

Obituaries

JOAN (LIBUTTI) ABAR, DO, 90, passed away peacefully on Nov. 30th, 2021. Born in Providence, she was married to the late Dr. J. Weston Abar.



She graduated from the University of Rhode Island in 1952 and the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine in 1963 and later earned a certificate in Nuclear Medicine at the Cleveland Institute. She interned at the former Cranston General Hospital and ultimately became chief of staff, the first female hospital chief of staff in Rhode Island, and was the recipient of the American Osteopathic Hospital Association Award of Merit. She was also very active in the community, serving on several boards, promoting the danger of smoking through the “tar wars” program and raising oysters for research to help clean the bay.

An avid traveler, Joan visited almost every national park in the U.S. in a motor home with her husband Jean. Together, they enjoyed life to its fullest, often in the outdoors, and always with good friends. They raised Brittany Spaniels, Arabian horses and a lovable donkey named Geronimo!

She is survived by her brother L. Daniel Libutti and his wife Joan of Stuart, FL; her sister Dacia Nickerson, and her husband Clive, of Cranston RI, as well as many nieces and nephews and grand nieces and nephews.

There will be a private burial with a celebration of life to follow in the spring. Information and condolences at www.carpenterjenks.com

Donations in Joan’s memory may be made to The University of Rhode Island Foundation, RhoDyNow: Students First Fund, URI Foundation, PO Box 1700, Kingston, RI 02881 or through www.urifoundation.org ❖



ROBERT WAYNE BROCHU, DO, 83, of Westerly, formerly of Misquamicut and Bradenton, FL, passed away at his home on December 23, 2021. He was the beloved husband of Nancy (Jarret) Brochu.

He graduated from Boston University, and then the Chicago College of Osteopathic Medicine in 1967. After a residency at Saginaw Osteopathic Hospital, Michigan, he moved his family to Scituate, RI, where he opened the N. Scituate Medical Center. In addition, Dr. Brochu was also an assistant to the RI State Medical Examiner for over 20 years, a long-term member of the RI Society of Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons, in which he served as president. Dr. Brochu also had affiliations with Cranston General Hospital and Roger Williams Hospital. After moving to Florida, Dr. Brochu served as Chief of Medicine for Manatee County Rural Health Services for over 15 years, continuing to work until his retirement in 2018.

“Dr. Bob” will always be remembered for his passion, for his love of life and his unbelievable caring for his patients, family, friends and co-workers.

Besides his wife Nancy, he leaves five children, Dr. Lisa Milder (Larry), Erma Russo (Mark), Mark Brochu (Josephine), Donna

Goodney (David), and Christine Brochu (Patricia); and three stepsons, James Kenney, Michael Kenney (Natalie), and Dr. Patrick Kenney (Stefano). Robert will also be dearly missed by his sixteen grandchildren; five step-grandchildren; two great-grandchildren; and many nieces and nephews. He was predeceased by two siblings, Louise Morris and Paul Brochu. His loyal Frenchie “Beau” also survives him.

Donations may be made to St. Jude Children’s Hospital in Dr. Brochu’s memory. For online condolences please visit www.gaffneydolanfuneralhome.com ❖

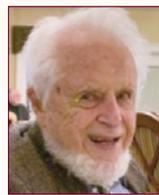


JOSEPH A. DILORENZO, MD, 72, of Saunterstown passed away Jan. 12, 2022 at Rhode Island Hospital. He was a graduate of Bishop Hendricken High School and received his medical degree from Brown University. He opened his own medical practice specializing in internal medicine and pediatrics.

He had a great love for any activity outdoors and was an avid camper, hiker and loved to canoe.

He was the husband of the late Kathleen (Moffitt) DiLorenzo and is survived by his sister and brother-in-law Mary Ann Borrelli and Donald. He also leaves his nieces and nephews Jeffrey and Kim Borrelli, Christine and Nathan Matson, Kevin and Alyssa Borrelli, and Eric Borrelli and his fiancé Erica Lee. He also leaves several extended family members.

Donations in his memory can be made to the American Cancer Society, 931 Jefferson Blvd., Ste 3004, Warwick, RI, 02886 or to Hasbro Children’s Hospital, Rhode Island Hospital Foundation Development Office, PO Box H, Providence, RI, 02901. ❖



WALTER R. THAYER, Jr., MD, 92 of Riverside, died peacefully surrounded by family and loved ones on January 8.

Dr. Thayer graduated from Tuft’s University Medical School in 1954 and gained prominence as one of the nation’s leading experts on Crohn’s and other gastrointestinal diseases. He served as Chief of Gastroenterology at Brown University Medical School and Head of the Gastroenterology Department at Rhode Island Hospital, where he started a Gastrointestinal Residency Program, in partnership with Brown. He held his positions at both hospitals for 30 years and was also a much-loved and respected professor at Brown Medical School.

Upon his retirement in 2004, he was proud to cut the ribbon at the Walter R. Thayer Inflammatory Bowel Disease Laboratory at Rhode Island Hospital. As stated by former U.S. Senator Lincoln Chafee, Dr. Thayer has been described as “the father of gastroenterology in Rhode Island, someone who is a masterful teacher and had a great love for his patients.”

Dr. Thayer was awarded the Distinguished Clinician Award by the American Gastroenterology Association and the Humanitarian of the Year Award by the Rhode Island and New England

Chapters of the Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America. He was also a recipient of the W.W. Keene Award from the Brown Medical Alumni Association.

Dr. Thayer had a well-deserved reputation as a caring and empathetic doctor to the thousands of patients he treated. He conducted significant research into the root causes of and treatment for Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis, seeking remedies to reduce the pain of people suffering from debilitating gastrointestinal maladies.

He proudly trained hundreds of young doctors to excel in the field of gastroenterology with a particular emphasis on the recruitment and support of doctors of color, understanding that the expansion of diversity in this vital field could have a great impact on the treatment of patients across all cultural and ethnic communities.

Following his retirement, Dr. Thayer remained committed to patient care and preparing the next generation of gastroenterologists. He volunteered at the Providence Veterans Affairs Medical Center and as a teacher at Brown Medical School where he was recognized as Teacher of the Year in 2016. He also volunteered at the Rhode Island Hospital clinic and mentored Brown medical students.

During his retirement, Dr. Thayer also found time to engage in his passions for gardening, birding, reading, and political debate. However, his happiest times were spent with his beloved children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

He is survived by his daughter, Ida-Marie Thayer Jonsen, her husband, Eric, and their three children, Kaitlyn, Jeremy and Michelle, each of whom provided Walter with one great-grandchild, respectively Walter, Jack and Theo. He is survived by his son, Peter, along with Peter's wife, Elizabeth, and his daughter Coral. He is also survived by, Brenda Melone, who Walter loved as another daughter. Walter's beloved son, Walter III, died in 1980.

Walter is survived by his sister, Barbara Thayer Monaghan, and Barbara's husband David, and by several stepchildren. He is also survived by many nieces and nephews, three of whom went on to become doctors themselves, and three more who are currently in medical school. All of them gained both inspiration and passion from Walter's long and distinguished career.

Fifty years after he graduated from medical school, Walter's sister, Barbara, asked him why he chose gastroenterology as a specialty. He remarked that he was so glad that she asked. He explained that in many of the other specialties he had considered, too often people died. As a gastroenterologist, he could help people to live...and to live better.

A memorial service will be held at a future date to be announced. The family would be most grateful for donations to the Crohn's & Colitis Foundation an organization that Dr. Thayer helped to create and strongly supported. ❖

 **HAROLD JOSEPH WANEBO, MD, FACS**, 86, of Bristol, Emeritus Professor of Surgery, Boston University School of Medicine, passed away peacefully on November 27, 2021. He was the beloved husband of Claire (Cookson) Wanebo for 57 years.



Dr. Wanebo graduated from Regis College and earned a Doctor of Medicine from the University of Colorado in 1961. He spent two years as a medical resident at the Cornell Medical Bellevue Hospital before pursuing and completing his surgical residency at the University of California San Francisco in 1969. Upon completing his residency, he signed up for the Doctors for Vietnam Program, a volunteer program which subsequently led to one year of active duty in Vietnam and a Bronze Star and Army Commendation Medal with Valor.

Upon return, he enrolled in the surgical oncology fellowship at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center (MSKCC). Upon completion of the fellowship, he remained at MSKCC on the Colon and Rectal Service. In 1977, he became the Chief of Surgical Oncology at the University of Virginia School of Medicine in Charlottesville, VA, where he rose to the rank of full professor.

In 1987, he was recruited to the Roger Williams Medical Center in Providence, where he served as the chief of surgery and Director of the Division of Surgical Oncology for the Brown University School of Medicine. In 1998, the hospital transferred to the Boston University School of Medicine.

Dr. Wanebo was a dedicated and prolific educator throughout his long academic career, delivering over 500 (national and international) oral presentations, and authoring 290 peer-reviewed journal manuscripts. He also published 75 book chapters and edited five books on surgical oncology, colorectal surgery, hepatobiliary surgery, gastrointestinal surgery, and the management of pelvic malignancies. He also served as an editor of on the editorial board of multiple peer-reviewed medical journals including *Annals of Surgical Oncology* and *Head and Neck Surgery*. He has been recognized internationally for constructing techniques to treat advanced and recurrent pelvic malignancies, developing the "Abdominal Sacral Resection" and surgical techniques for "Isolated Pelvic Perfusion of High Dose Chemotherapeutics."

He pioneered several techniques at Roger Williams and introduced this institution to the world of surgical oncology. Several patients from all over the world came to this institution to undergo treatment. This not only improved surgical oncology but also the entire gamut of oncological care improved and his contribution to this is boundless. He will be remembered for his strong conviction towards taking care of his patients and relentless work to improve the outcomes for the oncological care.

He was the founder of his own lab, Chemo Enhanced, where he was working on cancer research.

In addition to his wife, Claire, Dr. Wanebo is survived by his children: John E. Wanebo, MD (Sonja); Michael D. Wanebo (Sandra); Jacqueline E. May, MD (Jeffrey); and seven grandchildren.

Memorial contributions in his name can be made to St. Mary's Church, 330 Wood Street, Bristol, RI 02809. ❖