



Norman Decker, MD.

June 12, 1936 - November 6, 2022

Norman Decker, M.D. – 86 years old; June 12, 1936, in Brooklyn, NY – November 6, 2022, in Belmont Village Senior Living Facility, Houston, TX.

On Sunday, November 6, 2022, Norman Decker MD succumbed to his decade-long battle with dementia. Though the battle was lengthy, the end was sudden and unexpected.

Dr. Decker was born on June 12, 1936, to Irving Decker (nee Mordkovich), an eastern European immigrant and electrical worker union member, and Betty Decker (nee Warshawsky) in Brooklyn, New York. At a young age, the family moved to 1406 Hicks St. in Bronx, New York where the future Dr. Decker attended Bronx High School of Science, an institution that has produced eight Nobel Prize winners, eight Pulitzer Prize winners, and hundreds of other leading US citizens. Upon graduation from Bronx Science in 1953, Dr. Decker matriculated at Columbia University where he met the love of his life, the former Hannah Dorothy Shulman, with whom he shared a whirlwind romance of 69 years.

Their 69-year love affair and 65-year marriage produced two children, four grandchildren, a step grandchild, and two great grandchildren. Following graduation from Columbia University in 1957, Dr. Decker improbably matriculated at the Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons, the medical

school of Columbia University. Regarding this accomplishment, Dr. Decker, a perennial B student in high school and college is known to have remarked, "Every orchestra needs a bass". His father's electrical workers union provided the scholarship funds that sent Dr. Decker to both college and medical school.

Upon graduation from Columbia P&S in 1961, Dr. Decker and his wife moved east to Seattle where he completed a residency in internal medicine. He returned to the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York City to complete a fellowship in psychiatry.

In 1965, Dr. Decker joined the United States Army as Captain and was stationed at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio for a two-year term of service. While stationed in San Antonio, Dr. Decker became a father, celebrating the birth of a daughter, the present Ruth Decker Harper, on November 9, 1965, the night the lights went out in New York City.

Returning to New York in 1967, Dr. Decker established a successful psychiatry practice on Park Avenue while living on the east side of Manhattan at E. 70th St and York Avenue. During the last years of the family's residence in New York City, Dr. Decker celebrated the birth of a son, William Karl Decker in 1971, as well as the joy of seeing his wife join the ranks of the Academy by earning a PhD in History from Columbia University in 1972. This watershed event led Dr. Decker to close his Park Avenue practice and decamp to the wild environs of East Texas in 1974 so that his wife could begin an academic career at the University of Houston. That career continues to this day.

In his new home, Dr. Decker built a strong private practice on San Jacinto Street while serving on the clinical faculty at Baylor College of Medicine and the VA Hospital System. While at Baylor, he created the consult/liaison section in the Department of Psychiatry and ran the residency program for over 25 years. He also served on the staff of Bellaire General Hospital.

The Deckers made a beautiful life together in Houston, raising their family while passionately pursuing a number of hobbies that included scuba diving, gardening, cooking, photography, and travel.

Later in his career, Dr. Decker became obsessed with the sheer scale of human suffering he observed around him and society's relative inability to address the needs of its most vulnerable members. He founded Cancer Counseling, an advanced psychiatric consult service that provided counseling, guidance, advice, and comfort to dying cancer patients and their families. He is also a past President of the Houston Psychoanalytic Society.

As his career progressed into his golden years, he closed his San Jacinto practice and began seeing self-pay, Medicare, and indigent patients who could not generally afford quality care. This compassionate practice continued well into the years when dementia began to slowly and insidiously take his life. Nonetheless, he gleefully remarked to his patients, "If you don't mind that I can't remember your name, I don't mind continuing to treat you".

His professional career ended abruptly after he suffered a heart attack and a stroke in April of 2017, and his health continued to decline precipitously after he suffered a fall and hip replacement in 2020.

Dr. Decker spent the last seven months of his life in the care of the loving staff at the Belmont Village Senior Living facility in West University. The family remains exceptionally grateful for the care that was provided during these final months. Dr. Decker was lucky enough to see his daughter married to Mr. Russell Harper in 1999 and his son married to Ms. Ruth Denice Bates in 2000. Both marriages persist to this day. He was able to experience the joy of becoming a grandparent four times over and was exceptionally close to his four grandsons when they were young. In his later years, he remained

especially close to his oldest grandchild, Mr. Charles Decker, who was a source of comfort, stability, and inspiration for his grandfather in his final years.

Dr. Decker is survived by his wife, Hannah Decker; his children, William Decker and Ruth Decker Harper and their spouses Russell Harper and Ruth Denice Decker; his grandchildren, Max Harper, Charles Decker and spouse Ana Ramirez, Alex Decker, and Joseph Decker; and his two great grandchildren, Wesley Timothy Decker and Theodore Shulman Decker. He was preceded in death by his father Irving Decker in 1967, his mother Betty Decker in 1994, and his very dear older brother, Alan Decker in 2010.

Cemetery Details

Emanu El Memorial Park

8341 Bissonnet St
Houston, TX 77074