

A CELEBRATION OF LIFE

*Kenneth Wells Mahan, M.D.*

*"Ken"*



*Sunrise*

May 21, 1925

*Sunset*

August 21, 2016

*Service*

Saturday, August 27, 2016 - 10:00 a.m.

**Metropolitan A.M.E. Zion Church**

597 Bergen Ave. • Jersey City, New Jersey

***Reverend Nathaniel B. LeGay, Jr., Officiating***

# *A Life Remembered*

## *Order of Service*

Prelude

Processional

Musical Selection.....Ms. Lily Fleming

Prayer of Comfort.....Rev. Nathaniel B. LeGay, Jr.

Scripture Readings .....Ms. Judith Francis & Ms. Vonja Parker

Old Testament: Psalm 100

New Testament: 2 Corinthians 5

Musical Selection.....Ms. Lily Fleming

Obituary.....Ms. Sharon Harris

Reflections and Acknowledgments

Family Reflections

Eulogy..... Rev. Nathaniel B. LeGay, Jr.  
Pastor, Metropolitan A.M.E. Zion Church

Final Viewing

Benediction .....Rev. Nathaniel B. LeGay, Jr.

Recessional

### **Entombment**

Woodbridge Memorial Gardens

Route. 1 North

Woodbridge, New Jersey

### ***Repast***

*Immediately following Entombment the family requests that you join them for repast at Renaissance Woodbridge Hotel, Rte. 1. South, Woodbridge, NJ.*



# Our Precious Memories of Dad



**Juneau's Precious Memory of Dad is ...** You taught me the value of education, through your degrees, role modeling, and mentorship. You and Mom pushed all of us to be academically prepared. I know how proud you are of our academic abilities and careers, as we contribute to making the world a better place for the next generation ... just as you did. My other memory is running around the house (literally!) with you behind me, trying to catch me to give me a flu shot or shot of penicillin. Eventually, I lost the battle and got the needle and we both got a good workout. I'm still phobic about needles but improving. But I still don't get a flu shot!

**Barbara's Precious Memory of Dad is ...** Dad is simply the best! I have so many special memories that I could share. When I would hear your calm and reassuring voice, I always knew that no matter what the situation, that everything would be alright. You always gave the best medical advice and life advice and wanted the best for your children. You took care of your family lovingly and devotedly throughout your life. As children, you took us so many places where we laughed, played – had fun with you. If I needed help with homework, I knew no matter the time of night, you would always help me after a busy day at the hospital and office.

It was an honor and privilege to return to New Jersey to take care of you after Mom died and when your health and physical condition started to decline. Now was the time when the roles were reversed ... I was here to take care of you.

I tried to be the rock for you that you were for me and my family. I was often called your protector and your body guard. And you called me your right arm.

A special and loving father, grandfather, and great-grandfather. You fought the good fight. Rest in peace.

**Janet's Precious Memory of Dad is ...** I remember as a little girl, we would go on outings and trips with my parents and get back late. I would feign being asleep, so Dad would carry me from the car up to my bedroom in the attic and Mom would get us ready for bed. What Dad didn't realize is that I feigned sleep so I could feel the strength of security in my Father's arms.

**Ken's (KK) Precious Memory of Dad is ...** His kind, gentle, caring, compassionate, sacrificial and selfless devotion to his family, friends, neighbors, and patients. This was both his gift and blessing from God to those whose lives he touched. When I was a young boy, I remember him taking my brother and me with him to the hospital as he visited his patients. This was his way of spending precious time with his sons, while at the same time, attending to the needs of his patients. Finally, on a humorous note, I remember spending countless hours with him at the race track where he loved to “play the gray (horse) on a muddy day in the month of May”... and he cashed a few of those bets. Love Ya Dad. RIP.

...  
**Joel's Precious Memory of Dad is ...** You left all of us a huge legacy and lifetime of great memories, which we'll remember forever. You truly touched the lives of thousands of patients, colleagues, friends, and relatives.

I'm so proud that God blessed you with a special gift – working through your hands. God gave you the gift of saving lives and alleviating the pain and suffering of others. You never let the great demands on your time keep you from your top priority – your family.

My most precious memories involve having fun while traveling as a family around the country. That includes attending the National Medical Association (NMA) Conventions, season tickets to Giants football games and watching together our favorite baseball team, the New York Yankees!

I'll always remember your great spirit, kind heart, gentle manner, wisdom, guidance and calling me “Mr. Joel.” Miss you terribly. Rest in eternal peace.

# Obituary

**Kenneth Wells Mahan, Sr., M.D. ("Ken" and "Doc"),** 91, was born on May 21, 1925 in Wheeling West Virginia. He was the second of four children born to the late Samuel and Ellen (Edwards) Mahan. He was preceded in death by his brothers Otey and Lindbergh and sister Elaine. God called him home to rest on the morning of August 21, 2016.

Though born in Wheeling, West Virginia, Ken grew up in Beckley, West Virginia, a small coal mining company town with dirt roads. He was the product of a segregated public school system. He and his brothers would walk past closer schools to attend theirs. Ken was a smart student and skipped two grades. He first attended Byrd Trillerman High School in Amigo, West Virginia and later graduated from John Stratton High School, Beckley, West Virginia as the salutatorian in 1942, alongside his older brother, Otey. His favorite subjects in school were math and science. Had his family not moved to Beckley, he would have been valedictorian of his graduating class.

During his high school years, Ken befriended the future late Senator Robert Byrd of West Virginia, who, as a teenager, worked in the family butcher shop in which Ken's family purchased meat. During high school and summers, Ken and his brother Otey worked at the local segregated golf course/country club washing dishes ... while being very aware they could not use these facilities as a guest.

There were not many educational and career opportunities in West Virginia for African Americans, besides coal mining, which his father discouraged the boys from pursuing. Ken realized early on that he would have to move elsewhere to pursue an education. He enrolled in Hampton Institute (now Hampton University) in Virginia with the dream of becoming an architect but changed to agriculture.

During World War II, and still a college student, Ken was drafted into the U.S. Army and reported for duty in Richmond, Virginia on November 15, 1944. He served directly under the command of General Douglas MacArthur. He served his country proudly and honorably during World War II, as a clerk typist-technician, Fourth Grade, with the 95<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. His position, which required reading the ticker tapes, enabled him to be one of the first to know where soldiers would be deployed and when. Amazingly, Ken typed up orders for a soldier with the surname "Mahan." They soon met and Ken realized this was his first cousin, Lorenzo. Ken was honorably discharged from the U.S. Army on December 5, 1946 with two bronze service stars and a World War II Victory Medal.

Ken saw so many wounded and maimed soldiers and this experience changed the course of his life. He decided to finish college and pursue medicine as a career. The G.I. Bill enabled Ken to complete his college education. He transferred to Howard University in Washington, DC, graduating with a B.S. degree in 1948. He was accepted into Howard University's College of Medicine, graduating in 1952 with his medical degree. He was taught and mentored by Dr. Charles Drew, who discovered improved techniques for the storage of blood plasma, resulting in the saving of countless lives during World War II. At the 1952 graduation, President Harry S. Truman delivered the Commencement Address. Truman was the first U.S. President to deliver a Commencement Address at a historically Black university. Ken kept a picture of this special day on his wall, knowing he was sitting among the proud graduates.

How does a coal miner's son from West Virginia end up becoming a successful surgeon and trail-blazing physician in New Jersey? The journey began in 1943 when Ken visited his brother Otey, who was stationed at Fort Monmouth Army Base in Monmouth County, New Jersey. It was then and there that he decided he wanted to live in New Jersey one day, somewhere at the Jersey shore and by the ocean. It took several years to move to the shore, but he and his wife Costello ("Cos") made the move with their five children in 1970.

After graduating from medical school, Dr. Mahan completed his internship at the famous Jersey City Medical Center, Jersey City, New Jersey, followed by a residency in General Surgery from 1953-1957. He was among the first African American physicians to train in surgery in Jersey City. He later completed post-graduate training in advanced surgery at Harvard Medical School (Boston) in 1966 and Cook County Hospital (Chicago) in 1967. Always wishing to further his training, Dr. Mahan was inducted as a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons (FACS) in 1963, and was one of the first African American surgeons to hold this prestigious distinction. He was a member of the Medical Society of New Jersey as well as the Hudson County Medical Society. He was elected to serve as President of the Hudson County Medical Society (1976-1977) and was the first African American to hold this position.

Soon after he arrived at Jersey City Medical Center, Ken's path crossed with his future wife, Costello Foushee. She worked as a supervisor in the Admitting Office. They fell in love and married on July 4, 1953.

Dr. Mahan opened a solo medical practice in 1958 in General Surgery. Over the years, he was an attending physician at Jersey City Medical Center, Christ Hospital, Palisades Medical Center, Fairmont Hospital, and Greenville Hospital (in Jersey City and Secaucus). He loved surgery and using his God-given talent to heal patients and save many lives. One surgery, in particular, stood out to him. In a terrible car accident on the New Jersey Turnpike Extension, a man was impaled by a heavy wooden board. He was not expected to survive. Dr. Mahan's skilled hands saved his life. It was reported in the local paper, *Jersey Journal*, with the headline "Surgeon Saves Miracle Patient."

Throughout Dr. Mahan's illustrious career, he served the community through several medical roles. He was the Medical Director of Job Corps-Jersey City Unit, a police surgeon for the Jersey City Police Department, and a school physician for the Hudson County Board of Education. He was appointed a Clinical Assistant Professor of Surgery at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ) (and currently the Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School). He was also a company physician for ICI Americas (Bayonne, New Jersey) and served as the Medical Director for the U.S. Postal Service-New Jersey/New York Regional Distribution Center.

After Dr. Mahan retired from practicing major surgery, he wanted to remain busy and involved in medicine. He became a consulting examiner for the U.S. Social Security Administration-New Jersey Office and joined Immediate Medical Services in Oakhurst, New Jersey, as an emergency care physician.

Ken's professional and community involvement included being a church Trustee, Emeritus Trustee, and Man of the Year at Metropolitan A.M.E. Zion Church (Jersey City); member of the North Jersey Men's Club (or Nor-Jer-Men's Club); Monmouth County Men's Club; member of the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity; and Kiwanis Club.

In between all of these achievements, Ken remained married to his late wife, Cos, for 60 years, while raising a loving and devoted family of five children: Juneau, Barbara, Janet, Ken, Jr. (KK), and Joel; three grandchildren: Erika Green, Kristen Mahan, and Brendan Mahan; one step-grandson, Joseph Gary (JT); and two great-grandchildren: Cameron and Christian Green. Ken enjoyed his family and special family time, which was sometimes scarce. He had to sacrifice a lot of time away from his family, which included purchasing a second home for them in Loch Arbour, New Jersey at the Jersey shore, while he continued to work in Jersey City and commuted on weekends.

After the death of Cos, and as his physical health declined, he realized it was time to move to an assisted living facility. He chose Brandywine Senior Living (Wall, New Jersey). He enjoyed listening to Jazz (especially Ellington, Basie, and Fitzgerald), reading the *Bible*, meditating on the word, and listening to gospel music; completing word puzzles; participating in the daily activities at Brandywine; watching his favorite television shows (Jeopardy and Murder, She Wrote), and watching his favorite sport, baseball.

He often regaled to his children and grandchildren about his early childhood in West Virginia. It took him 90 years to tell us that his childhood nickname was "Chunk." He spoke fondly of West Virginia in spite of enduring some bitter and racist experiences. He was the oldest living member of the entire Mahan line until his death.

A proud man, but not prideful, he knew that his life and his calling as a surgeon were a gift from God. He was a gentle and kind man who rarely raised his voice and was a loving family man.

So, the journey of a coal miner's son from West Virginia ended peacefully at the Jersey shore on August 21, 2016. He leaves to mourn his beloved children, Dr. Juneau Mahan Gary (the late Dr. Melvin L. Gary), Ms. Barbara Mahan Green, Dr. Janet Mahan Williams (the late Michael K. Williams), Mr. Kenneth W. Mahan, Jr. (Bridgette Eaton Mahan), and Mr. Joel Mahan. He was a loving grandfather and great-grandfather to Erika Nicole Green, Kristen Olivia Mahan, Brendan Wells Mahan, JT Gary, Cameron Xavier Green, and Christian Cortez Green. He also leaves a special niece Verna ("Becky") Mahan Walker, sister-in-law Mrs. Mary Carter Mahan; "adopted" daughter Ms. Sharon Harris, and many cousins, nieces, nephews, and friends.

So, in the words of John Denver, ... "West Virginia, take me home, country roads".... Ken is now reunited in death with his wife Cos; parents Samuel and Ellen Mahan; brothers Otey and Lindbergh ("Lindy") Mahan; sister Elaine Mahan Baker; two sons-in-law; a "adopted" son Byrd Walker, and a host of cherished cousins, nieces, nephews, and friends.







*Precious Memories*



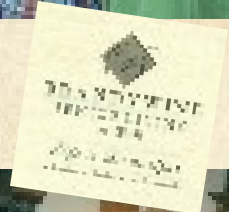




# Precious



# Memories



## *Beyond the Sunset*

You went first and I remained,  
to walk the road alone,  
I lived in memories garden, dear,  
with happy days we'd known.  
In spring I'd wait for roses red,  
when faded, the lilacs blue  
In early fall when brown leaves would fall,  
I'd catch a glimpse of you.  
I'd hear your voice, I'd see your smile,  
tho blindly I did grope,  
The memory of your helping hand  
would buoy me on with hope.  
You went first and I remained,  
one thing I'd had you do:  
Walk slowly down that long long path,  
for soon I'd follow you.  
I wanted to know each step you'd take,  
So I would take the same.  
For now down that lonely road,  
You'll hear me calling your name.





## *A Physician's Prayer*

Lord, who on earth didn't minister  
To those who helpless lay  
In pain and weakness hear me now,  
As unto the I pray.

Give to mine eyes the power to see  
The hidden source of ill.  
Give to my hand the healing touch  
The throb of pain to still.

Grant that my ears be swift to hear  
The cry of those in pain:  
Give to my tongue the words that bring  
Comfort and strength again.

Till Thou my heart with tenderness,  
My brain with wisdom true,  
And Wear in weariness I sink,  
Strengthen Thou me anew.

So in Thy footsteps May I tread,  
Strong in Thy Strength always,  
So may I do Thy Blessed work  
And praise Thee day by Day.

## *Acknowledgement*

The family wishes to express their sincere thanks and appreciation for all acts of kindness and expressions of sympathy that was shown to them during this time of bereavement.

### **Professional Services Provided By**

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