



Maurice B. Landers III, MD

December 19, 1937 - July 11, 2021

Maurice B. Landers, III, MD, an ophthalmologist and pioneer in the treatment of vitreoretinal diseases and mentor to scores of leading ophthalmologists across the country and globally in a career spanning over 58 years, passed away on July 11, 2021, in Memphis Tennessee. He died peacefully following a period of illness, in the loving presence of his wife and 3 children.

Dr. Maurice (Reece) Landers was born in Detroit, Michigan on December 19, 1937 to Maurice B Landers Jr, MD, and Virginia Voll Landers. The oldest of three brothers, he was raised in Ventura, California and received a B.A. from Princeton, in 1960. Reece Landers graduated from the University of Michigan Medical School in 1963. He attended Oxford University for a one year externship and completed his Ophthalmology Residency at the Jules Stein Eye Institute, UCLA in 1967. Reece Landers served in the U.S. Army from 1967 to 1969, achieving the rank of Major, serving in the Office of the Surgeon General in Washington, DC and at the Frankfort Arsenal in Philadelphia, PA where he was Director of the U.S. Army Medical Research Laboratory conducting early research on lasers.

After the Army, he joined the faculty of the Duke University Eye Center in Durham, North Carolina in 1969. He was instrumental in building the nationally renowned vitreoretinal practice at Duke and was an innovator in treating diabetic retinopathy. From 1976 to 1984. Dr. Landers was Professor of Ophthalmology and Chief of the Retina Service at the Duke University Eye Center. He later served as Professor of Ophthalmology and Chief of the Retina Services at the University of California, Davis Medical School in Sacramento, CA, practiced privately in Memphis, TN, Virginia Beach, VA and Houston, TX before returning to North Carolina as Professor of Ophthalmology at the Kittner Eye Center at UNC-Chapel Hill from 2001 until his retirement in late 2019.

Over the course of his career, Reece Landers authored or co-authored several hundred peer reviewed articles on the treatment of retinal disease and was responsible for numerous technical advances in vitreoretinal surgical techniques.

At Ventura High School, Reece (Mac) Landers was the captain of his basketball team, a starting right fielder of the varsity baseball team, and Prom King. He was also on the basketball team at Princeton University and remained an avid basketball fan throughout his life. His life experiences led Reece Landers to live in 8 states, and as a seasoned international traveler visited over 30 countries. In his retirement Reece Landers enjoyed life at his home on a lake in Lakeland, TN, where he could pilot his own pontoon boat across the water, and drive his golf cart around his property, which was styled with racing decals and #43 in honor of Reece Landers' favorite NASCAR driver, Richard Petty. Reece was well known for his engaging curiosity, and he loved communicating with family and friends, sharing thoughts on almost any subject from prehistory to the latest technological advances, from the smallest atom to the galaxies of the universe. There were few subjects he was not knowledgeable about and eager to discuss.

Dr. Reece Landers is survived by his wife, Wendy Marbury of Lakeland, TN, his three children, David Landers (Kara), Kathleen Landers (Alan Denniston) and Diana Landers (Bill Hodge) and five grandchildren: Douglas Landers, Irene Denniston, Virginia Landers, Shannon Landers and Vivien Denniston, His brother Stephen Landers (Jennie) and nieces Katherine Landers, Karen Landers and Megan Landers. He will be deeply missed.

A Celebration of Life Visitation will be held at 1:30pm (CST) Saturday, July 17 at the Memorial Park Funeral Home & Cemetery, 5668 Poplar Avenue, Memphis, TN. A Celebration of Life Service will immediately follow at 2:30pm (CST). A virtual webcast of the service and a page for posting memories of Reece will be available at <https://www.memorialparkfuneralandcemetery.com/>

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made in memory of Dr. Reece Landers to the Foundation for the American Society of Retina Specialists at <https://www.asrs.org/foundation/donate-now>

To view the service online for Dr. Landers click the link below.

<http://webcast.funeralvue.com/events/viewer/57025/hash:ED828DA54933F18C>

Events

JUL **Celebration of Life Visitation** 01:30PM - 02:30PM

17

Memorial Park Fireside Chapel

5668 Poplar Avenue, Memphis, TN, US, 38119

JUL **Celebration of Life** 02:30PM

17

Memorial Park Funeral Home-Riverside Chapel

5668 Poplar Avenue, Memphis, TN, US, 38119

Comments



“ A webcast video has been added.



Memorial Park Funeral Home and Cemetery - July 13, 2021 at 02:58 PM



“ Sending heartfelt condolences to Landers family. Mark Kelley.

Mark kelley - March 26 at 07:57 AM



“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



Diana - July 19, 2021 at 02:27 PM



“ Joel Pearlman,
MD, PhD, FASRS
Editor in Chief, Retina Times
President

Retinal Consultants Medical Group
Sacramento, California

Dr. Reece Landers is sitting in his usual spot directly in front of the speaker at the Squaw Valley Retina Symposium. His silver mane of hair is slicked back, and he is fidgeting in his seat next to his longtime friend, cohost, and co-conspirator, Rob Wendel, MD. The snow is gently falling outside on the beautiful Sierra Nevada mountains.

All eyes are fixed on the speaker, Lee Jampol, MD, a world-renowned authority on uveitis, who is finishing up a thorough exposition of the difference between white dots and white spots. Undaunted by the complexity of the topic, Reece draws a parallel between multifocal choroiditis and punctate inner choroidopathy, which most of us missed, but he is excited about the next talk on diabetic retinopathy. He feels that our current management, sophisticated as it is, may not be quite right and that we all might be missing the point by obsessing about VEGF, which is just acting downstream of the real pathology (hypoxia).

Reece was always an out-of-the-box thinker, ready to challenge the status quo, always encouraging young creative doctors, and, in his gentle way, never allowing us to be blinded by our own underlying assumptions. He was perhaps the most peripatetic ophthalmologist since Tadini in the 18th century—serving as the chief of multiple retina services, working in private practice for a while, and traveling the world both teaching and learning, which to him were really the same thing.

Reece invented new ways of seeing the retina; his multiple eponymous lenses and keratoprotheses have become the quotidian tools of our specialty. He helped pioneer numerous ways of treating the retina, including laser photocoagulation and fluid-air exchange, which we now take for granted. Reece encouraged a young Dr. Rob Wendel

and his colleague, Neil Kelly, MD, to pursue their cure for macular holes at a time when such treatment was exceedingly controversial.

For nearly 6 decades, Reece trained innumerable fellows, residents, and medical students,

creating a worldwide network of friends and experts. And he put on hilarious skits at the Squaw Valley Symposium that would be the pride of Kirk Packo, MD.

Nick Ulrich, MD, a longtime colleague at UNC, said it best. “Of all my colleagues, Reece enjoyed being an ophthalmologist the most. He had a special passion for teaching. Reece tirelessly tried to figure out ways to improve patient care. He read every journal he could get his hands on.

“Reece was never content with the conventional wisdom and never too old to try out something new. His green-ink emails at 3 AM, challenging current opinions and creating collaborations around the globe, were famous. He spoke up and told the truth, even if it was uncomfortable. His patients adored him. He made UNC a unique place.”

Jeffrey Benner, MD, recalled, “He gave me a chance to become a retina surgeon, and I am eternally grateful. But more than that, he taught us to challenge prevailing beliefs, innovate, and to strive to make things better for patients. Reece lived that way—throughout his whole career.”

Drs. Chris Semple and Cynthia Toth added, “We will always carry a little bit of him with us.”

Dr. Landers is survived by his wife, Wendy Marbury, his 3 children, David, Kathleen, and Diana Landers, and his 5 grandchildren. For those of us who learned from him and loved him, the world of retina is so much richer for his contributions and irresistible enthusiasm. Heaven just received one of the greats.



“ Dearest Wendy and the rest of Dr. Landers' Loving Family,

Reece was a wonderful colleague and friend for more than 15 years at the University of North Carolina Department of Ophthalmology. While we knew him well as a vitreoretinal specialist, researcher and professor, the beautiful Celebration of Life ceremony allowed us to know him as a cherished father, grandfather, and brother as well. He will be greatly missed by so many and the memories we all share will live on. "We must press on."

Rest in Peace, dear Reece.

All the very best, Seema Garg

When Great Trees Fall

When great trees fall, rocks on distant hill shutter,
lions hunker down in tall grasses, and even elephants lumber after safety.

When great trees fall in forests, small things recoil into silence,
their senses erode beyond fear.

When great souls die, the air around us becomes a light, rare, sterile.

We breathe, briefly.

Our eyes, briefly, see with a hurtful clarity.

Our memory, suddenly sharpened, examines,
gnaws on kind words unsaid,
promised walks never taken.

Great souls die and our reality, bound to them, takes leave of us.

Our souls, dependent upon their nurture, now shrink, wizened.

Our minds, formed and informed by their radiance, fall away.

We are not so much maddened as reduced to the unutterable
ignorance of dark, cold caves.

And when great Souls die, after a period blooms, slowly and
always irregularly.

Spaces fill with a kind of soothing electric vibration.

Our senses, restored, never to be the same, whisper to us.

They existed. They existed.

We can be. Be and be better.

For they existed.

~Maya Angelou



“ 129 files added to the album Memories Album



Diana Landers - July 17, 2021 at 10:20 PM



“ Dear Diana,

Thanks enormously for sharing these photos ~ simply BRILLIANT.

Sincerely,
Patricia Gordon-Stevens, AUSTRALIA

Patricia Gordon-Stevens - July 18, 2021 at 09:56 PM



“ Thank you for your comments. Dad was larger than life, a beautiful soul.

Diana Landers Hodge - July 19, 2021 at 12:21 PM



“ Wendy--
Remembering many special events and Reece's beaming face when you were at his side! Hugs and sympathy!
Cindy T

Cindy Toth - July 17, 2021 at 03:33 PM



“ In many ways, Reece and I grew up together. Early, through our high school years, we shared the middle California, middle class values of the 1950s and 60s. Although we didn't know one another then, we lived close to one another. He in Ventura and I in Ojai 15 miles apart. After college and medical school, we met as residents at UCLA and began our "growing up" as ophthalmologists, both having young families and both sharing a wish to excel in our field. Many things drew me to Reece: his intelligence, charm, wit, curiosity, and sense of fun. But, most of all, he was smart and he was funny. We spent many hours sitting in the pathology lab doing "research" together, listening to country music and laughing hysterically. We were, from the beginning, more than friends, but brothers-in-arms. We set out to transform our field and have a blast doing it. It was a natural that we ended up in academic medicine.

Although we took separate paths in life, we maintained our close relationship always. When vitreous surgery came along, we embraced it, Reece at Duke and me at UCLA. We were an inseparable duo at the surgical meetings that the new field spawned. Whenever I was with him, I learned something new. He was open minded, but critically astute, ready to deflate pompous or egocentric assertions with his razor sharp wit. His academic contributions to our field go way beyond those published in journals. His intellectual additions to the field happened at meetings, in discussions, and in his teaching. He loved his fellows and affected their lives in profound ways.

Reece was always looking to find the humorous in our field. Even as a resident, he found ways to turn Grand Rounds into a mini skit. He was the instigator of countless funny skits at Vail and Squaw Valley meetings, involving the "mighty" and bringing them down to earth with his humor. He loved being the director. I was the gofer that facilitated many of his creations.

Once we made it through this adolescence, our friendship became more philosophical and even more of a joy. We could go on for hours, discussing just about any field you can think of. Reece was always full of ideas and had a way of engaging me in his thoughts like nobody else. We communicated regularly from the very beginning of our friendship: early by mail (his written in green ink) and later by phone and email.

Reece and I were true friends. We shared the joys and sorrows of our lives, the wins and losses, the good times and the bad times. We shared thoughts, insights, and revelations over the years. His presence made an incalculable difference in my life. It won't be the same without him, but his influence will carry on.



“ 3 files added to the album Memories Album



ALLAN KREIGER - July 17, 2021 at 01:22 PM



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Maurice B. Landers III, MD.



July 16, 2021 at 10:39 PM



“ Remembering Reece as a life-changing teacher, innovator and mentor to whom I attribute my surgical training and career direction.

Cynthia Toth - July 16, 2021 at 09:40 PM



“ Emerald Garden Basket was purchased for the family of Maurice B. Landers III, MD.



July 16, 2021 at 01:37 PM



“ To My Dear Friend Wendy,
Reece was such an incredible person, ophthalmic surgeon and educator. You and he were such blessings to each others' lives. No one could have cared for him in sickness and in health the way you did. You have so many lifelong friends - a group to which I am proud to belong. You are an Angel, and we are the wind beneath your wings. Love, Janie Charles

Janie Charles - July 16, 2021 at 01:17 PM



“ Country Basket Blooms was purchased for the family of Maurice B. Landers III, MD.



July 16, 2021 at 06:48 AM



“ Heavenly Grace Spray was purchased for the family of Maurice B. Landers III, MD.



July 15, 2021 at 11:19 PM



“ Treasured Lilies Spray was purchased for the family of Maurice B. Landers III, MD.



July 15, 2021 at 09:25 PM



“ Radionchenkos purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Maurice B. Landers III, MD.



Radionchenkos - July 15, 2021 at 09:17 PM



“ Sending our condolences for the family's loss. Keeping you all in our prayers. May Reece rest in peace. Our love and sympathies, Karen and Bob



Karen Landers - July 15, 2021 at 09:00 PM



“ Wendy,
I am so sorry for your loss. You and the family are in my prayers! He was such a great man and wonderful doctor. He had touched many lives! He will truly be missed!

Lori Downing - July 15, 2021 at 07:34 PM



“ David, Kara, Douglas, Ginger & Shannon purchased the Serenity Wreath for the family of Maurice B. Landers III, MD.



David, Kara, Douglas, Ginger & Shannon - July 15, 2021 at 04:30 PM



“ Crystal Cross Bouquet was purchased for the family of Maurice B. Landers III, MD.



July 15, 2021 at 11:28 AM



“ More



Sharon Williams - July 15, 2021 at 10:45 AM



“ Birthday FUN at PickWick So many great memories



Sharon Williams - July 15, 2021 at 10:31 AM



“ It doesn't get much better than this!!!!
Always "Birthday Fun" at PickWick ...Many Great Memories



Sharon Williams - July 15, 2021 at 10:06 AM



“ Lakeland Fun



Sharon Williams - July 15, 2021 at 09:29 AM



“ 4 files added to the album Memories Album



Sharon Williams - July 15, 2021 at 09:23 AM



“ 4 files added to the album Memories Album



Sharon Williams - July 15, 2021 at 09:19 AM



“ Second cousin, Duke Dresser purchased the Ringed by Love for the family of Maurice B. Landers III, MD.



Second cousin, Duke Dresser - July 15, 2021 at 12:19 AM



“ Oh my Sweet Precious Reece,
Our memories are many and our love for you abundant. Words cannot begin to express how much we will miss you but you will live on in our hearts forever.....
Our dear Sweet Beautiful Wendy, you have always been my “Angel” (and you know that) our love for you will be ever so present during this time as it has been in the past and will be forever! You are one of a kind! We love you so much! Sharon and Keith

Sharon Williams - July 14, 2021 at 11:58 PM



“ Beautifully said, Sharon. Love the photos you posted too,

Janie Charles - July 16, 2021 at 08:57 AM



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Maurice B. Landers III, MD.



July 14, 2021 at 10:30 PM



“ From: Steve, Jennie and Katie Landers purchased the Sentiments of Serenity Spray for the family of Maurice B. Landers III, MD.



Jennie Buckner - July 14, 2021 at 08:36 PM



“ I am so sorry Wendy. I am forever grateful for his mentorship and friendship. Like so many others, all the patients and people I meet are influenced by his teaching and his personality. His kindness, humor, generosity, and the unbelievable number of lives he impacted and touched leaves such an amazing legacy. I am thinking and praying for you and the whole family. If there is a virtual connection I would like to attend.

Nick Farber

Nick Farber - July 14, 2021 at 02:03 PM



“ Dear David,

With great sorrow we learned from your email about Reece passing... We have enjoyed our friendship with Reece and Wendy for over 20 years working and socializing together. Once Reece said to me: "Boris, I am an old man" and I replied "You are a young man who happens to have an old birth certificate". And it was only partially a joke but mostly true because his mind was always as of a young man - interested in all aspects of life especially new science advances and technologies. Back in 2003 we had a pleasure of going together on a cruise - please see the picture below:

And a few years later when we visited Reece and Wendy in NC Reece took me to an impressive surgery he performed.

This year in April I talked with him over the phone last time ...

Reece will always be remembered in our hearts and minds. Thank you for notifying us.

Marina and I are wishing you and the entire family all the best.

Sincerely,

Boris

Boris Katz - July 14, 2021 at 12:52 PM



“ Wendy, David, Kathleen and Diana

Reece was a remarkable man, great doctor, and wonderful friend. I knew him for 47 years and was looking forward to 47 more. Good things don't last forever but it was so important to have had him in our lives.

Over the years I spent a lot of time with Reece in various ways, projects, medical meetings, vacations, traveling and many, many phone calls and emails. These were some of the best times of my life, as Reece was such an engaging, thoughtful and caring friend.

We would talk about everything and anything, and as David said, Reece knew something about everything and a lot about most things. He always had an interesting and different insight than other people, and speaking with him was enlightening.

Then there was the parties, so many of them. Wendy and he always the best hosts.

In our sadness, we must remember the joy - the great gift of having known him. Our lives are so much better having had him with us. I will always think of him with respect and love. I'm thinking of you all now.

Michael Bradbury



“ Oh Reese, I can't believe you are not longer with us. You came to Chapel Hill before Wendy could join you. You had an extra basketball ticket, better seats than mine, and invited me to join you. I became your "insignificant other" for the day. That one joke lasted throughout our friendship, and I was so sad to see you move away. I will always think of your as a dear dear friend. Rest in peace.

Nancy Tripoli, retired from UNC Ophthalmology

nancy tripoli - July 14, 2021 at 12:48 PM



“ Thank you David,
Reece and I had a long relationship co-directing the SquawValleyRetinal Symposium.
We collaborated in this endeavor since 1985.
We will certainly miss his energetic intelligence and constant curiosity re: what's new and exciting within the field of retina.
I am sorry for your and your families loss.
The retina community grieves with you.

Sincerely

Rob Wendel
rtwendel@me.com
www.retinalmd.com

Rob Wendel - July 14, 2021 at 10:47 AM



“ Well said Rob!!! I remember debating with him about how we would repair giant tear retinal detachments in outer space— discussion as “heavy liquids” came along—he was always questioning and pushing us all! Cindy

Cynthia Toth - July 16, 2021 at 09:49 PM



“ Wendy,

I head from Veronica yesterday of Reece's passing. Enid and I are so sorry to hear of this. As you know, I am so deeply indebted to Reece...he allowed for my career to happen.

Please let me know if there's anything we can do.

Mike Stewart

Michael Stewart - July 14, 2021 at 10:45 AM



“ Dearest Wendy,

It is with a heavy heart and deep sadness that I am responding to the announcement of Reece's death. After receiving your email from the Emergency Department two weeks ago I realized the severity of it all but hoped that the situation could be reversed. The great loss to you and his family is enormous and I am glad that you were all able to be with him at the end.

Your love for and support of Reece enabled him to do what he loved best way into his later years - as he said "the privilege of being with and healing patients." He was eternally grateful to you for all that you gave him in life. In our last conversation in Chapel Hill we discussed that the move to TN would be good for you in the eventuality of his passing since you would be among family and close friends.

I will always be grateful to Reece for my current sight. His unrelenting quest to reverse my rare retinal condition gave me the strength to be optimistic during periods of difficult therapy and led to the forging of my unique and close bond with you both. Wendy, I am always here for you and send you and the family all my love, condolences and deepest sympathy. I will be attending the Saturday memorial online.
Nerys

Nerys Levy - July 14, 2021 at 10:44 AM



“ David, and the entire Landers Family,

I was Reece's second fellow at UCDavis. I was both honored and privileged to have spent a year with Reece in Sacramento. To me, Reece was not only a mentor in vitreoretinal surgery, but also one of the most brilliant, funny, and engaging personalities I have ever had the pleasure of knowing.

While I learned how to operate and treat retinal diseases during my year with him, it was his approach to life in general which has made it's most lasting impact on me. His eagerness to look at every issue and problem, medical or non medical, from a different viewpoint was his most exceptional skill. He taught me to never accept the status quo and always question whether problems could be approached differently to achieve a better result.

Reece's dry and witty sense of humor is something I will always remember and cherish. No matter how bad things seemed, there was always a Reece-like curmudgeonly comment that would make things fall into place and problems seem to melt away.

My year at UCDavis with Reece was one of the best, most memorable times of my life; and, even though I am 31 years into a successful vitreoretinal career along the Northern Gulf Coast, I will always carry a piece of Reece with me.

I share your sorrow for his passing, but at the same time, I revel in the fact that he is probably right now engaging St Peter at the Pearly Gates about some arcane unsolvable problem that has vexed him in his life on earth.

He is a one of a kind treasure and I will miss him.

Chris Semple
UC Davis Vitreoretinal Fellow, 1989-1990
Mobile, Alabama

Chris Semple - July 14, 2021 at 10:11 AM



“ From Fellow number three, Chris you say it better than I could ever do. He is a one of a kind treasure—Cindy

Cynthia Toth - July 16, 2021 at 09:52 PM



“ Dearest Wendy,
Thinking of you and simply cannot comprehend the overwhelming sadness and grief you are experiencing. It was such a treat to meet Reece...so long ago...and to watch your happiness and contentment grow in abundance throughout the years. Reece will be missed by many and indeed left Mother Earth in a much better place due to his outstanding capacity for learning, teaching, and caring for community. Wrapping you in love ~ wishing I could be there by your side.
Enormous Condolences,
Patricia Gordon-Stevens, Australia

Patricia Gordon-Stevens - July 13, 2021 at 08:06 PM



“ Beautiful sentiment, Patricia.
Janie Charles - July 14, 2021 at 09:33 PM



“ In August of 2015 Wendy & Reece joined us at Virginia International Raceway. We had a great time watching the GT Lemans.



Houston Sharpe - July 13, 2021 at 05:52 PM