

IN MEMORY OF
**PETER
RICHARD
ALMOND**

Obituary for Peter Richard Almond



Peter Richard Almond, PhD, passed away peacefully at home on July 19, 2023, from pancreatic cancer. A loving husband, patient father, eminent scientist, thoughtful Christian and Sunday School teacher, and infinitely-curious student of the world, Peter lived a rich and full life. He was born on September 10, 1937, in Downton, England, to Stanley Richard and Louise Gladys Moody Almond. They had been preparing for one baby but got quite a shock when Peter's arrival was accompanied by his identical twin brother John. The family, including older sisters Rosemary and Julia, eventually moved to Edenbridge in Kent where Stanley was the pastor of the Baptist church. Much of Peter's childhood was spent in the shadow of World War II and included periods of rationing, an evacuation, and a downed German fighter plane crashing near their home. Peter could be a mischievous young boy and was not the most stellar of students early in his academic career, leading one headmistress to declare that Peter and John were going to "end up nothing but ditch diggers." Fortunately, they were just late bloomers. Peter discovered the joys of studying, especially in physical sciences, eventually earning a degree in physics from the University of Nottingham and then completing a post graduate program in medical physics at Bristol University.

In 1959, Peter left England for Houston, Texas, for a one-year fellowship at MD Anderson Hospital and Tumor Institute. Upon arrival in Houston, he knew he

needed to find a Baptist church, so he just started walking from his apartment until he found South Main Baptist Church. It was at South Main that he met the love of his life, June Stockstill, and they were married on August 7, 1960. In August 1964, they welcomed daughter, Jan, and then son, Stephen, in 1969. They enjoyed 61 years together until her death in January 2022. His care of her through her struggle with Parkinson's Disease was a model of steadfastness and commitment.

Peter's strong Christian faith and love of the church were at the core of his life. He was a member at South Main from 1960 until 1985, when he and June moved to Louisville, Kentucky, and attended Broadway Baptist Church. In 1998, they moved back to Houston and reunited with South Main. In his time there, Peter touched just about every aspect of the church. He was an Honored Deacon, served on standing committees and special committees and task forces, taught Sunday School, and served on the Senior Adult Council, just to name a few. Peter would tell you that he felt a special calling to teach Sunday School. He loved the preparation and learning about Scripture in a new way. He especially loved his time teaching the Men's Bible Class and the many friendships that he formed and maintained through that fellowship. He was also grateful and humbled to be a part of two Pastor Search Committees: the one that called Dr. Kenneth Chafin to South Main in 1972, and then chairing the committee that called Dr. Steve Wells in 2003.

One of Peter's other great passions was his life's work in the area of medical physics. After he settled in Houston, he was accepted to Rice University and earned masters and doctoral degrees in nuclear physics. In 1964, Peter took a one-year postdoctoral fellow position in the Department of Physics at The University of Texas/MD Anderson followed by a tenure-track faculty position. He was promoted to Professor of Biophysics in 1972, remaining at MD Anderson until 1985, where he served as Head of Radiation Physics and Director of the

Cyclotron Unit. From 1985 to 1998 he was Vice Chairman of the Department of Radiation Oncology at the University of Louisville. Peter helped develop cancer treatments from various forms of radiation and was instrumental in developing basic measurement techniques for these radiations. He authored or co-authored more than 100 scientific articles, wrote numerous chapters in radiotherapy textbooks, and supervised over 25 masters and doctoral students in medical physics, many of whom became leaders in the field. Peter served on numerous national and international committees and one of Peter's stronger attributes was his ability to collaborate with fellow medical physicists in the United States and world to further the practice of medical physics. He served as president of the American Association of Physicists in Medicine (AAPM) and as Chairman of the Board of Chancellors of the American College of Medical Physics (ACMP). He received the Coolidge Award from the AAPM, the Marvin M.D. Williams Professional Achievement Award from ACMP, and the Randall S. Caswell Award from the Council of Ionizing Radiation Measurements and Standards. In 2013 he was named one of the 50 Outstanding Medical Physicist World Wide during the previous 50 years. More recently, an annual award in the Journal of Applied Medical Physics was named in Peter's honor.

The term Renaissance man gets thrown around a lot, but it really fit Peter. He loved traveling both for work and leisure and learning about other countries and cultures including Japan, India, South Africa, Sweden, and many countries in Europe. He was a voracious reader, often reading two to three books at a time (while watching TV, no less—you had to maximize the time). From his youth, he loved sports and was an avid runner until his knees gave out. He then became a walker, and he was still cruising around the block until a couple of months before he died. Growing up in a household of four siblings, all of the children learned their way around a kitchen, and Peter was no exception. He loved to cook—his roast beef meal with roasted potatoes and carrots, cabbage, gravy, and Yorkshire pudding was a particular favorite—and he rarely bought a loaf of bread, instead

baking his own and filling the house with the wonderful aroma. He was a putterer; he enjoyed fixing things and doing projects around the house, not sitting idly. He also loved gadgets and instruments and machines that measured things like barometers, scales, gauges, and most importantly, clocks. His house was filled with so many kinds of clocks-- grandfather clocks, wall clocks, cuckoo clocks--that he tended to and worked on. Every hour there was a wonderful cacophony of chimes and dings.

Peter especially cherished being Grandad to Drew and Kate. He loved watching Kate in her theater performances and teaching her the finer points of bread baking. Drew was his fishing buddy when Peter and June had a beach house on Boliver Peninsula, and they shared a passion for Houston Dynamo soccer, going to games together for years. Peter was so pleased in recent years when both Drew and Kate found their significant others. He loved the times when the family was able to be together around the table, sharing a meal, laughing, playing games, and telling stories (and maybe having to complete one of his insanely difficult quizzes or puzzles!).

Even with the difficult diagnosis of pancreatic cancer and with his health challenges, Peter spent this last year still planning, learning, and looking forward. He was writing a second memoir, working on a program for the South Main senior adult group MainStreamers, looking forward to Kate's wedding, and planning to see the solar eclipse in central Texas in 2024. He was reading three books, two about Christian author and pastor Eugene Peterson and one about explorer Ernest Shackelton's ship, Endurance, appropriate reading material for a man of great faith and an enduring legacy.

Peter is survived by his son Stephen Almond and wife Christy; daughter Jan Almond Barkley and her husband Jim; grandson Drew Barkley and wife Sara; granddaughter Kate Barkley and fiancé Lamy Jean Chopin IV; sisters Rosemary

George and Julia Nicholson and her husband Paul, sister-in-law Jan Veranth and husband Frank; and many adored nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his wife June Stockstill Almond; his parents Stanley Richard and Louise Gladys Almond; and his twin brother John Downton Almond. The family would like to thank Joni Milton and her team for taking such good care of Peter during this last year, especially Nicole Nellums and Katrina Cannon, who were with him in his final days. He valued not only your care but also your compassion and friendship. In lieu of flowers, gifts can be made to the South Main Baptist Foundation.

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