitzman coming to visit their parents, our landlords. They always showed such respect. George was also the doctor for my dad, Willard ("Bill") Smith who taught Physical Education at East Syracuse High, had him as a football player and later put his trust in George when he had his first and second heart attack and was treated at St. Joseph's Hospital. He also said he was a great doctor and good man. Whenever I come to central new york and Fayetteville, where I grew up from 8 yrs onward and where my dad lived until 1984, I would also drive down west ave, East Syracuse and remember his mother and father as well as all the neighbors who we loved as children. My dad was proud of George (and Jimmy); he trusted him with his life and we trusted him to take care of my dad. Thank you the family members for enabling George to reach out to so many and be so dedicated to his profession. May he rest in peace. Suzanne Smith Saulniers, 139 Orchard St, New Bedford, Ma 02740

January 16 at 6:28 PM

JH

Judith Pelletier Hughes posted:

Donna - think of you often and hope you know how much we love you and your Dad. I'm so sorry for your loss. Please know you are in our thoughts and prayers/ Jude Pelletier Hughes/ and family

January 11 at 6:20 AM

DH

Donna K Heitzman January 14 at 3:46 AM

Jude...thank you...it warmed my heart to see your post. I am proud to be his daughter. He had a very good life. I, too, think of you and your family whenever I see Melrose, which is often ;)Love, Donna

DH

Deb Homer posted:

Dear Jenny, Peter, Donna, George and family, I have so many fond memories of our younger days at your home with your dad and mom. Sending my deepest condolences. Your dad is a very special person who touched the lives of many. He will be that shining light in heave watching out for you and will always be in your hearts. My thoughts and prayers are with you during this difficult time. Deb Magari Homer

January 8 at 6:53 AM



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KH

Kristin Hall posted:

Dear Jennifer. My deepest condolences to you in the loss of your dad. Have thought about you so many times through the years and regret this was the only way to get in touch with you during such a very sad time in your life. Keeping you in my prayers. Kristin Hall (huss)

January 3 at 2:37 PM

MI

Mary Ilacqua lit a candle in honor of George .

Gina, Sending our heartfelt condolences..Mary and Mike Ilacqua

January 3 at 1:18 PM



TN

Teresa Neider posted:

Our thoughts and prayers to the entire family and friends. MY husband too, Timothy Neider was one of his child open heart surgeries in 1967. If not for him, my husband and MANY more would not be here with us. He has blessed so many with life and passed on his gift of knowledge to many. What a mark he has left behind. God Bless you all at this time. Teresa and Timothy Neider Sr.

January 3 at 7:19 AM

MK

Mary Karpinski posted:

Heartfelt sympathy to Gina, Jacob and family. George is an example of a life well lived. His legacy is his kindness, humility, service to others and faith. My thoughts and prayers are with you as you celebrate his life. -Mary Karpinski

January 3 at 4:14 AM

HC

Harold J Casey Jr posted:

In 1965 or 6 the good Dr. saved my life when I was about 8 and inhaled a foreign object and blocked part of a lung. It was infected and he said another month and I would have died from the infection. I will never forget after him viewing the X-ray saying "ok get him ready" and he did the surgery right then and there! My poor parents when they got the bill, his nurse fixed it so we could afford it....it was more than just a job to these people....RIP

January 2 at 3:32 PM



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BH

Bob Hall posted:

Great friend, great doctor, and a great client .Know I will miss him and always remember the events we shared together.Bob Hall

January 2 at 8:17 AM

BS

B Sivakumar posted:

Gina and all the family members, my heartfelt condolencesWe will all miss George. He has been my teacher, guide, inspiration and above all a trusted friend. We will all miss him dearly.Kumar

January 2 at 8:04 AM

AY

Allan Yozawitz posted:

George always was, and always will be, a model for how to conduct one's life with class and humility. His life was a dedication to service for all humanity. George leaves us with lasting memories of warmth and of compassion. For those of us who were fortunate to know him, his memory will forever be a source of inspiration and strength. We are all better for knowing George and for the privilege of our shared experiences with him as well as for his friendship.We extend our hearts to Gina, Jacob, and the rest of George's family at this difficult time.Allan and Arlene Yozawitz

January 2 at 7:35 AM

SF

Sue Fiero posted:

Our sincere sympathy to the entire Heitzman family. George was a dear friend for many years, my Mother Rachel loved him like a brother. He was such a gentle soul, helped so many people. Loved his Wife and children...you will be missed George, We love you Al Sue and Nikki Fiero...Rip George.

January 2 at 6:15 AM

NI

Nilesgreenhousemd posted:

sincere condolences to a marvelous man and pioneer of medicine. No one has touched the heart and soul of medicine as George did. His teachings will continue forever through all his students and surgeons. God Bless Niles Greenhouse MD; Randey Greenhouse MD and AGGreenhouse DDS

January 2 at 3:56 AM



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MS

Margie Simcuski posted:

Gina, Jennifer, Jackie, Donna, George and Peter Please know that you are all in my heart and my prayers during this most difficult time. I will always remember Dr. Heitzman as a kind and wonderful man. May he rest in peace and know that my love and heart are with all of you. Margie Simcuski

January 2 at 1:31 AM

KM

Kathy Motto posted:

Donna, Jennifer and Family, My sincerest condolences on the passing of your dad, such an accomplished man. Going back as far as Lourdes Camp days, you would share stories. I am thinking of you both! Kathy Motto

January 1 at 10:25 AM

JP

Joel Potash posted:

Talented but unassuming. Quite a fine person and doctor. Condolences to you all. Joel Potash

January 1 at 8:26 AM

TA

Theresa Austin posted:

The family of Dr. Carl Austin would like to send our deepest sympathy for the loss of Dr. George. I am not sure if you know but my father passed the same day so we are hoping they shared a ride. May your memories bring you comfort and the legendary accomplishments of our fathers be a guiding light. Peace and love, Theresa Austin and family.

January 1 at 4:24 AM

JR

James And Roseanne posted:

Sorry for your loss George of your beloved father. May you and your family be comforted by God's love. Pastors James and Roseanne Exner

December 31 at 1:27 PM



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TE

Tim Emmons posted:

So sorry for your loss. Dr. Heitzman was a great man and Surgeon. I probably would not be here today , if not for him. I had open lung surgery in 1980 and I feel wonderful today because of him. What a Great Man. May he rest in peace. Tim Emmons Constantia , N.Y.

December 31 at 10:57 AM

MH

Mike O'hara posted:

Gina and Jacob: My condolences on your loss. May the Lord bring you comfort during this time of sadness.

December 31 at 6:03 AM

MF

Mrs. Dian M Furfaro posted:

Gina and family, I am so sorry for your loss. George was a great doctor who helped so many people. Please except my deepest sympathy. Diane Furfaro.

December 31 at 4:35 AM



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BP

Brian Peet posted:

Dr. George was a special man who meant a great deal to our family, especially to my parents Bob and Joan Peet. He will be missed and he made the world a better place to be in. My condolences to the Heitzman family. Brian Peet

December 30 at 2:19 PM

JL

Jack Larsen January 3 at 5:53 AM

Gina, Jennifer, Jackie, and Heitzman family, Suanne and I send our heartfelt sympathy to you all for the loss of your cherished husband, dad, and grandfather. He was an incredible man, who lived an extraordinary life. We should all strive to live a life that contributes to the betterment of mankind the way that Dr. Heitzman did. The world is much better place because George Heitzman lived in it. Our thoughts are with you all. Jack and Suanne Larsen

FC

Francis Capozzi January 2 at 11:38 AM

So sorry to hear of the passing of Dr. George. such a wonderful man. He took care of my father Michael Capozzi in the late eighties. Because of him , my father lived another 17 years , unheard of with lung cancer. Dad spoke of him every day , even bought the doctor a wallet when he and mom were in Italy! He sent me a letter when my dad passed , such a wonderful thing for him to do!! I will never forget what that man did for me , and my family. My God welcome him with open arms, he certainly deserves it!

LQ

Linda Quinn January 2 at 5:50 AM

I remember Dr. Heitzman from many years ago, as a nursing student. Such a kind man, and wonderful, unassuming doctor. He was always a "favorite" of the nurses. So sorry to hear of his passing. Linda



Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring George by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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