



Robert "Alex" Sanford

JUN 23, 1941 - OCT 17, 2013



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MEMORIAL PARK
Funeral Home & Cemetery

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Dr. Robert "Alex" Sanford, Sr., died on October 17, 2013. He was 72. He is survived by his wife, Dr. Martha Sanford; five children, Dr. Louie Lundy Roberts (Brook) of Houston, TX; Margaret "Tedie" Cole (Chance) of Fort Smith, AR; Robert Alexander Jr. (Susie) of Fayetteville, AR; Sydney Marie Sanford and Kathryn Nicole Sanford, both of Memphis, TN. He leaves nine grandchildren. He is preceded in death by his sister, Margaret Cox of Little Rock, AR. For nearly 30 years, Dr. Sanford, a pediatric neurosurgeon, saved the lives of many children with brain tumors and other neurologic problems. He founded the pediatric surgical brain tumor program at Le Bonheur Children's Hospital – a collaboration with St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, the University of Tennessee Health Science Center and Semmes-Murphey Neurologic and Spine Institute. It is now the largest program of its kind in the country. He served as director of the Neuroscience Unit at Le Bonheur Children's Hospital and chief of pediatric neurosurgery at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. He was also a professor in the Department of Neurosurgery at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center. Dr. Sanford was beloved by physicians, residents, staff, patients and families alike for his talent, dedication, tough love and most of all for his heart for saving children's lives. He received many accolades and honors throughout his lifetime. In 2010 he was honored by the American Association of Neurological Surgeons/Congress of Neurological Surgeons Section on Pediatric Neurological Surgery as recipient of the Franc Ingraham Award for distinguished service. He was one of fewer than 10 neurosurgeons ever bestowed this high honor. In 2012, he was honored by the Memphis Business Journal with the Health Care Heroes Lifetime Achievement Award. In 2007, Dr. Sanford was honored as a Health Care Heroes finalist in the physician category. Born in Connecticut, Dr. Sanford graduated from Hendrix College in 1963 and the University of Arkansas School of Medicine in 1967. He completed an internship at the University of



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Minneapolis and residency at the University of Mississippi Medical Center. He also served in the U.S. Army for two years as a neurosurgeon during the Vietnam War. He was stationed in Okinawa, Japan. Dr. Sanford's dedication and hard work won the respect of his medical colleagues throughout the country. He served on the pediatric section of the American Association of Neurological Surgeons board for 12 years and served as the organization's secretary. He was a member of the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society, American Association of Neurological Surgeons Pediatric Section, American Medical Association, Central Medical Society, Memphis Neuroscience Society, Memphis Journal Review Club, Memphis and Mid-South Pediatric Society, Congress of Neurological Surgeons and others. Dr. Sanford published more than 100 medical papers throughout his career in addition to regular presentations and speeches at national neurosurgery meetings. Thanks to Dr. Sanford's vision, the brain tumor surgical program now has approximately a 90 percent resection (or removal) success rate compared to a national average of 50 percent for certain types of tumors. Dr. Sanford's stipulation in coming to Memphis required that the hospital accept any child who needed help regardless of his or her family's ability to pay. Dr. Sanford emphasized this same ethic in teaching upcoming neurosurgeons who continue to exercise this compassionate yet tenacious approach to pediatric neurosurgery. Even during the years he fought his illness, Dr. Sanford spent time teaching, advising residents and fellows and encouraging the staff and physicians to continue their mission of saving children's lives. Dr. Sanford was a fun-loving, generous husband and father who enjoyed golfing, duck hunting, boating, and his farm in Arkansas. One of his greatest joys in life was spending time with his family, especially his grandchildren, and telling stories — lots of stories. Visitation will be on Sunday, October 20, from 5-7 pm at Memorial Park Funeral Home, 5668 Poplar Ave., Memphis. The memorial service will be on Monday, October 21, at noon at Hope Church, 8500 Walnut Grove Road, Cordova, Tenn. In lieu of flowers, Dr. Sanford requested that all memorials be sent to Le Bonheur Children's Hospital-Brain Tumor Program, PO Box 41817, Memphis, TN 38174. Funeral arrangements have been entrusted to Memorial Park Funeral Home and Cemetery, 5668 Poplar Ave. Memphis, TN 38119, (901)767-8930, "Behind the Stone Wall"



Tribute Wall

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AM

Amy Morman posted:

I am unsure if any of Dr. Sanford's family will read this but I see I'm not the only one leaving memories and thanks many years after his passing. I was born in Korea and adopted by a couple living in Memphis, Tennessee. My situation was not great: born with midline facial cleft, a rare congenital defect (1 out of 1,000,000 babies are born with this). Although I never knew Dr. Sanford, I know that he and an amazing team of surgeons saved my life by giving me a chance to look normal and not live as a social outcast. I cry as I write this ... I'm so thankful. To his family, if you read this, please know that I would never be who I am today without him. I am now almost 37, married to a wonderful man and have a beautiful 7 year old son. Thank you. ☐

October 3 at 3:17 PM

HT

Hubert D. Taylor II posted:

Shortly after my birth in 1976, it was discovered that I had hydrocephalus. It was Dr Sanford that placed my VP shunt at that time, and he remained my neurosurgeon throughout the next 37 years. He performed many revisions and surgeries on me throughout the years which allowed me to live life as a normal young man (minus contact sports). It was his inspiration and support that gave me a love for medicine, and because of him I too am now a medical doctor. A fond memory I have of Dr Sanford was during one of my surgeries at Lebonheur Medical Center I had a water gun and squirted him with it when he entered the room. He laughed and was a wonderful sport. The next day he entered the room with his own watergun drawn and fired away. We had a complete watergun war in my room. As a young kid, I thought he was the most awesome doctor ever. He was. Thank you Dr Sanford for giving me the life that I have today.

July 1 at 1:09 AM

TA

Tammy posted:

When I was 9 years old an AV malformation burst in my brain. Dr. Sanford successfully removed it and saved my life. I was under his care for many years. I recall that he told my mother that my being alive was "all God" because I should not have survived, and at least I should have been in a vegetative state. After reading all of the testimonies of him saving so many children it makes my heart so happy. He was simply amazing and I definitely would not have been here today without him. To his family, I am so thankful that God placed Dr. Sanford in my path and all of the children's path that he saved. It's an honor to have been treated by him. Thank you Doc !

May 8 at 4:16 AM



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PE

Pennelope posted:

Dr. Sanford removed my brain tumour in 2000 when I was 17 years old. I was told that after my first surgery, on his way home, his car wouldn't start and his battery blew up in his face. He later found out that what was not seen of what was left of my tumour started to grow around my brain stem and after what had happened, he still went in and got the rest. He was truly a great man and I no doubt owe my life to him. If it weren't for him, I wouldn't be here and my beautiful son wouldn't exist. I should've thanked him when I had the chance. May he rest in peace.

May 22 at 4:35 PM

PM

Patricia Mahaffey posted:

Dr Sanford was my daughters neurosurgeon in 1977 Through God giving Dr Sanford the ability to help our precious baby born with Spina Bifida one of the worse cases he ever saw and used her surgeries to help other Drs to learn how to help these children in forever grateful R.I.P.

October 17 at 5:52 AM

VM

Vicki McIlwain posted:

Was so sorry to hear that Dr. Sanford had passed away. Dr. Sanford postponed a trip to see his daughter, on Friday, August 19, 1993. to lead the team of surgeons that saved our daughter, Sara Kate's life. It was one week before her 2nd birthday, that she was diagnosed with a brain tumor. She is now 24, and has been a blessing to everyone she meets. She is a barrel racer, model, and her heart is children and horses. She recently was married, and lives a very blessed, happy life. She is our miracle! We give all the Glory to the Lord, and appreciate so much the part Dr. Sanford played in her healing process. He assisted Dr. Michael Muhlbauer. We appreciate him, and the legacy he leaves. We will forever be grateful for his dedication & kindness. May God bless his family. We will never forget him. Jim & Vicki McIlwain 228 Tribble Road Cedar Bluff, Ms. 39741 662-494-3116

January 26 at 6:40 AM



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ML

Marti Lewis posted:

Dr. Sanford was the most caring and loved neurosurgery resident at the University Medical Center in Jackson, Ms. He was cheerful, playful, and empathetic with his patients and families and had a collegial and respectful relationship with staff. As nursing manager in the Children's Hospital 2nd floor, I heard a lot about Louie, his beloved daughter, of whom he was so proud. I am so proud that she followed in her father's footsteps. Dr Alex saved the life of my best friend's son who was diagnosed with a poor prognosis of neuroblastoma at age 1 1/2. The little boy grew up to play football and live a normal life. I share your pride in Dr. Sanford's accomplishments and your grief in the loss of such a truly exceptional person. Marti Lewis

September 4 at 3:58 PM

SH

Stanley B Hughes posted:

I'm so sorry for the loss of Dr Sanford and I want to send my prayers and Love out to His Family and Friends also

May 23 at 10:36 AM

PH

Phillip Hardin posted:

Dr. Sanford was my neurosurgeon at Le Bonheur in the mid-90s, after the discovery of a mass on my brain. At the time, we weren't aware if it was a tumor or cyst. While I wasn't completely aware of the seriousness as an 11-year old, this was quite frightening to my parents. I remember the comforting news he brought when informing us that the diagnosis was a cyst, not a cancerous tumor. I'm happy to say the cyst was successfully removed, & a shunt was installed to drain the remaining fluid. I was one of Dr. Sanford's first patients to receive the Ventricular-Peritoneal shunt procedure. He forecast that it should last about 10 years & might eventually break as I grew. If I then no longer needed the shunt, it wouldn't have to be replaced. Unfortunately when the shunt indeed broke about 10 years from the initial surgery, it was found that I would need to have it replaced. I simply can't function without it. So, in a sense I have a piece of Dr. Sanford with me for the rest of my life. I can't say enough about how much my family & I appreciated his kindness & expertise at his God-given professional calling. He was not only a Godsend for me but many other children as well. My thoughts & prayers are with his family & friends during this time of sorrow, & I know he'll be greatly missed. However, I take comfort in knowing that we'll get to see him again one day. Heaven has gained another angel, & I'm happy to know he's up there watching over us all. May God Bless you Dr. Sanford. With great sympathy, Phillip Hardin

October 23 at 11:01 AM



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GB

George A Brown posted:

Alex and I, George Alexander Brown, the son of Virginia A Brown /Alexander a sister to Louie Alexander Sanford of Scott, ... later, Winchester Arkansas, were never very close even though we were first cousins. My uncle, George Alexander, the Family patriarch. had mortgaged the "home place" The AL Alexander Plantation,. to secure the "Hollywood Plantation" at Winchester (Dumas, Ar) the future home of Alex Sanford and the Sanford Family.... that had a number of heirs, several sisters, a mother and myself at that same time were never compensated..with some resentment.. Alex Sanford became a son that my uncle never had and because of that special relationship ...it provided him that heritage of that same delta Hollywood Plantation home and financial support that brought him to adulthood and becoming that famous doctor that was so honored these past few days and caused him to be now buried at McGhee, Ark. . Alls well that Ends Well, Never has my uncle, George Alexander. been so completly venerated, honored, as well as the entire Alexander Family as having Dr. Alexander Sanford for being the recipient of the Hollywood Plantation and now his children.George Alexander Brown Scott, Ark

October 22 at 12:25 PM

RM

Ruth Ellen White Morris posted:

Dr. Sanford, (Alex as we all knew him) was a member of the High School Class of 1959 at Dumas, Arkansas. He was "one of us" and we will miss his ready smile. We will miss him.

October 21 at 8:50 AM

DB

Dru Boyd posted:

Sending our love from Fort Worth, Texas. -The Women of Chi Omega, TCU

October 20 at 7:41 AM

BC

Billie Corbett posted:

Dr. Robert Sanford saved the life of my precious 6 year old grandson, Zachary. Zachary is now 19 years old and a sophomore at the University of Alabama. Dr. Sanford was definitely a God send for us. My family will forever be indebted to him. What a great reunion must be going on in heaven.Billie Corbett

October 19 at 4:00 AM



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SJ

Sondra Joiner posted:

My family first met Dr. Robert Sanford June 16, 2007. My 8 year old son had just been diagnosed with a brain tumor on June 14th. I will never forget when he walked through the door I immediately felt peace. His demeanor and confidence meant so much to us during that dark time. In our 10 days at LeBonheur, he treated my son just like he was his and he was always picking at Trenton about playing with his Nintendo DS. Trenton was to have surgery on June 21, but because of unforeseen issues, surgery became a must on June 19th. Dr. Sanford allowed Trenton to play with his DS until anesthesia sent him into a deep sleep. I'll never forget him laughing and saying he had never had a patient be wheeled into OR playing a video game, but for Trenton, he would allow just about anything! Trenton was discharged to St. Jude on Dr. Sanford's birthday. We got him a card and he had tears in his eyes when he hugged us goodbye. Although we would prefer that our son had never been diagnosed with cancer, we will always be so thankful for God bringing Dr. Sanford into our lives. He was an awesome man and I know if surgery had to be performed on a child in heaven, he would be right in the front lines doing everything he could!! To his family, I send my deepest sympathies. The world has definitely suffered a great loss, but God has gained a mighty warrior. Sondra Joiner

October 18 at 5:48 PM

KT

Kelly Tamkun posted:

We are so saddened to hear about Alex's passing. For fourteen years we had the pleasure of being neighbors, and we will always remember how friendly and helpful he was to our family. He was one of the very first neighbors to walk over and welcome us to the neighborhood. When one of our children had medical issues, he was there to personally provide medical care. We will always be grateful for his care, concern and thoughtfulness. Our girls always enjoyed babysitting for Sydney & Nicole. Sydney & Nicole, I just want to say that your dad always spoke of you with such pride and enthusiasm! A life well lived, he treasured his family and was dedicated to his work and his patients. He definitely left his mark on the world! Our sincere condolences to his entire family! During this extremely difficult time, may your wonderful memories of time with him bring a smile to your face. He will always be in your hearts. With Great Sympathy, Kelly & John Tamkun

October 18 at 3:01 PM

LR

Louie Sanford Roberts posted:

Dad always loved a challenge and squeaked up to the finish line of his five year survival date with his battle with cancer. He can be proud that he met his goal and rest in peace that he is meeting God's goal for him now.

October 18 at 5:44 AM



Memories only last if you share them

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



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