



Dr. Ralph N. Lee

May 14, 1930 - August 30, 2025

Dr. Ralph Navero Lee was born in West Point, Virginia, on May 14, 1930, to Gilbert Lee, Sr., and Nydia Allen Lee. After his mother passed away when he and his siblings were young, Ralph was separated from them at six years of age and raised in Newark, New Jersey, by his Aunt Crystie “Chris” Allen Carson and her husband, Uncle Edward “Patty” Carson.

From an early age, Ralph was taught to pursue excellence, even while growing up amid crime, poverty, and violence. His high intellect was quickly recognized, and he was blessed with a mentor and godfather, Uncle William Lunchman, who nurtured him as a son and encouraged him to pursue higher education. Throughout his schooling, Ralph became known for his good-natured personality, strong academic performance, and athletic ability.

On January 29, 1945, Ralph graduated from Robert Treat Junior High School, and in 1948 he received his high school diploma from South Side High School. During his youth, he worked various construction jobs and was admired for his diligence, work ethic, and physical strength.

With the money he earned through manual labor, Ralph matriculated at Upsala College, where he continued to excel. He also joined the wrestling team, which later served as inspiration for his sons and grandsons to explore martial arts. On June 8, 1953, Ralph graduated with a Bachelor of Science

degree, majoring in chemistry and minoring in biology.

Although his college years were filled with many happy memories, they also carried painful moments. After he shared his dream of becoming a physician, one chemistry professor—blinded by prejudice—told him to abandon his dream because he was Black and to consider another profession instead. With his trademark smirk—a look that seemed to say no challenge was too great—Ralph pressed forward with resilience. That same smirk would later shine through in moments of joy with loved ones, whether as he watched a grandchild discover one of his treasured books or when he shared a quiet laugh in daily life.

On August 6, 1953, Ralph enlisted in the U.S. Army. Serving as a nuclear weapons ordnance specialist, he traveled abroad and became proficient in French, Spanish, and German. He was honorably discharged on May 25, 1955. With the help of the GI Bill, he pursued his lifelong dream of medicine, enrolling at Howard University College of Medicine.

During medical school, Ralph met the love of his life, Fannie Jones, who nurtured him spiritually, mentally, and emotionally. On June 6, 1959, they joyfully married. With his devoted wife by his side, Ralph earned his M.D. degree from Howard University in 1960, completed his internship at Freedmen's Hospital, and his surgical residency at Fort Howard Hospital in Maryland.

In 1965, he moved to the Virginia Peninsula, where he was mentored by and partnered with the late Dr. C. Waldo Scott. He later built strong professional relationships with fellow physicians, and by the time he approached retirement, he had spent most of his career in a thriving practice with Drs. Gore and Hercules. After decades of providing compassionate, holistic health care, as well as education and mentorship to thousands of patients and

colleagues, Ralph retired in 1995.

Throughout his life, Ralph valued health and fitness, living it in ways that were both inspiring and playful. He wrestled with his sons, danced the worm for his grandchildren, and encouraged healthy living—though never without a love of ice cream and popsicles. His playful spirit often delighted those around him. After a family outing to the tennis park, he once suggested running home instead of driving—a spontaneous challenge that became a cherished memory of his vitality and joy.

As a father and grandfather, Ralph never allowed the demands of a rigorous career to interfere with his devotion to family. He hosted reunions, opened his home, offered financial and emotional support, and created spaces of belonging. When he saw young people struggling in the community, he did not turn away; he approached them with guidance and compassion. A wonderful listener with wise counsel and a great sense of humor, Ralph brought laughter and warmth to all who knew him. He cherished time spent reading, watching family films, enjoying nature, swimming, skating, playing basketball and softball, engaging in a game of chess or checkers, and countless other pastimes.

Ralph lived out love that crossed boundaries of race, religion, and culture. His faith was demonstrated not by rigid words, but by the way he lived and interacted with others. A lifelong learner, he was well-read, well-traveled, and well-educated, yet always humble. When asked about his faith in God, he explained that he could not have achieved what he did or overcome his challenges without God's blessings and strength. His faith was expressed not only in words but also in service. Since 1985, he had been a member of World Victory Church and Life Center, served on the first trustee board and planning committee, and participated in Easter Pageants and Christmas Dinner

Theatres.

Ralph's influence extended beyond medicine into every life he touched. He was a surgeon, yes, but first he was a husband, father, grandfather, friend, and faithful servant. Many in the community knew him as a giant of both gentleness and strength. He made the simplest times unforgettable and the hardest times bearable. Though he endured racism, loss, and adversity, he deliberately chose joy, and being near him invited others to do the same. His life reminds us that true greatness is measured not by achievements alone, but by presence, love, and service.

On August 30, 2025, Dr. Ralph N. Lee entered into a peaceful sleep at his home. He was preceded in death by his beloved wife, Fannie Jones Lee; his parents; and his six siblings. Left to cherish his memory are his children: William Lee, Dr. Maria Lee-Johnson (Dr. William Johnson III), Dr. Timothy Lee (Dr. Melissa Gross), Angela Anderson (Arthur Anderson Jr.), and Dr. Benjamin Lee (Dr. Nicola Garcia); his thirteen grandchildren—Jonee, Ralph, Kaylee, Sasha, William "Randy" IV, Lauren, Alyssa, Noah, Sonia, Wendolyn, Ezekiel, Tobias, and Savannah—and a host of nieces, nephews, cousins, and dear friends.

A funeral service will be held 12Noon Friday, September 19, 2025, at the Cornerstone Worship Center International Assembly, 55 Tide Mill Ln, Hampton, VA 23666. Interment to follow in the Hampton Memorial Gardens, 155 Butler Farm Rd, Hampton, VA 23666.

In lieu of flowers, the family kindly requests donations to benefit the Brinkley Homeschool Network. Checks are to be payable to: Capernaum Seventh-Day Adventist Church, 314 York St., Suffolk, VA 23434, (Attn: Treasurer).

Cemetery Details

Hampton Memorial Gardens

155 Butler Farm Rd
Hampton, VA 23666

Previous Events

Funeral Service

SEP **19**. 12:00 PM (ET)

Cornerstone Worship Center International Assembly
55 Tide Mill Ln
Hampton, VA 23666

Tribute Wall

DC

“ *It was only today that I learned of the passing of Dr. Ralph Lee, and I wish to extend my heartfelt condolences to the entire Lee family. Alongside this expression of sympathy, I feel a profound personal sense of loss.*

I first met Dr. Lee in 1986, at the very beginning of my medical practice in Hampton and Newport News. From the outset, it was clear to me that he was not only a brilliant surgeon but also a remarkably humble and friendly individual. As a cardiologist, I once had the privilege of observing him up close perform an operation, and I was truly awestruck by his exceptional professional skills. Our conversations covered a wide range of topics, yet I was particularly touched by his expressions of love and appreciation for his family. His commitment and affection for his loved ones left a lasting impression on me.

Those of us who worked alongside Dr. Lee as professional colleagues recognized him as one of the true medical heroes serving the Peninsula. Despite our admiration, Dr. Lee remained steadfastly modest, often refusing to accept praise and feeling genuinely embarrassed whenever I attempted to express my appreciation for his greatness. His humility was a defining characteristic, and he was always the gentle, gracious man.

To all members of the Lee family, and in particular to Ben with whom I was in practice, I trust you are surrounded by the support of your large and close-knit family and circle of friends during this difficult time. Yet, I know that neither rationalization nor acceptance of human fate can truly fill the void left by the loss of such a remarkable patriarch.

While Dr. Lee would expect you to mourn his passing, he would not want you to suffer. Let us all rejoice in his memory and cherish the legacy he leaves behind.

Dr. Mark W. Clark

Dr. MARK W CLARK - September 28, 2025 at 03:18 PM

SV

“ *It is with great sadness that we have learned of your Loss.*

We send our deepest condolences to you and your family.

Please note that in lieu of Flowers, Amentum Tidewater Operations Division has donated \$100 to the Capernaum Seventh-Day Adventist Church Scholarship fund in memory of Dr. Lee.

stepanie Vassell - September 24, 2025 at 04:15 PM

AB

“ *What a blessing it is to honor the life & legacy of Dr. Ralph Navero Lee, a man of stature and nobility, whose life works of personal sacrifices, love, conviction and achievement has been the catalyst for his lineage to follow.*

For the Bible says, "To live is Christ, and to die is gain" is a biblical phrase from Philippians 1:21 by the Apostle Paul, meaning that his life is entirely devoted to Christ and that death offers a superior state of being with Christ, making both life and death opportunities to honor Him.

For Paul, living was an active mission to serve and preach Christ, while dying was a longed-for release into eternal communion with Jesus.

Continued blessings to Dr. Lee's family, relatives & personal acquaintances. May his revered memories remain in your hearts in perpetuity.

Love always,

*Antonio & Melissa Mears Brinkley & Family
Newport News, Virginia*



Antonio Brinkley - September 19, 2025 at 12:09 PM

LR

“ *My condolences to Dr. Ralph N. Lee Family. May He Rest in Power & Peace. God Bless.*

L. Jane W. Rhodes - September 19, 2025 at 08:31 AM

DS

“ I am deeply saddened to hear about Dr. Lee's passing. Please accept my heartfelt condolences to you and your family during this difficult time.

Your father was not only a respected doctor and a trusted family friend, but also someone who had a lasting impact on many lives—including mine. His kindness, professionalism, and care will always be remembered with great respect and gratitude.

Please know that you are in my thoughts and prayers.

With deepest sympathy,

David M. Summers

David M Summers - September 17, 2025 at 03:54 PM

TW

“ Sorry For Your Loss



Thomas Widgeon - September 11, 2025 at 06:39 AM