



Donald Richard Knarr M.D.

June 13, 1935 - October 21, 2025

Dr. Donald Richard Knarr, M.D., of Tyler, Texas, passed away peacefully on October 21, 2025, at the age of 90.

He was born on June 13, 1935, in Hopkinsville, Kentucky to William F. Knarr and Edith Nunn Knarr and was the 4th of 5 children.

He grew up in Lone Oak, Kentucky and graduated from high school at Paducah Tilghman in Paducah, Kentucky. He lettered in track, basketball, and football and set state records in both the discus and shot put. After high school he went on to earn his Bachelor's degree from Western Kentucky State College (now Western Kentucky University) and his Doctor of Medicine from The University of Louisville. During his internship at Jackson Memorial Hospital in Miami, Florida, he met the love of his life, a young and lively nurse named Ethel. They married on New Year's Eve of 1963 in Honolulu, Hawaii and shared 50 wonderful years together before her passing in 2014.

Dr. Knarr joined the ROTC while in college. After finishing medical school he fulfilled his military obligation and served as a Captain in the U.S. Army. He was stationed in various locations including San Antonio, Pensacola (where he went through the naval flight surgeon training program and earned his wings), and Korea. After returning home from Korea he spent a brief stint in Atlanta, GA as an Army doctor. After serving out his remaining military obligation he went into private practice and moved to Jasper, Alabama for a brief time before finally settling in Tyler in 1966 and joining the family practice of Dr. Robert Gatti. He said when he first started in Tyler he charged \$5 for an office visit. Eventually he bought a building on Old Jacksonville Hwy and started his own clinic where he practiced solo for many years. In 1996 he joined Trinity Manhattan Clinic and practiced there until his retirement in 2021 at the age of 85. In total he dedicated more than 60 years as a physician, 55 of those being in family practice in Tyler. He was beloved and trusted, both as a doctor and a friend, to generations of patients. Known for his compassion, kindness, and genuine concern for his patients, he touched countless lives with his steady hand and kindheart. He was a lifelong student, curious and always interested in learning.

As such, he always encouraged his nurses and staff to further their own education. He hired Laura Sue McClenny in 1984 at the age of 18. They were together for 37 years. In that time she went from being a fresh high school graduate all the way to now practicing as a nurse practitioner at the Manhattan Clinic. Her accomplishments made him so proud and gave him great joy. During his early years in practice after arriving in Tyler he had several mentors that he had the utmost respect for and he always said “saved his life” with their unfailing willingness to help, guide, and teach him. They were: Dr. Sherroll Neill, Dr. Don Steph, Dr. Tom Alexander, and Dr. Charles McCarthy.

As a general practitioner he did a little bit of everything. He split time between the clinic and the hospital. He delivered babies for a brief time, performed simple surgeries, and was one of the first general practice doctors in Tyler to perform flexible sigmoidoscopies in his clinic. He was instrumental in establishing the first emergency room in Tyler. There was not one at the time and he recalled hearses being used from the local funeral home to transport patients to the hospital in emergency cases.

Outside of his medical career, Dr. Knarr led a rich and full life. He had enthusiasm in all he did. He had a lifelong passion for photography. He served as the wedding photographer at quite a few weddings for family and friends. He was a traveler. He loved taking trips to all corners of the country with his family and friends. There are too many to count...hunting trips, fishing trips, river trips, Boy Scout trips to Jamborees and Philmont Scout Ranch with his son Rich, retracing the Lewis and Clark journey over the course of 2 summers with his grandsons, camping trips to Colorado with friends and family every year for many years the first week of August, etc. etc. He was always up for an adventure and ready to go.

He was a dedicated family man, a true patriarch — a devoted husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather whose love and quiet strength were the foundation of his family. He loved his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren so much and invested so much of his time and energy into their lives. It gave him great joy to be with them (and they with him).

Above all else he was a humble servant of Jesus Christ. His faith was steadfast. His life reflected his deep love and trust in Jesus. Never preachy, his kindness, integrity, and compassion spoke volumes about what he believed. He found strength and peace in reading Scripture. He was always sharing favorite Christian writings and devotionals and inspirational and encouraging quotes with family and friends. One of his favorite things was attending “Choir Practice” every Thursday morning at 6:30 am. This group has been meeting weekly for over 50 years to fellowship and study the Bible together. A special Thank You to Dr. Herd Snider for picking him up every week these last few years after he

was no longer able to drive himself.

Dr. Knarr was preceded in death by his parents, his beloved wife Ethel, his daughter Amy, his sisters Helen Shell, Marilyn East, Johnnie Dossett, and brother Bob Knarr. He is survived by his children, daughter Hilary Lee and her husband Mark of Waxahachie, TX, Rich Knarr and his wife Susan of Tyler; six grandchildren: grandson Christopher Lee and his wife Christa of Waxahachie, TX, grandson Luke Lee and his wife Ashley of Cleburne, TX, grandson Noah Lee and his wife Jasmin of Ennis, TX, granddaughters Haley, Amy, and Rachel Knarr, all of Tyler; five great-grandchildren: Annabelle Lee, Amelia Lee, Arianna Lee, Isaac Lee, and Lillian Lee; and many dear friends, colleagues, and former patients who will forever cherish his memory.

A celebration of Dr. Knarr's life will be held on Saturday December 13, 2025, at 10 am at Marvin Methodist Church in Tyler, with visitation the evening before on Friday, December 12th from 5-7 pm at Stewart Family Funeral Home in Tyler.

Honorary pallbearers are: Van Graham, Ken Hegtvedt, Drew Denman, Mark Wheeler, David Arrington, Danny Alexander, Laura Sue McClenny, Dr. Charles Fries, David Mohr, Dr. Eric Smith, Dr. Walter Johnson, Terry Brown, John Prestridge, and all past and present members of "Choir Practice."

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that memorials be made to The Hospice of East Texas in his memory. They are truly a group of angels and the family wishes to thank them for their kindness, compassion, and extraordinary care provided in the last month of his life. Also, thanks to all of the nurse's aids, nurses, doctors, therapists, and caregivers that served him these last few years at Christus Mother Frances Hospital, Christus Rehab Hospital, The Heights, and Reunion Plaza. And a special thank you to Clarine Cooper, his personal caregiver the last couple of years when he was in declining health. The family is forever grateful for all of you.

He came, he lived, he loved it. And it was Fun!
To The Great I Am be all honor, glory and praise.

Previous Events

Visitation

DEC **12.** 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM (CT)

Stewart Family Funeral Home
7525 Old Jacksonville Hwy
Tyler, TX 75703
(903) 581-2008

Celebration of Life

DEC **13.** 10:00 AM (CT)

Marvin Methodist Church
300 West Erwin
Tyler, TX

Tribute Wall

JB

“ I called on Dr Knarr for many years. The early years were kinda tough yet I finally figured out that he loved political trivia! Once I figured this out he was more apt to see me when I called. Good fun for sure as he was always ready to stump me. Much was learned by both of us as the years went by. One of his greatest deeds was taking “Laura” under his wing making her a genuine asset to his practice. Good job Doc RIP
John R Bell
Pfizer Pharma.

john r bell - October 27, 2025 at 03:14 PM

ML

“ I went to work for Dr. Knarr and Dr. Gatti in 1968 as an insurance clerk. During my time there, Dr. Knarr taught me had to take the patient vital signs and also had to give shots, especially when his nurse was not there. He's also the only person that could get away with calling me Little Martha. He did that because we had two people working there with the same name and it's stuck with me all the way through because when I left work there I went to work for a CPA and Dr. Knarr later became one of our clients and he still called me a Little Martha. He also if you did something good or did something wrong the next morning you would find a Bible verse to go read to help you become a better person. I still have some of those packed away that he gave me all those years ago. I will truly miss him. He was a great teacher, physician and friend. Martha Lindblom



Martha Lindblom - October 24, 2025 at 05:19 PM

KH

Dr Knarr sewed up my brothers and I from countless childhood accidents when he was in family practice with Dr Robert Gatti on Clinic drive just west of then Medical Center Hospital (later East Texas Medical Center ETMC now UT Health Tyler) he was the quintessential family practice doctor who had an amazing bedside manner - we were so fortunate to have known him and had the privilege to be in his care for so many years - he will be missed greatly - rest in peace Dr Knarr

Kyle Hill - October 24, 2025 at 09:07 PM

BB

“ I only saw him once at the Manhattan Clinic in Nov. 2020 he was so kind. Dr. Knarr got so excited when he sent my prescription via email to my pharmacy with no problems. He was adorable, it may have been his first time. Blessings to his family and friends.

Becky Bryant - October 24, 2025 at 11:29 AM