



Donald Marcus

December 10, 1930 - October 10, 2024

A man's character is his fate.

—Heraclitus

Donald Martin Marcus passed away at home on October 10, 2024. He was born in Brooklyn, New York on December 10, 1930 to James L. and Sophie Horn Marcus. The family moved to the Bronx several years after Donald was born, and eventually to Manhattan's Upper West Side. Donald attended high school at the Horace Mann School, did his freshman year of college at Columbia University, and then transferred to Princeton University, where he graduated in 1951.

Passionate about both literature and science, Donald chose a career as a scientist and medical educator. He graduated in 1955 from Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, where he also received training in Internal Medicine. From there, he performed his obligatory military service in the immunochemistry research laboratory of Dr. Elmer Becker at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, DC (1957–1959). Donald continued his training as a postdoctoral fellow in Dr. Elvin Kabat's laboratory at Columbia's Department of Microbiology and Immunology. Donald met his wife of 64 years, Marianne Taft Marcus, at a dance while in medical school in 1954. They married in 1958 and eventually had three children. The family moved to Scarsdale, New York in 1963. That year, Donald joined the Department of Medicine of Albert Einstein College of Medicine, where he became Professor of Medicine and Immunology, and director of the Division of Rheumatology of the Department of Medicine.

In 1980 Donald joined the faculty of Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, where he developed a new training program in Rheumatology. His initial research elucidated the structures of human carbohydrate blood group antigens and the nature of hereditary blood group abnormalities. Those studies stimulated his interest in the biological functions of sugar-containing molecules, and he pursued his interests across disciplinary boundaries in the fields of biochemistry and cell biology. The research program produced over 120 publications, and provided new insights into the localization of glycolipids and glycoproteins within cells and their biosynthesis, as well as how antibodies bound carbohydrate antigens. Although the field of glycolipid

chemistry was small in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s, it was a major topic in Japan. As a consequence, Donald had the opportunity to visit Japan frequently, where he forged enduring friendships and collaborations with many Japanese biochemists, who sent their talented young postdoctoral fellows to spend time in his laboratory. Donald served on research grant review groups of the National Institutes of Health and of private foundations, and on the editorial boards of scientific and medical journals.

Over his distinguished career, Donald's honors included the Karl Landsteiner Memorial Award of the American Association of Blood Banks, the Philip Levine Award of the American Society of Clinical Pathologists, and the Annual Michael Heidelberger Award Lecture at Columbia University College of Physicians & Surgeons. He was elected to membership in the American Society for Clinical Investigation, and the Association of American Physicians. He was also awarded the status of Master of the American College of Rheumatology, and received an award of appreciation from the Tokyo Society of Medical Sciences and the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Tokyo. After phasing out his laboratory research, he pursued a new scholarly interest: educating health professionals and the public about the empty claims and hazards of alternative medicine. He published more than 20 publications devoted to this topic and was invited to speak about it at medical schools and national professional meetings. After becoming an Emeritus Professor in 2008, Donald continued to participate in Baylor rheumatology educational and clinical programs while caring for underserved populations as a volunteer at the San José Clinic. In 2016, Donald and Marianne moved to Brazos

Towers/Bayou Manor, where they became part of a vibrant retirement community.

Donald's calling as a researcher and physician was a guiding principle. He often talked about the importance of the Hippocratic Oath. He was more than once the first medical personnel on the scene of emergencies in public settings and was perennially on-call as an advisor to family and friends who regularly sought his counsel. In his 2013 article, "My Career as an Immunoglycobiologist" Donald noted that, "What attracted me to research was my interest in many areas of science and medicine, and the stimulation of trying to solve problems." He also observed how his professional life had been "enriched by friendships with scientists from many countries, and by the opportunity to learn about other cultures."

Donald modeled a well-rounded life decades before "work-life balance" became a household phrase. Although he chose a career in medicine, he sustained his love of literature and the arts. An avid reader, he enjoyed poetry, fiction, memoir, and non-fiction. Appreciated by many in his circle as a literary guru, he often gave books to family and friends based on their particular interests and tastes. Donald appreciated diverse musical genres: he loved Broadway musicals, classical music, American and international folk and

traditional music, and jazz, among others. His patronage of diverse concerts, readings, museum exhibits, and theater and dance performances were a testament to his eclectic tastes and the great joy he took in arts and culture. Donald fostered a love of reading and music in his children and grandchildren.

Donald and Marianne traveled the world extensively, for both work and pleasure. Donald's yearlong sabbatical at London's Chester Beatty Laboratories (1969-70) offered the family a cultural immersion and springboard for exploring the UK and Europe—an experience that instilled a love of travel in his children. When Marianne's parents retired to Bluff, Utah in 1974, the family launched an enduring connection with the American Southwest. For many years, Donald and the family made annual trips to the Four Corners area as well as Taos and Santa Fe, where they relished the cultural and natural landscape and developed a passion for Native American art. A regular at the annual Taos Pueblo Pow-wow, Donald often joined the Friendship Dance, adding his two-step to the circle.

Whether at home or during his travels, Donald savored good food and wine, about which he became very knowledgeable. Donald also read the newspapers and watched the news every day—a lifelong practice that nurtured an astute perspective on national and world events.

At a relatively young age, Donald recognized the importance of regular physical exercise. Throughout his long life, he remained disciplined about working out and he encouraged others to follow his lead. He was also an ardent sports fan who enjoyed attending various sporting events and watching them on television. He remained a loyal fan of the New York Football Giants—even in the 1970s. Donald was also an avid New York Yankees fan. During his childhood in the Bronx, he attended games and collected autographs from Yankees greats.

Donald was a devoted and caring family man. While his wisdom was generally shared in the form of jokes or witticisms, it was not lost on his family and friends. Using his skills as a father, physician, researcher and educator, Donald nurtured each of his children and grandchildren along whatever path they chose in life, and made sure that they had everything they needed to succeed on their journey. Throughout his life, Donald maintained friendships with colleagues and classmates from as far back as his high school years. He will be remembered as a loyal friend and mentor, and a gentle spirit with a dry sense of humor. He was an adept joke teller, and found humor in almost any situation. We will greatly miss his steady presence, his twinkling eyes and

mischievous smile, and his knowledge, kindness, candor and generosity.

Donald was preceded in death by his parents James L. and Sophie Horn Marcus, his wife Marianne, brother Robert Marcus, stepmother Helen Marcus, brother-in-law Luran Harris, brother-in-law Sven Ramklint, and nephew Luran Harris, Jr. He is survived by his children: Laura Marcus Green (Steve), Susan Marcus-Mendoza (Jorge), and James Marcus (Mia de Saint Victor); his grandchildren: Donald Mendoza (Jhoana), Kathryn Torres (Jon), Sam Marcus, and Lila Marcus; great-grandchildren: Lucas Mendoza and Lily Mendoza; sister-in-law, Newell Taft Friedman; nephews Daniel Friedman (Gail Ablow) and Andrew Friedman, niece Patricia Ehrenzeller; grand-niece Sophia Friedman; friend of seventy-plus years Mark Kaplan, and cats Roger and Louise.

The Marcus family wishes to thank the staff and residents at Brazos Towers/Bayou Manor for their friendship and care. They are also deeply grateful to caregivers Barbara Taylor, Chinyere Uloma, Caroline Ikelle, and Sharmaine Pinnekins, Dr. Martin Poliak, Dr. Christopher Finila, and Dr. Albert Raizner, and to the At Your Side and Nurturing Home Healthcare agencies.

A Celebration of Life for both Donald and Marianne Marcus will take place on Saturday, March 1 at 11:00 am at the First Unitarian Church, 5200 Fannin Street in Houston. Donations may be made in Donald's memory to: San José Clinic in Houston, <https://www.sanjosecclinic.org/donate>; Texas Defender Service, <https://www.texasdefender.org/donate/>; and/or Mercury Chamber Orchestra, <https://www.mercuryhouston.org/in-memory>

Please [CLICK HERE](#) to RSVP to let the family know you will be joining them for the services and reception.

Tribute Wall

NP

“ I remember one day in Scarsdale when I was staying with the family and Dr. Marcus took me aside. He said he had noticed what an avid reader I was and recommended a few books to me. It was sweet because he was in earnest about how important it was that I continue reading widely. He was a good man.

Noelle P - November 09, 2024 at 03:09 PM